

Was the Papacy Established by Jesus #1

Daniel 11:36; Matthew 16:13-19

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If Protestant Christians today were asked to identify the most well-known false prophet in history that has misled the most people from the pure gospel of Jesus Christ, many might select Joseph Smith (Mormonism), or Ellen G. White (Seventh Day Adventism), or Charles Taze Russel (Watchtower Society), or perhaps some televangelist (and I agree these and others like them surely would qualify as false prophets). I doubt very seriously that the Papacy would hardly make it on the radar screen of very many Protestants today. And yet this false prophet has misled (and is misleading) far more than all those other false prophets combined (1.4 billion members presently and millions upon millions more from the past). Even Reformed Ministers have sadly/grievously forgotten or denied the clear testimony of our Protestant forefathers (who summarized the teaching of Scripture) that the Papacy is THE Antichrist (not simply an antichrist among many antichrists).

Martin Luther (1483 – 1546)

The papacy is truly the kingdom of Babylon and of the very Antichrist. For who is the man of sin and the son of perdition, but he who by his teaching and his ordinances increases the sin and perdition of souls in the church; while he yet sits in the church as if he were God? All these conditions have now for many ages been fulfilled by the papal tyranny (*First Principles*, pp. 196-197).

John Calvin (1509 – 1564)

Though it be admitted that Rome was once the mother of all Churches, yet from the time when it began to be the seat of Antichrist it has ceased to be what it was before. Some persons think us too severe and censorious when we call the Roman Pontiff Antichrist. But those who are of this opinion do not consider that they bring the same charge of presumption against Paul himself, after whom we speak and whose language we adopt ... I shall briefly show that [Paul's words in II Thess. 2] are not capable of any other interpretation than that which applies them to the Papacy (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol.3, p.149).

John Knox (1505-1572)

Knox wrote that "the pope himself" is "the very antichrist, and son of perdition, of whom Paul speaks" (*The Zurich Letters*).

Matthew Poole (1624-1679)

May we not say to the pope concerning antichrist, Art thou he, etc.? I will speak boldly, either there is no antichrist, or the bishop of Rome is he (*Commentary*, on 2 Thessalonians 2:4).

Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

The antichrist here mentioned is some usurper of God's authority in the Christian Church, who claims divine honours; and to whom can this better apply than to the bishops [i.e. popes] of Rome, to whom the most blasphemous titles have been given? (*Commentary*, on 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12).

The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647—approved by Church of Scotland)

There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ: nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof; but is that Antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition, that exalts himself in the Church against Christ, and all that is called God.

The name "Protestant" comes from those who were "protesting" (they were Protesters) against the tyranny

and corruption in doctrine, worship, and church government decreed by the Pope and the Church of Rome. I dare say that in God's providence the Protestant Reformation would not have come to be if these reformers had not believed that the Papacy was THE Antichrist (prophesied in Scripture) who was misleading and deceiving the world, coming as a wolf in sheep's clothing—coming "in the place of Christ" (Antichrist) and as the Vicar of Christ (the Substitute of Christ).

Even Pope Gregory I (590-604) in his dispute with John, Patriarch of Constantinople (who claimed the title of Universal Bishop over the whole church) wrote in clear opposition to anyone claiming such a title (though subsequent popes claimed that very title for themselves).

I say it without the least hesitation, whoever calls himself the universal bishop, or desires this title, is, by his pride, the precursor of Antichrist, because he thus attempts to raise himself above the others. The error into which he falls springs from pride equal to that of Antichrist; for as that Wicked One [2 Thessalonians 2:3] wished to be regarded as exalted above other men, like a god, so likewise whoever would be called sole bishop exalteth himself above others (https://orthodoxwiki.org/Gregory_the_Dialogist).

Peter, the first of the apostles, himself a member of the holy and universal Church [note: not over the holy and universal Church], Paul, Andrew, John ... were but heads of particular communities ... and yet all were members under one Head [i.e. Christ] ... Now let your Holiness acknowledge to what extent you swell within yourself in desiring to be called by that name [Universal Bishop] by which no one presumed to be called who was truly holy (Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, XII:226).

It is a swelling of pride and tyrannical usurpation of Christ's office and authority to be called the Universal Bishop (1 Peter 2:25). And to aggravate that sin, there is not a greater lie promoted by the Papal Antichrist than that the office of the Papacy was established by Christ Himself and was given by Christ to Peter as the first Pope in ruling over the universal church upon earth, who then passed that same universal headship/authority over the whole world and to his successors, one after another to the present time (even though Peter never claimed such a title, nor is given such a title in Scripture—1 Peter 5:1-3).

The primary biblical text to which the Church of Rome appeals to support this claim that Peter was the first pope are the very words of Jesus found in Matthew 16:18: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." Is Peter personally the rock (the first Pope) upon which Christ promised to build His Church? If so, the claims of the Papacy as to its supremacy and infallibility are established. If not, the claims of the Papacy are lies, and the false system of the Papacy comes crashing down.

The questions we shall seek to answer from our text over the next few Lord's Days are: (1) Who Is the Rock upon Which the Church Is Built? (2) What Are the Gates of Hell? (3) What Are the Keys of the Kingdom?

I. Who Is the Rock upon Which the Church Is Built?

A. The Context

1. In Matthew 16:13, Jesus asks His disciples a question. The disciples collectively respond to Christ's question put to them in Matthew 16:14. The Lord then narrows the question in the next verse (Matthew 16:15). To which Peter responds on behalf of the whole group (Matthew 16:16). Jesus then explains that such a true testimony of faith concerning His eternal Sonship and His Divine work as the anointed Prophet, Priest, and King is certainly the work of God's free grace in Peter's life and not the work of mere human wisdom and knowledge (Matthew 16:17).

