



**WIN Program: Witnessing in Neighborhoods
Advanced Class on Catholicism**

Week Two and Three: Peter and The Pope

The First Fundamental Bible Church

Primera Iglesia Biblica Fundamental

11000 Washington Boulevard

Whittier, CA 90606

Phone: 562-695-FFBC (562-695-3322)

Fax: 562-695-3320

<http://www.ffbc.net>

CARM

1. CARM Office number: 208-466-1301
2. Office hours: M-F; 9-5 pm; Mountain Time
3. CARM, PO BOX 995, Meridian, ID 83680

<http://www.carm.org/>

Is Peter the rock on which the Church is built?

[by Matt Slick](#)

"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it," ([Matt. 16:18](#)).

The Roman Catholic Church puts a great deal of emphasis on Peter and claims that Jesus said he would build his church on him.

1. Simon Peter holds the first place in the college of the Twelve; Jesus entrusted a unique mission to him. Through a revelation from the Father, Peter had confessed: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Our Lord then declared to him: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it." Christ, the "living Stone", thus assures his Church, built on Peter, of victory over the powers of death. Because of the faith he confessed Peter will remain the unshakable rock of the Church. His mission will be to keep this faith from every lapse and to strengthen his brothers in it." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, par. 552).
2. "By the word "rock" the Saviour cannot have meant Himself, but only Peter, as is so much more apparent in Aramaic in which the same word (Kipha) is used for "Peter" and "rock". His statement then admits of but one explanation, namely, that He wishes to make Peter the head of the whole community of those who believed in Him as the true Messiah; that through this foundation (Peter) the Kingdom of Christ would be unconquerable; that the spiritual guidance of the faithful was placed in the hands of Peter, as the special representative of Christ." (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11744a.htm>).

The scripture reference to which the Roman Catholic Church attempts to substantiate its position is found in [Matt. 16:18](#). Here it is in context.

"Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He *began* asking His disciples, saying, "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 And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ And Jesus answered and 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 "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it." ¹⁹ "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." ²⁰ Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ," ([Matt. 16:13-20](#)).

There are problems with the Roman Catholic position. First of all, when we look at the Greek of [Matthew 16:18](#) we see something that is not obvious in the English. "...you are Peter (πέτρος, petros) and upon this rock (πέτρα, petra) I will build My church..." In Greek nouns have gender. It is similar to the English words actor and actress. The first is masculine and the second is feminine. Likewise, the Greek word "petros" is masculine; "petra" is feminine. Peter, the man, is appropriately referred to as Petros. But Jesus said that the rock he would build his church on

was not the masculine "petros" but the feminine "petra." Let me illustrate by using the words "actor" and "actress:" "You are the actor and with this actress I will make my movie." Do see that the gender influences how a sentence is understood? Jesus was not saying that the church will be built upon Peter, but upon something else. What, then, does petra, the feminine noun, refer to?

The feminine "petra" occurs four times in the Greek New Testament:

- [Matt. 16:18](#), "And I also say to you that you are Peter (petros), and upon this rock (petra) I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it."
- [Matt. 27:60](#), "and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock (petra); and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away."
- [1 Cor. 10:4](#), "and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock (petras) which followed them; and the rock (petra) was Christ."
- [1 Pet. 2:8](#), speaking of Jesus says that he is "A stone of stumbling and a rock (petra) of offense"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed."

We can clearly see that in the three other uses of the Greek word *petra* (nominative singular; "petras" in [1 Cor. 10:4](#) is genitive singular) we find it referred to as a large immovable mass of rock in which a tomb is carved out ([Matt. 27:60](#)) and in reference to Christ ([1 Cor. 10:4](#); [1 Pet. 2:8](#)). Note that Peter himself in the last verse referred to petra as being Jesus! If Peter uses the word as a reference to Jesus, then shouldn't we?

In addition, Greek dictionaries and lexicons give us further insight into the two Greek words under discussion:

1. Source: Liddell, H. (1996). A lexicon : Abridged from Liddell and Scott's Greek-English lexicon (636). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.
 1. Petros: "πέτρος, a stone, distinguished from πέτρα
 2. Petra: πέτρα, Ion. and Ep. πέτρι, , a rock, a ledge or shelf of rock, Od. 2. a rock, i.e. a rocky peak or ridge...Properly, πέτρα is a fixed rock, πέτρος a stone."
2. Source: Vine, W., & Bruce, F. (1981; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996). *Vine's Expository dictionary of Old and New Testament words* (2:302). Old Tappan NJ: Revell.
 1. PETRA πέτρα, (4073)) denotes a mass of rock, as distinct from *petros*, a detached stone or boulder, or a stone that might be thrown or easily moved.

