

# POPE PETER?

Simon Peter, one of the disciples of Jesus Christ, was the first pope of Rome. This is the claim of the Roman Catholic religion. And if it is true, then what is known as the Roman Catholic Church is the very Church that was founded by Jesus Christ Himself.

However, by claiming that Peter was the first pope of Rome, the Roman Catholic institution has a very big problem on its hands. For in making this claim, *it has contradicted what Jesus Himself said of Peter; it has ignored what Paul wrote of him; its popes have not followed Peter's example; and it has not paid any heed to what Peter himself taught!*

As shocking as all this may be to you if you are a Roman Catholic, please consider the following facts.

Firstly, what did Jesus say of Peter?

He said that Peter was a stone. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Roman Catholics are taught that Peter is the Rock on which the Church is built. However, the Greek word translated as "Peter" is *petros*, and it means a small, moveable *stone*. And this is precisely what Jesus called him in John 1:42. Peter was *not* the Rock. The true "Rock" (in Greek, *petra*, meaning a large boulder, or bedrock) is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself! For the Bible says of the Lord, "HE is the Rock" (Deuteronomy 32:4); and "who is a rock save our God?" (Psalm 18:31). The New Testament calls CHRIST the Rock, when it says, "As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him [Christ] shall not be ashamed" (Romans 9:33). Peter cannot be the foundation of the Church, according to 1 Corinthians 3:11: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." In a secondary sense, the foundation the Church is built on is that of ALL the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20), and certainly this verse gives no pre-eminence to Peter; in fact, the *very same* verse says that Jesus Christ Himself is the "chief corner stone."

There is also 1 Corinthians 10:4: "and that Rock was Christ."

Thus, Jesus did not make Peter the "Rock", the foundation of the Church, for He would not contradict His own Word. Jesus said that Peter was just a stone, but Rome says he was the Rock.

Secondly, what did Paul the apostle write about Peter?

Paul wrote that Peter the apostle was a *married man*. In 1 Corinthians 9:5 he wrote, "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas [i.e. Peter – John 1:42]?" Peter, according to Rome the first pope, was a married man! There was certainly no sin in being married. Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 3:2 that a bishop should be the husband of one wife. And in fact, the doctrine of "forbidding to marry" is called in 1 Timothy 4:1-3 a "doctrine of devils"! And yet, centuries after the apostolic age, Roman Catholic priests (and consequently popes) were forbidden to marry.

Paul wrote that James and John, in addition to Peter, were "pillars" of the church (Galatians 2:9). Peter was NOT the chief of the apostles, as Rome claims.

After Paul was converted, he (according to his own testimony) "conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days" (Galatians 1:16-18). It certainly does not appear as if Paul was subject to Peter! This would be strange, if Peter were the first pope. Then, in Galatians 2:6, he leaves no doubt that he was not subject to Peter as "universal Bishop", when he writes of those who seemed to be pillars in the church (Peter, James and John), and says, "whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person". He certainly did not treat Peter as the "Vicar of Christ", the chief of the apostles, the pope!

In the same passage Paul wrote, “But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed” (Galatians 2:11). Again, if Peter were the Roman pope, such behaviour would have been unacceptable on Paul’s part, and no doubt Paul would have been disciplined for daring to reprimand the one whom the Roman Catholic system claims holds the place of Christ on earth! (read Galatians 2:11-14). But the truth of the matter is, Paul was not subject to Peter. He wrote in 2 Corinthians 11:5 that he “was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles”; and in 2 Corinthians 12:11 he wrote, “in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles”.

There is still more that Paul wrote about Peter. In Galatians 2:7,8 he wrote that, whereas he was the apostle to the Gentiles, Peter was the apostle to the Jews. In other words, Peter was called primarily to proclaim the Gospel to the Jews. This is why the Bible reveals that Peter was ministering in *Jerusalem* at the very time when, according to the Roman Catholic teaching, he was supposed to have been bishop in *Rome* (Galatians 2:1; Galatians 1:18; Acts 10, 12, 15)!

In addition, when Paul wrote his letter to the church at Rome, he sent greetings to over 25 Christians there –but *never once* mentioned Peter (see Romans 16). Now if Peter were bishop of Rome, Paul would certainly have sent greetings to him. And, writing when he was in prison in Rome, Paul wrote this: “Only Luke is with me” (2 Timothy 4:11). Peter was NOT with him in prison in Rome!

Thirdly, consider the example that Peter the apostle set.

As has been seen, he was married. Further evidence of this is found in Matthew 8:14, where we are told that Jesus healed Peter’s wife’s mother. Have the popes of Rome followed his example, the example of the one they claim was the first pope? No, they have not, neither in this matter nor in others.

In Acts 3:6, after a lame man had asked Peter and John for money, Peter replied, “Silver and gold have I *none*”. Peter had no money. Have the popes of Rome followed his example? No, they have not. The Roman Catholic institution is extremely wealthy, and the wealth of its popes is a fact of history which none can deny. Peter followed the example of Jesus with regard to possessions and wealth, but the popes of Rome have neither followed Jesus nor Peter.<sup>1</sup>

In Acts 10:25,26, Peter refused the worship of a man. “And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.” Have the popes of Rome followed his example? No. They too are mere men, yet they have allowed men to prostrate themselves before them, to kiss their rings (Peter had no ring – Acts 3:6), to kiss their feet, etc. Peter would not allow what the Roman popes freely allow.

