

Was Peter the First Pope?

Colleges of Cardinals meet in Rome's Vatican City to elect new Popes, claiming each pope succeeds the Apostle Peter. Was Peter ever a Pope? What do history and Bible evidence tell us? Many scholars think that Peter died about 66 A.D. The Apostle John wrote the last *Bible* book, *Revelation*, about 95 A.D. No *New Testament* book suggests or hints that anyone succeeded Peter or any Apostle.

In *Galatians* 2: 1-10, Paul referred to Peter, John, and James (Jesus' half brother James) as being pillars and Apostles to the Jews as Paul and Barnabas were Apostles to the Gentiles. Paul publicly rebuked Peter (Cephas) in Antioch because Peter became squeamish about his relationships with Gentiles in that huge city. Paul wrote that Peter stood condemned (*Galatians* 2:11). Nothing in the Scriptures supports current claims that Jesus appointed Peter as his church's first Pope.

Catholic churchmen as well as some Protestants make much ado over Jesus' statement in *Matthew* 16:18: "You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church . . ." They scoff when doubters point out that Peter (Petros: masculine in Greek) differs greatly from rock (petra: feminine in Greek, as is *ecclesia*, the word church). Petra describes massive formations of rock. Recall the pics you have seen of the ancient city of Petra in Jordan. New Testament writer use Petros only in identifying Peter.

Mark 3:14-17 strongly suggests something else about the name Peter: Jesus appointed his Apostles to be with him, send them to preach, and to have authority to drive out demons. "*These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter), James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means 'sons of thunder') . . .*" Jesus regularly condemned religious pretense, formality, and ritual. He repeatedly burst ballooning human pride. James and John, who wanted to rain fiery brimstone on a Samaritan village, Jesus nicknamed "sons of thunder." What nickname did he give Simon, who on many occasions tried to be "the big man on campus"? He gave him the name Petros, which many Greek speaking folks recognized as Pebble, not big Rocky. Why should we be amazed at this? The Apostle, Saul of Tarsus, was popularly called Paul, which indisputably in the Roman's language means short-Shorty.

To be continued next week, the Lord willing.

Bob Blair, PO Box 176, Cleghorn, IA 51014 www.robertblairbooks.com