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**Truth Community Church**  
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road  
Cincinnati, OH 45255

**Website:** [truthcommunitychurch.org](http://truthcommunitychurch.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm](http://www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm)

Well, as we've said many times over the past few weeks on Tuesday evenings, the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation will be on October 31<sup>st</sup> of this year and in a gross oversimplification, we could say that the Reformation occurred when the power of Scripture was brought to bear on the Catholic Church and 500 years later we still need to do that; we still need to bring the Bible to bear on everything that we see and we need to bring the Bible to bear on the Roman Catholic Church and that's what we're going to do over the next few weeks here culminating on October 31, 2017. It is a privilege for us as a church, it is a privilege for me as a sinful unworthy man, to open God's word, to stand on the shoulders of the great Reformers like Luther and Calvin and Zwingli who have had such a profound impact on the world under the hand and Providence of God as they opened God's word.

So we want to stand in that tradition this evening and tonight we start a biblical examination of the Catholic Church. Tonight we're going to look at the pope and over the course of the next several weeks we'll look at the Bible and Catholic tradition; we'll look at the Bible and the Mass; the Bible and Mary; and conclude with the Bible and the Catholic view of salvation. And this is going to be helpful in many ways. There are many in our congregation and certainly in this area that are affected by Catholicism and come out of a Catholic background, but even if you haven't been influenced by Catholicism, this series is going to be very helpful for you in order to see the principles that we have been talking about the past two weeks on a biblical perspective of church history where we talked about different principles that guide our understanding of the unfolding of God's plan in his church; principles of divine Providence and the preeminence of Christ and other matters along that line. So we're going to take those general principles and apply them to a consideration of the Catholic Church.

The 2016 Pontifical Yearbook released by the Vatican said that there are 1.27 billion baptized Catholics in the world. That is 17.8% of the world population and those numbers behoove us to examine the claims of Catholicism and as we do that tonight and in the coming weeks, there are two extremes that we need to avoid. Some would overlook our differences with the Catholic Church completely. They would say, "We all believe in Jesus so can't we just join forces against our declining culture and politics and not get too precise about theology?" To them we say, "No. We can't." I'm mindful as I stand here when I've addressed this in years gone by, people have left and no longer attended our

church after I addressed Catholicism in one way or another, and I realize that that might happen again as I do it here this evening and in the coming weeks, to which I just say, "Oh well." We just have to stand for truth without regard to the consequences and the way that people might react against it.

You see, Rome, by which I mean the Catholic Church, makes truth claims. By the way, let me just say this at the start: I'm going to be citing a lot of Roman Catholic documents referring to different things and it's going to be hard for you to try to get all of that down if you're taking notes. If you have an interest in these things and you want the documentation, I have them all in my notes. If you'll just let me know, I'll be happy to share a copy of my notes with you and that perhaps will take some of the pressure off of the notes and trying to keep up with me as we go along.

The Roman Catholic Catechism was issued in 1994, a second edition was issued in 1997. It is the official source of their teaching and in paragraph 846 of the Catechism, it says this and I quote, "They could not be saved who knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it or to remain in it." Listen to that again. It says, "They could not be saved who knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would either refuse to enter it or to remain in it." The official doctrine of the Catholic Church is that if you know about it and you reject it, you cannot be saved. And I want to say something here because what comes up every time you deal with Catholicism is people will object and say, "Well, I know Catholics who aren't like that." Or, "You know, I know a priest that doesn't teach that way." That doesn't matter. That's utterly irrelevant because what matters is what is the official teaching of Rome and Rome has expressed in their Catechism what their teaching is and it is fair and it is right for us to examine it biblically.

