

Thoughts on Recent Comments by The Pope

Over the past few months Pope Francis has made some rather strange headlines. In a letter written to believers he said they have a path to forgiveness if they live their lives in all good conscience. Keep in mind this was a written response to some questions posed to the Pope. Therefore, he had ample opportunity to collect his thoughts and carefully frame the letter.

On another occasion in an interview he spoke of same sex marriage and made headlines when he advocated “civil unions” for homosexual couples. “Homosexuals have a right to be part of the family. They’re children of God and have a right to a family.” Again, this raised some eyebrows for the doctrine of the Catholic Church has been in favor of defining marriage as between a man and a woman.

To be fair many Protestant denominations have been going in the same direction as the Pope. Over the last twenty or thirty years many denominations have changed their teaching on marriage in favor of homosexual unions. Many also teach that sincere Muslims, Hindu’s, Jews, and other non-Christian religions are going to heaven. This presents some obvious observations and questions.

This is what happens when man exercises editor rights over God’s word. The Catholic Church believes it gave mankind the Bible and its traditions are equal to if not superior. Their councils have “interpreted” what God wants and the Pope as the Vicar of Christ, speaks for Him. At the same time many religious groups believe they can qualify or modify the Bible by their creeds. Both are neither equal or superior to the Word of God. The Bible is to be our one and only source of doctrine, or authority, and teaching.

The Pope’s comments also raise some important questions. Such as, can one go to heaven without believing in God? Looking at the Bible, the answer seems to be rather obvious. Especially when one considers the ramifications of not believe in the existence of God. **Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He**

is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. To not believe in God, means one does not believe in our Creator. Atheist/Evolutionist believe man is the product of time and chance. We are the result of an accident of nature and are no different than any other living being.

To not believe in God means to not believe in man's spiritual nature. A physical universe cannot create a spiritual being, it cannot give man a soul. The only way man can have a soul is to have a spiritual Creator. **Genesis 1:27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.** Strangely the Pope is probably offending many atheists by suggesting there is life after death.

To not believe in God means to not believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God. How can one believe another has the qualities of deity if you reject the idea of deity? Jesus claimed to be eternal, He exhibited the quality of omniscience, and omnipotent. John in writing his Gospel said, "**but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.**" (John 20:31) John did not write so as to persuade us of Jesus' existence but of His deity.

To not believe in God means to not believe in and obey the Son of God. Could the Jews reject Jesus and still go to heaven? Many believe it is too closed minded to say that Jesus is the only way to heaven, but I am willing to let Jesus speak for Himself. "**Therefore, I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.**" (John 8:24)

This also presents some questions about heaven itself. Can one who does not believe in God, go to a place they don't believe in? Let me get this right, the Pope is speaking to a group of people who do not believe in God, do not believe in man's spiritual nature, and yet says they can go to a place they do not believe exist! This stands logic on its head. I have said, the Calvinist believes a person who doesn't want to go to heaven may go there if they are part of the elect. The Pope has gone one step further by saying there is a

pathway to heaven for those who don't believe in heaven.

This begs another question; can one go to heaven by “having a good conscience”? Which means your conscience is the standard by which you will be judged. There are Bible passages which teach the importance of not violating one's conscience but does your conscience take the place of God's word? What if your conscience leads you to disobey the Gospel of Christ? Before you say yes, consider Saul of Tarsus. He lived his whole life in “all good conscience” (Acts 23.1). Yet he persecuted, had Christians bound in chains and even put to death, Acts 9.1-4. Was he saved while persecuting God's people? How about the idolaters mentioned in Romans 1 as they rejected God and worshipped the creation rather than the Creator? One's conscience must be trained by the word of God. **“Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith.” (1 Timothy 1:5)**

While not directly saying so, the Pope is advocating the doctrine of universalism which contradicts the very words of Jesus. Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. (John 14:6) – Dennis Tucker