

THE INTERCONTINENTAL CHURCH OF GOD

SPECIFIC BIBLE STUDIES - PETER - WAS HE THE FIRST POPE?

SUBJECT: Peter - Was he the first pope?

QUESTIONS: Was Peter a Catholic or a pope? Was Peter the bishop at Rome?

ANSWER:

PETER vs. the POPES

The Roman Catholic Church claims that its popes have inherited the seat and authority of the Apostle Peter. That this is a gross error is evident by a simple comparison of Peter's life and teaching with the lives and teaching of the Catholic popes:

1. There is no evidence that Peter was in Rome (Romans 16), and there is no evidence in the New Testament that there was anything special about the congregation at Rome, but the popes rule in Rome and claim that it is the "mother church." Peter's first epistle was written from Babylon, not from Rome, and the popes' claim that "Babylon" stands for Rome is mere conjecture. The biblical evidence that Peter was not a leader in the church at Rome is overwhelming. Paul wrote TO the church at Rome in A.D. 58, but though he mentions 27 people by name, he does not mention Peter. That would have been an inexcusable affront if Peter had been the pope at Rome. Later, Paul writes FROM Rome to the Galatians, the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, and to Philemon, but not once does he mention that Peter is in Rome. In 2 Timothy 4:16 Paul said that no man stood with him and all forsook him when he answered his charges. Where was Pope Peter? The fact is that Peter was not a pope and he was not in Rome.
2. Peter was married (Matthew 8:14), but the popes cannot marry.
3. Peter said Holy Scripture is the sure Word of God and to this alone we are to give heed (2 Peter 1:19-21), but the popes say we are also to heed their uninspired traditions.
4. Peter warned of false teachers who would make merchandise of God's people (2 Peter 2:1-3), but the popes have not feared to sell their masses and their prayers and their indulgences.
5. Peter said baptism is a figure, a symbol, and that it is not water which saves us, but the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3:21), but the popes say that baptism itself brings salvation and that it is not merely symbolic.
6. Peter refused worship (Acts 10:25-26), but the popes have accepted honor and bowings and kissings which border on worship and have allowed themselves to be treated almost as gods.
7. Peter taught that salvation is strictly through the righteousness of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:1), but the popes claim that their sacraments are also necessary for salvation.
8. Peter taught against hierarchicalism, warning the pastors against "being lords over God's heritage" (1 Peter 5:1-4), and Peter mentioned no church office other than that of the elder; but the popes have set up a system of ecclesiastical lordship over the churches, and have added many offices which are never mentioned in the New Testament.
9. Peter taught that the only priesthood in the New Testament dispensation is the High priesthood of Jesus Christ and the general priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:9), but the popes say that their "church" has a special priesthood which is ordained to distribute sacraments.
10. Peter taught that Jesus Christ is the rock upon which the church is founded (1 Peter 2:4-8), but the popes say that Peter was the rock.
11. Peter taught that men are born again through the Word of God (1 Peter 1:23) [and the entire Salvation Process

ending in being changed to spirit], but the popes say that men are born again through baptism.

12. Peter taught that Christ has "once suffered for sins" (1 Peter 3:18), and "bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24); but the popes say that Christ is sacrificed anew in each mass and that having Jesus Christ and his cross is not enough, that a believer also needs the Roman Catholic Church and its sacraments and priesthood.

13. Peter taught that the believer has a living hope, that he has an inheritance reserved in heaven, and that he is kept by the power of God (1 Peter 1:2-5); but the popes say that a believer cannot know for sure that he has a home in heaven. Indeed, popes say we go to heaven when we die. Peter knew that the Kingdom of God would begin on earth with the return of Christ.

14. Peter taught that the believer is not to be a murderer, or a thief, or an evildoer, or a busybody in other men's matters (1 Peter 4:15); but the popes have been all of these things.

WAS PETER THE BISHOP AT ROME?

The Roman Catholic Church claims that Peter was the bishop of the church at Rome and that he held the position as the first Pope. The Bible record conclusively testifies against this. The following study by Henry Hudson is from his book *Papal Power: Its Origins and Development*--

"In A.D. 58 Paul wrote to the Romans, but does not mention Peter. In Romans 1:11, he wants to impart special gifts, and in Romans 1:15 he is ready to preach there. He sends greetings to twenty-seven persons, but none to Peter.

"In 61 Paul is conveyed a prisoner to Rome, and certain brethren go to meet him, but not Peter.

"At Rome Paul writes to the Galatians, and mentions Peter, but not as being there or as having been pontiff there for twenty years [as the Roman Catholic Church claims].

"The Epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon were all written from Rome; but while others are mentioned as sending messages, or as being associated with Paul, Peter is never once mentioned.

"From Rome also Paul's last letter is written (the Second Epistle to Timothy). He says, 'At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me' (2 Timothy 4:16). So that if Peter were Bishop of Rome he enjoyed an immunity which was not accorded to Paul, and is guilty of having forsaken the great apostle.

"And, finally, in this very Epistle, written from Rome immediately before his martyrdom, Paul says, 'Only Luke is with me' (2 Timothy 4:11). This is conclusive.

"So Paul had written to Rome, he had been in Rome, and at the end he writes from Rome, and not only never once mentions Peter, but declares, 'Only Luke is with me.'"

While it is possible that Peter visited Rome briefly at some point, the biblical record testifies conclusively that he was not the bishop of the church at Rome.