

31. The Epistle of 1Peter—5:1

(8/22/18)

As we come to the fifth and final chapter in Peter’s first epistle—it contains a mixture of greetings and exhortations.

I planned to finish 1Peter tonight—but then a couple of things caught my attention and so I’d like to focus on them tonight and finish this epistle next week.

1 Peter 5:1 (NKJV)

¹ The elders who are among you I exhort...

The word ‘**elders**’ is *presbuteroi* in the Greek—a word we get the English word ‘presbytery’ and ‘Presbyterian’ from.

A Presbyterian church is an *elder* run church.

The word “elder” in the N.T. is sometimes used to describe an older man, and not necessarily one who is a leader in the church.

However most of the time the word “elder” describes a man recognized in a local church as one who exercises pastoral care over the people of God.

The Presbyterian form of government differs from our form of church government—let me explain.

There are basically three forms of government that we see today in local churches.

1. The Presbyterian

This is a form of church government where the church is run by a group of elders—the pastor himself may or may not be in this group. If not, then he becomes a ‘hireling’. (Explain)

2. The Episcopalian

Episcopalian comes from the Greek word ‘episkopos’ which is translated ‘bishop’ (overseer) in 1Tim.3.1

The Episcopalian form of church government is where there is a head pastor who is ultimately in control of the church and has under him a group of elders (assistant pastors) to assist him in making decisions and shepherding the people of God.

This arrangement works very much like a marriage. (Explain)

3. The Congregational

The third form of church government is the congregational form—which was very popular in the early days of our nation’s history.

This is a form of government where the congregation is in control and votes on all decisions including the hiring and firing of its pastors.

This is the democratic form of government—a church run by the people.

“So, what’s wrong with that?” → Explain

I hold to the ‘Episcopalian’ form of church government—not that I’m an Episcopalian!

Why do I hold to this view of church government?

Every institution God has ordained functions under the principle of authority and submission.

Whether we're talking about government, the Church or marriage—and all of these institutions come down to one person making the final decision.

In the O.T. civil government had a king; and in the N.T. marriage comes down to the headship of the husband—and the Church is led by the main shepherd or 'senior pastor'.

“What about the ‘elders (plural) of the church at Ephesus?’”

The city of Ephesus was 500,000 people and the church didn't start meeting in church buildings until the fourth century.

These were house churches spread out all over the city with an elder ('senior pastor') over each of them.

During the first church council in Acts 15, we see this form of church government emerge.

In the following passage, James makes the final ruling—

Acts 15:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God...

In the Greek, this is an authoritative judgment or decree from the person in charge.

James and not Peter is presiding over this council (hold on to that)—and he (James) was the ‘senior pastor’ of the church in Jerusalem.

Now, as the senior pastor of this church, I don’t have absolute authority to do whatever I want to do—our church constitution provides checks and balances to my authority. (Explain)

So, **church government** was the first issue I wanted to address tonight from our text—

The **second** is even more important and pertains to Peter himself.

1 Peter 5:1 (NKJV)

¹ The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder...

If Jesus had really made Peter the first pope, we would have expected him to start out this chapter by saying, “*The elders who are among you I exhort—as the supreme pontiff and leader of the Church...*”

Of course, the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) claims that Jesus appointed Peter as the first pope—

Matthew 16:13-18 (NKJV)

¹³ When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" ¹⁴ So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 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.

And so the RCC believes and teaches that when Jesus said to Peter, "**I...say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church**"—He was officially appointing Peter as the first pope and would go on to build the Holy Roman Catholic Church on Peter.

Further, they claim that from Peter an unbroken succession of bishops (the bishops of Rome) became the popes and the leaders of the Christian church down through the centuries to the present day.

Evangelicals contend that Jesus would have never built His Church on a fallible man—especially one like Peter who would shortly deny Him three times.

They claim that “the rock” that Jesus was going to build His Church on was Himself.

Other evangelicals say, “*The rock that Jesus was going to build His Church upon was the declaration of Peter—that Jesus is ‘the Christ, the Son of the living God’*”.

Why is this so important?—because if the RCC is correct then it and it alone is the only true Christian church!

It alone acknowledges Peter as pope and the entire papacy as being established by the Lord Jesus.

If that’s true then the Protestant Reformation was a lie, its leaders (Luther, Calvin, Zwingli etc.) were heretics and those who follow their teachings are lost—a charge I have heard from Catholic apologists who were simply repeating RCC doctrine.

“Are you sure that’s what the RCC teaches on this?”

This is a direct quote from the RCC’s official doctrinal position on this—

“If anyone says that the blessed Apostle Peter was not constituted by Christ our Lord, prince of all the Apostles, and visible head of all the church militant, or that Peter directly and immediately received from our Lord Jesus Christ a primacy of honor only and not one of true and proper jurisdiction, let him be damned.”

