

The Primacy of Peter? (An Overview)

- A. Roman Catholicism holds that the Apostle Peter was given primacy (first in order, rank, chief place) by Jesus Christ in the visible church.
1. The church is supposed to be built upon Peter, the vicar of Christ.
 2. Peter is supposed to have been the first Pope and the succession of popes flow from him in perpetuity of headship.
 3. If this is accurately supported by Scripture, it should be regarded, but is it?
- B. Peter is also known in Scripture as:
1. Simon. **LUK 22:31-34.**
 2. Simon Peter. **MAT 16:16.**
 3. Simon, son of Jona and Cephas. **JOH 1:42; 21:15.**
- C. Peter was an eminent apostle and has some remarkable honors.
1. He was pronounced as blessed by Jesus in **MAT 16:17**, but so are others. **MAT 5:3-11.**
 2. Peter was conspicuous in the pre-Pentecost church to direct it. **ACT 1:15-22.**
 3. Peter delivered the great sermon at Pentecost but he wasn't alone. **ACT 2:14, 37.**
 4. Peter played an important role at Samaria but he wasn't alone. **ACT 8:5, 14-23.**
 5. Peter was chosen to first go in unto, preach to and baptize uncircumcised Gentiles (**ACT 10**) but later caved on a fundamental of that event. **GAL 2:11-12.**
 - a. Some RC apologists claim this was "another Peter" in **GAL 2:11-12** but consider the context and language of **GAL 2:7-10.**
 - b. "Another Peter" may be from *another spirit* that produces *another gospel* of *another Jesus* who put an apostle Peter higher than the real Jesus did for the real Apostle Peter. **2CO 11:4.**
 6. Peter was a pillar of the Jerusalem church but so were others. **GAL 2:7-9.**
 7. The gospel of the circumcision was committed to Peter but he wasn't alone. **GAL 2:7-9.**
 8. If Peter was chief, he wasn't alone in that. **2CO 11:5; 12:11.**
 9. Peter's name is mentioned first in the list of the apostles. **MAT 10:2; MAR 3:16; LUK 6:14; ACT 1:13.**
 - a. King Saul's name is the first in the list of Israel's kings but he was a dud.
 - b. Reuben was the first in the list of Jacob's benedictions but Levi and Judah were more significant in history. **GEN 49.**
 - c. Not all firsts are first. **MAT 19:30.**
 - d. Paul outdid Peter (**1CO 15:10**). The N.T. has 100 chapters and 2325 verses by Paul, but only 8 chapters with 166 verses by Peter.
 10. There is no Biblical proof that Peter was the first Jew to lawfully enjoy bacon (but he was certainly a joyful man after going to Cornelius' house).
- D. **MAT 16:15-19** is a favorite text that RC teaching uses to support the primacy of Peter.
1. This idea did not take hold until the time of Calixtus, bishop of Rome (218-223 A.D.).
 2. The text is no proof-text for Petrine claims. "...this rock..." could refer to other than Peter:
 - a. It could refer to the doctrine that *Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God*, and that is a requirement of baptism which adds one to (builds) a church. **ACT 8:36-38.**
 - b. It could refer to Christ Himself since He is the chief cornerstone of the church. **EPH 2:19-22.**
 3. Even notable RC fathers did not hold that "this rock" was Peter.
 - a. "On this rock, therefore, He said, which thou hast confessed, I will build my church. For the Rock (Petra) was Christ; and on this foundation was Peter himself also built. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ

- Jesus.” (Homilies On The Gospel Of John, Augustine)
- b. “If you suppose that on this Peter alone the whole church is built by God, what would you say about John, the son of Thunder, or about any other of the apostles? Is it at all possible to say that against Peter in particular the gates of Hell shall not prevail, but that they shall prevail against the other apostles and against the elect?” (Origen, as cited in Ecumenicalism and Romanism, p. 81)
 - c. “The Rock is Christ, who granted to His apostles that they too should be called ‘rocks.’” (Jerome, Ibid., p. 99)
4. The apostles, including Peter, considered Christ the rock and the true foundation. **ACT 4:11-12; 1PE 2:4-8; ROM 9:33; 1CO 10:4; 3:11.**
 5. Two chapters later, the disciples asked Jesus, “...Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” (**MAT 18:1**). Jesus did not reply, “Peter.”
 - a. Why ask Him that if they knew from **MAT 16** that the answer was “Peter”?
 - b. Instead, Jesus spoke of a humble person, like a child. **MAT 18:2-4.**
 - c. In **MAR 10:35-44**, James and John asked Jesus to set them on His right and left hand in his glory. Jesus did not tell them, “Such a position is only for Peter” but He did tell them Christ-likeness is service, not magnification.
 6. James, not Peter, was the presiding apostle in the Jerusalem council whose sentence became the order after hearing Peter, Paul and Barnabas. **ACT 15:6-20.**
 7. Whatever was intended in **MAT 16:19** was later extended to the other apostles. **MAT 18:18-19; JOH 20:22-23.**
 - a. They loosed Gentiles from the Mosaic institution of circumcision but bound them to avoid idolatrous pollutions, blood consumption and fornication. **ACT 15:24-29.**
 - b. Peter also by example loosed himself and other Jewish believers from the assumed restriction on eating and conversing with Gentiles (although he later buckled). **GAL 2:11-14.**
 - c. Paul, another apostle, unequivocally loosed believers from dietary law such as was in the Law of Moses AND from any notion of forbidding to marry. **1TI 4:2-4.**
 - d. Unlike the RC celibate priesthood, Peter was married. **MAT 8:14; 1CO 9:5.**
- E. Peter would not allow men to bow down to him but Popes do. **ACT 10:25-26.**
- F. Peter had little regard to traditions of the fathers but he had a great regard for the Scripture. **1PE 1:18; ACT 2:16-36.**
1. The Catholic Encyclopedia’s article on Peter notes that a **tradition appeared** as early as the third century that Peter was the bishop of Rome for about 25 years.
 2. One thing that **never appeared** in Paul’s letter to the Romans was a salutation to Peter as the bishop but he greeted 27 other members by name. **ROM 16.**
- G. RC’s think **LUK 22:31-32** guaranteed Peter (and papal successors) to have infallibility.
1. Mind that Peter’s faith slipped shortly after that. **vs. 33-34.**
 - a. Christ, though, preserved him in spite of his weaknesses and he held on in spite of pending death of which Christ prophesied to him. **2PE 1:14 c/w JOH 21:18-19.**
 - b. In that last letter, Peter also honored Paul who had rebuked him. **2PE 3:15-16.**
 2. Jesus did not only pray for Peter’s faith. He prayed similarly for the other apostles concerning His words, the very basis of faith. **JOH 17:5-9 c/w ROM 10:17.**
- H. Peter considered himself a fellow-elder, not a super-elder who acts as a lord over God’s heritage. **1PE 5:1-4.**