

Why Are We 'Protestants'? #1 (We Reject the Papacy) sermonaudio.com

Why Are We 'Protestants'?

By Don Green

Preached on: Thursday, March 14, 2013

Truth Community Fellowship

Creation Museum

2800 Bullittsburg Church Road

Petersburg, KY 41080

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

I'm very excited to be here and to share with you the timely topic of consideration here. We're here tonight to begin to answer the question, why are we Protestants? Why is it that we are not Roman Catholics? This is part of a broader series that we've titled "Ready to Defend." What we're addressing on these midweek meetings is we're answering the question, why do we believe what we believe? It's not just what we believe, but why we believe it. You know, most of us are not Roman Catholics in the audience, and the question is, why not? And so, tonight we're going to start an examination of that question. Why are we Protestants? And the 2009 Pontifical Yearbook released by the Vatican said at that time that there were 1.2 billion, with a "b," Catholics in the world. And as all of you know, they welcomed a new pope yesterday, Pope Francis. And so, there's a lot of media attention being directed to the Catholic Church these days. And so, it's timely for us to undertake an examination of this question. This is not going to be like Sunday preaching. I've got a lot of information that I want to share with you here tonight. Part of my commitment was for you to hear Catholic teaching in their own words, so that you would know exactly what it is that we're dealing with. It's very easy when you're trying to refute another religious system to mischaracterize it, to attack straw men which are really not what they would agree that they believe. Well, we're going to have a lot of direct quotations from their own official documents to help us see that there is a vast gulf between what Catholics teach and what we believe.

Now, as we approach this topic of dealing with Catholicism, I want to just kind of talk about the sense in which, the demeanor in which, we would do it. I think there are two extremes for us to avoid. On the one extreme, on the one hand, some would have us, and probably more than any, would have us overlook our differences with the Catholic Church and simply say, "We all believe in Jesus, so can't we get along? Can't we join forces in addressing the cultural and political decline in our world and kind of join hands together to be able to achieve a moral agenda?" To those people we say, "No, we can't." We can't join together with people that hold to a different Gospel. That's not feasible. The Church of Rome makes truth claims. They assert things to be true and, in fact, they say in paragraph 846 of the 1994 catechism of the Catholic Church, I'm going to document all of this for you. The official catechism of the Roman Catholic Church says, "They could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse to either enter it or to remain in it." And so, what they're

saying there is that if you know about the Catholic Church, and you know about our truth claims, and you stay outside of the Catholic Church, you cannot be saved. They're saying that you're going to hell if you're not in the Catholic Church.

Now, very important point. Individual Catholics and sometimes even professing Roman Catholic theologians will try to soften the sharp edges of those kinds of Catholic demands and the official Catholic teaching, but they don't have the prerogative to do that. This is their official teaching. The official teaching of the Catholic Church is that you can't be saved outside of the Catholic Church, if you know about it. They make exceptions for people who've never heard of the Catholic Church, but that doesn't apply to us. Their official doctrine is that if you know about the Catholic Church and reject it, you cannot be saved. That's imposing. That's a pretty dramatic claim to make. We would certainly not say that about Truth Community Church. We wouldn't say that there is only salvation within the walls of Truth Community Fellowship. We don't think that for a minute. We realize that there are many legitimate churches where the Gospel is taught around the world, and people can be saved under those churches that have never heard of us. On the contrary, the Catholic Church says, "If you know about the Catholic Church and stay outside it, you cannot be saved." Well that's an absolute truth claim that they make. What I want to remind you of is the passage that we looked at just a few weeks ago on Sunday morning. In the book of 1 John chapter 4 verse 1 it says, "Test the spirits to see whether they're from God." We have the right and the prerogative and the responsibility to evaluate whether their truth claim is true or not. We don't have to be intimidated into silence by it. We can't just ignore it. They make a truth claim that they say in part is based on Scripture. And so, we're going to say, "Okay, we hear what you're saying. Let's look at the Word of God and see if that's true." And so, we can't just ignore these differences as if they were inconsequential.

On the other hand, there's another extreme for us to avoid as we approach this topic. We need to avoid an argumentative spirit. The Bible says that we're to give an account of our hope with gentleness and with reverence, and we must not only know the truth, but conduct ourselves graciously with those who do not know Christ. And so, we're not here to argue and get angry about anything. We just want to say, "What does the Catholic Church teach, and what does the Bible say about it?" and then come to conclusions. We're just trying to be obedient to the Word of God as we consider these things in the manner in which we're doing it. Now, let me just hasten to say one final thing in a preliminary way. When I talk about the Catholic Church, I want you to distinguish that from individual Catholics that you know, because we're addressing Catholicism as a system of religion. This is not directed at any one individual. This is directed at the system of religion that they teach, that the Catholic Church holds to, that's driven by the authority found in the papal chair of Rome. That's what we're addressing. This isn't targeted at an individual. It is targeted to a system of religion. Now, any questions about that so far? We're just kind of laying groundwork right now.

