

Peter or Paul – Who was the First Pope?

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Introduction

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Peter was the first pope, based largely upon their interpretation of Matthew 16, and upon numerous other vague references in scripture. Roman Catholicism promotes Peter as being specially delegated as having singular authority over the apostles by Jesus. The first issue with respect to this question is whether such a position of primacy ever existed over the church and it appears that scripture puts that to bed fairly readily by stating that the only head of the Church is Jesus (Eph 5:23). Nowhere does scripture say that this authority was delegated, but the Roman Catholic Church has chosen to read that interpretation into certain passages of scripture.

Following the examination of these arguments, we will then take this same approach and apply it to Paul to see if this same approach would, if applied to a different apostle, bring us to a much different conclusion as to who the first pope would be, if such a position were ever to exist.

Examination of the Claims for Pope Peter

The basic claim for the belief that there was even an office of the pope or for Peter holding that office comes from the Roman Catholic Interpretation of Matthew 16, so first we will examine that claim and then look at the remainder of the arguments put forward for the primacy of Peter.

First, let's look at Matthew 16, which is the basis for the Roman Catholic Claim that Jesus established the Roman Catholic Church as the one and only true Church.

Matt 16:13-19

13 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" 14 So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 And 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. 19 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."

NKJV

What do we see here?

- Jesus was speaking to his disciples as a group
- The topic was "who is Jesus"
- Peter answered that he is the Messiah, son of the living God.
- Jesus does not immediately refer to Peter, but rather the fact that the revelation of the truth came from God the father.

The word Peter here is Petros, which means stone or a piece of a rock, and then Jesus refers to the "rock" which is the revelation of who he is, and states that His church shall be built upon this revelation that He is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. The word "rock" here is Petra, which means rock, or a mass of rock. We do not build a building upon a piece of a rock or a stone, but rather upon a rock that is massive enough to provide a solid foundation. Jesus' choice of words made it clear which should be the foundation of His church.

It is interesting to note the consistency of scripture in the use of these terms, Rock and stone. Throughout scripture, the Rock is always God (Father or Son):

Deut 32:4

*4 He is the Rock, His work is perfect;
For all His ways are justice,
A God of truth and without injustice;
Righteous and upright is He.*

NKJV

Deut 32:15

*Then he forsook God who made him,
And scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation.*

NKJV

Deut 32:18

*18 Of the Rock who begot you, you are unmindful,
And have forgotten the God who fathered you.*

NKJV

Deut 32:30-31

*30 How could one chase a thousand,
And two put ten thousand to flight,
Unless their Rock had sold them,
And the LORD had surrendered them?*

31 For their rock is not like our Rock,

NKJV

2 Sam 22:47

47 "The LORD lives!

Blessed be my Rock!

Let God be exalted,

The Rock of my salvation!

NKJV

2 Sam 23:3

3 The God of Israel said,

The Rock of Israel spoke to me:

NKJV

Ps 18:46

46 The LORD lives!

Blessed be my Rock!

Let the God of my salvation be exalted.

NKJV

Ps 28:1

To You I will cry, O LORD my Rock:

NKJV

Ps 42:9

9 I will say to God my Rock,

"Why have You forgotten me?"

NKJV

Ps 95:1

Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.

NKJV

Ps 144:1

Blessed be the LORD my Rock,

NKJV

Isa 17:10

10 Because you have forgotten the God of your salvation,

And have not been mindful of the Rock of your stronghold,

NKJV

Isa 44:8

Is there a God besides Me?

Indeed there is no other Rock;

I know not one."

NKJV

Hab 1:12

O LORD, You have appointed them for judgment;

O Rock, You have marked them for correction.

NKJV

1 Cor 10:4-5

For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.

NKJV

As for the stone, there is much less, but here is what we do find:

John 1:42

42 And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone).

NKJV

1 Peter 2:4-6

4 Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

6 Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture,

NKJV

So, we are stones, but there are references to Jesus as a stone as well:

Rom 9:33

33 As it is written:

"Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense,

And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

NKJV

He is both a Rock and a Stone. That is because he is the cornerstone:

Eph 2:19-22

19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

NKJV

The cornerstone is in fact, a rock. So Jesus can be called a stone (cornerstone), but is more frequently called the Rock and even the reference to Him being a stone refers to a Rock (cornerstone). On the other hand, there is no reference in scripture anywhere of Peter being called a Rock. He is a stone, as we all are stone per 1 Peter 2:4-6. This may also be a reference to the fact that Jesus is both God (Rock) and man (stone), and is the sole person to hold such a distinction.

