

Did Christ Appoint Peter As Chief Apostle?

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If Jesus Christ appointed Peter as chief apostle, there might be grounds to claim that one man has the responsibility to lead Almighty God's flock on Earth. Many millions in Christianity believe this is the case but it is based on a misunderstanding and, in some cases, a twisting of scripture (2Pet. 3:16). A number of scriptures will be examined to reveal the truth about the only true leader of Almighty God's flock.

In the 16th chapter of Matthew, there is a section that can be used incorrectly to assert that Jesus Christ appointed Peter to a position of leadership over the other disciples. However, upon closer examination this will be seen as a fallacy,

And Simon Peter answered and said. 'You are the Christ, the son of the living God.' (cf. Jn. 17:3) Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon bar-Jonah (son of Jonah), for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven (Mt. 16:16-17).

Because Peter was the first disciple to respond to Christ's question, Jesus continued a short dialogue with him in order to teach all his disciples some important truths,

And I (Christ) also say to you that you are Peter (Mt. 16:18a).

Simon is being reminded at this point that Christ changed his name from Simon the son of Jonah to Cephas (Peter), which is translated, a stone (Jn. 1:41-42). Christ then placed Peter, a stone, in juxtaposition to God our Father who is the rock upon which Christ will build his church,

And on this rock (God our Father; cf. Mt. 16:17b) I will build my church (Mt. 16:18b).

As the Bible cross references itself, there are usually a number of confirmations explaining important truths. One of these proves that only Almighty God is the rock upon which Jesus Christ could build his church,

He (reference to Jesus Christ) shall cry to me (Almighty God; cf. Jn. 17:3), 'You are my Father, my God, and the rock of my (Christ's) salvation' (Ps. 89:26; cf. Mt. 7:24).

In this prophetic passage of scripture, Christ is pictured as trusting in his heavenly Father to save him from everlasting death, through a resurrection from the dead. If this were not the case, then Hades (the grave) would be victorious and Christ would not be able to build his church,

And the gates of Hades (the grave/death) shall not prevail against it (the church) (Mt. 16:18c).

Christ went on to explain that the church, which included all its members, were going to be given the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and with these keys they would be able to collectively administer affairs on Earth,

And I will give you (the disciples) the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you (the collective church) bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven (Mt. 16:19).

Again, there are other cross references that confirm this to be true,

Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear you, take with you one or two more, that *'by the mouth of two witnesses every word may be established.'* And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you (the collective church; not one leader) bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you that if (at least) two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven (Mt. 18:15-19).

This is a very important principle proving that there is no requirement for a chief apostle, or leader, to make any final ruling on important matters affecting the Body of Christ. Instead, it is up to the members of the Body to make decisions by working together even if there are only two of them at any given time in history. Almighty God purposely inspired Christ to say that at least two members are necessary for any decision, related to church affairs, to be considered in heaven; just as there had to be two witnesses before any action was taken against Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:1-29), and just as there will be two witnesses confirming the moral depravity of this world prior to Christ's return (Rev. 11:1-10). Therefore, someone acting alone in a position of authority within a religious structure will not have their decisions bound or loosed in heaven. Once the members have come to a conclusion on any matter, a final decision can be made without any need for a leader's approval. In fact, if the apostle Peter was the leader following Christ's death and resurrection, he would have been the one to stand up and tell everyone what was going to be done regarding the subject of circumcision. Instead, James simply summarized what had been discussed during an important meeting on this subject and the whole church was involved,

And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, 'Men (the elders and apostles who were gathered to discuss this important issue) and brethren (church members who also contributed their thoughts), listen to me (Ac. 15:13).

Therefore, I (James) judge that we (the collective church) should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we (the church) write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood (Ac. 15:19-20).

Then it (the final decision) pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church (Ac. 15:22a).

The apostle Paul confirmed that it was up to the church in Corinth to take collective action to deal with a sinning brother. He stated his opinion on the matter, but pointed out that it was their responsibility to act,

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you (members of God's church in Corinth), and such sexual immorality as is not even named among Gentiles – that a man has his father's wife (step-mother). And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you (1Cor. 5:1-2).

Paul also taught against choosing a particular leader in the Body of Christ. He pointed out that this was a carnal way of thinking. It leads to divisions, does not allow the brethren to take responsibility for important decisions, and does not promote working and learning together (cf. 2Pet. 3:18). It also focuses attention on a human leader rather than the true leader of the church, Jesus Christ (cf. Rev. 3:20),

For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren (in Corinth), by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, 'I am of Paul,' or 'I am of Apollos,' or 'I am of Cephas,' or 'I am of Christ.' Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? (1Cor. 1:11-13).