2. This truth is the very foundation upon which the Church of Jesus Christ is built and reformed. Without this truth there is no Church (**1 Corinthians 3:11**).

a. Only He who is the Son of God can perfectly speak to us the mind of God in all areas of faith and life. Only He who is the Son of God can perfectly offer a sacrifice that will satisfy the justice

of God. Only He who is the Son of God can perfectly govern His Church in doctrine, worship, and church government, and crush all ungodly magistrates and false religions beneath His feet.

b. The living God calls all of us to receive as a free gift this Christ that was testified to by Peter on behalf of the disciples. Have you embraced Christ as more than a mere historical figure who walked upon the earth and said a lot of good things? Have you received Christ as the eternal Son of God (Savior/Lord) who alone can save you from sin, death, and hell and who alone will build His Church by adding us as living stones to it? Jesus is building His Church as we meet today?

c. If Peter's testimony is our testimony and we receive Jesus by faith alone, then realize that this is not the result of our inherent wisdom and knowledge. This is the result of God's effectual calling in convincing us of our sin and misery, in enlightening our mind in the knowledge of Christ, and in renewing our will so that He persuades and enables us to embrace Jesus Christ offered to us in the gospel.

B. Jesus directs His words to Peter in the hearing of all the disciples (Matthew 16:18). Peter had taken the lead in making this faithful testimony on behalf of the disciples. Now the Lord speaks directly to Peter: "Thou art Peter." The Lord had previously given to Peter this name (Peter—*Petros*) as a second name, Simon being his birth name (John 1:42). Peter (*Petros*) is the Greek equivalent of the Aramaic Cephas (*Kēpha*), and means "a stone", one that can be carried (as distinguished from a stone of bedrock upon which one would build a house/building).

1. I submit to you that the Lord does not refer here to Peter (individually/personally) as the Rock upon which He will build His Church (for the Rock upon which the Church of Christ will be built is *Petra* in the feminine gender, not *Petros* in the masculine gender—these are two distinct Greek words and in two different genders). Now no one builds a house (let alone a worldwide Church) upon a stone (i.e. *Petros*) as a foundation (i.e. a stone that one can carry), but as we shall see one does build a house upon "this the Rock" (i.e. a bedrock, *Petra*, as we see in Matthew 7:24-25).

2. You see, rather than identifying Peter with the Rock upon which the Church will be built, Jesus actually distinguishes Peter (*Petros*) from the Rock (*Petra*) upon which He will build His Church. Christ does NOT say, "Thou art *Petros*, and upon this *Petros* I will build my church." No, to the contrary, Jesus declares, "Thou art *Petros*, and upon this *Petra* I will build my church" (perhaps Christ was even pointing to Himself as He spoke these words). But clearly Jesus moves from speaking to Peter in the second person to speaking of the *Petra* as a distinct from Peter.

C. Who/What is THE ROCK upon which Jesus will build His Church? The Rock (*Petra*) is Jesus (or Peter's confession concerning Jesus). It is not a valid objection that *Petra* is in the feminine gender and yet refers to Christ (for Peter is also a male). Jesus also calls Himself the "true vine" (John 15:1), and yet the Greek word for vine [*ampelos*] is in the feminine gender).

1. The Holy Spirit in Matthew 16:18 uses both a different word and a different gender, so as to remove any confusion that should arise as to the Rock upon which the Church would be built (and it wasn't upon Peter personally or individually), but rather was upon Jesus (or Peter's confession of Jesus).

2. Consider the following passages in which the Greek word *Petra* is used of God/Christ: 2 Samuel 22:2 in the Greek Septuagint; Romans 9:33; 1 Corinthians 10:4; 1 Peter 2:8 (Peter does not call himself the *Petra*, but calls Jesus *Petra*). Jesus is also called the foundation of the church upon which the Church is built—not Peter (1 Corinthians 3:11).

3. John 2:18-19. Jesus said, "Destroy THIS temple [literally, "THIS THE temple" not THAT temple of stone], and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19), meaning the temple of His own body; so likewise He says here in Matthew 16:18, "and upon THIS THE Rock (not THAT rock) I will build my Church", meaning upon Himself.

4. With that one truth established (i.e. that Christ is the Rock upon which the Church was built and would be built, and not Peter), the office of the Papacy and the Roman Catholic Church fall to the ground; for the basis of the authority claimed by Rome depends upon the alleged apostolic succession from

Peter (as head of the Visible Church upon earth) to his alleged successors (which alleged succession is also strangely missing in the words of Jesus to Peter). Without Peter as the rock upon which the Church is built, the Papal Antichrist is shown to be the arch usurper of Christ's office/authority—he is unmasked in plain view as the Antichrist of Scripture, seeking to replace Christ as the Rock upon which the Church was and shall be built.

D. Application

1. Dear ones, only Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, is a firm and secure foundation upon which the Church is built. Only His person, work, and righteousness are sufficient to save sinful frail men, women, and children from the fires of hell. The Church is His Church, and it will not only survive, but will continue to be built regardless of what hostility, persecution, and deception come against it, because our foundation is not the weakness of man, but the almighty power of Jesus Christ.

2. The same is true for our life and our family. If our life and family are built upon Jesus Christ, they are indestructible. We may be attacked, despised, reviled, tempted. We will fall at times, but we will always rise again because our foundation is absolutely secure and unshakeable. Why would we build our lives or our families upon a foundation that will give way in the storms of life when there is a firm foundation that will not give way? "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). We can lose relationships, riches, property in this life, but we cannot lose Christ.

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