So the official teaching of the Catholic Church is if you know about the Catholic Church and refuse to enter it, you cannot be saved. That is imposing. Well, you know, the Bible says in 1 John 4:1, "test the spirits to see if they are from God." When someone makes a truth claim and the Roman Catholic Church makes a lot of them, we not only have the right, we have the responsibility to test those truth claims by the teaching of Scripture. We have the right and we have the responsibility to do it and the fact that they try to preempt the discussion with intimidations and curses upon those who reject their system of religion, doesn't hinder us at all. We're not intimidated by that at all because we're under a direct command of God in the Scripture to test the spirits.

Now, on the other hand there's another extreme to avoid and we want to avoid on the other hand a contentious spirit. I'm not up here trying to pick a fight with anybody. The Bible says to give an account of our hope with gentleness and with reverence in 1 Peter 3:15. We must not only know the truth but we are to conduct ourselves graciously as we handle it and as we interact with those who do not know Christ. So in the truest sense, I'm not an enemy of any individual Catholic as I stand here tonight, I just want to share truth in a way that God might use it to open hearts to understand, to help you grow in your understanding of truth, and if God would use this series to open the mind of someone that's under the dark chains of Catholicism, then that would be the greatest act of love

that we could do for anyone, is to show them the darkness that they have been enslaved to.

Now, when I talk about the Catholic Church, I do want to just repeat myself here, I am addressing the system of religion taught by its leadership in Rome. I realize that individual Catholics may differ with their church but that doesn't change the nature of the system any more than somebody who visits Truth Community Church could presume to speak for what our doctrine is when they're not in leadership, they're not in membership or anything like that. Someone who is outside the leadership and the authority of a church does not have the capacity to define what its doctrine is and so we go to their official sources, we go to their official documents, we see what they say in their own documents, their own Catechism, and we evaluate it accordingly. So tonight we're here to bring the Bible to bear on the pope. The Bible and the pope and, first of all, we'll break this down into three points. I can't seem to do a message without three points, generally speaking, but that's alright. Point 1: we just want to consider the Catholic teaching about the pope. The Catholic teaching about the pope, and so what we're going to do is we're just going to lay out what they teach and then later in the message we'll bring Scripture to bear upon it to see whether what they say is true or not.

Now, Catholics believe that Christ appointed Peter to be the head of the church and whoever becomes the pope inherits Peter's authority so that they believe that there is an apostolic succession, authority was given to Peter and whoever sits in the so-called chair of Peter has the authority that Christ originally gave to Peter. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, as I said, is their official teaching. What does it say about the pope? Listen to this, paragraph 936 of the Catholic Catechism and I quote. Catholics teach that "The Lord made St. Peter the visible foundation of his Church. He entrusted the keys of the Church to him," that is Christ entrusted the keys of the church to Peter. "The bishop of the Church of Rome, successor to St. Peter, is head of the college of bishops, the Vicar of Christ and Pastor of the universal Church on earth." Paragraph 882 says, "The Roman Pontiff has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church." One man has supreme, universal power over the entire Church. That's their official teaching. You can look it up.

Now, this Catechism is built on prior proclamations that the Catholic Church has made. The First Vatican Council in 1870 said in chapter 2, titled, "On the Perpetuity of the Primacy of Blessed Peter and the Roman Pontiffs," says this, "Whoever succeeds to Peter in this See, does by the institution of Christ himself obtain the primacy of Peter over the whole Church." It goes on and says, "If then any should deny that the Roman Pontiff is the successor of blessed Peter in this primacy, let him be anathema," in other words, let him be accursed. The Catholic Church, my brothers and sisters in Christ, the Catholic Church pronounces damnation on anyone who denies that the pope is Peter's successor.

Chapter 3 from the First Vatican Council says this and I quote, "All the faithful of Christ must believe that the Roman Pontiff possesses the primacy over the whole world and that the Roman Pontiff is the successor of blessed Peter, head of the whole Church, and father and teacher of all Christians, and that full power was given to him in blessed Peter to

rule, feed, and govern the universal church by Jesus Christ our Lord." That's staggering. The Catholic Church asserts that the pope has primacy over the entire world, he is head of the Church, father and teacher of all Christians, and has full power to govern the church of Jesus Christ. I have to restrain my emotions just not to react verbally against that. I guess I am reacting verbally against it here tonight, am I not? But to restrain the righteous indignation that I feel at such blasphemous claims.

