

JESUS DID NOT MAKE PETER THE ROCK - CENTURIES LATER POPE'S TURNED THEMSELVES INTO THE ROCK!

The head of the Roman Catholic Church is called the Pope. He claims to be the successor of St Peter the apostle on whom Christ built the one true Church, the Roman Catholic Church. He goes as far as to claim to be infallible. There is no evidence that if Jesus made Peter the rock that he meant he was to be the head of the Church. There is nothing in the Bible about creating a central power or authority in the Church or a spiritual father for the whole Church. If there was always a pope in Rome, the problem is that other bishops were treated as popes too but only over their own diocese and the bishop of Rome was no exception. There was no functional pope as in teacher for the whole church and the one to be obeyed by the whole Church for centuries after Peter.

The first bishop of Rome to claim to be the successor of Peter and to be in his chair was Stephen I (254 to 257 AD). Firmilian recorded that in 257 AD. So it is hearsay. And especially since Firmilian didn't even live in Rome! At least Stephen did not claim to have a divine right to rule the Church in the way the current pope does.

Damasus in 370 AD proclaimed the "Apostolic chair" in which "the holy Apostle sitting, taught his successors how to guide the helm of the Church" (Ep ix ad Synod, Orient ap Theodoret V, 10). Damasus also states how "The first See is that of Peter the Apostle, that of the Roman church" and says how Rome received primacy not by the conciliar decisions of the other churches, but from the evangelic voice of the Lord, when He says, "Thou art Peter..." (Decree of Damasus 382).

Damasus was the first pope in the sense of claiming to be indispensable head of the Church and appointed by God so that he is no ordinary leader.

THOU ART PETER

Catholic Doctrine says, "Peter was the first pope for Christ said he was Peter and on this rock on whom he would build his Church and the gates of hell would never prevail against it (meaning the Church being the last thing mentioned) (Matthew 16:18). See also Luke 22:32; John 21. Jesus gave Peter the keys of the kingdom of Heaven – symbols of authority – and told him that whatever he bound or unbound on earth would be bound or unbound in Heaven. Peter's authority was to run and teach the Church. These promises were made to Peter alone at the time so they signify a special authority just for him. Like Peter, the pope, his successor, is the supreme head of the Church on earth – its chief shepherd and teacher and who takes the place of Christ on earth. The popes are the successors of Peter for the true Church needs a pope to mark it as the true religion and guide it – the early Church needed a pope so does the modern one. Commonsense shows the need for a pope".

One good way to read what Jesus said is, "You are rock and on this rock I will build as in increase my church." This makes Peter a missionary and indeed the first one and he stands out in the New Testament as missionary who effectively founds the Church by bringing in converts.

Had Jesus meant to make Peter a pope he would have said, "You are foundation and on this foundation I will build my Church." Some Catholics object that Jesus calling Peter rock would be stronger than calling him a foundation for you build the foundation on the rock and it will stand forever. They say Peter then is the rock that the foundation stones will be laid on (page 105, The Church and Infallibility). This would tell you that if Jesus built the Church on Peter who as a man was a weak and changeable one who let Jesus down then he was mad. You can't build a Church on a man. Most popes even if they have been infallible have not been rocks, some neglected to protect the faith by speaking out clearly, some were too fond of the sentences of excommunication and caused schism after schism, and others have been totally wrapped up in sex, money or power. The Church admits that many popes have harmed the Church. And they are rocks! How absurd. It is no wonder that many reason that even if Jesus said, "You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church" that "this rock" refers to Jesus himself. Jesus being God or the sinless Son of God, alone could be the rock. Jesus could have been speaking poetically. He would have assumed that we had the commonsense to realise that "this rock" is not Peter for it couldn't be but Jesus himself or even the declaration of faith that Peter made that prompted Jesus to say this. Peter had declared, "You are the Messiah the Son of the Living God." Some Catholics say that nowhere does the Bible say that the rock is not the foundation. A foundation is dug in the ground because the ground needs to be prepared to support a building which it can't do without a foundation. The rock can be the same as the foundation when it is a flat rock so you can build on it with the right cement. It would be silly to try and put a foundation in a rock like that. But we know Peter was not a rock and no pope was a rock.

Rome speaks as if Peter couldn't have been the rock of the Church without being the head! Peter could have been the chief asset of the early Church (Acts 1-4; Luke 22:32). The keys of the kingdom just symbolise the power he had to open Heaven to the world by his arresting and spirit-inspired preaching. Peter was the main man as regards organising and bringing converts in. Jesus gave him the power to bind and loose – make rules - for he was the only one who believed that he was the Son of God at the time, the first Christian (Matthew 16). The most likely understanding of the keys is that they represented opening up the mysteries of knowledge and faith to others. The Rabbis used the same device at the time (page 5, From Rome to Christ).

