

**Matthew**

**Chapter 16**

By

**Don Stewart**

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## MATTHEW CHAPTER 16

This chapter marks a major turning point in the life and ministry of Jesus. After another confrontation with the religious rulers and warnings about them, Jesus goes to Caesarea Philippi where He reveals, for the first time, that He truly is the Messiah.

### THE DEMAND FOR A SIGN (16:1-4)

The religious leaders now demand to see a sign from Jesus. Remember what He has already done (chapters 8 and 9).

**Matt. 16:1** And the Pharisees and Sadducees came up, and testing him they asked him to show them a sign from heaven.

**Note on a variant reading:** Some manuscripts read *they began to ask Him* instead of *they asked Him*.

**And the Pharisees and Sadducees came up,** He is now approached by these two sects. These two groups, ordinarily opposed to each other, unite in their opposition to Jesus.

**and testing him** They were tempting Him.

**they asked him to show them a sign** Their request for a sign was nothing innocent as they made it appear.

**from heaven.** This would be another way of saying “from God.” The Jews had the concept of three heavens. The first heaven would be the atmosphere above us (Job 35:5). The second heaven refers to the stellar heavens—the sun, moon and stars (Genesis 1). The third heaven speaks of the abode of God (2 Corinthians 12).

**Matt. 16:2** And he answered and said to them, “When it is evening you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’

**Note on a variant reading:** Some manuscripts do not have “*When it is evening you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’*”

**And he answered and said to them, “When it is evening you say,** He alludes to a popular weather proverb.

**‘It will be fair weather,** The signs in the sky which are factors that help predict the weather.

**for the sky is red.’** We have a similar saying, “Red sky at night, take delight.”

**Matt. 16:3** And in the morning, ‘Today will be bad weather, for the sky is red and threatening.’ You know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times.

**Note on a variant reading:** Some manuscripts do not have this verse.

**And in the morning, ‘Today will be bad weather,** Now the signs appear for bad weather.

**for the sky is red and threatening.** Similar to our saying, “Red sky in morning, time to take warning.” **You know how to discern the appearance of the sky,** There is probably a play on words here between heaven and sky.

**but you cannot discern the signs of the times.** They can discern the signs in the physical heavens but not in the spiritual.

**Matt. 16:4** An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.” Then he left them and went away.

**Note on a Variant Reading:** After *Jonah* many manuscripts read *the prophet*.

**An evil and adulterous generation** He begins by condemning the people for their lack of belief. The idea of theirs being an evil generation is found throughout Matthew.

**seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.”** This verse is almost verbatim with 12:39. The sign will be Jesus resurrection. That will be the one spectacular sign given to that generation.

**Then he left them and went away.** An abrupt end to the conversation.

#### WARNINGS AGAINST THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS (16:5-12)

Jesus now warns His disciples against the religious leaders.

**Matt. 16:5** When his disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to bring bread.

**Note on a Variant Reading:** Some manuscripts read *the disciples* instead of *His disciples*.

**When his disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to bring bread.** They seemed to have come to a more deserted area where they would need to bring their own bread.

**Matt. 16:6** And Jesus said to them, “Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

**And Jesus said to them, “Watch out and beware** Jesus delivers a strong warning to them.

**of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”** This refers to the teaching of these two groups.

**Matt. 16:7** And they began to discuss among themselves saying, “Is it because we did not bring any bread.”

**Note on a Variant Reading:** Some manuscripts read *then* rather than *And*.

**And they began to discuss among themselves saying,** As usual, they were not sure of the meaning of Jesus’ statement.

**“Is it because we did not bring any bread.”** They were thinking of natural bread which causes them to

miss the point of Jesus' words.

**Matt. 16:8** But Jesus, aware of this, said, “You of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves that you do not have bread?”

**Note on a Variant Reading:** Many manuscripts read *you did not take* rather than *you do not have*.

**Jesus knowing this said, “Why are you discussing among yourselves, ones of little faith,** Their lack of faith is again attested to

**that you do not have bread?** They should not be distracted by the lack of physical bread, God is certainly able to take care of them..

