

## The New Testament Does Not Support A Papacy

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by Bill Crews

The New Testament does not mention, or imply, or even hint at such an office as the papacy. In it there is no hierarchy, no earthly headquarters, no central governing body, no cardinals, no archbishops, no dioceses or diocesan bishops, no parishes or parish priests, no special order of priests among Christians (every Christian is a priest — see 1 Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:5-6; 5:9-10; Christ is our high priest — Hebrews 4:14-16; 6:20).

Jesus condemned and forbade such religious titles as “*rabbi*,” “*master*,” and “*father*” in Matthew 23:8-12. Jesus was grieved by every controversy among His disciples as to who would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. He made it clear that the pathway that leads one into the kingdom is the pathway of humility, a humility that submits to God’s will, and that the pathway to greatness in the kingdom is humility, a humility that serves others and promotes their welfare (Matthew 18:1-4; 20:25-28; 23:11-12; John 13:3-17). Ambition and pride had much to do with men changing God’s simple plan of autonomous congregations with each having a plurality of elders, overseers or shepherds (Acts 14:23; 20: 17, 28; Philippians 1:1) into the pyramid-like hierarchy with a pope at the head.

Jesus Christ, who has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-23), is identified as the head of His church (Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:15-16; 5:22-24; Colossians 1:18; 2:9-10, 19). Besides Him there is no other head. There is not a hint of any man being made the earthly head of His church.

Our Savior said, “*Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*” (Matthew 4: 10).

The Scriptures tell us, “*And when it came to pass that Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter raised him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man*” (Acts 10:25-26). But popes receive such homage from men and rebuke no one for paying it.

During the ministry of Jesus Peter was a married man. In Matthew 8:14-17 Jesus entered Peter’s house in Capernaum and healed his wife’s mother who had a fever. More than twenty years later Peter still had a wife (1 Corinthians 9:5). In 1 Peter 5:1, still later, he addressed “*the elders therefore among you*” and identified himself as “*a fellow-elder*” (please read verses 1-4 and note that he was referring to elders who were appointed and placed over a flock). One of the qualifications to be met by such an elder is “*the husband of one wife*” (Titus 1:6; read verses 5-9). Popes are not allowed to be married.

Only human tradition places Peter in Rome; the New Testament does not. Paul’s epistle to the saints at Rome makes no mention of Peter, even though salutations are sent by Paul to numerous individuals in chapter 16 and even though the epistle was written about 59 A.D.. The apostle Paul was a prisoner at Rome from 61 or 62 A.D. to 63 or 64 A.D.; while there he wrote four epistles (Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon), but he makes no mention of Peter in them. Again in either 67 or 68 A.D. Paul was a prisoner at Rome (which imprisonment ended in his death) and wrote 2 Timothy, but makes no mention of Peter in it. He wrote: “*At my first defense no one took my part, but all forsook me,*” and “*Only Luke is with me*” (2 Timothy 4:16, 11).

Peter, along with James, the Lord’s brother, and John, was reputed to be somewhat among the saints at Jerusalem, but Paul said it made no matter to him because God does not accept man’s person (Galatians 2:6, 9). Some way for a man to talk about “the pope,” if indeed Peter was a pope. In neither of the two epistles that he wrote did Peter refer to himself as universal bishop or pope. He rather described himself in terms such as these: “*an apostle of Jesus Christ*” (1 Pet. 1:1), “*a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ*” (2 Pet. 1:1), “*a fellow elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ*” (1 Pet. 5:1). A far cry from “his holiness,” “your worship,” “universal bishop,” “vicar of Christ,” “voice of God,” and “Lord God, the pope.” The pope’s lavish robes, ornate palace, wealth, attendants, power and titles stand in stark contrast to the humble apostle Peter of the New Testament.

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