

The Bishopric of Peter

It must be understood on the onset that the purpose of this tract is not to incense or demean members of the Roman Catholic Church, but to help them understand the one and only truth that sets all men and women free. Anyone who considers himself to be honest and reasonable understands that two people holding to differing views cannot both be correct. If it is true as the Catholic Church claims that Christ delegated all His authority to Peter to perpetually rule and reign over His church, then all religious peoples must accept and teach this in order to please God. However, if their claim is not true, then it is the case that all peoples must fight ardently against it and encourage all Catholic members to come out from its doctrinal shackles and be truly saved.

The Roman Catholic Church asserts that Jesus Christ while upon the earth, granted to the Apostle Peter alone, the position of chief pastor of the whole church, and the Vicar of Christ upon the earth. This title referred to in differing ways such as, supreme and universal pastor, Archbishop of the Roman Province, Primate of Italy, Sole Patriarch of the Western Church, and finally as the papa or pope of the Church. Their proof text is Matthew 16:17-19 and John 21:15-17 in which they believe that Christ assigned to Peter absolute authority over the church both legislatively and judicially; thus placing him as vicegerent to rule in Christ's stead.

The Roman Catholic Church maintains that no "writer of weight" has ever been able to refute Peter being the undisputed head of the church in perpetuity. This of course is based upon the assumption that no one outside the Catholic Church has any authority to interpret Scripture or to conclude their meaning. If this is truly the case, then God would be a liar, for He tells us that He is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34; Deuteronomy 10:17). However God does not lie (Titus 1:2), therefore it must be the case that He has given to all men and women the ability to know and understand His will without and apart from Catholic all authority (Ephesians 3:4; John 8:32; 2

Corinthians 13:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; et al). The Holy Spirit has commanded all men and women that "*ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable FOR DOCTRINE, for reproof, for correction, FOR INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, that the man of God may be complete, THOROUGHLY FURNISHED unto EVERY GOOD WORK.*" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). It does not say that the Catholic Church will give us what we need for doctrine and instruction, but the Word of God! No one needs a priest to interpret what the Scriptures say, nor do we need their permission to read and study what God has left to all. Therefore, it is to the Word of God that we turn to establish authority for whether or not God ever intended for Peter to be a pope, the pope or any other type of chief pastor in the church of Christ. It is our purpose here to prove that the doctrine of the primacy of Peter is merely an assumption based upon uninspired men and not upon the Word of God.

Assumptions & Misinterpretations

It is alleged by Roman Catholicism that Matthew 16:16-19 teaches that the Lord's church was built upon Peter and that all power and authority was delegated completely and entirely to him and his successors. Their argument is based upon a weak assumption that Jesus spoke to Peter in the Aramaic language which renders no gender distinction. While it is possible that Jesus spoke Aramaic, it is false that this language has no gender distinctions. Just as in the Greek both the masculine and feminine genders are used, so it is with the Aramaic. Whether Jesus said "*you are Peter (Petros – Gr.)*" or "*you are Peter (cephas – Ar)*" they are both in the masculine form. The same is true of "*upon this rock (petra – Gr.)*" or "*upon this rock (cepha – Ar)*," both being in the feminine form.

While the Catholic authorities try to maintain that Jesus spoke the same Aramaic word in both places (cepha), the Word of God tells us differently. Notice what Jesus said to Peter: "*He said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called*

Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone" (John 1:42KJV). Here we find that Jesus referred to Peter with the Aramaic word "Cephas" which the Holy Spirit tells us means "stone." So it is mere assertion on the part of Catholicism to say that Jesus used the same word "cepha" to refer to Peter and the foundation of the church. Since divine revelation cannot lie, we must put our trust in it and not men.