Jesus, as the Rock, is also the cornerstone, which is the most notable piece of the foundation, but the confession of Peter that Jesus is Christ is the foundation upon which the church will be built. We see this endorsed in scripture as well, later by Paul:

1 Cor 3:11

11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

NKJV

So the foundation is Jesus, not Peter. A church built upon Jesus, and the revelation of the fact that he is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God is the church that will stand, not a church built upon a man.

What were these keys? We see that the Pharisees had the keys:

Luke 11:52

52 Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered."

NKJV

The keys were knowledge, but what knowledge would bind people and what knowledge was it that the Pharisees did not use to loose themselves by entering in? It was the key of the truth and specifically the truth of the gospel. The Pharisees were the priests who had the key of truth by which they could guide the people into salvation, and instead of loosing the keys to open the door, they bound the key, took it away from the people and bound themselves by not using it.

We see here in Matthew 16:

Matt 16:19-20

19 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."

NKJV

Jesus gave the keys to the disciples. We see in Matthew 16:13 that he was speaking to the disciples:

Matt 16:13

13 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"

NKJV

The gospel was not given just to one man, but to the disciples to use to take into the word to bring salvation to the people. Note that even the Pharisees were not given the keys, but Luke 11:52 says that they took the keys. Who from? It was from the people of Israel. The keys were never intended to be in the hands of only some people or one person, but Jesus took the keys from the Pharisees and gave them to the disciples, people who had already entered into their salvation and who knew that to use the keys, they had to give them to the people, that they too might enter in. If they use the keys, people will no longer be bound and can enter in and be saved. It is the keys of knowledge that loose men to be free in Christ and be no longer bound by sin.

There are those who claim that the keys are the key of David mentioned in Isaiah 22, and that Jesus owns the key as King (parallel to the king in Is 22), but that the key is being delegated and is held by the servant (Peter/popes).

Isa 22:20-23

*20 Then it shall be in that day,
That I will call My servant Eliakim the son of Hilki'ah;
21 I will clothe him with your robe
And strengthen him with your belt;
I will commit your responsibility into his hand.
He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem
And to the house of Judah.
22 The key of the house of David
I will lay on his shoulder;
So he shall open, and no one shall shut;
And he shall shut, and no one shall open.
23 I will fasten him as a peg in a secure place,
And he will become a glorious throne to his father's house.
NKJV*

But that is not the case. Jesus addresses that in the book of Revelation:

Rev 3:7-8

*7 "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write,
'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts
and no one opens":
NKJV*

So Jesus has and uses that key alone. Jesus has the key and He alone uses it to open and shut.

Roman Catholics will suggest that Matthew 16 Must refer to Peter because Jesus referred personally to Peter by using the Greek singular form of the word that is interpreted as "you". Did Jesus speak to Peter personally in Matthew 16:19 to Peter by using the Greek singular of the word "you"? Let's look at other places where Jesus used the Greek singular of "you":

Matt 5:23-26

*23 Therefore if **you** bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that **your** brother has something against **you**, 24 leave **your** gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to **your** brother, and then come and offer **your** gift. 25 Agree with **your** adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver **you** to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you are thrown into prison. 26 Assuredly, I say to **you**, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.*

NKJV

In this passage, Jesus uses the Greek singular of the word "you" in each case that is highlighted. The various occurrences vary in case only (Dative, Genitive or Accusative), but all are the singular of the Greek word "you". So whom is He speaking to in Matthew 5? Let's go back to the start of the chapter and see:

Matt 5:1-2

5:1 And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. 2 Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

NKJV

He is therefore speaking to the "multitudes", not an individual, yet His words are aimed at each person as an individual by using the singular of the Greek word "you". If we look at Matthew 16 in context, we see the same thing. Jesus speaking to a number of people, but using the singular to point out that each and every person, as a priest (1 Peter 2:9) has a responsibility to use the keys, the gospel, to bring people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Those who would take the keys and claim them for themselves are following the path of the Pharisees, not of Jesus.

Man is fallible -why would God make his foundation fallible. The confession is the gospel - that Jesus is the Messiah, the son of the Living God. That is a perfect foundation for the church, the confession of the gospel of Jesus, not a man. Jesus remains the head of the church, and the gospel is the foundation.