Now, you might ask, "Well, are they serious? I mean, people say different things, do they really mean this? Do we have to take this seriously as though it matters? Are they serious?" They are. Listen to the First Vatican Council also from chapter 3 on the primacy of the Roman Pontiff. "This is the teaching of Catholic truth from which no one can deviate without loss of faith and of salvation." That's the Catholic teaching on the pope. The Catholic Church teaches that you must completely accept their teaching about the pope or you will go to hell.

The First Vatican again, concerning the infallible teaching of the Roman Pontiff says this, "The See of Holy Peter remains ever free from all blemish of error. We teach that the Roman Pontiff when he speaks ex cathedra, that is when in discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians and defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, is possessed of infallibility." So when the pope speaks ex cathedra, when he is defining doctrine, they say that the pope is infallible. They attribute to the pope that which we rightly attribute to the Bible alone. Infallible. Incapable of error. Never wrong. Are they serious? Well, here's what they say, "But if anyone presume to contradict this, our definition, let him be anathema." They curse those who contradict their teaching on the papacy, to which I say, "Hey, bring it on. Bring it on. Do you want a battle? We'll fight this. This is worth fighting over."

Now, Catholics use Matthew 16 as a primary text to justify their view. Turn to Matthew 16, if you will with me, and we'll turn to Scripture for most of the rest of our time now. In Matthew 16, Catholics will quote verses 18 and 19 when Jesus addresses Peter and he said to Peter,

18 "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."

So this is their primary text. They say that Jesus spoke to Peter and said, "You're Peter, on this rock I will build my church." When you look at it biblically, these grandiose claims that the Catholics make about the pope stand on a very narrow foundation; it has a very narrow base. And Loraine Boettner, one of my favorite theologians frankly, a man. I always have to clarify that for those of you that don't know of him. Loraine Boettner, a man who wrote a standard work on Catholicism in decades gone by says this, "Disprove the primacy of Peter and the foundation of the papacy is destroyed. Destroy the papacy and the whole Roman hierarchy topples with it."

So that's the Catholic teaching on the pope. That's the biblical basis that they claim, not that they're really...you know, it's just a justification for the assertions they make. But here's what we want to do tonight, having stated what their claims are about the pope, is we want, first of all, we want to answer, this is our second point here tonight, we want to answer this question: was Peter the first pope? Was Peter the first pope? And we'll answer this in various ways but in short the answer to this question, was Peter the first pope, the answer to that question is nope. Nope. Peter was not the first pope and that's demonstrably clear from Scripture.

First of all, in context, Peter is not the rock. In the context of Matthew 16, Peter is not the rock. Let's look at the whole context of the passage that they base their claims on. Look at the whole context of Matthew 16:13-20. And by the way, with every false religion, with every false religion, context is always going to be the key. They will never deal fairly with the context with you. They'll isolate a single verse or two, take them out of context, but if you just read the context and consider what you are actually looking at, you'll find that those verses have been twisted beyond all recognition and that is certainly the case with the Catholic treatment of Matthew 16.

Let's read the entire passage in order to set it in our minds. Matthew 16, beginning in verse 13.

13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." 20 Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ.