Several weeks ago, for those of you that weren't able to be there, I did a two-part series on the authority of the apostles. And one of the things that I said about the authority of the apostles is, in the context of those messages, is that whenever you are dealing with

another system of religion, or other people making truth claims of any kind, make a beeline for the issue of authority. That's where you always have to start, in my judgment, when you're wanting to evaluate truth claims that other people are making. What is their basis of authority? As we consider Catholicism we're going to go and address the issue of the pope and their view of Scripture and tradition, which will probably come next week. But we want to focus on their view of the authority of the pope here this evening. So, if you're going to take notes, here's your first point. We're going to answer the question, what is the Catholic teaching about the pope? What do Catholics teach about the pope? And in short answer to that question, Catholics believe that Christ appointed Peter to be the head of the church. And whoever becomes the pope, that is, the Bishop of Rome, inherits Peter's authority.

Now, there's a whole lot wrapped up in there, and I'm going to try to unpack that for you, but what I'm trying to do in this, in my parts of these series, is to ask questions and give you very concise answers to them and then expound on them and explain them. What do Catholics teach about the pope? They believe that Peter was the first pope, and that whoever is pope now is in the succession of Peter and, therefore, inherits all of the authority that they say that Christ gave to Peter during that earthly time, some 2,000 years ago. Okay, so it's all tied up with their view of Peter. That's really essential.

Now, I referred earlier to the catechism of the Catholic Church that was published by the authority of Pope John Paul II in the French language in 1992. The English translation was released in 1994. Even though I am not Catholic, I'm grateful for this catechism, because it clarifies the issues. It gives you an authoritative place to go with the imprimatur of the Pope on it saying, "This is what we teach." You know, there can be no disagreement when you say, "This is what the Catholic Church teaches. This comes from the mouth of the two popes ago himself." What does the catechism of the Catholic Church say about the pope? Paragraph 936, and I quote, says, "The Lord made Saint Peter the visible foundation of His church. He entrusted the keys of the church to Him. The bishop of the Church of Rome, successor to St. Peter, is head of the College of Bishops, the Vicar, or the representative of Christ, and pastor of the universal church on earth." They go further and say in paragraph 882, listen to this, "The Roman pontiff has full supreme and universal power over the whole church." They say that the pope has authority over every Christian on the face of the earth. Amazing! That's quite a truth claim to make.

Now, back in 1870, there was a meeting together of the Catholic Cardinals called the first Vatican Council. And in their document in chapter 2 they had a section, it was all dealing with the authority and really the infallibility of the pope. And in chapter 2, which is titled "On the Perpetuity of the Primacy of Blessed Peter and the Roman Pontiffs," now, that's a little ostentatious, but that's what it says. The first Vatican Council in 1870 said, "Whoever succeeds to Peter in this See," in this position, "does by the institution of Christ Himself obtain the primacy of Peter over the whole church." It goes on to say, listen to this, "If then any should deny that the Roman pontiff is the successor of blessed Peter in this primacy, let him be anathema." Let him be accursed. Let him go to hell, if you deny this teaching. Don't miss that. The Catholic Church pronounces damnation on

anyone who denies that the pope is Peter's successor. I didn't make this up. These are their own words, and it goes further. Chapter 3 of the first Vatican Council says, "All the faithful of Christ must believe that the Roman pontiff possesses the primacy over the whole world." Not just the church, over the whole world! "And that the Roman pontiff is the successor of blessed Peter, head of the whole church, and father and teacher of all Christians, and that full power was given to him and blessed Peter to rule, feed, and govern the universal church by Jesus Christ our Lord."

So, what's that saying? The Catholic Church asserts that the pope has primacy, has authority, has prerogative over the entire world, is head over the church. He's the father and teacher of all Christians and has full power to govern the church of Jesus Christ. If you're a Christian, the pope is your father. The pope is your teacher. Now, that should, if you're a true Christian, that should make you uncomfortable. You know, especially in these days. I'm going to ask you a question here. Especially in these days, you might ask the question, "Well, are they serious? Do they really mean that, or is this just posturing on their part?" I realize, and part of the reason that I was careful to distinguish at the start the fact that we're addressing the Roman system, not what necessarily individual Catholics might say, is that you have to go to what their authority is. You have to see what they say about it. And this is the official position. A Catholic who is under the authority of the pope does not have the prerogative or the authority to contradict it and say that it means something other than what their own official documents say. And so, the question is, are they serious? "I mean, are you serious that this man from Argentina, two days ago was whoever he was, a cardinal in the Catholic Church of Argentina, and now, today, after a vote of the Cardinals, he's the head of the church, the father of all Christians and has full power to govern the church of Jesus Christ. Mr. Catholic, do you seriously mean that?" They do.

