

Saint Peter's Church

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TO WHAT CHURCH WOULD SAINT PETER BELONG WERE HE ALIVE TODAY?

He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." For long, weary centuries Israel had waited for the fruition of her hopes in the coming of the Redeemer. Now He had come. Light divine shone upon the darkened plains of old Judea. The wonderful life that He lived, the marvelous miracles that He performed, the saving truths that He proclaimed, gave unmistakable evidence of His Messiah ship. But the people loved darkness rather than light. They expected a conqueror; He came as a servant. They longed for a deliverer from the hated Roman yoke: He came to deliver them from the heavy yoke of sin. They would have welcomed a Jewish Caesar, but they rejected the lowly Jesus, the world's Savior.

"Whom do men say that I am?" Jesus was talking now to the twelve disciples. His name was on everybody's lips. Some called Him the prophet Elias; others, the prophet Jeremiah. Some said He was John the Baptist restored to life. They gloried in His miracles and marveled at His teachings, but they bitterly resented His direct appeal for the renunciation of hidden sin. "But whom say ye that I am?" Jesus was now searching the hearts of the disciples themselves. Quick as a flash, from the lips of impetuous, great-hearted Peter, came the declaration "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God, to which Jesus replied: "I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven and whatsoever thou shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Matthew 16:13-19.

CENTER OF THEOLOGICAL BATTLE

Around these words have centered many a theological battle. Sixty millions of people in our land believe that Peter was the first pope. As many more believe that Peter, if here today, would be a Methodist or a Baptist or an Episcopalian. What church would Peter join if he should come to your town today?

I wish to state briefly -six propositions as evidence that Peter was never considered a pope, that he never had the preeminence among the disciples.

1. Before leaving the disciples Jesus told them that it was expedient for Him to go away in order that His representative might come. And the representative of Christ, the One who was commissioned to guide people into all truth, is clearly stated to be the Holy Spirit. (John 16:7-13.)
2. The church of the living God is built upon the foundation of all the prophets and apostles. Not Peter alone, but all were lively stones in that magnificent structure, the church. (Ephesians 2:19, 20.)
3. The chief corner stone of the church is the Lord Jesus. The testimony of this verse is so clear that it cannot be misunderstood. Peter himself called Jesus "the head of the corner." 1 Peter 2:7, 8

CHRIST IS THE ROCK

4. In all the Bible, and there are thirty five instances in the Old Testament alone, Christ is called the rock. Not Peter, but Jesus the Son of God is the rock, the tried stone, the corner stone of the church.

Using the words of the original Greek, the verse in Matthew would read. "Thou art Petros, and upon this petra I will build My church." The words petros and petra have different meanings. Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon says: "Petros, a piece of rock, a stone, and thus distinguished from petra as a ledge, or shelf, of rock. Petrai [a variation of petra] are not loose stones, but masses of living rock." Jesus is the living rock upon which His church is founded. Peter was but a fragment of stone and, like us, had life only in Christ.

5. The other apostles were given the same authority and power as was given to Peter. (Matthew 18:18; John 20:21-23.) The keys of gold that unlock the gates of heaven to the sin-bound soul are the Old and New Testaments of God's wondrous Book. The acts of the church in opening the word of God to men, thus opening to them the way to life eternal, are ratified in heaven. If Peter was a pope, then we are all popes, for we are all disciples of Christ.

6. Peter himself acknowledged that he was on a par with his fellow disciples. (Acts 10:25, 26.) In the great council at Jerusalem it was not Peter but James who presided. If (here were a preeminence, it belonged to the apostle James.

If Peter were in your town today, he would be a Protestant-but I scarcely utter the word before I seek to qualify it. Of Protestantism, what absurdities and inconsistencies are taught in your sacred name! The Protestantism of Reformation days exalted the Bible as the voice of God speaking to man "The Bible and the Bible only" as a rule of faith was the platform upon which Protestantism was built. Upon this platform the apostle Peter could stand. But the Protestantism of today is no longer a protest against traditional error and a proclamation of eternal truth. These shorter bibles and lesser christs, these travesties on truth that would pervert the meaning of Christ's redemptive program, scrap the Ten Commandments, and substitute message of social service for the gospel of salvation, these are no part of Protestantism. These wild fanaticisms, with their jazz hymns, their senseless jargon of "unknown" tongues, their "hip-hip hoorah" preaching and praying-these religious tragedies that cover a multitude of sins with loud hallelujahs---are no part of Protestantism. These stately creeds, cold, formal, and lifeless, mimicking Rome and mocking apostolic Christianity, multiplying holydays and ritualistic services while dividing the truth of the Bible-these are no part of Protestantism.