This is official RCC dogma—that if anyone says that Peter was not the first pope and his successors were not popes—they are damned to hell.

Alright, that’s what the RCC teaches Jesus *meant* when He said, **“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church...”**

They claim that Jesus made Peter the first pope, the ‘rock’ or foundation that He (Jesus) built His Church upon—in fact, they read verse 18 this way, *“You Peter are a rock and upon this rock (speaking of Peter) I will build My church”*.

Non-Catholics point out several things from the Greek that they/we believe disproves this interpretation.

1. In the Greek Jesus uses two different words for ‘rock’.

“You are Peter (petros) and upon this rock (petra) I will build My church”.

The word ‘petros’ means *“a little stone”*, but the word ‘petra’ means *“a large rock”*—like a bed-rock (same Greek word is used in Matthew 7:24).

2. In the Greek ‘petra’ is feminine while ‘petros’ is masculine

And so, Protestants and Evangelicals contend that Jesus couldn’t be calling Peter the rock He was going to build His church upon because they are different Greek words and one is feminine and the other masculine—simple, end of discussion—our side wins the debate!

However Roman Catholics say, *“Not so fast!”*

They point out that most scholars believe that Jesus spoke in Aramaic and not in Greek.

In Aramaic there is no distinction between the words for *Peter* and *rock*—both words in Aramaic are *kefa*—

Therefore, in Aramaic the verse would read, “*You are Kefa and upon this kefa I will build My church*”—which they say bolsters their contention that Jesus is talking about Peter and not Himself as the foundation He would build His Church upon.

Furthermore, Catholic apologists claim that the difference in the Greek between ‘petros’ and ‘petra’ is only found in what is called Attic Greek and not in the N.T. version of Greek which is Koine Greek.

One Catholic apologist put it this way—

“The difference in meaning can only be found in Attic Greek, but the New Testament was written in Koine Greek—an entirely different dialect. In Koine Greek, both petros and petra simply meant “rock.” If Jesus had wanted to call Simon a small stone, the Greek lithos would have been used.”

And finally, they point out that, although the word ‘petra’ in Greek is feminine, the only reason Jesus didn’t use the feminine form for *Peter* is because *Peter* is a man’s name and therefore He had to use the masculine ‘petros’.

So, what about all of this?

First of all, even if Jesus did speak in Aramaic (not everyone believes that—some contend He spoke in Hebrew) it doesn’t matter because when the Holy Spirit inspired Matthew to write his gospel He inspired him (and all of the other writers of the N.T.) to write in the Greek.

He did this not just because Greek was the common language of the day but also because Greek is a very specific language.

And that’s why I don’t buy the argument that there is no distinction between the words ‘petra’ and ‘petros’—Jesus obviously used two different words to convey two separate ideas.

Secondly, the reason Jesus didn't use the Greek word *lithos* instead of *petros* if He really wanted to make a distinction between Peter being a little stone and the large rock He was going to build His church upon—was because the Lord was using a play on words.

Petros means a *little stone*—but a little stone that is chipped off a large rock!

Let me paraphrase, Peter said, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*”.

Jesus responded,

“Blessed are you Simon son of Jonah, flesh and blood did not reveal this to you but My Father in heaven... You are a little stone chipped off a large rock and upon this large rock I will build My church.”

The large rock is Jesus Himself (including Peter's declaration) but Jesus wanted to use a play on words to communicate that Peter (and all of His disciples) were *connected* to Him thru the new birth—that they were an extension of Him (His Body).

In other words, as Christians we have all come from Him—He is the Rock but we are all like little chips off of Him as His disciples.

We even have a similar saying in English concerning the relationship between a son to his father—“*he is a chip off the old block*”.

The testimony of the early church fathers—what did they believe Jesus was saying in Matthew 16:18?

In Roman Catholicism one of the basic tenets of faith is what the church calls “*The Tridentine profession of faith*”.

The Tridentine profession of faith requires all Roman Catholic clergy, since the days of Pope Pius IV (1559-65), to vow to interpret Holy Scripture only in accord with the unanimous consent of the Early Church Fathers.

Dave Hunt in his book *A Woman Rides the Beast* says with regard to this—

“How did the so-called Church Fathers (the leaders up to the time of Pope Gregory the Great, who died in 604) interpret this passage? It so happens that in this regard they are unanimously in agreement with the Protestant position. Not one of them interprets this passage as Catholics are taught to understand it today.

To be in agreement with the unanimous teaching of the Church Fathers, a Catholic would have to reject the dogma that Peter was the first pope, that he was infallible, and that he passed his authority on to successors.”

