

WAS PETER THE FIRST POPE?

INTRODUCTION: (Information regarding Catholics belief of the Papacy)

1. What is the Papacy?

The term “papacy” refers to the office held by the Pope, the head of the Roman Catholic Church. The Pope may also be referred to as the Bishop of Rome or the supreme pontiff. There are 266 men that are designated as heads of the Catholic Church, beginning with Saint Peter.

2. What is the Pope?

The word pope comes from the Latin *papa*, meaning father. In the Catholic Church, the pope serves as the spiritual father and servant leader of the universal Church. As the Bishop of Rome, he holds the highest teaching authority, safeguarding Catholics in faith and morals under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The pope is believed to be the successor of Peter and the reason for it being in Rome is the fact that Peter was believed to have died in Rome and had a church in Rome.

3. Papal Infallibility: What it means

Catholics believe the pope is infallible when he individually defines a doctrine on faith and morals for the entire Church, as well as when he teaches at an ecumenical council with his brother bishops. The belief is that while being guided by the Holy Spirit and his brother bishops there will be protection from error when teaching on a particular doctrinal matter thereby ensuring that the Church remains faithful to Christ’s truth. When the pope speaks “Ex cathedra”, which in the Latin means from the chair or throne then there is infallibility.

A BIBLICAL RESPONSE TO THE POPE AND PETER’S ROLE:

A. Does scripture define a job description of the pope as a supreme leader of the church?

Official offices (Established Roles)

1. **Elder (Presbyters/Overseers/Bishops):** Spiritual leaders responsible for guiding, teaching, protecting doctrine, and shepherding the flock (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Timothy 3; Titus 1).
2. **Deacons (Servants/ Ministers):** Focused on service, managing church affairs, and meeting physical needs, freeing elders for prayer and the Word (Acts 6; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8-13)

3. **Gifted Roles:** Apostles (Ephesians 4:11; Acts 1), Prophets (Ephesians 4:11; Acts 2), Evangelists (Ephesians 4:11; Acts 8), and Pastor/ Teacher (Ephesians 4:11; Acts 20:28).
4. All these roles are designated for governing each church. The role of pope as a supreme authority on all church affairs globally is not recognized. Therefor biblically there is no supportive job description fitting the pope.

B. The problems associated with selecting Peter as the first pope:

1. A misunderstanding of the foundational text in Matthew 16:13-20
2. Peter was not given any special honor of authority (Luke 22:24-30; Acts 15)
3. Biblically Peter would know the danger associated with the title “father” (Matt. 23:9)

C. If Jesus placed Peter as the authority of the church, then three questions must be asked:

1. Is there any evidence in the Bible that Peter’s authority is transferable?
2. Is there anything to suggest that this power has been transferred to the Bishops of Rome?
3. Is there anything in the New Testament to suggest that Peter was infallible in his pronouncements and that this gift has also been conferred upon the Roman Bishops?

D. The dangers of the papacy that are taught:

1. In 1053 the position of the pope is established by Pope Leo IX
2. In 1870 at the first Vatican counsel papal infallibility is established
3. In 1962-1965 established that the authority of scripture and the traditions of the church were on equal importance. The traditions of the “Catechism” would be considered inspired by God himself through the Holy Spirit.

APPLICATIONS:

- A. When taking the papacy to scripture there is no placement for it and no evidence that Peter was the first pope, nor does scripture affirm him authority over the supreme church.
- B. Infallibility is only given to scripture and anytime a person aside from Christ himself is given the authority to speak infallible word it should put up a red flag that something is terribly wrong.