Now, let's just ask a really basic question as we consider that passage of Scripture. The most simple, clear, fundamental question that an 8 year old child with the ability to read could answer. Who is the focus of this passage? Who is this passage about? And it's obvious that it is Jesus Christ who is the focus of this passage in Matthew 16, not Peter. Peter is incidental because the passage opens up with the statement, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" in verse 13. Peter gives the answer in verse 16, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," after there has been this explanation of all of the competing theories about the identity of this Christ, about the identity of who the Son of Man is. So verse 13, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" There are different speculations in verse 14, verse 15 Jesus says, "Who do you say I am?" Peter said, "You're the Christ, the

Son of the living God." This is all about who Christ is, not about who Peter is. Peter is just giving the answer. Peter is the mouthpiece for divine revelation that affirms Jesus of Nazareth of being the Christ of the living God. That's the focus of the context and after all of that clear emphasis on Christ as the Son of God, beloved, it would do violent damage to the whole context to suddenly flip it and make everything about Peter as though Peter were the point of this whole passage. Peter is not the point of this passage, Jesus Christ is.

You say, "But what was Jesus referring to when he said 'on this rock'?" Well, look at verse 18 with me again. Matthew 16:18, Jesus says, "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." Catholics say that Peter is the rock of which Jesus spoke but that's not true. That's demonstrably false. "Peter" is from the masculine Greek word "petros" and petros refers to a detached stone or a boulder. Picture something that you can pick up and move. It's that kind of rock. When Jesus says upon this rock I will build my church, he uses a different word. He uses the Greek word "petra." It's a play on words. Petros and petra, but petra is a different word that means a large body of rock. Picture a rock formation in a mountain or a rock foundation underlying the earth's soil and you get the idea. Something massive. Something immovable is the idea behind petra. So it gives you this sense, it's the difference between a movable stone, petros, versus an immovable slab, petra.

Now, notice this: sometimes the most important observations you could make are the simplest ones. Jesus used two different words. He did not say, "You are Peter and on you, Peter, I will build my church." He did not say that. He did not say, "You are petros and on this petros I will build my church." He could have said that. It would have been a whole lot more plain if he meant to isolate Peter but that's not what he said. He said, "You are petros, and upon this petra I will build my church." Beloved, basic language. Basic language. Different words mean different things. Different words mean different things. The rock is not Peter, as I will show to you conclusively soon, the rock is Peter's confession of Christ.

Go back to Matthew 16 with me, not that you turned away because I haven't directed you to any other text yet, but look in verse 16. Let me back up and just keep the context really really clear to you here. The question in verse 13 is, "Who is the Son of Man? Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" Verse 15, he repeats the question in a slightly different way. He says, "Who do you say that I am?" The issue is who is Christ. That's the whole focus of the context here and Peter answers the question saying, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Everything in the context is pointing to that confession as being crucial to the question that Jesus raised.

Now, when Peter answers it, Jesus says, "Simon Barjona, you are blessed that God has revealed this to you. God in heaven has revealed that to your mind." What has he revealed to his mind? The confession that Jesus is the Christ. All the way through, this is about the confession of who Christ is. So he says in verse 18, "I say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." The rock is not Peter, the rock is Peter's confession of Christ, the confession that, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

That is the immovable rock because, beloved, it is an eternal truth. Peter was a man chosen by Christ, true, to be an apostle, but he was a sinful man, born of flesh, destined to die just as any other man did. That is not an immovable rock upon which to build a church for 2,000 years and counting. What is an immovable rock is who Jesus Christ is. That's the immovable rock.

Beloved, hell itself, Satan and demons themselves, cannot overturn that truth. Nobody can overturn the truth that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God. Nobody can overturn the truth that he is God Incarnate, he is God in human flesh, and he is the one who builds his church. Nobody cancels that out and as you read on in Scripture, you find that apostolic preaching built itself on the exclusivity of Christ.

Let's look at three passages. I'll have you turn there just to keep your fingers involved in the action. Turn to Acts 4:12. Acts 4:12 says,

12 "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

The name of Jesus Christ being the name given by heaven by which men must be saved. It is only for those that confess Christ as Lord that find salvation. "If you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved," Romans 10:9-10 says. Acts 4 says there is no other name. It is a confession of the name. It is the name of Christ that is the rock upon which the church is built. There is no debating this. This is not open for discussion. This is not a close question.