Listen to the first Vatican Council, also from chapter 3, on the primacy of the Roman pontiff. "This is the teaching of Catholic truth from which no one can deviate without loss of faith and of salvation." If you don't believe what we're saying to you in this first Vatican Council, you cannot be saved. The Catholic Church teaches that you must completely accept their teaching about the pope, or you will go to hell. Once again, the first Vatican Council speaking about, now, the infallibility of the pope says, "This See of holy Peter remains ever free from all blemish and error." "We teach that the Roman pontiff, when he speaks ex cathedra," again I'm quoting here, "that is, when in the discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians, and the pope defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the universal church, he is possessed of infallibility." Infallible, incapable of being wrong. Never wrong. Are they serious? "But if anyone presume to contradict this, our definition, let him be anathema. Curses upon him."

So, let's summarize here, and believe it or not, when I originally planned this series on Catholicism, I planned to do it in two weeks covering four things, and I was going to do the pope in half an hour. Well, it didn't take long for me to realize that that was an impossibility and a foolish restraint. Under my original plan I would've been done with that by now, but I just thought it was too important for you to hear it with your own ears from their own official statements. Let's summarize what we've seen so far. Catholics

make staggering claims about the authority of the pope, staggering claims. And if you look at the most superficial history of the pope, you realize how completely ridiculous this is, but their official position is that the pope is elevated over the entire world. He rules the church. He is endowed with infallibility, and if you don't agree with them, the Catholic Church tells you to go to hell. That's what they teach. That's their official position.

Now, this is very disturbing. This is very troubling. But we want to see how it is that they justify their view, and we're not going to look at every strand of support that they give, here tonight. I just want to focus on their primary passage, their cornerstone passage, on this. And if you have a Bible with you, I'd invite you to turn to Matthew 16. Again, all we're doing right now is setting forth their position. We're not trying to counteract it just yet. That will come in a little bit. You say, "Where could they possibly get that kind of teaching?" Well, Matthew chapter 16 verse 18 says, Jesus is speaking, and Catholics point to this repeatedly. They say, "I say to you," He's speaking to Peter, "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 overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." They say, "See, there it is right there. Jesus is speaking to Peter. He says, 'You're Peter, and upon this rock,' which is a reference to Peter," they say, "Jesus is going to build His church." That's their basis upon it, upon which they build.

Now, there are a few other passages that they might point you to. In John 21, Jesus tells Peter, "Feed my sheep," and some other things like that that. But we're not going to try to tie up all the loose ends here this evening. What I want you to see is that this claim of massive authority for the pope rests on really one crucial assumption that they make and try to foist on the world. That Christ appointed Peter to be the head over all and that, second part of the assumption, that whoever is the pope is the successor to Peter and receives all the authority that Jesus gave to him. Everything else depends on that. That's the whole thing. It would be like taking this little platform here and trying to build a 150 story tower that shoots way up in the air and looks really impressive, but it's on a very small and narrow foundation. Their grandiose claims stand on a narrow base. Lorraine Bednar, who is a man, despite that first name, is a Protestant who, some years ago, wrote a standard work critiquing Roman Catholicism. And he said this, and I quote from him, he says "Disprove the primacy of Peter, and the foundation of the papacy is destroyed. Destroy the papacy, and the whole Roman hierarchy topples with it." If Peter falls, if Jesus wasn't really appointing Peter to the position that Roman Catholics say he is, if Peter falls, he brings down the whole papacy with it, and if the papacy goes, all of their authority goes. Everything else collapses along with the papacy. And so, they are incredibly dependent upon their view of Peter.

And so, that's what we want to take a look at now for the rest of our time here this morning. Second point, if you're taking notes. We're going to ask this question. Was Peter the first pope? Was Peter the first pope? And the answer to that question is, "Nope." Peter was not the first pope, and that is demonstrably evident from the Scriptures. Now, we're going to look at, we're going to give four, I think, sub points to support our assertion that

Peter was not the first pope. First of all, sub point A, if you're taking notes. In the context of Matthew 16, Peter is not the rock. Peter is not the rock in Matthew 16 that Jesus is referring to. Let's look at the whole context of Matthew 16 verses 13 through 20. This is really important. By the way, one of the things that I've noticed repeatedly in dealing with Catholics, either well-intentioned and uninformed or those who are more professional in their theology about it, is that they are experts at taking one verse out of context and saying that this means what I say it means, and, inevitably, when you look at the context of the verses that they claim, you will find that the context refutes the very interpretation that they place upon it. And so, whenever you're in a conversation with a Catholic you come across, they assert a verse that you're not familiar with and all of that, call an immediate timeout in your thinking, if not in the conversation, and say, "Let's look at the whole context and see what the context says to see if it supports what you're saying." Well, Catholics love Matthew 16 verse 18. It's very difficult to get them to talk about the entire context. And so, what we're going to do here tonight is we're simply going to read this passage, at this point, and then make some basic observations about it that are right on the surface for you to see for yourself, okay?

So, Matthew 16 verse 13 says, "Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?'" Now, right there. Notice that, the issue at the start of this passage is who is Christ, not who is Peter. That is the introductory question that frames everything else that follows in this passage. You must grasp that and follow that. Who do people say the Son of Man is? That's the issue, not who Peter is. "Who is Christ?" He's asking His disciples. And they go on in verse 14, and they answer Him. Well, "'Some say that you're John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?'" You see, it's about who Christ is, who Christ is, who Christ is. "Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'" Verse 17. "And Jesus 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. 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 overpower it.'" We'll stop there for the sake of time for right now.