Peter had no temporal power. Again, the Roman popes have not followed his example. They claim temporal power, a claim that is absolutely without biblical support.

Peter was *sent*, along with John, on a mission by the other apostles (Acts 8:14). So he certainly did not claim to be supreme head over the other apostles. Once again, the popes of Rome have not learned from his example. In addition, look at what happened in Acts 15. The “apostles and elders” in Jerusalem came together to settle the matter of circumcision (v.6). And v.7 says that only after there had been “much disputing”, did Peter rise up and say something. Finally, it was not Peter, but *James*, who settled the matter (vv.13-21); and Peter accepted James’ decision (vv.22-29). This entire chapter exposes the false claims of the popes of Rome.

Finally, as was already seen, Peter preached the Gospel to the Jews. The popes of Rome have not followed his example in this. Many of them, through the centuries, have been responsible for the massacres of Jewish people, during the Crusades, the Inquisition, etc. This is a fact of history.<sup>2</sup> Peter preached the Gospel to them; he did not kill them.

Lastly, what did Peter himself teach?

It is easy to find out. In addition to his words which are recorded in the book of Acts, he also wrote two epistles. Among other things, he taught the following:

He taught that he was an elder, not a pope (1 Peter 5:1).

He taught that *Jesus* is the Rock. In 1 Peter 2:4-8, he taught precisely what the Lord Himself had taught in Matthew 16:18. Just as Christ had said that Peter was a stone, so now Peter refers to all Christians as “stones”; and then he refers to Christ as the Rock (v.8)!

He also taught that only CHRIST can save a person from sin. In Acts 4:12 he said, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is *none other name* under heaven given among men, whereby we must

be saved.” According to the Bull, *Unum Sanctum*, issued by the Roman pope, Boniface VIII, “To be subject to the Roman Pontiff is to every human creature altogether necessary for salvation”; but according to Peter the apostle, only CHRIST can save. The popes of Rome have not preached the same Gospel that Peter preached.

Jesus once asked the chief priests: “The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?” (Matthew 21:25). “And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet” (vv.25,26).

Now, while John was indeed a prophet, whereas Peter was not the first pope of Rome according to the Bible, the Roman Catholic institution is in a similar predicament. The question it has to answer is, Was Peter the first pope of Rome, or not? If it answers, Yes (as indeed it does), then Christ will say, Why did you not believe the Scriptures? My Word entirely condemns this false teaching. But if, on the other hand, it were to answer, No, Peter was not the first pope of Rome; then the Roman Catholic system would fall apart! For it claims to be built on this very foundation. If Peter was not the Rock, the first pope of Rome, then there is no apostolic succession; and without apostolic succession, there is no papacy; and without a papacy, the Roman Catholic system would fall apart.

The simple truth is that Peter was not the first Roman pope. There is absolutely no biblical evidence for it. And nor is there any historical evidence, despite what Rome claims. In fact, far from having died and been buried in Rome (for which there is no solid evidence whatsoever), it is possible that many years ago the tomb of Peter was discovered in *Jerusalem*, not Rome.<sup>3</sup>

The Roman Catholic “Church” is built on a false foundation. It is not built on the TRUE Rock, Jesus Christ. He alone is the Head of the Church, HIS Church (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18). Peter taught that salvation is only to be found in Christ (Acts 4:12). It is not to be found in the Roman Catholic system. Being a Roman Catholic will not save you. Only Christ can.

Jesus Christ, God the Son (John 1:1-18), came to earth to become the perfect Sacrifice for the sins of His people; to die for their sins *once* only (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; Hebrews 9:26). His blood alone can cleanse from sin (1 John 1:7-9). To be saved from one’s sins, to have eternal life, one must REPENT of one’s sins (Acts 3:19), and receive Christ by *faith alone*, as one’s all-sufficient Saviour (John 14:6; John 1:12,13; Romans 5:1,2; Ephesians 2:8,9). Salvation is a *gift* of God. We cannot earn it (Romans 6:23). Turn from your sins, trusting in Christ alone. The promise of the Scripture is, “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:12). Leave the Roman Catholic system. It is not a Christian church (Revelation 18:4,5). Heed the words of Peter in Acts 4:12. One can only enter into life through Christ. Hell is filled with people who trusted in false religious systems and not in Jesus Christ.

**Shaun Willcock**

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*If you have repented of your sins and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, or if you would like to know more about Him, His Gospel, and the true Christian life, please contact us.*

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#### ***ENDNOTES:***

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1. *The Vatican Billions*, by Avro Manhattan. Chick Publications, Chino, California, USA, 1983.
2. *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, as well as other encyclopedias and historical works.
3. *Peter's Tomb Recently Discovered in Jerusalem*, written and published by F. Paul Petersen. Fort Wayne, Indiana, USA, 1960.