**Matt. 16:9** Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets did you take up?”

**Do you not yet understand,** Understanding is a key concept in Matthew (see chapter 13).

**or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets did you take up?”** He now refers to the two miraculous feedings they have just witnessed.

**Matt. 16:10** or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets did you take up?

**or the seven loaves of the four thousand,** This is another confirmation that the two were separate events.

**and how many baskets did you take up?** He reminds them that He had done it twice.

**Matt. 16:11** How could you fail to understand that I was not talking to you concerning bread? But to beware from the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees!

**How could you fail to understand** Jesus again expresses His disappointment with their lack of understanding.

**that I was not talking to you concerning bread? But to beware from the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees!** He was talking about a different kind of leaven.

**Matt. 16:12** Then they understood that he had not told them to beware from the leaven of bread, but from the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

**Note on variant readings:** Instead of *the Pharisees and Sadducees* some manuscripts read *the Pharisees*, others read *the Sadducees* while still others read both after *the leaven of bread*.

**Then they understood** Finally they understand the meaning of His statement.

**that he had not told them to beware from the leaven of bread, but from the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.** It was the teaching of these groups that they were to be concerned about.

### THE TRUE IDENTITY OF JESUS CONFIRMED—HE IS THE CHRIST (16:13-20)

Jesus, for the first time, will acknowledge that He is the Messiah—in a private meeting with His disciples.

**Matt. 16:13** When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, he questioned his disciples saying, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”

**Note on a variant reading:** Some manuscripts read “*Who do people say that I the Son of Man am?*” rather than *Who do the people say that the Son of Man is?*

**When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi,** Jesus was now away from Galilean crowds at Caesarea Philippi—near the headwaters of the Jordan. This place was about twenty-five miles northeast of the Sea of Galilee. It was under the rulership of Herod Philip who renamed it Caesarea in honor of the Emperor.

The modern names for this place is Banias. The name was derived from a grotto underneath the mountain which was supposed to be the birthplace of the god Pan—the most famous fertility symbol in the ancient world. It is against this backdrop that Jesus will assert His own authority. Therefore the place He chose to ask the question about His identity was of utmost significance.

**he questioned his disciples saying,** He is now going to ask them a question.

**“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”** This is the question that had been on the minds of all the people from the beginning of His ministry. What is the pulse of the people?

**Matt. 16:14** And they said, “Some John the Baptist; and others Elijah; but still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

**And they said, “Some John the Baptist;** Like Herod Antipas they thought John had risen from the dead. Obviously there was something about Jesus that reminded them of John the Baptist.

**and others Elijah;** Others thought that He was Elijah, a prophet the Old Testament said would prepare the way for the Messiah (cf. Malachi 3:1; 4:5-6). John the Baptist, as we have noted, had many things in common with Elijah. Jesus was also mistaken for Elijah.

**but still others Jeremiah** Some thought Jeremiah would play a key role in the appearance of the Messiah. He was a prophet of judgment who had been persecuted by the leaders. There may have been something about the character of Jesus that reminded them of Jeremiah.

**or one of the prophets.”** This points to the widespread view that the greatest figures of the Old Testament would return just before the end of the age.

**Matt. 16:15** He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

**Note on a variant reading:** Instead of *He said* some manuscripts read *Jesus said*.

**He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”** Now He personalizes the question. God does the same thing to all of us!

**Matt. 16:16** Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

**Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ,** Peter answers for himself as well as for the group. The title “Christ” has only occurred in Matthew’s editorial words and not in direct speech.

**the Son Jesus is the Son of God in the sense that He is somehow intimately related to God. of the living God.”** This went beyond a nationalistic fervor for the Messiah. *Living God* is contrasted to Pan—a non-living god.

**Matt. 16:17** Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you Simon, son of Jonah, because flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

**Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you** Jesus acknowledges the confession.

**Simon, son of Jonah, because flesh and blood has not revealed this to you,** Understanding the nature of Jesus is not gained through any human agency

**but my Father who is in heaven.** Rather it comes through divine revelation.

**Matt. 16:18** And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.

**And I also say to you** Now Jesus will return the favor.

**that you are Peter, and upon this rock** The famous rock passage. This verse has rightly been described as among the most controversial in all of Scripture. As Peter made a declaration toward Jesus, now Jesus makes a declaration toward Peter (see question at the end of this chapter).