Here's what I want you to see is that in the context of that verse 18 where He talks about who the rock is, the emphasis is on who is Christ. Verse 13. "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" Verse 15. "Who do you say that I am?" Verse 16. "You are the Christ the Son of the living God." In response to that Jesus says, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." So it's about Christ. Christ. Christ. Christ. That's the emphasis of the passage. That is the focus of attention, not Peter. Peter is just responding to questions. Jesus is setting the agenda for the topic, and He's making Himself the focal point. And so, after all of that clear emphasis on who Christ is and making clear what the issue is, it would do severe violence to the context to suddenly turn this passage on its head and say, "What it's intending to do is teach the primacy of Peter." That is absurd. That is absolutely impermissible by the context of this passage. Everything is about Christ. And then, we're going to pivot and say, "Really what this is meant to be was about Peter?" That doesn't make any sense. That is contrary to human reason to talk that way.

Now, let's look at verse 18 even a little bit more closely. It does violence to the context to say that Jesus wants to talk about Peter here. Now, Verse 18. Jesus says, "I say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church." A whole 2,000, not 2,000 years, the Catholic Church isn't really 2,000 years old. That's their claim. A millennium and a half of assertions of spiritual authority are tied up in these words that we're looking at right now. And what I want you to know about this, and this is well known, it's easily verifiable, even if you don't know the underlying Greek language here. Any work on Matthew of any depth whatsoever would tell you what I'm about to tell you now. This is not secret. When Jesus says, "I say to you that you are Peter." He's using a masculine Greek word called Petros. P-e-t-r-o-s. Petros. He says, "I say to you that you are Petros." Now, then he goes on and he says, "And upon this rock." Uh-oh, what does that mean? Is the rock, is the antecedent of this rock, is that referring to Peter? Well, there's a real problem with saying that it is, because it's a different word. It's a feminine form called Petra. Petra. Jesus changes the word. He's using a different word. He says, "Peter." One writer says, "You can think about it that He says, 'Mr. Rock,' and then, 'on this Miss Rock,' M-i-s-s Rock, 'I will build my church.'" All that I want you to see right now is that He's using a different word. He's using a different word.

Now, Peter, this masculine word Petros, refers to a detached stone or a boulder. Picture something that you can pick up and move. The word "rock" is from the feminine form petra. It's a different word, and it means a large body of rock. Instead of picturing a rock that you can pick up and move, with petra picture a rock formation in a mountain or a rock foundation that underlies the earth's soil. That gives you the sense. It's the difference between a movable stone and an immovable slab. But the main thing in Matthew 16 that I want you to see is that Jesus is using two different words. Notice, Jesus did not say, "You are Peter, and on you I will build my church." That is not what He said. He did not say, "You are Petros, and upon this Petros I will build my church." Either one of those would've made clear that He intended an identity of meaning, an identity that says, "When I say Peter, I'm going to repeat myself in a way so that there can be no question that I'm referring to Peter, whom I just identified." That's how you would do it if you were going to make that point. But that's not what He said. He said, "You are Petros, and upon this petra I will build my church."

Here's a basic point of language for you. Really simple. Different words mean different things. Different words mean different things. Particularly, when they are used side by side like that, you look for what the distinction in meaning is. And what Jesus was doing here is He was making a play on words. We do this all the time. Some of you love puns and you make puns on different things. But Jesus is using a play on words in the Greek language here. You can think about it this way, he's not here this evening, but you know how a church steeple is sometimes called a spire, right? A steeple or a belfry or something like that. The tower that's up there sometimes called a spire. Well, suppose that I was with one of the men in our church who is really named Paul Spires. That's his name, Paul Spires. And I'm carrying about, and I'm looking for a place to raise my American flag, and we're walking around, and we see a couple of church towers in the distance, and I look at him, and I say, "You are Paul Spires, and upon this spire I'm going

to fly my flag." It's a play on words. It's just a clever way of expressing something. And we all understand that in English.

Well, what is Jesus saying here? What is He distinguishing? Look back at Matthew 16 verse 18. When He says, "I say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church," what is that rock that He's referring to? Well, had something significant just happened in the prior context? Yes! Peter had made a confession that no one else was getting. There was massive confusion in the public about who Jesus Christ was. He's Jeremiah. He's Elijah. He's John the Baptist. He's another prophet. There's utter confusion going along, and in a God inspired moment, Peter has a word of clarity. And in that word of clarity that came from God Himself he says, "You're the Christ, the Son of the living God." All of a sudden there's clarity where confusion had been before. He had made an accurate statement about the eternal nature of Jesus Christ. He had accurately identified who this man in human flesh in front of him was, and who He was, was the Son of the living God. And what Jesus is saying, "You're Peter and upon this rock of a confession that you just made, upon this rock that came from your lips, I'm going to build my church." That, who Christ is, is an immovable rock. It is a foundation stone upon which everything else is built. It's the cornerstone to Christianity, who is Jesus Christ. And everything that we believe and all of our hope about eternal life is grounded on the reality that Jesus Christ is the living Son of God. And that is true. That is eternally true. And that is what we stand upon. The truth about Christ is what Christ builds His church on. Hell itself cannot overturn that truth.