A stone is movable, unstable and this is exactly what we see with Peter, who doubted when he walked on water, who denied Jesus, and who was rebuked by Paul at Antioch.

- [Matt. 14:29-30](#), "And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But seeing the wind, he became afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!"
- [Luke 22:57-58](#), "But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know Him." ⁵⁸ And a little later, another saw him and said, "You are one of them too!" But Peter said, "Man, I am not!"

- [Gal. 2:11,14](#) "But when Cephas [Peter] came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned...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?"

Jesus, who knew the heart of Peter, was not saying that Peter, the movable and unstable stone, would be the immovable rock upon which the Church would be built. Rather, it would be built upon Jesus and it was this truth that Peter had affirmed what he said to Jesus, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," ([Matt. 16:16](#)). This is consistent with scripture elsewhere where the term rock is sometimes used in reference of God, but never of a man.

- [Deut. 32:4](#), "The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; a God of faithfulness and without injustice."
- [2 Sam. 22:2-3](#), "The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; ³ My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge."
- [Psalm 18:31](#), "And who is a rock, except our God."
- [Isaiah 44:8](#), "Is there any God besides Me, or is there any other Rock? I know of none."
- [Rom. 9:33](#), "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed."

It should be obvious from the Word of God that the rock Jesus was referring to was not Peter, but himself.

The Aramaic Kepha

In contrast to this, in paragraph #2 at the beginning of this article, the Roman Catholic Church says that the rock cannot refer to Jesus, "but only Peter, as is so much more apparent in Aramaic in which the same word (Kipha) is used for 'Peter' and 'rock'." The problem is that the text is not in Aramaic, but Greek. Since we do not have the Aramaic text, it is not proper to refer to it as proof of the Roman Catholic position. We have to ask ourselves why the Roman Catholic Church would resort to using something that we don't have: the aramaic text. Is it because their argument is not supported by the Greek and so they must infer something from a text we don't possess?

Furthermore, in [John 1:42](#) it says, "He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him, and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas," (*which is translated Peter*)." The word "Peter" here is petros, not petra. It is used to elucidate the Aramaic kephas which is not a name in Aramaic.

"Except in [Jn. 1:42](#), where it is used to elucidate Aramaic kēphás, Pétros is used in the NT only as a name for Simon Peter....The translation supports the view that Kēphás is not a proper name, since one does not usually translate proper names."¹

Jesus is the rock on which the church is built

The truth is that the only foundation is Jesus. The only rock of truth is Jesus Christ and that we, as his redeemed, need to keep our eyes on him. We are to look to no one else as the foundation, the source, or the hope on which the church is built. The Church is built upon Jesus, not Peter.

"For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ," ([1 Cor. 3:11](#)).

1. Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1995, c1985). Theological dictionary of the New Testament. Translation of: Theologisches Worterbuch zum Neuen Testament. (835). Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans.

Is Peter supreme among the Apostles?

[by Matt Slick](#)

The Roman Catholic Church considers Peter to be supreme among Christ's apostles. This position is known as the Primacy of Simon Peter. It says that Peter is the Vicar of Christ upon whom the Church is built ([Matt. 16:18](#)).

1. In the Papal bull, Unam Sanctam, November 18 1302, it says "Consequently, we declare, state, define, and pronounce that it is altogether necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff."[1](#)
2. The first Vatican Council, chapter 1, "We teach and declare that, according to the gospel evidence, a primacy of jurisdiction over the whole church of God was immediately and directly promised to the blessed apostle Peter and conferred on him by Christ the lord."
3. The first Vatican Council, chapter 3 states that, "and so, supported by the clear witness of holy Scripture, and adhering to the manifest and explicit decree both of our predecessors the Roman Pontiff's and of general councils, we promulgate anew the definition of the ecumenical Council of Florence, which must be believed by all faithful Christians, namely that the apostolic see and the Roman Pontiff hold a worldwide primacy, and that the Roman Pontiff is the successor of blessed Peter, the Prince of the apostles, true Vicar of Christ, head of the whole church and father and teacher of all Christian people. To him, in blessed Peter, full power has been given by our Lord Jesus Christ to tend, rule and govern the universal Church. All this is to be found in the acts of the ecumenical councils and the sacred canons.