Devout Catholic historian von Dollinger reminds us of the undeniable facts:

‘Of all the Fathers who interpret [this passage in Matthew 16:18] not a single one applies [it] to the Roman bishops as Peter’s successors. How many [Church] Fathers have busied themselves with these texts, yet not one of them whose commentaries we possess (Origen, Chrysostom, Hilary, Augustine)...has dropped the faintest hint that the primacy of Rome is the consequence of the commission and promise to Peter!

Not one of them has explained the rock or foundation on which Christ would build His Church as the office given to Peter to be transmitted to his successors, but they understood by it either Christ Himself, or Peter’s confession of faith in Christ—often both together.”

If Roman Catholics are to be faithful to the teachings of their own church they can’t interpret Matthew 16:18 to mean that Peter was the rock Jesus said He would build His church upon.

Do the rest of the gospels and New Testament teach that Peter was the first pope?

1. Later in the gospel record, after this event in Matthew 16:18, we see the disciples arguing among themselves who was the greatest in the kingdom.

If Jesus had pronounced Peter the first pope they would never have argued about this—Jesus would have already settled it by pronouncing Peter the greatest!

2. During the first church council in Acts 15, Peter isn't presiding over it as he would have if he was really the pope—James was in charge.

Peter was called to give testimony, but James made the final judgment concerning the church's position on gentiles now being accepted into the church without being circumcised or becoming Jews first.

3. In Paul's letter to the church in Rome, he neglected to mention "Pope Peter" even once, especially in his final greeting to so many individuals (Rom 16).

John MacArthur

"Paul wrote Romans in the year 56 and...made no reference to Peter and had a whole bunch of greetings in chapter 16 and didn't greet Peter.

Peter was supposed to be the pope of Rome by then. When Paul was later in prison in Rome, where he wrote four letters in about 60 to 62 in that first century, he included everyone who came to him. Peter never came. If he's the Bishop of Rome, where is he? Peter was not holy, by the way, in case you wondered. Jesus said to him, "Get behind me, Satan." Peter wasn't even the head of the Jerusalem church; James was."

4. The foundation of the Church

William MacDonald

"Ephesians 2:20 teaches that the church is built on Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone. Its statement that we are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets refers not to them, but to the foundation laid in their teachings concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is spoken of as a Rock in 1 Corinthians 10:4. In this connection, Morgan gives a helpful reminder:

'Remember, He was talking to Jews. If we trace the figurative use of the word rock through Hebrew Scriptures, we find that it is never used symbolically of man, but always of God. So here at Caesarea Philippi, it is not upon Peter that the Church is built. Jesus did not trifle with figures of speech. He took up their old Hebrew illustration—rock, always the symbol of Deity—and said, "Upon God Himself—Christ, the Son of the living God—I will build my church.' Peter never spoke of himself as the foundation of the church..."

In Galatians 2:11-14 we read about how Paul rebuked Peter to his face because of hypocrisy (Explain).

And for that matter, if any apostle acted like the head of the church and therefore a pope—it was Paul (I'm not saying Paul was the pope rather than Peter).

You can count how many times in his epistles he commands the churches to obey and teach certain things.

Paul was the one who seemed to have the weight of the church on his shoulders—

2 Corinthians 11:28 (NKJV)

²⁸ besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

We don't see this kind of language in Peter's epistles.

And remember, Paul and not Peter was celibate—Peter had a wife!

We find no place in Paul's epistles where he ever calls Peter the Pope or even singles him out for special mention (except for when he had to rebuke him)—instead, he places Peter on the same level as the other apostles:

Galatians 2:6-9 (NLT)

⁶ And the leaders of the church had nothing to add to what I was preaching. (By the way, their reputation as great leaders made no difference to me, for God has no favorites.) ⁷ Instead, they saw that God had given me the responsibility of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as he had given Peter the responsibility of preaching to the Jews. ⁸ For the same God who worked through Peter as the apostle to the Jews also worked through me as the apostle to the Gentiles. ⁹ In fact, James, Peter, and John, who were known as pillars of the church, recognized the gift God had given me, and they accepted Barnabas and me as their co-workers. They encouraged us to keep preaching to the Gentiles, while they continued their work with the Jews.

How did Peter see himself—did he think he was the head of the entire Christian church?

1 Peter 5:1-4 (NKJV)

¹ The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: ² Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; ³ nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the

flock; ⁴ and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

Peter believed that he was one of many other "*fellow elders*," he exhorted others to "*shepherd the flock of God*," and he acknowledged Christ as the "*Chief Shepherd*"—a title he never took for himself as the popes of today do.