SCRIPTURES DIVINELY INSPIRED

The Scriptures were read by the apostle Peter as the sacred oracles of God. "Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," was his testimony as to the worth of Old Testament prophecy. The inspired and inspiring messages from the books of the Old Testament were living truths in the estimate of Peter. And why should they not have been since they testified of Jesus, the One who had lifted Peter from the miry clay and placed his feet upon the solid rock? Peter could never fellowship with a church that repudiates the writings of Old Testament scripture; with a church that denies the divinity of Jesus, His Son-ship, His miraculous birth, His glorious resurrection, His saving power: or with a church that rejects any one of the Ten Commandments that were spoken by Jesus upon Mt. Sinai.

A church that exalts the Bible and the Christ of the Bible; a church that repudiates the God-dishonoring doctrine of evolution; a church that preaches salvation through the blood of Christ, a new birth, regeneration, growth in grace, and a triumphant experience in Christ; a church that upholds the majesty of the Ten Commandments; a church that carries into all the world the gospel of the kingdom; a church that is Spirit-filled and Spirit-led in its program of world evangelization, for such a church would Peter seek if in your town to-day. Could he find it?

If Peter were here today, he would be an Adventist. No doubt you will smile at this, but listen: the longing of Peter's heart was for the coming of Jesus. "When the chief Shepherd shall appear," said Peter, "you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away." For the new heavens and the new earth, for the everlasting reign of righteousness, for the end of sin and sorrow, Peter looked forward. Moreover, he warned us against the "scoffers" of "the last days" who would deny the truth of the second coming of Christ. Do you believe in the personal, literal, visible coming of Jesus? If so, you, too, are an Adventist, for an Adventist is one who believes in the second advent of Christ. All the prophets and all the apostles were Adventists. Jesus gave to us the promise of His second coming, and was an Adventist. All true Christians are Adventists

CHARACTER OF PETER REVEALED

The character of Peter after his conversion is portrayed for us in his appearance before the Sanhedrin, which was "the board of bishops" of all Judea. They commanded him not to teach or preach in the name of Jesus. What a transformation of character from pre crucifixion days! Then he denied his Lord; now he exalted Jesus as a prince and a savior, and was willing to follow Him even unto death "We ought to obey God rather than men" was Peter's fearless reply to the demands of the Sanhedrin. Jesus was the perfect pattern for Peter. "Leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps," were the words of inspiration from Peter's epistle. Walking as Jesus walked led Peter in the path of God's commandments. The way of fellowship with Christ is the way of obedience. Obedience is life; disobedience is death. If Peter were in your town today, he would walk in the footsteps of Jesus, he would walk in the way of God's commandments; and, friends, that way would lead him to the church that exalts every one of the Ten Commandments. It would lead him to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

"The word of the Lord," said Peter, "endures forever." "The word of God," he declared, "lives and abides forever." The word of the Eternal One established the seventh day as a memorial of creation. The Lord Himself wrote that word into the Ten Commandments. There it stands, eternal, unchangeable, as the fiat of the God of the universe. The Sabbath is the battle ground of truth and error, the Bible and tradition. Sunday is the child of tradition, the mark of apostasy The Sabbath is the Lord's day and His royal seal of sanctification. The church that exalts the truth of the Bible must, of necessity repudiate every error, expose every deception. The relics of paganism and the false doctrines of modern Protestantism must be cast aside, and the Bible exalted as the one standard of truth. The veneration of images, infant, baptism, Sunday worship, and all other customs that were born in paganism have no place in the church

of Christ. If the word declares that "the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." The true church will not seek by hook or crook, to make "seventh" mean the "first."

OUT AND OUT FOR JESUS

"We ought to obey God rather than men." Would Peter, if here today, follow the crowd in bowing to the traditions of Rome, or would he, as in days of old, keep the Sabbath of the Bible? Would Peter be out and out for Jesus and His truth, or would he step into the ring of popularity with the majority and with Rome? Peter felt the sting of the Roman lash and suffered the hardships of the Roman dungeon because he sought to obey God. Can you imagine Peter, if he were in your town today, saying, "Well, I know the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Bible, but I don't like to lose a good job and starve to death; so I guess I'll keep Sunday instead"? No, we can hear the words of that man of faith. "We ought to obey God rather than men."

The apostle Peter was not negligent in declaring the principles of "present truth." 2 Peter 1:12. If he were here today, his voice would ring out against traditional error and in defense of Bible truth. He would call the world to commandment keeping and to preparation for the coming of Christ. In these dark days of apostasy and forsaking of God, every man's loyalty must be tested. God has preserved for Himself a church, which in its repudiation of error, its exaltation of every truth, marches forward under the banner bearing the inscription, "The commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." God will have a converted people, a praying people, a Ten Commandment keeping people. "The just shall live by faith." Will you step out with Peter upon the platform of truth? Will you yield your life in obedience to God: Will you walk in the way of His commandments?

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