Look at 1 Corinthians 2 when the blessed Scriptures teach us through the Apostle Paul, 1 Corinthians 2:1, Paul is speaking of his own ministry here and he says,

1 And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

He said the sum content, the summary of the content of my preaching is Jesus Christ and him crucified. Why? Because Christ is the rock. Because Christ is the confession. Because that is the means by which God builds his church, through the proclamation of the name of Jesus Christ. It has nothing to do with Peter.

And in 2 Corinthians 4, if you would turn there, Paul again said, and I'm going to start in verse 1. It's a little more context than we need but it needs to be said.

1 Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, 2 but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in

the sight of God. 3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5 For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.

The Gospel is about the glory of Christ. Paul says, "We don't preach ourselves, we preach Christ Jesus as Lord." Now the whole point of this, remember, is simply to show that Peter is not the rock upon which the church is built. The church is built upon Jesus Christ and upon him alone. So we see from the context of the passage, we see from the representative examples of apostolic preaching, it's the name of Christ. There is no other. "We determine to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. We proclaim Christ and not ourselves." Why all of this emphasis on Christ? Beloved, it's because he is the rock. It's because he is the foundation upon which the church is built. Nobody has ever been saved by Peter. Peter wasn't crucified for your sins. Peter was an apostle, the Lord used him, but he is nothing compared to Christ, just as I am nothing, you are nothing, compared to Christ.

So the idea of elevating the pope on the basis of Peter is shown to be completely ridiculous, completely unbiblical, completely untrue. It is an utter fabrication. Christ builds his church on his name, not on the authority of Peter, and in that manner, Christ gets all the glory alone as it should be.

Now, in the context we said Peter is not the rock, the context of Matthew 16. Let's expand it out a little bit further. Let's look at some more things in Scripture. By the way, just to help you with your note taking, we're on our second point. The question was: was Peter the first pope? And the answer was nope. Now we're following some subpoints here. In context, Peter is not the rock. In context of Matthew 16, Peter is not the rock. Now the second subpoint here on point 2: was Peter the first pope? Nope. He wasn't. Second subpoint: in the canon Peter is not the rock. In other words, in the totality of Scripture it is obvious that Peter is not the rock.

Let's consider the concept of the rock. What about the idea of a rock in Scripture, the rock in Scripture. Do you know what? Let's just let Scripture speak. Let's just let God's word speak to the matter. Turn to Psalms in Psalm 18. Psalm 18:31 and notice the exclusivity of the assertion of who the rock is. We'll start in verse 30.

30 As for God, His way is blameless; The word of the LORD is tried; He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him. 31 For who is God, but the LORD? And who is a rock, except our God,

It's a statement of exclusivity. God is the only rock.

In Isaiah 44:8, you don't need to turn there, but you can jot the Scripture down. Isaiah 44, actually go ahead and turn there. There are so many things to see because when it comes



to these assertions about Christ as the foundation of the church, when it comes to these assertions about who the rock is, the Scripture makes it in statements of exclusivity that preclude any others. In Isaiah 44:6 Scripture says,

6 "Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last, And there is no God besides Me.  
7 Who is like Me? Let him proclaim and declare it; Yes, let him recount it to Me in order, From the time that I established the ancient nation. And let them declare to them the things that are coming And the events that are going to take place. 8 Do not tremble and do not be afraid; Have I not long since announced it to you and declared it? And you are My witnesses. Is there any God besides Me, Or is there any other Rock? I know of none.'"

He says, "There is no other God beside Me. There is no other Rock." This really isn't difficult. You say, "Okay, we let Scripture speak in those couple of passages there, let's do this, let's have some fun with this, shall we? Let's let Peter speak to the issue of who the rock is." Turn to the writings of Peter in the New Testament in 1 Peter 2. We see what the Old Testament says, there is only one rock, it's the Lord himself. What does Peter say? 1 Peter 2:4, he says,

4 And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For this is contained in Scripture: "Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed." 7 This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "The stone which the builders rejected, this became the very corner stone."