Peter being the rock would not mean he was the foundation. Paul wrote, "For other foundation no one can lay, but that which has been laid, which is Christ Jesus" (1 Corinthians 3:11).

The power of the keys illustration comes from the Bible where Jesus tells Peter he will give him the keys of the kingdom of Heaven which power to open up Heaven by forgiving sins which Peter or the Pope gives to the bishops and priests. But Jesus said the Jewish leaders had these keys and they didn't absolve sins so the keys do not refer to the power to pardon that the Pope has and gives to the Church. He told them they shut the kingdom of Heaven against their followers (Matthew 23:13) so he has the image of Heaven having a door or gate in his mind and a door or gate can only be shut properly with a key. Jesus told his hearers to enter through the narrow gate of Heaven and not to look for somebody with a key (Matthew 7:13). Most of these people would stay Jews so he was telling them they had to try and enter and not look for the man with the key or power to let them into Heaven. The keys then are just what Protestants take them to mean, the power to open Heaven by preaching the gospel of divine mercy. It is more an opportunity than a power. The key of the Catholic Church is literally a key to Heaven while the key Jesus means is just a metaphor. Absolution is not the key.

It is strange that only a believer can be the rock the Church is built on in the Catholic sense and many popes were not believers. It tells us that there is something seriously wrong with the Catholic interpretation.

Greek Grammar shows that Jesus said, "I give you the keys of heaven BUT whatever you may bind on earth etc". The but shows that the keys did not signify the same thing as the binding. Then he said, "Whatever you bind on earth has been or shall have been bound in Heaven and the same with what you loose" (page 11, Roman Catholicism, What is Final Authority? Harold J. Berry). The keys to Heaven may just mean that Jesus is promising him that he will be saved for they are different from the binding power. Notice that Peter is not given any power to bind or loose like the pope claims but is being COMMANDED to bind and loose what God has already bound and loosed in Heaven. There is no hint of the idea that Peter will only bind and loose what God binds and looses which implies that to obey Peter is not necessarily to obey God but God to obey him. Not one of the early fathers ever used this passage to prove anything resembling papal authority (page 12, Roman Catholicism).

Jesus would have meant that if Peter was the rock he would only be that as long as he stayed firm so it is a conditional role he gets. If Peter got a leadership role, Jesus fired him by calling him Satan telling him to get behind him. He meant he was being rejected totally and must even go out of sight. Jesus forgave him later though. This indicates the role whatever it was was conditional.

In Luke we read that Jesus said,

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren."

Peter was not the rock then. Jesus was asking him to become the rock again. He was to be the motivator of the Church not its pope.

Ignoring the evidence about Peter, the pope claims that his office is unconditional for the Church needs him. So the papacy was not instituted by Jesus. Moreover, Peter might have been only the chief organiser of the Church meaning that if the pope is his successor, the pope like any organiser may be rebelled against and broken away from if he does not do his job. The pope sees no evidence for his infallibility and his kingship over the Church so he has stolen his position. He has stolen the place of Christ and is antichrist. Pope John Paul II claimed that the papacy never misleads the Church and yet he came out against the Bible teaching on the rightness of liberal capital punishment! To say as he did that capital punishment is evil for the person might be innocent however unlikely this seems, accuses Jesus of backing up an evil God who commanded these executions for apostasy, heresy and sexual sins. This is the man who insists that condoms must not be used even by a married man trying to avoid giving AIDS to his wife!

The Church says Peter was the rock the foundation of the Church and the Church was built on so it follows then that Peter and the pope his successor have to hold the Church together. The Roman Church has never said that the Roman Pontiff is infallible or acting without error when he excommunicates for history shows persons and groups being thrown out of the

Church by one pope and this action being apologised for by another. If the pope were really the rock he wouldn't be able to excommunicate unfairly. The concept of invalid excommunication doesn't solve any problems for the pope and the Church are separating themselves from some person or group. There is still a split, casting-out, separation and division even if the decree is invalid. The decree might be invalid but it is still effective. If you give John a vodka but not knowing it is a synthetic copy of vodka you have given John an invalid vodka but it still makes him drunk and has consequences. It's real in its effects.

The Bible indicates that Jesus appointed apostles to teach his gospel and so after his resurrection he appeared to one apostle first and that was Peter (1 Corinthians 15:4-5, Luke 24:34). Jesus gave Peter the task of confirming the brethren in the post-resurrection faith. All this suggests that Peter being the rock means only that Peter was to be the apostle who would see Jesus first and get the task of helping the Church believe. None of that makes him anything like a pope or head of the Church. In fact we have not the slightest information about this vision! For the Church all that mattered was Jesus appearing to Peter and Peter as Peter was so important that it did not matter if his account was looked after or not!

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