Catholicism takes great pains in trying to destroy the fact that Jesus founded His church upon His deity and not Peter. But it only takes an honest and rational mind to realize that our Lord would not have changed the genders had He been referring to Peter as the rock. Please stop and carefully consider the following: Jesus said He would build His church upon something called "the rock." So the question must be asked, "*to what was He referring; to Peter, or something else?*"

Consider if you will constructing some building and the first thing the engineers will tell is that you must start with a solid foundation; a foundation that has been tested and found reliable enough to endure for all time. Because men are not to be found true, only God, we must conclude that God is the only foundation that is reliable enough to put our confidence in (Romans 3:4; Jeremiah 10:23). God alone is the everlasting rock upon we can depend (2 Samuel 22:32, 47; Psalm 18:2, 31; 62:2; Isaiah 26:4). Therefore, every honest soul who loves truth must admit that "the rock" to which Jesus refers is not Peter, but Himself, the Christ, the Son of the Living God! For Paul and others confirm this very truth 1 Corinthians 3:11; 10:4; Romans 9:33; 1 Peter 2:8).

In all of Old Testament prophecy, the stone, the foundation, the Government, the Keys of Authority, the throne of David, the rule and the law **ALWAYS** and **ONLY** refer to Christ – **NEVER** to Peter (Isaiah 8:14; 9:6; 22:22; 28:16)! Peter confirmed that Christ alone sat on the throne of David (Acts 2:30). John confirms that Christ alone has the keys (Revelation 3:7). As Isaiah predicted that the "*Government shall be upon His [Christ's] shoulders*" (9:6), so the New Testament confirms this to be true (Matthew 28:18; 1

Corinthians 15:25). The question put forward to the disciples by Jesus was "Who is Christ?" **NOT** "Who is Peter?" (Matthew 16:13). The rock to which Christ said the church would be built, was NOT Peter, but his confession of faith that Jesus was the Christ! 1 Corinthians 3:11 confirms this as Paul says that the foundation of the church is Jesus Christ! Again Paul presents Christ as the chief corner stone of the church in Ephesians 2:19-21. Even Peter agrees with Paul that Christ is the head of the corner, the chief corner stone (1 Peter 2:4-10). As the one and only head of the church Jesus gave to all the apostles the keys to the kingdom – these are teaching keys, not primacy keys.

In Ephesians 2:19-21 Paul speaks of the apostles being the 'foundation' along with the prophets of old. Peter was given "primacy" by Christ in Matthew 16:16-19 to be the first to use the teaching keys to open the kingdom of God to the Jews first. But now those keys are available to all the church of Christ to carry out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). Jesus said, "*EVERY ONE that cometh unto Me, and HEARETH My Words, and Doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who digged and went deep, and laid a foundation upon THE ROCK*" (Luke 6:47-48). The foundation of the Apostles and prophets was laid upon the ROCK which is Jesus Christ!

Another assumption and misinterpretation of Scripture by the Catholics is John 21 where Jesus tells Peter to "*feed My lambs...feed My sheep.*" Catholicism argues that it is here that Jesus confirms Peter's primacy, giving him all authority over the visible church on earth and in the world. However this conclusion is false and merely assumed to be the truth. Keeping the context of the scene before us, Jesus has now appeared to His disciples for the third time after His resurrection. Having predicted that Peter would deny Him three times during His trial, before the rooster crowed (Matthew 26:34), Jesus now gives Peter a chance to redeem himself.

Notice also, that Jesus does not call him Peter, but by his Jewish name Simon. Asking him, "*Lovest thou Me more than these?*" Just as Peter tried to

convince himself and Jesus that he would not forsake Jesus as would the other disciples, now Jesus is asking him if he still feels that way. Understanding his weaknesses, he confirms that he loves Jesus, but not in a superior way to his comrades. Simon used a weaker form of love than did Jesus. Despite how painful it was to relive his denial, Simon confirms before all that his faith was as strong as it was when he confessed that Jesus was the Christ (Matthew 16:16). We must also remember that this gospel account written by John was a universal letter meant to encourage faith in Jesus, and if others did not see Peter's willingness to confess his love for Christ, they would be left wondering whether or not it was worth giving one's life for such a cause, if Peter denied Christ.