Is the Catholic Church's assertion about Peter true? If it is, then we should see such a supremacy in the person of Peter as revealed in the New Testament - the place where spiritual truth must be verified. Unfortunately, we find no such supremacy of Peter in the Scriptures. Let's examine what the New Testament says in reference to Peter.

[Matt. 16:18-19](#), "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it. 19 "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

The Roman Catholic Church claims that this is where Peter is conferred with authority by Jesus since Peter is the rock upon which the church is built. But, this is not the case. CARM has dealt with this issue in the article [Is Peter the rock on which the Church is built?](#) where we see that Peter is not that rock. Rather, Christ is the rock on which the church is built. Furthermore, if [Matt. 16:18](#) means that the keys of authority were given to Peter and *his* successors, why is it that Jesus gives the same authority to all the disciples in [Matthew 18:18](#)? Jesus says, "Truly I say to you (the disciples), whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." What apparently had been granted to Peter only, is now extended to all the apostles. Therefore, if Peter is to be the supreme successor of Christ who has the keys to the kingdom to be able to bind and loose, then why is this same right also granted to the other disciples? If Peter is supreme among the apostles we can't infer it from these verses.

[Gal. 2:7](#), "But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised."

We can see that Peter is the apostle to the Jews and Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles. If Peter is the pope to the entire Church, why is it that God appointed him an apostle to the Jews and not the Gentiles to which the entire Christian church includes? Remember, Jews are not Gentiles and Gentiles are not Jews. The Christian church is composed of Gentiles. Of course, there are many Jews who become Christians, but in so doing they are no longer non-Gentiles. So, if Peter was supposed to have had supremacy among the disciples and be the head of the Christian church (which is composed of Gentiles), why did God appoint him to reach out to the Jews? It would make no sense if Peter were the supreme Pontiff and the primary apostle.

[Gal. 2:11-12](#), "But when Cephas (Peter) 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."

If Peter is the first pope who had already been given the authority of Christ in [Matthew 16:18](#), then why did Paul the apostle have to rebuke him? The common response here by Roman Catholics is that the papacy speaks with authority and without error, but the men who hold the office can make many mistakes. But the problem here is that there is no way to distinguish the truth of the Roman Catholic Church's claim that the papacy is descended from an office granted to Peter alone. You see, whenever a pope makes a mistake or speaks something that isn't true, the man is blamed and is said to not have spoken with authority. But whenever something is "true," then it is by virtue of his office. So essentially there is no way possible to challenge the claim that the Roman Catholic Church has regarding the office of the papacy. It is, essentially, non-falsifiable. Non-falsifiability means that something cannot be proven to be false. The Roman Catholic Church assumes, without warrant, that Peter is the first pope, and then distances itself from heresies and mistakes of those who held the papal office that supposedly descended from him. In this way, it attempts to remain untouchable to cross examination.

[1 Pet. 5:1-2](#), "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;"

If Peter was supreme among the apostles, why does he state he is a fellow elder instead of asserting his supremacy? Did Peter not recognize his position given to him by Christ? The Roman Catholic Church certainly affirms the primacy of the papal office as a cited above. Apparently, the Roman Catholic pope has no problem proclaiming such self-affirmations. Yet, this is not what Peter does in scripture. One has to wonder why the pope in the present Roman Catholic Church does not follow the lead of Peter who they claim to follow. Nevertheless, Peter does not affirm his own supremacy. In fact, he does the contrary by saying he is a fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ.

Questions

1. Where is the evidence that Peter ruled the other apostles?
2. If Peter is supreme among the apostles, why does he never refer to himself as such?
3. If Peter is supreme among the apostles, why do none of the other apostles refer to him in such a way?
4. If Peter is supreme among the apostles, why is he listed second in the list of the pillars of the church in [Gal. 2:9](#)?
5. If Peter is supreme among the apostles, why is he rebuked by Paul in [Gal. 2:11](#) for Peter's error in doctrine?
6. If Peter is supreme among the apostles, why did Jesus not appear to him first after the resurrection? That privilege went to Mary Magdalene ([Mark 16:9-11](#)).
7. If Peter is supreme among the apostles, why did he write only two N.T. books while Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles ([Gal. 2:7](#)), wrote 13?