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THE SURE WORD by Jonnie Hutchison

ARTICLE TITLE: WAS PETER “THE ROCK”?

The Roman Catholic Church claims that the apostle Peter was the first Pope of Rome and all the “Popes” are his successors. The basis for this claim is the record found in Matthew 16:13-20 where Peter answered the Lord’s question, “Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am” with “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” The Catholic Church teaches that when Jesus answered Peter with the words, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church” that he was giving Peter primacy over the other apostles of Jesus. They claim that the “rock” upon which Jesus said He would build His church was Peter himself. However, a careful study of the scriptures proves this claim to be false.

First, Peter is not the “rock” upon which the church of Christ was built. Peter confessed the truth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. It is upon the truth of that confession that Jesus promised to build His church. Jesus is the “rock”, not Peter. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth using the example of God’s people in the Old Testament to warn the church against idolatry and sexual immorality. In this discussion the inspired writer made the statement: “and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and **that Rock was Christ**” (1 Corinthians 10:4). Peter himself identifies Jesus as the “rock.” 1 Peter 2:7-8 reads, “Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone," and A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense."

Second, Jesus is the one and only foundation of the church. “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Third, if the church was built upon Peter, it was built upon a fallible man rather than the perfect, sinless Son of God. Peter was addressed by Jesus in the words “get thee behind me Satan for thou art an offense to me” (Matthew 16:23). Peter denied the Lord (Matthew 26:34-75). Peter was rebuked by Paul when Peter erred (Galatians 2:11). Jesus was sinless (Hebrews 4:15).

That Peter was the first “Pope” does not come from the Bible but is a human religious tradition. The Bible does not use the word “Pope” in reference to Peter or to an official position in the New Testament church. The religious hierarchy of Roman Catholicism is conspicuously absent from the New Testament pattern for the church. We urge each reader to “search the scriptures” for yourself (Acts 17:11).

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