
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: *Is the Pope head of the church?*

The Catholic Church holds the position that the church was built upon the apostle Peter and that Peter was the first Pope. Furthermore, they teach the Pope is the head of the church. In other words, they teach the Pope has the authority to make religious laws.

Is this true? Is the Pope the head of the Lord's church and does he have authority to make religious law?

The answer is: **No**. Listen to the following passage of scripture:

Matthew 16:16-19

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

¹⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

¹⁸ And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

¹⁹ And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

The Roman Catholic Church teaches from this passage that the church was built upon the apostle Peter and that he would be the head of the church in the sense that he would have power to bind things on earth as religious law. Also, he would have the authority to "loose" religious requirements on earth if he so chooses.

In response to this thinking, I will say three things:

First: The Lord's church is built upon the apostles and prophets of the New Testament, but not on Peter alone.

Ephesians 2:19-22

¹⁹ Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

²⁰ having been built on the foundation of **the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,**

²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,

²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Here we learn the church is not built on Peter alone, but on all the apostles with Jesus as the "*chief cornerstone*." This means the church is obligated to follow the teachings of the Lord Jesus and His apostles—Jesus is the supreme authority—the apostles are the Lord's official spokesmen.

Second: When Peter was alive he did not have authority to make or loose religious laws. When Jesus said, "Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth

will be loosed in heaven," the Lord was using the perfect tense. Literally, the Lord was saying:

Matthew 16:19

¹⁹ ... whatever you bind on earth will *have already been bound* in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth *will have already been loosed* in heaven."

In other words, the apostles were not making church laws; they were revealing church laws. Things that had already been determined in heaven were being revealed thru the apostles and prophets on the earth.

Third: There was no successor appointed to take Peter's place when he and the other apostles died.

The Roman Catholic Church says when Peter died, another man took his place and became the new head of the church on the earth.

The fact of the matter is: Peter was never the head of the church to begin with. Jesus is the head of the church (Colossians 1:18). When Peter died, no one took Peter's place. Peter wrote the following:

2 Peter 1:12-15

¹² For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth.

¹³ Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you,

¹⁴ knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.

¹⁵ Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.

In this passage, Peter is saying he is about to die. He does not say someone else would take his place as the head of the church. Instead, Peter is writing his epistles so that, after he is dead, the church can continue to function as it should by reading the inspired words which Peter is writing and leaving behind.

The apostles and prophets revealed the will of God. By the close of the first century, all of God's will had been revealed "*once and for all*" (Jude 3). It does not need to be revealed again and again as new generations arise—for the word of God which the apostles revealed and wrote down will never perish from the earth (1 Peter 1:22-25; Matthew 24:35).

In summary: Peter was never the head of the church. He was never given permission to make laws for the church. No successors were ever chosen to replace Peter.

Jesus alone is the head of the church:

Colossians 1:18

¹⁸ **[Jesus] is the head of the body, the church,** who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

Ephesians 1:22

²² [God] put all things under [Jesus] feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church.

Announcements

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