Let me take you to a couple of passages. Apostolic preaching in the New Testament builds upon the exclusivity of Christ, not the exclusivity of Peter. That's just undeniable. Look at the book of Acts chapter 4 verse 12. These are just illustrative of the fact that the church is built on Christ, not on Peter. So, Acts chapter 4 verse 12 says, "There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." Who is Peter talking about? Verse 10. "Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by this name this man stands here before you in good health." He, referring to Christ, is the stone. That has nothing to do with Petros or Petra. It's a different word altogether. He's the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the corner's chief cornerstone. Christ is the cornerstone. Christ is what we build on. Christ is the One in whom there is salvation and no one else, because no other name under heaven has been given among men by which we must be saved. It's about Christ, not about Peter. No other name. No other name.

Look over at 1 Corinthians chapter 2. 1 Corinthians 2 verse 2. The Apostle Paul says, "I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." There is the foundation. The foundation of Paul's preaching was Jesus Christ and Him crucified. 2 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 5. 2 Corinthians 4 verse 5. "For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake." Not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord.

And so, was Peter the first pope? That's our second point answer. Nope, he wasn't the first pope. Sub point A. In context Peter is not the rock. In context Peter is not the rock. In the context of Matthew 16 Peter is not the rock, because the whole context is about who Christ is, and we've gone through and clarified that. Now, having looked at those passages in Acts and in the two letters of Corinthians, what Christ is saying in Matthew 16, contrary to what Roman Catholics teach about that verse and that passage, what Christ is saying is, "Peter, the confession that you just made, that confession that points to Me, that confession that so many of your contemporaries have missed, that confession is the very confession upon which I will build My church." Christ builds His church on the proclamation of His name, not the authority of Peter, and that is an irreconcilable difference that we have with Rome. The rock of Christ's church is Christ and the true confession of Christ, not Peter. Those two things cannot be reconciled together. We can't have competing authorities. We can't build on conflicting authority claims where one says, "Scripture alone," and another says, "Okay, Scripture, but the pope." You can't have it both ways. We'll talk about that some more next week.

But now, we said in the context Peter is not the rock. Here's your second sub point. Sub point B, if you're taking notes. In the Canon, Peter is not the rock. And what I mean by that is in the rest of Scripture Peter is not the rock, and that's just ever so evident. What about this concept of rock in general? Let's just let the Scriptures speak. What does Scripture say about the rock? Look at Psalm 18, which would have been familiar to the Jews who were reading Matthew's Gospel. Matthew's Gospel was written to the Jews. The Jews read about this discussion of the rock. Would they have thought about Peter as the rock, or would they have thought of something else? Psalm 18 verse 30. We'll just start there for the sake of context. Psalm 18 verse 30. "As for God, His way is blameless; The word of the LORD is tried; He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him. For who is God, but the LORD? And who is a rock, except our God." The rock is a reference to God. Look over at Isaiah chapter 44. Isaiah 44. By the way, let me just say this. I know there's a lot of information here and quotes and all of that. If you would like to have a copy of my notes from which I'm teaching this, just send me an email and let me know. I'll be happy to share them with you. And that will simplify your note taking as well.

Isaiah 44 verse 8. "Do not tremble and do not be afraid; Have I not long since announced it to you and declared it? And you are My witnesses. Is there any God besides Me, Or is there any other Rock? I know of none." Now, in light of that Old Testament teaching, and we're not looking at all the verses that we could look at. 1 Samuel 2:2 addresses this as well. In the light of God in the Old Testament making exclusive association of the imagery of rock with Himself, is it possible that Christ would suddenly transfer that reference to Peter? It's unthinkable. The confusion that that would cause and the contradiction in Old Testament Scripture would just be too massive. In the Canon Peter is not the rock, but, you know what? We don't have to take the Old Testament word for it. I love this next point. This is still under some point B here. In the canon Peter is not the rock. We've looked at the Old Testament a little bit, let the Old Testament say. But do you know what we're going to do now? We're going to let Peter speak to the issue. What does Peter say about it? Who does Peter think the rock is? What does Peter think about his own authority?

Look at the book of 1 Peter in the New Testament, just after the book of Hebrews. 1 Peter chapter 2. There was no confusion in Peter's mind about this issue at all. In chapter 2 verse 4 of his own letter Peter says, "And coming to Him," that is to Christ, "coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." Now, watch what he says here, verse 6. For this is contained in Scripture. "Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone." Who is this stone? He who believes in Him will not be disappointed. It's a reference to Christ. This precious value, then, is for you who believe, but for those who disbelieve, "'The stone which the builders rejected, This became the very corner stone,' and, 'A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense;'" there it is, "a rock of offense." Peter says that Christ is the rock. He refers, in all of this context about Christ, he refers to Christ as the rock.

