

DEFENDING THE PAPACY

3 BIBLE PASSAGES EVERY CATHOLIC SHOULD KNOW



The Catholic Church's teaching that the Pope has supreme authority to guide and teach God's people on earth rests on the claim that Jesus gave such authority to St. Peter. Below are three bible passages that support this claim.

MATTHEW 16:18-19

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Explanation:

There are two clues that suggest St. Peter's unique and supreme authority. First, Peter is the foundational "rock" of the church. The name "Peter" (Greek—petros) means rock. St. John confirms this in John 1:42 when he explains that the Aramaic equivalent of the Greek word petros is kepha, which means rock. If St. Peter is the visible foundation of Jesus' Church on earth, then that makes him the visible source of unity. Wherever the foundation is, there is the true Church of Jesus.

Second, Peter is given the “keys of the kingdom.” In the Jewish tradition, this imagery signifies an institutional office in the Davidic kingdom known as the Royal Steward or Master of the Palace. This official had royal authority second to none except the king himself (Is. 22:15-22). Therefore, Jesus’ handing over the keys to Peter signifies Peter as the Royal Steward, second in authority only to King Jesus.

LUKE 22:31-32

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren.

Explanation:

There are two clues that suggest Peter’s unique and supreme authority. The first is Jesus’ prayer of protection. Jesus informs the apostles that Satan desires to sift all of them. When Jesus says, “Satan demanded to have you,” the Greek text contains the second person plural, *humas*.

This is equivalent to the southern expression, “y’all.”

When Jesus speaks of his protection prayer, however, the Greek text switches to second person singular, *sou*. Jesus singles Peter out when he makes the promise: “I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.” What is the take away? In order for the apostles to avoid being sifted by Satan, they must remain with Peter. Peter is the visible source of unity in the truth.

The second clue is Jesus’ command for Peter to strengthen the brethren. This command implies the gift of infallibility since Peter can only strengthen the brethren with truth.



JOHN 21:15-17

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” A second time he said to him, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.”

Explanation:

The key to St. Peter’s supremacy is the exclusive command to feed Jesus’ sheep. Like in Matthew 16:18-19 when Jesus made Peter the visible foundation of his church, Jesus singles Peter out. The exclusive command signifies that Peter has a unique role in shepherding Christ’s flock.

This is supported by Jesus’ prophecy in John 10:10 about the one shepherd that will oversee both Jews and Gentiles. The Greek word for “shepherd” is *pōimēn*, which is of the same root as *pōimaine*, the Greek verb used when Jesus says, “shepherd [pōimaine] my sheep” (Jn 21:16).

Furthermore, the Greek text suggests Peter is the universal shepherd of Christ’s flock. Peter is given the command to feed both the “lambs” (Greek—*arnia*) and the “sheep” (Greek—*probata*)—the young and the old.

Peter’s role as the universal shepherd of Christ’s flock on earth gives reason to conclude he was the first pope.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karlo Broussard, a native of Crowley, Louisiana, left a promising musical career to devote himself full-time to the work of Catholic apologetics. For more than a decade he has traveled the country teaching apologetics, biblical studies, theology, and philosophy. Broussard has published articles on a variety of subjects in Catholic Answers Magazine and has been a regular guest on Catholic Answers Live.

Broussard, who holds a master’s degree in theology from the Augustine Institute, also worked for several years with nationally known author and theologian Fr. Robert J. Spitzer at the Magis Center of Reason and Faith.

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