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, 'I am of Paul,'; and another, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not carnal? (1Cor. 3:1-4).

Jesus Christ warned against choosing human leaders for the purpose of running the affairs within his Body,

But Jesus called them (his disciples) to himself and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet is shall not be so among you (the Body of Christ); but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant (Mt. 20:25-26).

Christ did not make a suggestion in this last scripture. Instead, he gave the members of his Body, the church, a command that they are not to elevate anyone to a position of authority above the rest of the brethren. Again, there are other Biblical references to this type of activity,

But when you (members of the Body of Christ) are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes (God our Father through Jesus Christ; cf. Jn. 6:44; Rom. 2:4b) he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher.' Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. For whoever exalts himself will be abased (humbled), and he who humbles himself will be exalted (Lk. 14:10-11).

Even if Christ were to appoint one of his disciples as chief apostle, which he did not, it would not have been Peter. Instead, it would have been John because Christ knew he would live longer than the other apostles (cf. Jn. 21:20-23), and that is why Christ gave the responsibility of caring for his mother to John,

When Jesus therefore saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved (John; cf. Jn. 13:23) standing by, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold your son!' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold your mother!' And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home (Jn. 19:26-27).

It is very important to note that Christ made no distinction, as far as authority is concerned, between any of his disciples. He made it abundantly clear that they all had an equal responsibility toward those they were to care for, and this responsibility went beyond their mortal lives,

So Jesus said to them (the twelve disciples), 'Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Mt. 19:28).

In Revelation 2:6, 15, Christ stated that he hated the deeds and doctrine of the Nicolaitans. Although there are a number of differing opinions and theories about who the Nicolaitans were, it is important to examine the root meaning of this word.

Some of the so-called early Christian writers, such as Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius of Caesarea, claimed the Nicolaitans were a Gnostic sect teaching extreme asceticism, denying the self and all earthly pleasures to attain a spiritual goal. They forbade marriage to its members and apparently were strict vegetarians. The primary feature of most Gnostic sects was the assertion that only their priests held the secret knowledge, that when learned, resulted in immortality. Some of their ascetic practices may have been a part of the secret knowledge they claimed to hold.

The commoners or laity who wished to attain this secret knowledge were at the mercy of the priesthood within the Gnostic sects. This inherent discrimination towards the worshippers established a dramatic distinction between the priesthood and the laity.

It should be noted that the term Nicolaitans is found only twice in the New Testament in Revelation 2 verses 6 and 15. It is a word coined by Jesus Christ. It is not found in any other Greek literature to date.

Nicolaus is a compound word consisting of SGD 3529 Gk. *nikē*, of which 3534 *nikos* is derived; and 2992 Gk. *laos*.

3534 Gk. *nikos*, a later form of 3529 Gk. *nikē*, means: victory, to overcome, to conquer (with the preposition 1519 Gk. *eis*, into, among, to, on, inside, upon, toward.), used adverbially meaning: *victoriously, triumphantly*.

2992 Gk. *laos*, a people, people group, tribe, nation, all those who are of the same stock and language, a number of people joined together by common bonds, the common people, the multitude, or laity referring to the brethren or members of a church.

The word Nicolaitans then carries the meaning, "Victorious over the people" or "Conquerors of the laity." It also means those who are followers of Nicolaus, whose teaching and deeds are hated by Jesus Christ according to scripture.

There is a figure of ancient history who also fits this description of conqueror or destroyer of the people, his name was Nimrod the man who founded Babel and was called the mighty hunter. Nimrod is still honored today in the festival called Saturnalia observed primarily on his birthday of December 25th. The modern-day character in this festival was also called Nicolaus and then later Saint Nick or Santa Claus. He is also victorious over the people as he is able to read the minds of all children, reward those whom he deems deserving, punishes those who are not and receives the recognition of billions of people each year who honor him.

The following quote is from a study on the web concerning the Nicolaitans, which also arrives at the same conclusions concerning the name Nicolaitans.