Now, what does Peter say about himself in this very same book? Keep in mind, remember, as we're talking here, the grandiose truth claims and the grandiose claims that Rome makes about their pope. They say that he is the universal father of all Christians. That he rules over the church. That he is the Vicar and representative of Christ on earth. Which, by the way, is utterly false. The Holy Spirit is the representative of Christ on earth, but that's another issue. Look at what Peter said. In light of that, and in light of their claim that Peter is the first pope with all of this authority, and that authority is meant to be exercised and to govern and to rule, and everyone must obey the pope, and the Cardinals must kiss his feet. That's what it's morphed into. They claim Peter is the precedent for that. And what does Peter say in chapter 5 verse 1? How does he allude to himself? Chapter 5 verse 1. He says, "Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder." He places himself on a level with those local church leaders. I'm your fellow elder. If ever he was going to exert a prerogative authority, he would do it right here, because he's telling them important things, but he goes on! He calls himself a fellow elder, not the ruler of the church, and he says in verse 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." Now, watch verse 3. "Nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock." That is devastating to the claim that Peter was the pope. It's utterly devastating to the claim that the pope is the one to whom all must obey. That the pope is the one who rules with authority, and to reject this is to cast your own soul into damnation. If you are going to define what it means to lord it over people, you would do it exactly like the Catholic Church does.

Let's me remind you what they say. Peter says, "Don't lord it over." This is Peter, supposedly, the first pope says, "Don't lord it over. I'm a fellow elder. I exhort you as one of you." What does the Catholic Church say? "The Roman pontiff is the head of the whole church, the father and teacher of all Christians, and full power was given to him to rule, feed, and govern the universal church by Jesus Christ our Lord." If that's not lording it over 1.2 billion people, I don't know how else you would do it. This is the teaching of the Catholic Church from which no one can deviate without loss of faith and of salvation.

That's a threat. That's lording it over. If anyone presumes to contradict our definition, let him be accursed. This is self-refuting. You just read the Scripture, and it refutes itself. Peter speaks in a way that makes it impossible for Catholics to claim him as the first pope. Peter calls Christ the rock and himself a fellow elder. He forbids leaders from lording it over the flock. That is not a man claiming supreme authority. James McCarthy, who wrote a very helpful book called "The Gospel According to Rome," which compares Catholic teaching with Scripture, and which I relied on extensively in this, and is a book that I commend to you. He says this, "Peter describes himself not as the supreme shepherd, but as your fellow elder and forbids anyone from lording authority over other Christians. He identifies Christ as the Chief Shepherd, not himself." So, in the Canon, in the Bible, Peter was not the rock. Peter was not the rock. Peter didn't claim this to himself. He didn't express himself in a way that is consistent with what Rome attributes to him.

Now, thirdly, third sub point here. Sub point C. We said that in context Peter was not the rock, in the context of Matthew 16. In the Canon, that is, in the broader Bible, Peter is not the rock. Point number C. In character Peter was not a rock. Remember that Rome ascribes infallibility and incapability of error to their pope. Now, they try to limit that and say, "Well, it's just when he's teaching on faith and morals," but come on. Come on. If you've got all authority, and you have attributes of infallibility. We ought to be able to see that in the life of Peter, right? That's only a fair assumption to look for, but subsequent events in Peter's life show that he was not an immovable rock upon which the church could be built. Go back to Matthew 16. This is really, the verse that I'm about to show you, this is really the verse that applies to the pope. Chapter 16 of Matthew verse 23, "Get behind me Satan." You know what happened there. Just after Jesus has said, "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church," and Rome latches onto that and says, "There's our pope." What happens immediately after that? Verse 21. "Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day." Verse 22. Peter, allegedly the first pope, took Christ aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." Well, his prophecy there didn't turn out too hot, did it? His first statement as an infallible pope proved to be false.

Come on! This isn't even a close question. This isn't even debatable. And so, in verse 23, Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's." This is the rock upon which Christ is going to build His church? Jesus addresses His rock as Satan? That can't be. That's just utter folly. It's impossible, and there's more, and we won't turn to all of these passages just for the sake of time. Just listen to this little summary here. Jesus rebuked Peter and called him Satan. That's what we just looked at. Later, in Gethsemane, Jesus rebuked Peter for sleeping during Christ's agony. Matthew 26. This rock, Peter, denied Christ three times with curses. Matthew 26 verses 69 to 75. Listen, those references right there, those are three references from Matthew. The reader of Matthew's Gospel having read through and finished the Gospel, could never have walked away thinking, "Peter's the guy that Jesus is going to build the church on." You would never think that. He was called Satan. Jesus rebuked him for sleeping in the garden. Peter

denied him three times with curses. This idea of ascribing infallibility to him is utterly foreign to the context of the very Gospel upon which his authority is supposedly based. This is foolishness. But that's not all.

