



SAVED TO SERVE
Pastor Andrew Henriques
www.prophecyagain.com
WAS PETER THE FIRST POPE?

1. In this Sabbath School Lesson, we will refute the claims by the Roman Catholic Church that Peter was the first Pope, and the church of God was built upon him. It is important to note that there are many faithful Roman Catholics who will leave their error, accept God's truth, and be a part of the eleventh-hour workers. See the following quotation.

“Stand out of the way, Brethren. Do not interpose yourselves between God and His work. If you have no burden of the message yourselves, then prepare the way for those who have the burden of the message, for there are many souls to come out of the ranks of the world, out of the churches—even the Catholic church—whose zeal will far exceed that of those who have stood in rank and file to proclaim the truth heretofore. For this reason the eleventh hour laborers will receive their penny. These will see the battle coming and will give the trumpet a certain sound. When the crisis is upon us, when the season of calamity shall come, they will come to the front, gird themselves with the whole armor of God, and exalt His law, adhere to the faith of Jesus, and maintain the cause of religious liberty which Reformers defended with toil and for which they sacrificed their lives.” {1888 378.2}

2. What is the Biblical formula to understand Bible truth?

a) Isaiah 28:9-10

b) 1 Corinthians 2:13

3. Read Matthew 16:16-18. What did Jesus say about the rock in verse 18?
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4. Let us analyze this scripture, phrase by phrase. In the Greek Lexicon of the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, the name Peter is number 4074 and it means “rock”. Peter was also called Cephas by Jesus. What does Cephas mean? John 1:42
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5. What is Jesus also called in scripture? Ephesians 2:19-20; 1 Corinthians 10:4
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6. How does Peter describe believers in Jesus? What do these believers in Jesus comprise or make up? 1 Peter 2:5
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a) What does a house represent in scripture? 1 Timothy 3:15

7. What/who does Peter say the church or the “spiritual house” is built upon? 1 Peter 2:6-7
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8. What does Paul say concerning the foundation of the church? 1 Corinthians 3:9-10
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a) What other word is synonymous to “foundation”? Luke 6:48

9. From the words of the apostles Peter and Paul, we can clearly see that Jesus is the rock/foundation of the church. To further strengthen this point, what warning does Paul give to the church? 1 Corinthians 3:21-23
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10. Roman Catholics also argue that Peter is the head of the church. What do the following scriptures teach us about the head of the church? 1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:20, 22-23; Ephesians 5:23

11. What did Peter himself say about Jesus? Acts 4:8, 10-12

12. While Jesus walked the earth, He was the visible head of the disciples and the Christian church that He was raising up. Who did He promise to leave to guide the church after His ascension to heaven? John 16:7, 13

13. Let us now discuss the assertion that Peter was the first Pope. If this were true, it would mean that Jesus preferred Peter above the other disciples. Was Peter the first disciple of Jesus? John 1:37, 40-42

"Leaving John, they went to seek Jesus. One of the two [disciples] was Andrew, the brother of Simon; the other was John the evangelist. These were Christ's first disciples." {DA 138.5}

14. What subject did the disciples often dispute among themselves? Mark 9:33-35; Matthew 20:20-21, 24

a) What did Jesus say the disciples would not do which the Gentiles did? Luke 22:14, 24-26

15. Furthermore, Catholics say that Peter was the first Pope because he was told by Jesus to "feed my sheep" (John 21:15-18). After the ascension of Jesus to heaven, how did Peter refer to himself in 1 Peter 5:1?

a) **Note:** When Jesus asked Peter if Peter loved him three times and told him to feed His sheep, He was restoring Peter to gospel ministry. Prior to this, Peter had denied Christ three times outside the palace of the high priest. In fact, Jesus told all the disciples to feed His sheep. See Matthew 9:36-38 and Matthew 10:1.

16. What relationship did Peter have which Catholic priests are forbidden to have? Matthew 8:14

17. The Pope's of Rome carry various names/titles. What does Jesus say not to do which the Catholics do? Matthew 23:9 and quotation the citation below.

THE HOLY FATHER

"The Roman Pontiff, as the successor of Peter, is the perpetual and visible principle and foundation of unity of both the bishops and of the faithful." LUMEN GENTIUM, 23

https://www.vatican.va/holy_father/index.htm

18. **Note:** Matthew 23:9 does not mean that we cannot call our earthly parent, father. It is prohibiting saying Father to a religious figure in the context of worship. See Matthew 23:7-9.

19. Additionally, people generally bow to the Pope and kiss the ring on his hand. What did Peter say to Cornelius when they met? Acts 10:25-26

20. Who else did people bow to and kiss as a form of worship in scripture? 1 Kings 19:18 _____

a) Baal was the chief god of nature. What celestial body in nature was principally worshipped? 2 Kings 23:5 (Note: From sun worship, we get modern-day Sunday worship).

21. Read Matthew 16:19. Roman Catholics claim that because Peter was given the keys of the kingdom, we must go through Him to be saved. As we saw earlier, Acts 4:12 refutes that claim by stating that only through Jesus can we be saved. What do the keys represent which Jesus gave to Peter? Luke 11:52; 2 Peter 1:3, 5

22. Was the key of knowledge given to Peter only? To whom else did Jesus give this gift? 1 Corinthians 12:8, 14; Colossians 1:18

23. Why was this key of knowledge given to the body, the church? Ephesians 4:11-13

24. Who only has the keys of hell and death, and who only can open and shut the door of salvation? Revelation 1:18; Revelation 3:7

25. Matthew 16:18 says, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Catholics believe this statement refers to the church which is supposedly built upon Peter. Let us disprove this. What did Jesus say to Peter in Matthew 16:21-23?

a) **Note:** Furthermore, Peter denied Christ three times in Matthew 26:69-75. He also was a hypocrite when he withdrew himself from the Gentiles when the Jewish brethren were around but fellowshipped with the Gentiles when the Jews were away (Galatians 2:11-14). At times, the powers of darkness were indeed prevailing against Peter!

26. The grave could not hold Jesus. This is why He has the keys of hell and death because He conquered sin and death (Revelation 1:18; Isaiah 38:10). Moreover, what did Jesus say which proves that sin had no power over Him? John 14:30

27. As we close, meditate on the following quotations to learn how we can have this same experience like Jesus.

"The prince of this world cometh," said Jesus, "and hath nothing in Me." John 14:30. There was in Him nothing that responded to Satan's sophistry. **He did not consent to sin. Not even by a thought did He yield to temptation. So it may be with us.** Christ's humanity was united with divinity; **He was fitted for the conflict by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And He came to make us partakers of the divine nature. So long as we are united to Him by faith, sin has no more dominion over us.** God reaches for the hand of faith in us to direct it to lay fast hold upon the divinity of Christ, that we may attain to perfection of character." {DA 123.3}

"And how this is accomplished, Christ has shown us. By what means did He overcome in the conflict with Satan? By the word of God. Only by the word could He resist temptation. "It is written," He said. And unto us are given "exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." 2 Peter 1:4. **Every promise in God's word is ours.** "By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" are we to live. **When assailed by temptation, look not to circumstances or to the weakness of self, but to the power of the word. All its strength is yours.** "Thy word," says the psalmist, "have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee." "By the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer." Psalm 119:11; 17:4. {DA 123.4}