This is all talking about Christ and the affect that Christ has on men. And in verse 8 he says,

8 and [Christ is], "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.

Peter is talking about Christ as the corner stone and he calls him in the midst of that "the rock of offense." Peter says that Christ is the rock.

Now, along with that, Peter also refers to himself in this letter in chapter 5, 1 Peter 5. Remember, this is the Peter upon whom Rome says the pope is patterned after, the pope who is the universal head of the church, all authority, can speak infallibly. They are saying the pope is like Peter. Well, what did Peter say about himself? Did Peter speak of himself in those terms? Not at all. Chapter 5, verse 1, he said,

1 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, 2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; 3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

Look beloved, Peter's own words would be enough to refute the papacy just in this little passage. Peter's words alone would be enough to refute an entire system of religion that 1.27 billion people are in bondage to, because this is the undoing of the papacy. Peter who called Christ the rock, calls himself a fellow elder. He puts himself on the level of those leaders to whom he is writing. Not only that, he forbids them, he forbids the leaders to whom he is addressing from lording it over the flock. That is not a man claiming supreme authority. And in the name of Peter, Rome constructs a house of cards that stands for everything that Peter rebuked in this passage. "I'm a fellow elder. Don't lord it over people." You won't find any strain of that in the Catholic teaching about the pope. Scripture condemns it.

James McCarthy who's written a very helpful book examining Catholicism biblically says this, he says, "Peter describes himself not as the supreme shepherd but as your fellow elder and forbids anyone from lording authority over other Christians. He identifies Christ as the Chief Shepherd, not himself." He's referring to verse 4 which I did not read. Look at verse 4 there in 1 Peter 5,

4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

"Christ is the Chief Shepherd, I'm a fellow elder. Brothers," he says, "don't lord it over the flock." So in the canon Peter is obviously not the rock that Jesus was referring to when he said, "on this rock I will build my church."

Now, let's drill down just a little bit further here in our consideration of Peter. We've said that in context Peter was not the rock, context of Matthew 16. In the canon Peter is not the rock, Old Testament, Peter's own words. Consider it this way, beloved: in character Peter was not a rock. In character Peter was not a rock.

Subsequent events after Jesus made that declaration, "upon this rock I will build my church," subsequent events show that Peter was anything but an immovable rock upon which the church could be built and interestingly enough, turn back to Matthew 16. In Matthew 16, after this passage that we've taken a look at, immediately afterwards in verse 21,

21 From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. 22 Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall

never happen to You." 23 But [Jesus] turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

It is unfathomable that anyone reading Scripture for themselves could read Matthew 16 in its context and think that Peter was the rock when just four verses later Jesus had to call him Satan because he was opposing the eternal plan of God in trying to dissuade Christ from going to the cross. Is the church built on a man that Jesus had to call Satan at that point in Peter's life? This is absurd.

Later on, we won't turn to all these references, in Matthew 26:40, Jesus rebuked Peter for sleeping in Gethsemane during his agony. Later on in Matthew 26, Peter denied Christ three times with curses. Does this sound like a rock that the church could be built on?

Turn over to Galatians. We've pointed this out in the past but it needs to be said in this context as well. Galatians 2, just after 1 and 2 Corinthians in your Bible. Paul gives the account of when he rebuked Peter for straying from Gospel principles. Verse 11, Galatians 2,

11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. 12 For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. 13 The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

Paul rebuked Peter, does that sound like the supreme pontiff, infallible, who is able to rule over all of the church? Does anything about Peter's fallible failings suggest that he could be an immovable rock that the church could eternally be built upon? Absolutely not. That is utter nonsense. Utter nonsense created by men who had motivations to try to control and manipulate people by false claims to authority. Peter himself, look at it from another direction in 2 Peter 3, said, that the Apostle Paul wrote things that were hard to understand.

