

THE POWER OF THE PAPACY

Matthew 16:13-20

1. **At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked His apostles, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?”**
 - a. **They told him what the people were saying.**
 - b. **He then asked, “But who do you say that I am?”**
 - c. **Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”**

2. **Jesus said to Peter, “I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in Heaven.”**

3. **The foundation of the Roman Catholic Church is their interpretation of this passage.**
 - a. **They claim Peter was the first pope.**
 - b. **Because “Peter” comes from a word which means “rock,” they claim Peter is the rock upon which the church is built.**
 - c. **Since Peter was given the keys to bind and loose, they say the pope has the power to forgive sins or to retain sins.**
 - d. **If their interpretation of this passage is wrong, then the whole system of Roman Catholicism is wrong.**

4. **What does this passage teach?**
 - a. **“Peter” is from “petros,” masculine for “small stone.”**
 - b. **“Rock” is from “petra,” feminine for “bedrock, a large stone.”**
 - c. **Jesus is making a play on words saying: “You are a small stone, but upon this bedrock, I will build my church.”**
 - d. **The church is not built on Peter, but upon the truth that Peter had confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.**

5. **The power of binding and loosing is literally “Whatever you bind on earth shall already have been bound in Heaven.”**
 - a. **Peter used the keys when he preached the Gospel first to the Jews on Pentecost, then to the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius (Acts 2, 10).**
 2. **He simply told them what to do to be saved; this had already been decided in Heaven.**

Discussion:

I. THE CAPITAL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE WAS MOVED TO BYZANTIUM.

- A. Constantine rebuilt this city and renamed it Constantinople.**
 - 1. A leadership void was left in Rome which the Bishop of Rome began to fill.**
 - 2. The Bishop of Rome and the Bishop of Constantinople vied for power and control over the Church.**
- B. The feud between the bishops of the two centers soon began.**
 - 1. John the Faster of Constantinople claimed preeminence for himself.**
 - 2. Gregory I of Rome reprimanded John for his lack of humility.**
 - c. Boniface III of Rome proclaimed himself head of the church in 606.**

II. EMPERORS AND KINGS PROVIDED SUPPORT FOR THE PAPACY.

- A. Many of the barbaric tribes which conquered Rome accepted Roman “Christianity.”**
 - 1. Clovis, king of the Franks, commanded his army to be “baptized.”**
 - 2. Charles Martel stopped Islam’s invasion at Tours in 732 causing the Roman Church to rely on secular rulers for protection.**
 - 3. The pope gave his blessing to Charles’ son, Pepin and Pepin gave the pope rule over a large territory in Italy.**
 - 4. Pope Leo III crowned Pepin’s son, Charlemagne, in 800.**
 - 5. Charlemagne declared church property tax free and turned disputes with church officials over to ecclesiastical courts.**
- B. Three views of church and state arose:**
 - 1. The pope and the emperor were both commissioned by God but operated in different realms.**
 - 2. The emperor and the secular state are superior to the pope and the Church.**
 - 3. The pope is superior to all worldly rulers and kingdoms.**
- C. The kings were supreme over the popes at first.**

1. The popes relied on the kings for protection against Muslims, etc.
2. The kings enriched the Church by gifts of land, etc.
3. Kings commonly appointed church officials.

III. EFFORTS WERE MADE TO BOLSTER THE POWER OF THE POPES.

A. Forged documents were used to give the popes land and power.

1. Isidore, a seventh century Spanish bishop, presented a number of ancient documents to the church.
2. The “Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals” were alleged to contain early documents that supported the pope’s claims.
3. According to them, Constantine donated a large territory to the Bishop of Rome and recognized his superiority over all other bishops as well as the emperor.
4. These documents also maintained that Peter was the first pope.
5. The documents were not questioned until the 15th century.
6. In the 17th century the Roman Catholic Church acknowledged they were forged but never renounced the claims they made.

B. The popes used two weapons to enforce obedience of civil rulers.

1. They excommunicated those who opposed them.
 - a. One who was excommunicated was cut off from salvation.
 - b. He could not be married or have a funeral.
 - c. He was deprived of his citizenship.
 - d. He was denied both civil and religious protection.
2. They put entire nations under the Interdict.
 - a. No masses could be said.
 - b. No weddings could be performed or funerals conducted.
 - c. No one could be baptized.
 - d. No priests or other church officials could be ordained.
3. This had a great effect on ignorant people who knew only the Roman Catholic Church.

C. Many popes used their authority over kings and their kingdoms.

1. Pope Nicholas I forced Lothair II of Lorraine to divorce his second wife and go back to his first.

2. **Pope Gregory VIII was deposed by King Henry IV of Germany.**
 - a. **The pope retaliated by excommunicating the king and placing Germany under the Interdict.**
 - b. **King Henry was forced to beg forgiveness from the pope.**

IV. THE PAPACY WAS OFTEN BOUGHT AND SOLD, OR TAKEN BY FORCE.

A. Benedict IX was driven from Rome because of his scandalous behavior.

1. **The Church appointed Sylvester III in his place.**
2. **Benedict IX regained the papacy, then sold it to Gregory VI; however, he continued to hold the office.**
3. **Thus, for a time there were three men all claiming to be pope.**
4. **King Henry III of the Holy Roman Empire called a church council; the council deposed both Benedict and Sylvester and forced Gregory to resign.**

B. Hildebrand became Pope Gregory VII in 1073.

1. **He had been the power behind the throne of several previous popes.**
2. **He turned the choosing of a pope over to the College of Cardinals.**
3. **He took away the right of kings to appoint church officials.**
4. **He formed political alliances with various kings and used them to bring countries under his control.**
5. **He instigated the invasion of England by William the Conqueror in 1066.**
6. **Gregory wrote: “The Roman Church was founded by God alone; the Roman pope alone can with right be called universal; he alone may use the imperial insignia; his feet alone shall be kissed by all princes; he may depose the Emperor; he himself may be judged by no one; the Roman Church has never erred, nor will it err in all eternity” (The Eternal Kingdom; pp. 192, 193).**

Conclusion:

1. **Boniface VIII (1294-1303) “came in like a fox, ruled like a lion, and died like a dog.”**
2. **In 1302 he issued “Unum Sanctum” which stated that outside the Roman Catholic Church “there is neither salvation nor remission of sins.”**
3. **Salvation and remission of sins are found only in Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12;2:38).**