Many commentators argue that the most natural understanding of the passage is that

1. Peter is the rock upon which the church is to be built. This view, however, by no means affirms the papacy or to denies that the church, like the apostles, rests upon Jesus as the bedrock of its existence. Jesus is, after all, the builder and all the apostles do what they do through Him.
2. A popular view is that the rock is Peter’s confession of Christ, rather than Peter himself.
3. Another view sees the rock as the teachings of Christ that He had previously referred to (7:24). Whatever view is taken, this passage, along with the rest of the New Testament, gives no basis that Peter was the first Bishop of Rome to be followed by successors (see question at the end of the chapter).

There is also a play on words with rock.

**I will build my church,** The church is yet something to be built.

**and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.** This phrase appears in the Old Testament (Job 38:17; Psalm 9:13; 107:18; Isaiah 38:10). It also appears in other Jewish literature (Wisdom 16:13; 3 Maccabees 5:51; Psalms of Solomon 16:2). This phrase is also found in Greek literature. Keener writes:

The gates of the realm of the dead appear widely in ancient Near Eastern literature, but the image

here may especially evoke Isaiah 28:15-19, where the cornerstone in Zion withstands the assault of water from those in the covenant with Sheol (Keener, p. 271).

The gates of Hades are often thought of as the organized powers of evil which dwell in Hades. It has led to a number of different interpretations among scholars. Leon Morris says:

The word *gate* is normally used in the New Testament for some impressive gate, such as the gate of a city (Luke 7:12), of the temple (Acts 3:10), or of a prison (Acts 12:10); it may indicate the gate to life (7:13-14). *Hades* is the underworld, the place of the dead; it may be contrasted to heaven (11:23). That the gates will not overpower the church is a little puzzling, since we think of gates as part of the defense rather than a weapon of offense. But gates were important parts of fortifications in the first century and were usually flanked by bastions. Wooden gates would be overlain with bronze. They thus lend themselves to the imagery of strength. The gates of Hades were probably regarded as especially strong (did not they keep in all the dead?). Their expression may of course be metaphorical cf. “powers of death REB). Jesus is then saying that the gates of Hades are not strong enough to prevail against the church; the church will never die. There may also be the thought that though Hades is strong and the dead do not come back from it, it is not strong enough to contain Jesus and it is not strong enough to contain the Christian dead. Whether we can understand all the detailed imagery or not, it is clear that Jesus is giving his followers the assurance that nothing in this world or the next can overthrow the church (Morris, p. 425).

A.H. McNeile believes the phrase speaks only of death.

It is doubtful that Hades was ever thought of as the *abode* of the powers of evil, from which they emerge to injure men. In 11:23 (Luke 10:15) it symbolizes punitive destruction, in Luke 16:23 an intermediate state of punishment, and in Acts 2:27,31 it is the state of the departed generally, i.e. death; in Revelation (1:18, 6:8, 20:13 ff.) it is always coupled with death. In the O.T. the ‘gates of Hades (Sheol)’ never bears any other meaning . . . The *ecclesia* [church] is built upon the Messiahship of her Master, and death, the Gate of Hades, will not prevail against her by keeping Him imprisoned. It was a mysterious truth, which He was soon to tell them in plain language (v.21) (McNeile, p 242).

**Matt. 16:19** And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on the earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

**And I will give you** The *you* here is singular, referring to Peter

**the keys of the kingdom of heaven;** Peter will be given custody of the authority of Christ symbolized by the keys of the kingdom of heaven. He is the one who opened the door of the gospel to the Jews (Acts 2) and the Gentiles (Acts 10). (See question at the end of the chapter).

**whatever you bind on the earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth be loosed in heaven.** It is not that heaven will ratify Peter’s decisions, it is that Peter’s decisions have already been ratified in heaven. Binding and loosing speaks of authority.

**Matt. 16:20** Then he warned His disciples not to tell anyone that he himself was the Christ.

**Note on variant readings:** Some manuscripts read *rebuked* instead of *warned* Some manuscripts have *Jesus* before *the Christ*.

**Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he himself was the Christ.** Jesus demands silence, for His time had not yet come. The term Messiah, loaded with all sorts of different meanings than what Jesus meant it to be, was not to be used at this time.

### **JESUS' FIRST PREDICTION OF HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION (16:21)**

After acknowledging that He is the Messiah, Jesus now predicts His death and resurrection.

**Matt. 16:21** From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders, the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.

**Note on variant readings:** Some manuscripts have *Christ* after *Jesus*. A few manuscripts have He began rather than *Jesus began*. Some manuscripts have *of the people* after *scribes*. Instead of *on the third day* a few manuscripts read *after three days*.

**From that time** This marks a major turning point in the ministry of Jesus.

**Jesus began to show his disciples** This is one of several predictions of His passion.

**that he must go to Jerusalem,** Jesus Himself testified that it is not right for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.

**and suffer many things from the elders, the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed,** The Messiahship that Peter declared will be different from the one they expected. Now we have the first announcement of the suffering and death of the Messiah.

**and be raised up on the third day.** Again we have the emphasis on the third day.

### **PETER REBUKES JESUS (16:22)**

Peter feels that he must rebuke Jesus for talking about dying.

**Matt. 16:22** And Peter took him alongside and began to rebuke him saying, "May it never be to you, Lord! This thing will not happen to you!"

**Note on a variant reading:** A couple of manuscripts (including Vaticanus) reads *he said to Him rebuking* rather than *began to rebuke Him*.

**And Peter took him alongside** Jesus statement was totally incomprehensible to Peter.

**and began to rebuke him** Peter feels he is now in a position to rebuke the Lord!

**saying, "May it never be to you, Lord! This thing will not happen to you!"** It did not fit Peter's view as to his confession of Jesus being the Messiah.

### **JESUS REBUKES PETER (16:23)**

Jesus, in turn, rebukes Peter for his statement.

**Matt. 16:23** But he turned and said to Peter, “Go behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but the things of men.”

**Note on a variant reading:** Instead of *but the things of men* a few manuscripts read *the thing of a man*.

**But he turned and said to Peter, “Go behind me, Satan!** Jesus will show where this idea came from.

**You are a stumbling block to me;** The idea of averting the cross is an offense to the program of God.

**for you are not setting your mind on the things of God,** Peter had his mind on earthly rather than heavenly things.

**but the things of men.”** Opposing the death of Jesus is opposing the will of God.

### INSTRUCTIONS ON TRUE DISCIPLESHIP (16:24-28)

Jesus shows that a true disciple will deny his own self-interests and be more concerned with the interests of the kingdom.

**Matt. 16:24** The Jesus said to his disciples, “If any one wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and let him take up his cross and follow me.

**The Jesus said to his disciples, “If any one wishes to come after me,** Jesus is now going to speak of the cost of discipleship.

**let him deny himself,** We deny our self-centeredness.

**and let him take up his cross and follow me.** Following Jesus means denying our self-centeredness.

**Matt. 16:25** For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, and whoever wishes to lose his life for my sake will find it.

**For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, and whoever wishes to lose his life for my sake will find it.** The irony of the gospel.

**Matt. 16:26** For what benefit will it be for a man, if he gains the entire world, but forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

**Note on a variant reading:** Some manuscripts have *what is it benefiting* (present tense) rather than *what benefit will it be* (future tense).

**For what benefit will it be for a man, if he gains the entire world, but forfeits his soul?** The answer is obvious, it will benefit him nothing.

**Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?** A profound truth.

**Matt. 16:27** For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will repay to each person according to his work.

**Note on a variant reading:** Some manuscripts read *according to his works* rather than *according to his work*.

**For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will repay to each person according to his work.** Jesus must come into His Father's glory before He can judge mankind.

**Matt. 16:28** For truly I say to you, that there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

**Note on a variant reading:** Many manuscripts do not have *that*.

**For truly I say to you, that there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.** This statement has been interpreted in various ways. It refers either to

### **1. The Second Coming Of Christ**

This view understand Jesus to have been mistaken about the time of His coming. He assumed it would have been in the same generation. The mistake is attributed to Jesus' humanity. However, the evidence is clearly against this being the proper interpretation.

