

Was Peter the First Pope? Part II

Thank you for your interest in this timely, crucial subject. Was Jesus' Apostle Peter the first pope? Millions of folks assume the truth of the centuries old Catholic claims. The Apostle Paul wrote of:

the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the person of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3: 15-17 NASB).

Have you put your faith in Christ or the agents and spoke-persons of a church organization? Unless God's word guides us, we can be easily deceived.

What do the Scriptures tell us about Peter and the Popes? *Acts* 10 tells of a Roman military officer named Cornelius. The Lord arranged for Peter to visit Officer Cornelius so Peter could lead Cornelius, his family, and his close friends to Jesus. When Peter arrived at the officer's house, "Cornelius met him, fell at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter raised him up, saying, 'stand up, I too am just a man,'" (verses 25 & 26). Peter refused the honor that Popes routinely receive.

Jesus forbade us to give that type honor to religious leaders. In *Matthew* 23: 9, Jesus directly warned: **"Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven."** Peter and the other Apostle were all addressed by their first names or nicknames. They didn't dress differently than ordinary people, did not wear imposing or special garments, use any special titles, or expect others to defer to them.

The Apostles exercised authority over Jesus' church. Yet they prepared God's people for their absence. Most of the Apostles were martyred. The *Bible* books: *Acts*, *1 Timothy*, and *Titus* teach that groups of elders (mature married men) oversaw individual churches. No congregation controlled another. Note *Acts* 20: 17-38. The Apostle Paul met with the *elders* (*presbyters*) of the church in Ephesus. In v. 28, he called those *elders*, overseers (*episkopoi*)-bishops. Paul wanted them to shepherd (*poimân*)-pastor God's flock. The various titles in most churches now did not come from Scripture. Not one elder, bishop, or pastor oversaw a church (all those titles refer to the same office) and they were always a plurality.

To be continued next week, the Lord willing.

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