This verse you do need to see. Go over to Galatians chapter 2. Supposedly, Jesus appointed Peter as the head of the church, and Peter rules over all. Well, that did not play out at all in history. Galatians chapter 2 verse 11. "When Cephas," who is Peter, "when Cephas came to Antioch, I [Paul] opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. 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. The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. 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?'" A fellow apostle rebukes Peter as being in error in his practice and in danger of compromising the very truth of the Gospel with what he was doing. This is our infallible pope? This is the rock upon whom the church is built? No, it's not. That's just not possible in light of the Scriptures.

If you want to write down a final reference here, 2 Peter 3 verses 15 and 16. Know that they said that in Peter is infallibility in the interpretation of faith and morals. Do you know what Peter says about Paul in 2 Peter chapter 3? Paul writes things that are hard to understand. This is your infallible pope? He can't understand? He has difficulty understanding the Scripture? Now, look, I want to be real careful here. I'm actually not engaging in Peter bashing here. I'm actually quite sympathetic to Peter. The point is not the true view of Peter, but it is the way that Rome misrepresents Peter contrary to Scripture and then builds lofty truth claims off of their misrepresentation. It is those misrepresentations that we have to attack with the clear pages of Scripture. I respect Peter. His writings in the New Testament are the inspired Word of God. But he was not the first pope. Peter's subsequent career after Matthew 16 utterly contradicts Catholic claims that he was the first infallible pope. That cannot be.

Now, there's one more thing here that I'll just cover real quick. This is a little bit of a tangent, but the fourth sub point, sub point D here, is that the Bible does not place Peter in Rome. You see, the whole claim of the Roman Catholic Church is that Peter founded the church of Rome and ruled there for like 25 years or so until he was martyred in the in the mid 60's. That's not possible. Biblically, that's utterly impossible. First of all, you're in the book of Galatians right now. First of all, Rome was a Gentile center there, and Peter's mission was to the Jews, not to the Gentiles. Look at Galatians chapter 2 verse 7. Paul is speaking and he says, "I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised (for He," meaning Christ, "who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles)." Peter was an apostle to the Jews, not to the Gentiles, and while there were Jewish elements in the church at Rome, this was a Gentile center. The book of Acts does not describe Peter being in Rome. In fact, there's no references to Peter being in Rome in church history until like the third century. And what's more important than all of that,

what's more telling and compelling, who wrote the letter to the Romans? Paul. Do you know what Paul does in Romans 16? Paul greets by name over 25 people who were there in Rome. He says greet, "Rufus and greet so-and-so and so-and-so and so-and-so." The whole chapter 16 is just a bunch of greetings. Paul, in the book of Romans to the place where Peter allegedly founded the church, does not mention Peter at all. That is inconceivable if Peter was there and Peter had founded the church. That's impossible to think that Paul would bypass the Apostle Peter in the greetings. It would be a complete insult to disregard the leader and founder if he was there, and greet other people by name. If someone wrote to Truth Community Fellowship and greeted you all by name but ignored me and didn't say anything about me as the pastor, there would be an evident division about that. There'd be something wrong. That would be a deliberate insult to the pastor of that church. That's inconceivable, if Peter established the church, that Paul wouldn't greet him.

Now, there's more to the Catholic claims that I hope to address some next week, but we had to find some place to jump in and some place to jump off as we're addressing it. I really wanted to cover it all in one session, and I just couldn't. Listen to me carefully as I'm about to wrap this up. And I wrote this out, and I mean every word of what I'm about to say. This is not a close question. This is not a debatable point when all the facts are in front of an unbiased mind. Jesus Christ did not appoint Peter as the first pope. The Catholic papacy for all of these centuries is a complete fabrication. It is a colossal fraud. It has been perpetrated for centuries on unsuspecting souls. Personally, I believe that the Catholic papacy is the greatest crime against humanity in the history of the human race. They have deceived billions of people. They have martyred countless numbers of professing Christians simply because they wouldn't bow the knee to Rome. It is a corrupt financial organization. They murdered their own pope John Paul I in 1978. There's a book titled "In God's Name" by David Yallop that conclusively establishes that. This is gangster government, not the church of Christ. And with their grandiose truth claims and their threats of damnation to anybody that would leave, they intimidate people into obedience, into unthinking obedience. They hold their souls captive. They keep them in darkness and threaten them with hell and damnation if they question what they're taught. We have some converted Catholics in here in the room tonight, and the only thing that we can say is, "How do you ever get out of that?" It's an act of God, isn't it? It's a grace of God to deliver people from such a system, but we have to be direct and candid about these things. There is no commonality with any organization headed by the pope.

Now, I want to finish on a positive note here. Question number 3, we'll deal with this quickly. Who is the head of the church? Who is the head of the church, if it's not the pope? The answer is Christ. Christ is the head of the church. That's what Scripture says in Ephesians chapter 1. Turn there with me. Paul says, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but

also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet," watch this, "and gave Him," that means Christ, Peter is nowhere in this context, "gave Him," gave Christ, "as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." Chapter 4 verse 15. He says, "Speaking the truth in love, we," as Christians, "are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head," notice the present tense, is the head, "even Christ." Turn to your right a couple more pages to the book of Colossians chapter 1. Colossians chapter 1 verse 18. Speaking of Christ. "He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything."