### **2. The Transfiguration**

A popular view is that it refers to the transfiguration, which is recorded in the next chapter. Without the chapter break this is the obvious answer to the question.

### **3. The Death Of Jesus**

The power of sin was broken at the death of Christ on Calvary's cross and some commentators see this as a fulfillment of Jesus' coming.

### **4. The Resurrection Of Jesus**

The power of death was broken at Christ's resurrection. Some see His statement here referring to that event.

### **5. The Day Of Pentecost**

When the Holy Spirit came down on the Day of Pentecost it inaugurated a new age. This is a possible explanation of Jesus' statement here.

### **6. The Destruction Of Jerusalem**

A view that many people accept is that this refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

### **7. No One Specific Event**

Some commentators see this as not referring to any one specific event in the life and ministry of Jesus.

## SUMMARY TO CHAPTER 16

This chapter marks another major transition in the gospel of Matthew. Jesus has further confrontations with the religious leaders—this time over the demand for a sign. Jesus then warns His disciples about doctrine of the religious leaders.

At Caesarea Phillipi, a turning point occurs. Jesus asks for a confessional statement from His disciples. First, who does the crowd say that He is? After they give a variety of answers Jesus then personalizes the question. Whom do they say that He is? Peter, speaking for the groups confesses that He is the Messiah, the Son of God.

Jesus acknowledges Peter's confession and promises Him the keys to the kingdom of heaven. After this memorable announcement Jesus then stuns His followers by predicting His death. Peter rebukes Jesus for saying this and Jesus in turns rebukes Peter. Jesus then speaks of denying oneself and following Him.

The chapter ends with Jesus' statement about certain of His disciples not seeing death until they see His kingdom.

## QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTER 16

### WAS PETER MADE THE SUPREME AUTHORITY OVER THE OTHER APOSTLES?

Did Peter have a position of superiority over the other apostles? If he did, was this authority to be passed down to his successors?

Peter is mentioned first in every list of Jesus' apostles and is marked for special attention in Matthew's list. This has led many to believe that Peter had special supremacy as an apostle of the Lord. The following points should be made with respect to Peter's authority.

1. Peter's preeminence over the other apostles was nowhere stated by Christ. The fact that Jesus changed his name does not mean Peter was given a special position for Jesus changed the names of other of His apostles (e.g. Levi to Matthew, James and John "sons of thunder").
2. Nowhere does Peter himself claim preeminence over the other apostles. In the two letters that he wrote we find nothing remotely resembling a claim to his special authority over other believers.
3. Peter is not considered preeminent by the remaining members of the twelve. Nothing in their spoken words or their writings give any hint that he was authoritative over them.

Any claims for Peter's papal authority makes no sense in light of the fact that the New Testament does not recognize Peter as any type of ecclesiastical leader. If his authoritative position were part of the essential makeup of the church it is incomprehensible that it is never mentioned in the New Testament. There is not even a passing reference to Peter's status above the others. Certainly there were opportunities to mention it (e.g. the council of Jerusalem [Acts 15]). In all of Paul's discussions about the basic nature of the church, Peter's position *never once* arises as an issue. There is no rational way of explaining this if he were the head of the church. Therefore, the silence of the New Testament speaks loudly against any papal authority that should be attributed to him.

In fact we do not even have the slightest hint that Peter had some special authority in the church. The

church is portrayed as a flock of sheep with Jesus as the chief shepherd, a kingdom with Jesus as the king, a bride with Jesus as her husband, and a body whose head is Jesus (John 10:16; Revelation 19:16; Revelation 21:2; Ephesians 1:22,23).

**4.** Furthermore there is no evidence that the Papal office was one of the offices of the church. In the various lists of offices in the church (1 Corinthians 12:28-30; Ephesians 4:11-16) the Papacy is never even mentioned! If the papal office were apostolic we would expect to see it mentioned at least once, but it never is.