The term "Nicolaitans" is derived from two Greek words... "Nikos" and "Laos". Nikos is defined as: a conquest; victory; triumph; to conquer; and by implication, dominancy over the defeated. The word "nicao" literally means; to dominate-intimidate-manipulate. Additionally, the term "laos" means "the people" or the "laity." Thus exacting the phrase "to conquer (dominate-intimidate-manipulate) the people (laity). The root of the word through historical evaluation shows us that the word Nicolaitans comes from Greek *nikao*, to conquer or overcome, and *laos*, which means people and which the word laity comes from. The two words together especially means the destruction of the people and refers to the earliest form of what we call a priestly order or clergy which later on in church history divided people allowing for leadership other than those led by the spirit of the risen Lord Jesus Christ. A good translation of Nicolaitan would be "those who prevail over the people."

The Nicolaitan movement marked the beginning of an unrighteous priesthood in the church. The first item on this spirit's agenda is to divide in order to conquer. The primary objective of the Nicolaitan spirit is the separation of the body from the Lord's provision for Spiritual leadership and the insight given through that spiritual authority. (From: <http://www.votisalive.com/content/nicolaitans-counterfeit-self-appointed-leadership>)

In contrast to this abusive form of leadership within a religious structure, Jesus Christ taught time and again that followers of his Father's way of life are to be willing to lay down their lives in service to others, whenever it was necessary. All

of Christ's apostles, with the possible exception of John, were martyred while serving Almighty God and His people. Anyone who is ordained as an elder or deacon has a much greater responsibility to serve others and is more accountable for their conduct (cf. 2Cor. 1:24; Heb. 13:17). They certainly have no authority from Almighty God to wrest power from the brethren, which most religious structures do, and take control of the decision-making process associated with running church affairs.

Paul confirmed that the brethren in Antioch made independent decisions with no interference from a hierarchal form of government. They were used to making decisions as a group and did not need to be told what to do, or manipulated into taking a specific course of action,

And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea (Ac. 11:27-29; Cf. Rom. 15:26).

Not only did the brethren in the early church make decisions about daily affairs, they also made decisions regarding who should be in certain positions of responsibility. Christ's apostles confirmed that this was the case,

Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. Then the twelve (apostles) summoned the multitude of the disciples (brethren in the church; cf. vs. 3) and said, 'It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables (reference to daily church administration). Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, who we may appoint over this business (Ac. 6:1-3).

The early church was correctly organized and does not resemble the majority of religious structures today. The brethren had a lot of independence and responsibility which helped their spiritual growth and development. There is little room for personal growth and development when a human ruler, usually at the top of a hierarchal church government system, tells everyone below them what to do. In fact, it trains all the brethren to simply rely on the human ruler rather than each member working directly with Jesus Christ, in the decision-making process, through prayer, study, fasting and meditation. In fact Jesus Christ stated in Revelation 2:6 that he hates this structure. It is a form of idolatry because an idol is anything that comes between a worshipper and Almighty God. It is so bad that Christ showed, through the use of a metaphor, that many of his people are cut off from him and that his position as head of the church has been usurped by an idolatrous form of governance,

Behold, I (Christ) stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with me (Rev. 3:20).

This scripture is a sad commentary because the context is dealing with various eras of the church that Christ is supposed to be leading. It should be no surprise that there are so many different beliefs and religious organizations today. It is a testament to the fact that Jesus Christ has been removed from his rightful position as head of the church, and confusion in doctrine has resulted. Every group that has done this is guilty of breaking the first, second, third, fifth, seventh and eighth commandments. In many cases a human leader ends up being worshipped by the brethren, or church laity, instead of Almighty God. Because this religious government structure is the norm, it is no wonder that a false leader is able to take over complete control and replace the leadership that Almighty God placed in Jesus Christ (Mt. 17:5),

Let no one deceive you (Almighty God's faithful and obedient followers) by any means; for that Day (reference to Christ's return) will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin (lawlessness; cf. 1Jn. 3:4) is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple (church) of God, showing himself that he is (in place of) God (2Thess. 2:3-4).

Any religious system that allows a human leader to dominate its affairs will find itself open to many forms of abuse. It is an ungodly structure and will be removed by Jesus Christ upon his return. Almighty God placed Christ as the only head of the church, and no human leader has permission to claim that he, or she, is Christ's representative on earth, nor are they to use any of the titles and offices that were given to Christ by Almighty God,

Do not call anyone on earth your father (in a religious sense), for One is your Father, He who is in heaven (Mt. 23:9).

Many of those who claim that Peter was the chief apostle also claim that those who follow in Peter's footsteps and office have a right to claim the title, "Holy Father."

It should not be difficult to see the falsehood in this system, but sadly far too many are deceived by it (Rev. 12:9; cf. 2Cor. 11:12-15).

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor. 11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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