Now look, when Peter was writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, his words were completely trustworthy but to think that the man Peter was the person upon whom the church was going to be built is contradicted by the context of Matthew 16, the context of Scripture, and by Peter's own character after that statement was made. Look at Peter's life. Does Peter's life look like an infallible pope? You know what the answer to that question is, don't you? Nope. Peter was not the rock.

Now, along with this, the Roman Catholics claims that Peter was the head of the church in Rome and that, therefore, that was his means to prominence and his role of authority, but beloved, despite how often Catholics make that claim, the Bible does not place Peter in Rome at all. That's our fourth subpoint under point 2. The Bible does not place Peter in Rome.

You're in Galatians 2 which is helpful, Peter's mission was to the Jews, not a Gentile center like Rome. First of all, look at Galatians 2:7 and 8. Paul makes the point that he was entrusted with the Gospel to Gentiles, Peter was to the Jews. He says in verse 7,

I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised 8 (for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles),

They were equal apostles but they had different target audiences. Peter was to the Jews. Paul was to the Gentiles. As you go through the book of Acts, the book of Acts does not describe Peter being in Rome. It talks about Paul going there, not Peter.

There is another aspect to this. You remember that Paul wrote a letter to the church at Rome, the Romans. In chapter 16 of that book that he wrote to Rome, he greeted over 25 people by name. He does not mention Peter. Beloved, that's inconceivable if Peter was the head of that church, that he would write and not greet the head honcho. It is inconceivable if Peter established the church and was presiding there that Paul would write and not address him in that way.

So what can we say about the Catholic papacy? Just by way of a somewhat...I'm not quite done yet, but I say without fear of contradiction that the Catholic papacy is a complete fabrication. It is a colossal fraud perpetrated for centuries on unsuspecting souls. And personally, I'm speaking not ex cathedra here, I'm speaking as Don, this is my opinion, but personally given all of the consequences of the papacy, all of the consequences of the assertions that they make that this is their authority of 1.27 billion people following a colossal fraud like that and that's just of the living now, forget the past 1,500 years when the papacy was really first asserted, in light of that, in light of the fact that it usurps the role of Christ, it misrepresents Peter, and the papacy is the foundation of a false religion that holds 20%, rounding up, the world's population in darkness, here's my opinion: I personally believe that the papacy is the greatest crime against humanity in the history of the human race. There are billions of people that have followed this teaching on the papacy straight into the flames of hell. That's a crime to say nothing about the earthly fraud, the abuse, the sexual abuse that the priesthood has perpetrated on people in the Catholic Church.

There's a book called "In God's Name" that details the fact that the Catholic Church, the Catholic Cardinals, actually murdered. He proves the point, the author does, David Yallop, proves the point, proves conclusively that this corrupt regime actually murdered Pope John Paul I 30 days after he had taken the papacy. The papacy is a fraud. It is a

crime and it is a grief to any Bible believing Christian to realize that all of that is being done supposedly in the name of Christ. Their condemnation at the Great White Throne Judgment will be colossal and unspeakable. Fiercesome. And God will vindicate his righteousness and he will vindicate the supremacy of Christ against those who tried to usurp it.

Well, that leads naturally into our third point: who is the head of the church? Who is the head of the church? Beloved, this is not difficult. Read your Bible. Who is the head of the church? The pope is not the head of the church, Jesus Christ is. Jesus Christ is.