**5.** Jesus clearly stated that the apostles had the same level of authority—none was considered above the other (Matthew 18:18; 19:27, 28; 20:20-27; 23:8-11; Luke 22:24-27; John 20:21-23; Acts 1:8). Jesus had the chance to put in place a structure among His apostles, yet He did not.

**6.** Peter himself declared that his position was no more than an equal to the other apostles (1 Peter 5:1,4). He made it clear that the church was not established upon him (1 Peter 2:4-9).

**7.** The attitude of Paul toward Peter is unexplainable in light of the papal claims. When Paul rebuked Peter face to face (Galatians 2:11-14) he certainly did not assume that Peter was some sort of supreme authority in the church. Paul called Peter's behavior hypocrisy because he was doctrinally in error for what he did.

**8.** Furthermore, if one is considering the evidence of New Testament lists, Paul listed Peter behind James (Galatians 2:9). This certainly shows that Paul did not consider Peter above James.

**9.** In addition when Peter is mentioned behind James and ahead of John they are all called pillars of the church. This shows that Paul assumed the all three of them were among the leaders of the church not just Peter.

**10.** Paul himself made it clear that his apostolic mission was not dependent upon the authority of Peter or any other apostle. His authority was directly given by God (Galatians 1:11,12 16b, 17).

**11.** When Samaria had received the word of God the church sent out Peter and John to go down and lay hands upon the people. Peter was the one sent, not the one doing the sending. The authority of the one sending is always greater than the one sent.

**12.** At the council of Jerusalem, after Peter, among others, had spoken, James said, "Brothers, listen to me . . . my judgment is." If Peter were the supreme authority in the church these words would be senseless. Yet the decision of the assembled leaders was to abide by James' suggested solution to the problem (Acts 15:7-11). Peter, being the fourth from the last to speak, was not by any stretch of the imagination, the leader at this council.

**13.** The fact that James seems to have been in a position of early leadership is not only inferred in Acts 15, but also in Acts 12. When Peter was supernaturally freed from prison he told the ones praying for him to tell James and the brothers what had happened (Acts 12:17). Again, James is singled out for a position of authority.

**13.** Even if it were possible (which it is not!) to establish beyond a reasonable doubt that Peter was the preeminent apostle and the spiritual head of the church, there would still be the issue of a successor. Several assumptions would have to be made.

- a. Peter was the supreme authority among the apostles and had some sort of infallibility.
- b. Peter was the first bishop of Rome.
- c. The unique privileges that Peter possessed were passed down at the time of his death. He would have had to hand his authority over to some other person who would hold the office of the spiritual authority of the church. This would have happened while the apostle John, the disciple who Jesus loved, was still alive!
- d. It must also be assumed that Peter, or any apostle, had successors.
- e. The bishop of Rome is the direct successor of Peter.
- f. Any successor of the bishop of Rome has the same infallibility that Peter supposedly possessed.

**14.** All of these above points would have to be assumed to be true for the claims of papal authority and infallibility to be valid. Yet none of them can be proven and several of them are disproved from the testimony of Scripture. For example, the Scriptures themselves speak against the apostles having any successors for an apostle must have seen the risen Lord (Acts 1:21,22; 1 Corinthians 9:1). Also, there is no irrefutable evidence that Peter was ever in Rome. In his letter to the Romans Paul greets 27 people by name (Romans 16:1-23) but Peter is not among them. Even if Peter had been in Rome, it still would not prove any of the claims the Catholic church makes.

**15.** Catholic sources themselves admit there is *no* New Testament evidence for Peter's primacy and jurisdiction over the other disciples. Consider the following admission of Richard P. McBrien, former chairman of the department of theology at Notre Dame in Indiana:

Peter was a figure of central importance among the disciples of our Lord. He was the first called, served as a spokesman for the other apostles and may have been the first to whom the Lord appeared after the resurrection . . . Nevertheless, the terms *primacy* and *jurisdiction* (italics his) are probably best avoided when describing Peter's role in the New Testament. They are postbiblical, indeed canonical terms. . . .

Whether he actually served the church of Rome as bishop cannot be known through the evidence at hand. And from the New Testament *alone*, (italics his) we have no basis for positing a line of succession from Peter through subsequent bishops . . .