The following are a list of other arguments put forward from scripture or that have been used in discussions with me by Roman Catholics to try to promote the doctrine of the papacy and the belief that Peter was the first pope. This does not include every argument but does represent the majority of the arguments and certainly those which are put forward most often as the strongest arguments in favour of Peter, other than Matthew 16 which is dealt with separately above.

<p style="text-align: center;">Roman Catholic Argument for Supremacy of Peter</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Scriptural Response</p>
<p>Peter alone is commanded to strengthen his brethren and oversee the Church. (John 21:15-19)</p> <p>John 21:15-18 15 So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, 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." 16 He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep." 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, 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 all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep." NKJV</p>	<p>This was not unique to Peter. Evidence that this was also for other church leaders is found here:</p> <p>1 Pet:5:1 The elders among you I exhort, who am a fellow-elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 Tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly, according to the will of God; nor yet for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd shall be manifested, ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away.</p> <p>Neither was this authority given to Peter alone to dispense. Here are the words of Paul:</p> <p>Acts 20:25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, shall see my face no more. 26 Wherefore I testify unto you this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. 27 For I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God. 28 Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood.</p>
<p>Peter is referred to first in many verses and lists of apostles indicating primacy amongst the apostles (Matt 10:2, Acts 1:13/15, Acts 2:14/37, Acts 3:1/3/4/11, Acts 4:13/19, Acts 5:29, Acts 8:14 and Acts 10:5)</p>	<p>Ordering of the names is a weak argument and is, at best circumstantial. Without any other specific evidence, such an argument will not stand. Further, there are notable exceptions to this also which suggest that this was not done intentional to present a specific message of primacy, for example, John 1:44. A very significant example is Acts 15, at the Council of Jerusalem. If Peter had primacy, certainly it should have been evident at the council, but Peter was neither the spokesman (Paul and Barnabas were), nor did he speak first, and typically the decision maker or chairman will be the last to speak to provide the summary as to what the decision is and what is to be done and that was James.</p>
<p>Peter alone among the apostles is mentioned by name as having been prayed for by Jesus Christ in order that his "faith may not fail" (Lk 22:32).</p>	<p>The context of this is that Peter declared that he would never deny Christ and then proceeded to become the apostle who is most noted for his denial, 3 times of Christ,</p>

	<p>which is recorded immediately following this prayer. This would not be the “rock” upon which the church could be built because clearly Peter was not infallible.</p>
<p>Miracles were performed through Peter, notably Acts 5:15.</p> <p>Acts 5:14-15 15 so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. NKJV</p>	<p>Acts 5 records that such miracles were done at the hands of the apostles (plural):</p> <p>Acts 5:12-13 12 And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. NKJV</p> <p>Thus, the example of Peter was but one example. Throughout scripture we have numerous examples of the apostles performing miracles, therefore this is not specific to Peter.</p>
<p>Peter made authoritative decisions in the church, for example Acts 15:6-11.</p>	<p>This was mentioned earlier and is notable because Peter is recorded as one of the speakers who provided some key input but not the decision maker. Indeed, the decision was a joint decision and was not made by even the apostles alone, but also by the elders.</p>
<p>Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:8)</p>	<p>This was also said specifically of John the Baptist (Luke 1:15), Elizabeth (Luke 1:41), Zacharias (Luke 1:67), all the apostles (Acts 2), The congregation in Acts 4:31, Paul (Acts 9:17) and is promised to all believers. This is therefore not unique to Peter.</p>
<p>Peter alone is told that he has received divine knowledge by a special revelation (Mt 16:17).</p>	<p>Not true. All the prophets received revelation from God, and Paul most certainly did because 2 Tim 3:16 says that all scripture was inspired by God. Further, scripture records a promise to all believers that the Holy Spirit would guide us into all truth (John 16:13)</p>
<p>Herod seized Peter because he was the leader of the apostles and the church (Acts 12:1-5)</p>	<p>Scripture says that James was the first target of Herod and that it was due to the urging of the Jews that he also went after Peter.</p> <p>Acts 12:1-3 12:1 Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. 2 Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword. 3 And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. NKJV</p>