James Montgomery Boice

“How did Peter understand Jesus’ words [Matt.16:18]? I Peter 2:4–8 provides a definitive answer to that question, because there, as in his great sermon before the Jewish Sanhedrin (Acts 4:8–12), Peter does not suggest even for a moment that he is the rock on which the church is built. Rather, he insists that the foundation stone is actually Jesus Christ. Peter refers to Jesus as “the living Stone” on which those who believe are, “like living stones,” being built into a spiritual house or temple. Therefore, if others, like Peter himself, are to be called stones in any sense, it is only because they have been built on Jesus, who is the actual foundation”.

Finally, concerning the Catholic teaching that Peter began an unbroken line of popes that continues to the current pope—vicars of Christ, holy fathers—men of the highest virtue and moral character—

Pastor John MacArthur—

“There were big chunks of time when there wasn’t even a pope--fourth century, seventh century, eleventh century, thirteenth century, fourteenth century, and fifteenth century. There was no pope [for] periods of time. There’s no succession.

If you want to study the history of the papacy, it’s really a sordid mess--blood baths, mob violence, corruption, sexual perversion, buying and selling of papacy power; it’s an unbelievable horror—the claim of some unbroken papacy is absurd.

Even Cardinal Ratzinger wrote this, ‘For nearly half a century, the Church was split into two or three obediences that excommunicated one another,’ so that every Catholic lived under excommunication by one pope or another pope. And in the last analysis, no one could say with certainty which of the contenders had a right on his side.

So here are popes excommunicating everybody else so that everybody’s excommunicated—that’s the kind of chaos and conflict even admitted by them.

Dave Hunt

“...there is no record that Peter was ever Bishop of Rome, and therefore no Bishop of Rome could possibly be his successor. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons (178-200), provided a list of the first 12 Bishops of Rome. Linus was the first. Peter’s name does not appear. Eusebius of Caesarea, the Father of church history, never mentions Peter as Bishop of Rome. He simply says that Peter came to Rome “about the end of his days” and was crucified there. Paul, in writing his epistle to the Romans, greets many people by name, but not Peter. That would be a strange omission if

Peter had been living in Rome, and especially if he were its bishop!” Who the actual Bishops of Rome were cannot be known with any certainty at this late date. Even the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, published by the Catholic University of America, acknowledges this fact:

‘But it must be frankly admitted that bias or deficiencies in the sources make it impossible to determine in certain cases whether the claimants were popes or anti-popes’

The simple truth is that the Roman Catholic Church itself, with all of its archives, cannot verify an accurate and complete list of the popes. The alleged *‘unbroken line of succession back to Peter’* is therefore a mere fiction. Anyone who takes the time to seriously attempt a verification of its accuracy will conclude that the Church has fabricated an official list of popes in order to justify the papacy and its pretensions. Nor was the Bishop of Rome considered to be the pope of the universal Church until about a thousand years after Pentecost!”

Pastor John MacArthur gives us a ‘snapshot’ of the history of the papacy—

“Deprived of the support of the Empire, the papacy became a possession of the great Roman families, a ticket to local dominance for which men were prepared to rape, murder and steal.

A third of the popes elected between 872 and 1012 died in suspicious circumstances. John VIII was bludgeoned to death by his entourage. Stephen VI was strangled. Leo V was murdered by his successor Sergious III. John X was suffocated. Stephen VIII was horribly mutilated, a fate shared by the Greek antipope John XVI, who unfortunately for him didn’t die from the removal of his eyes, nose, lips, tongue and hands.

Most of these men were maneuvered into power by a succession of powerful [Roman] families. The *Theophilax, the Crescentie, the Tuscalani*. John X, one of the few popes of this period to make a stand against aristocratic domination, was deposed and murdered in the Castle San Angelo by one group, the very group that had appointed him in the first place. I mean, that’s how the history goes...

I think probably the papacy is the biggest hoax foisted upon the world in the name of Christianity. As J.C. Ryles said, “*A gigantic system of church worship, sacrament worship, Mary worship, saint worship, image worship, relic worship, priest worship, and Pope worship...a huge organized idolatry.*” That’s what it is and that’s what you have to see it as. A man wearing a gold crown, triple decked with jewels worth millions. The cardinal’s garb is worth tens of thousands of dollars—what a contrast to Acts 3:6 where Peter says, “*Silver and gold have I none.*”

The pope is surrounded by this dazzling display of arrogant over-indulgence; is a theater and nothing more to give the illusion of transcendence, the illusion of holiness, the illusion of spirituality. All of this pompous display of wealth and lavish indulgence and ridiculous buildings and robes and crowns and thrones covers a sinful system. It seduces; it’s satanic—the true church has nothing to do with it”.

I love Roman Catholics—I hate Roman Catholicism—it is a false religious system that traces its roots back to ancient Babylon. (Read Revelation 17)

I think Peter was a great man, who loved the Lord with all of his heart—a wonderful Christian, a fellow elder—but not the pope!