You're in Galatians, turn to your right one book to Ephesians 1. Ephesians 1:22,

22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet [under the feet of Christ], and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Do you know what God did for us as true believers in Christ? He gave us a head over our church. Not Peter. Not some corrupt pope. He gave us the lovely Lord Jesus Christ as the head over our church; the one who suffered and bled for our sins; the one who rules over us in majesty and in grace and in mercy; the one who has secured our position before a holy God in perfection never to be diminished. The impeccable Lord Jesus Christ, he's the head of the church and he was a gift from God to us. The greatest gift that God has ever given to you was the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look at chapter 4, verse 15. Paul said,

15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,

And one more, you don't need to turn there in Colossians 1:18. Speaking of Christ it says,

18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

In all of those verses, beloved, those verses are present tense. Christ is now, ongoing, continually the head of the church. And beloved, listen to me, for the sake of the glory of Christ, for the sake of the good of your own soul listen to me. This is critical: Jesus Christ did not buy the church with his blood so that the pope could come and claim the glory for it and claim that he was head of the church. The pope is a usurper. He's a fraud. He's a counterfeit. He claims that which belongs to Christ alone and that's a frightening place for a man to be. The severity of judgment is unthinkable.

So beloved, in these days when the Reformation is being discussed, what have we done here tonight? We've looked at what the Catholic Church claims about the pope. We realize that they make lofty claims for him. We've looked at Scripture and seen clearly

that Scripture says that cannot possibly be true. What's the converse? Who is the true head of the church? We've seen that it is Jesus Christ and him alone. So what do we do? We do a couple of things. We give our supreme allegiance to Jesus Christ and to him alone. We stare the Catholic anathemas pronounced against us for rejecting the pope and we spit on them. We reject them without fear. For the sake of the glory of Christ we are not intimidated by those who would make such ridiculous claims. We give our supreme allegiance to Christ and, therefore, we reject out of hand anyone who sets himself up as a rival to Christ no matter how long they've been doing it. We stand on the true Rock, the true Rock of Christ, the Rock of Scripture, and we know that we are safe in him as we do.

You know, the word "Protestant" means that you protest against something and we all in this room, this is a Protestant church in the broadest sense of that term. Why are we Protestants? I'll tell you why we're Protestants: we protest against the claims of the Catholic Church. We reject them. We stand against them. With all of our might we stand against them. Why are we Protestants? We're Protestants because we have biblically examined the claims of the Catholic papacy and we have found them to be a lie. They are false. We are Protestants because we reject the authority of the pope. Christ is the head of his church, not the pope.

We are undeterred by Catholicism's empty threat of damnation. We know that our Lord Jesus Christ has purchased our salvation. He has rescued us from sin and death and hell and judgment and the wrath of God and we are safe and secure in him and so we rest in him. We trust in him completely and we trust in him alone, and while he gives us breath, we will proclaim his exclusive authority over the church to anyone who will listen and we will do it until our dying breath. Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father and in him we rest and have our salvation. Do you know him?

Let's pray.

*Fairest Lord Jesus, we love you, we revere you, we honor you, we worship you in spirit and in truth. You are the sole object of our soul's affections. You are the one in whom alone we trust for the forgiveness of our many sins against you. We honor you and we honor you alone and we worship you as part of our honor. But also, Lord Christ, it is our privilege to honor you in defending your name against those who falsely claim what belongs only to you.*

*Father, we pray, we pray for these 1.27 billion people that are under the darkness of the empty claims of the Roman Catholic Church and their papacy. Father, you opened our eyes to truth, you shone light into our darkness, Father, we ask that by the power of your Holy Spirit you would shine light into the darkness that these people are trapped in. These dear eternal souls, Father, need a work of your Holy Spirit just like we did and we ask you to bring the truth to them not only in external call, Father, but in the powerful inner call of your Spirit that would bring them to the true Christ.*

*Help us to be faithful. Father, we realize that we are nothing more than sinners saved by grace ourselves. We speak not from a pride of greater position, not from a pride of*

*greater merit, Father, we're all a bucket of demerit but, Father, we've been saved by your grace, we've been saved by the application of the blood and righteousness of Christ to our souls so that you have pardoned our sin and accept us as righteous for the sake of your Son and Father, because you have done that great work in our lives, we cannot help but speak. So bless us as we go, Father. For the glory of Christ we pray. Amen.*

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