So what we find in the context of John 21 is not the Catholic belief that Jesus is confirming Peter as the chief shepherd of the church, with all authority to teaching and train the clergy in preparation for their teaching of the masses. Jesus is simply giving Simon the opportunity to redeem himself, and to let him know that Jesus trusts him to teach His lambs and sheep (both young and old). The fact of the matter is that God has given the duty of feeding the flock to the elders of the church (Acts 20:28).

The elders of the true New Testament church were plural in number and are required to meet certain qualifications spelled out for us by the Holy Spirit as given to the apostles to record (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-3). Please notice that in each of these passages, it is the duty of the elders/bishops/pastors to do the feeding, and it is the feeding of the entire flock (members of the church) not the clergy. They are also required to be married and have believing children. Every congregation of the Lord's true church is to have a plurality of elders/bishops/pastors who meet these qualifications. There is no Bible authority for one exclusive and successive bishop to rule over all congregations. This is man's doctrine, and it is heresy!

Was Peter ever in Rome?

It is also asserted by the Catholic Church that Peter established his "holy see" in the city of Rome. This term in the general sense means "seat," "residence," together with the various ecclesiastical authorities of the pope's administration. The earliest claim that Peter was in Rome was by Ignatius in 130AD. However, much of his writings are very unreliable on so many facts that he can't be trusted on anything. It is merely Catholic theory that Peter ever visited Rome, let alone establishing his supreme bishopric there.

Scripture and history affirms the opposite is true. Catholics say that Peter was in Rome between 42 and 67AD; however these dates would make it impossible. First of all, Peter and James were imprisoned by Herod in 44AD (Acts 12). Secondly, the edict of Claudius Caesar that all Jews depart from Rome happened around 50AD (Acts 18:2). Thirdly, the Jerusalem Conference at which were present Paul, James and Peter occurred around 53AD (Acts 15). Fourth, when Paul spent three months in Corinth, he wrote his letter to the Christians at Rome but never made mention of Peter, while naming 35 other brethren. Fifth, during the years of 62-63AD Paul lived in his own rented house while under house arrest, waiting to have his case heard before Nero (Acts 28:30). During this time he was visited by many brethren from different parts of the world, as well as from Rome itself, but never one mention of Peter! Finally, in 67AD, Paul writes his final letter – 2 Timothy while imprisoned at Rome, and again not one mention of Peter.

Surely the evidence is so overwhelming as to exclude any possibility that Peter ever lived or died in Rome, or that he ever resided as supreme pontiff of the church.

Conclusion

“And all things He made subject under His feet, and Him He gave as head over all things to the church, which indeed is His body, the fullness of

Him who is wholly fulfilled in all” (Ephesians 1:22-23). Long after Christ had ascended back to the Father in heaven, the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to record for us this simple truth; that Jesus remains the one and only head of the church! There has never been a 'visible head' of the church on earth, since Jesus Christ is the only head (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 5:23).

If Peter is truly the papa of the church, holding perpetual supremacy, then he did not understand this to be the case. Listen to Peter's own words, *“Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ..”* (2 Peter 1:1). *“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder..”* (1 Peter 5:1). Not once did he refer to himself as Father, Reverend, Most Reverend, chief elder or pastor, but simply a servant, apostle and fellow elder. Peter also taught, *“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God..”* (1 Peter 4:11). Nothing said about speaking Catholic traditions, or acquiring authority from the Church's magisterium, priest, or bishop. Peter refers to Christ as the 'chief shepherd,' not himself (1 Peter 5:4). Apparently Peter forgot that he had the power of keys to bind and loose, when Simon the sorcerer sinned (Acts 8:22).

After looking at all the overwhelming evidence, we must conclude that the Catholic Church has usurped its authority by inventing doctrines of men and not of God. We have weighed in the balances of God's word the doctrine of Peter's primacy and it has been found wanting.

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the Scriptures?
Concerning.....*

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