Again, I tell you, notice the present tenses. Christ is now, as we speak, and has been, the head of the church. Listen, and this is where, if you love Christ and you're truly regenerate, convictions start to grow deep and passions start to wrap around those convictions so that this cannot be an academic matter to you. Christ did not die on the cross, Christ did not shed His blood, Christ did not cry out "My God! My God! Why have You forsaken me?" in an act of redemption to purchase the church. Christ did not do that so that the pope could claim the glory. The pope usurps Christ. He claims a position that Christ bought with His own blood, and that is so treasonous. That is so culpable that all we can do is show what Scripture says and say, "No, we give supreme allegiance to Christ and, therefore, we reject anyone who sets himself up as a rival to Christ. It doesn't matter how many billions of people disagree with us. We are convicted by Scripture. We see it in the Word of God and, by the power of His Spirit and by the power of His grace, we yield to Christ and not to a man."

Think about it this way too. Christ wore a crown of thorns. Have you ever seen that hat the pope wears with all the expensive jewels in it? That's not a correlation to Christ. That is anti-Christ. Christ had no place to lay His head. Have you seen the Vatican? Have you seen all the ornamentation around it? Christ walked alone to Calvary. Have you seen the pope carried on the shoulders of people? You know what Christ carried on His shoulders? A cross. The pope has his people carry him on their shoulders. So, why are we Protestants? In part, we answer the question this way. We are Protestants, because we have biblically examined the claims of the Catholic papacy and found them to be false. That's why we're Protestants and not Catholics. We are Protestants because Christ is the head of His church, not the pope. We are Protestants because we reject the authority of the pope. And brothers and sisters, we are undeterred by Catholicism's empty threat of damnation against us for that position. We rest in Christ, and we rest in Him alone.

Let's pray.

Father, we all know Catholics who are affected by the claims of the papacy. They're in many cases our own flesh and blood, and we love them, and we realize that these things have a separating effect. And while we would love them and want them in the kingdom of God, Lord Jesus, we remember that You said that You come to divide. In some cases, father against son, and mother against daughter, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law. We're not happy about that in one sense. We just want to be faithful and if faithfulness to you means that we have to be separated from a false system of religion, then we'll gladly

go with You outside the camp and bear the reproach. Father, we'll gladly bear the empty threats of anathema directed against us from those godless men in Rome. We're not afraid of them. We're not afraid of their threats, because we trust in Your Word, and we trust in Christ who truly does rule over all, who knows us by name and keeps us in His hand. And Lord, we know that You would never cast us out, and so their calls to damn us fall on Your deaf ears, as it were, because You will never abandon those who truly belong to You.

Father, this is a time where the papacy is going to be celebrated, and this man will be held up as such a humble guy and all of that. Lord, we see through it based on Your Word. We're grieved that a man would claim the position that belongs to You alone. That offends every fiber of our being, because we treasure the fact that You lay down Your life for us. And a man that would stand in the way of that being seen clearly, a man who would claim prerogatives that belong to You alone, is an object of our rejection, derision, and our own condemnation. We condemn that based on the authority of Your Word.

Father, we thank You for the men who have gone before us over the centuries. We know that thousands upon thousands shed their blood over the very issues that we can talk about in peace here in northern Kentucky in 2013. But the very truths that we hold dear were the cause of bloodshed to brothers and sisters in Christ across time. And so, Father, we can do nothing less than be faithful to this. We're under obligation to the blood of Christ. We're under obligation to the blood of the martyrs. And so, just help us to be faithful, Father, not in an argumentative, arrogant way, but graciously, humbly, depending on Your Word and pointing anyone who would listen to what Your Word says about these things.

It's not easy, Lord, to be a Christian, sometimes. There's so many trials and struggles, and we all feel the weight of them even tonight in one degree or another, feel the weight of our circumstances or of conflict and things like that, but we thank You for this time where we could step aside and see what Your Word says. And we look humbly as Your children to our Father. We look humbly as sheep to a shepherd, saying, "Savior, like a shepherd lead us. Much we need thy tender care." For these brothers and sisters in Christ that are gathered here today, Father, I just pray for Your tender care upon them, for Your loving grace to be manifest in their lives. That You would sustain them through trials, through recovery from medical conditions, conflict, and financial issues, all those things. Lord, we just humbly bow before You. As it were, kiss the feet of our Christ and rest beneath Your loving care. We love you Lord, and that's why we stand for these things. Give us grace to stand even taller and even firmer in the days, and weeks, and months, and years ahead here at Truth Community. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

You have been listening to Pastor Don Green from Truth Community Church. For more information about our ministry including Pastor Don's blog and our location and service times, please visit us at truthcommunitychurch.com. You will also find Don's sermon

library where you can download free messages on many biblical passages and topics.
This message is copyrighted by Don Green. All rights reserved.