As for the conferral of the power of the keys, this suggests an imposing measure of authority, given the symbolism of the keys. And yet in the Acts of the Apostles Peter is presented as consulting with the Apostles and even being sent by them (8:14). He and John act almost as a team (3:1-11; 4:1-22; 8:14) (Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism*, San Francisco, Harper Collins, 1994, pp. 753, 754) .

**16.** Peter calls himself a fellow apostle of those to whom he is writing (1 Peter 5:1). He takes no position of authority over them. To the contrary he puts himself in the same category as the other apostles.

**17.** Jesus promised that when He returned to heaven there would be One left behind to teach and guide the church—the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 16:13). This removes any idea that Peter was going to be the teaching authority of the church.

**18.** Peter died before the all of the apostles. That means that his successor—Linus, according to the Roman Catholic church, would have exercised authority over all the remaining living apostles, including

John. Are we to believe that this man, who is only incidentally mentioned once in Scripture, would wield authority over someone like John, one of the original twelve who wrote five books of the New Testament?

Therefore we conclude that there is no Scriptural evidence whatsoever that Peter was the Bishop of Rome, the spiritual leader of the church, and that upon his death he would have successors who would continue in his authority. Peter never recognized himself as the pope, none of the apostles never recognized him as the pope, there is not even one mention of the Papacy in all of Scripture. The Papacy was not established until several centuries after the time of Christ.

### **QUESTION: WHAT ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR AN APOSTLE?**

The New Testament lists the following qualifications for an apostle.

- a. The person must be a male (Acts 1:21)
- b. He must have seen the risen Lord (Acts 1:21,22; 1 Corinthians 9:1).
- c. He must have been personally called into the ministry by Jesus Himself.
- d. He must have been an eyewitness to the entire ministry of Jesus—from His baptism to ascension. By definition this limits it to people who were living in the first part of the first century when Jesus ministered. Based upon this, there is no one living today who could call themselves an apostle. The unique apostolic ministry therefore is unrepeatable. Consequently they could not have successors to their eyewitness experience.

The apostolic ministry was foundational to the church (Ephesians 2:20). Their office did not continue to further generations.

### **QUESTION: WAS PETER THE ROCK ON WHOM CHRIST BUILT HIS CHURCH?**

This is probably the most controversial passage in Matthew's gospel, if not in the entire New Testament. It concerns the role of Peter in the church. Was he the one on whom the church was built? What did Jesus mean when He said, "upon this rock I shall build My church." The views are as follows:

**Option 1. Peter The Rock.** Many people consider that Peter himself is the rock upon which Christ will build His church. The following arguments have been put forward for this view:

- 1. Aramaic would have no separate word for rock.
- 2. Word has to be in masculine gender because it is a proper name
- 3. Context fits it referring to Peter.

**Response:** With respect to the original Aramaic word kepha two responses can be made. First, let us remember that Matthew is written in Greek and not in Aramaic. There is no guarantee that Jesus spoke Aramaic on this occasion, to the contrary many scholars are becoming persuaded that Greek was the main language Jesus used. Whatever the case may be, the section before us is written in Greek.

In addition, it is not certain that the Aramaic word would have been. A.H. McNeile makes an interesting observation:

It does not follow from the word-play that ‘this rock’ must be Peter. It *can*, indeed be he; cf. the similar metaphors applied to the apostles in Gal 2:9, Eph 2:20, Rev 21:14 . . . In this case the words are addressed to Peter as an individual, not as bishop of Rome. But if he were the ‘rock’ . . . it would be more natural if the Lord were speaking of him in the third person to the other disciples (McNeile, p. 241).

**Option 2. Peter’s Confession** Peter confessed Jesus to be the Messiah. Many believe that it was this confession of Peter that served as the foundation for the church.

**Option 3. The Rock of Jesus’ Teachings.** Some feel that this refers to Jesus’ teachings. When Jesus ended the Sermon on the Mount the Bible says He compared His teachings to a rock—a sure foundation.

Whichever option one chooses for this famous statement of Jesus, it does not follow that Peter was to be the first leader of the Christian church or that his authority would somehow be passed on.