<p>God specially protected Peter as the leader of the Church</p> <p>Acts 12:6-12 6 And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison. 7 Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, "Arise quickly!" And his chains fell off his hands. 8 Then the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and tie on your sandals"; and so he did. And he said to him, "Put on your garment and follow me." 9 So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. 10 When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. 11 And when Peter had come to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people." NKJV</p>	<p>This was also done for all of the apostles, thus is not unique to Peter.</p> <p>Acts 5:17-20 17 Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, 18 and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. 19 But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, 20 Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life." NKJV</p> <p>Acts 16:24-26 24 Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. 25 But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. NKJV</p>
<p>The name of Peter is given precedence in the New Testament, mentioned more than any other name.</p>	<p>These arguments are again, weak and do not show anything other than circumstantial evidence. As shown before, Peter's name is not always given precedence. Peter's name is mentioned 158 times, Paul's name 156 times. If we add in the name Saul (Paul's original name, we get Paul mentioned an additional 26 times for a total of 182, compared to Peter's total of 179 (if we include Simon), making Paul the most prominent from a numerical perspective. In the book of Acts, Peter's name is mentioned 57 times, while Paul's is mentioned 127 times.</p> <p>Using this argument, the name of Israel is mentioned 2567 times throughout the Bible, whereas Jesus is only mentioned 980 times. Does that mean that Israel is more important than Jesus?</p> <p>These arguments prove nothing.</p>
<p>Peter always spoke first, for example in Acts 2.</p>	<p>Again, not accurate. Peter was the second to last speaker at the church council in Jerusalem, for example. Further, the first speaker is not always the leader in any case. Frequently it is the last speaker. Jesus frequently did not speak first in</p>

	<p>scripture, yet I am sure that all Christians would acknowledge His authority and position.</p>
<p>Peter presided over the election of Matthias as a replacement for Judas (Acts 1:15-26.).</p>	<p>The suggestion here is that this was a meeting specifically for this purpose whereas scripture states that this was just one items which was raised during the meetings:</p> <p>Acts 1:14-17 14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. 15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said, 16 Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; 17 for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry." NKJV</p> <p>Peter, in a middle of what was essentially a prayer meeting came forward with a recommendation. Not everyone who makes a recommendation during a prayer meeting is the leader; indeed this is more often than not, not the case.</p>
<p>Peter was first to preach the Gospel (Acts 2.14). When the multitude which had listened to his sermon begged him and the other Apostles to tell them what to do in order to be saved, Peter, acting as spokesman, answered their questions. (Acts 2.37,38).</p> <p>Peter is regarded by the Jews (Acts 4:1-13) as the leader of the Christians.</p>	<p>They all were speaking prior to Peter, because they said that they heard them in their own languages.</p> <p>Acts 2:4 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. NKJV</p> <p>Peter then spoke up to explain what was happening. The fact that Peter was the last one to speak (not the first) and gave the sermon does not imply anything with respect to leadership. The fact that all the apostles were speaking is also emphasized by the fact that crowd responded to them all, not just Peter:</p> <p>Acts 2:37 37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" NKJV</p>

	<p>Nothing in Acts 4:1-3 would suggest that Peter was singled out as the leader. Indeed he is not even mentioned or identified by the Jewish leaders.</p> <p>Philip was on another occasion chosen as spokesman (Acts 8:26-7) as was Paul on numerous occasions. The position of spokesman was not unique to Peter.</p>
<p>Peter performed the first miracle (Acts 3.6).</p>	<p>The first miracle in the New Testament was performed by Jesus, not any of the apostles (John 2:1-12). Numerous miracles were performed in the Gospels and by other disciples (not necessarily apostles) such as in Luke 10:17-20, so the miracles in Acts 3 were not even the first performed by believers in the New Testament. Even if the intent is to address the first miracles performed by the Apostles after Pentecost, this is still not accurate, because the first miracles performed after Pentecost were in Acts 2 and scripture does not record the specifics of the first.</p> <p>Acts 2:43-44 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. NKJV</p>
<p>When Peter and John were apprehended by the Jews and taken before the Council, Peter spoke in defense of both himself and John (Acts 4.7-11).</p>	<p>Though the words of Peter are recorded, scripture records that both Peter and John (the only two apostles who were there) both spoke:</p> <p>Acts 4:13-14 13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. NKJV</p>
<p>Peter is specified by an angel as the leader and representative of the apostles (Mk 16:7).</p>	<p>There is nothing in this reference which suggests that Peter is leader. He is simply mentioned as one of the apostles to be advised of the events.</p>
<p>Peter who rebuked Ananias and Sapphira for deceiving the Apostles (Acts 5.3-10), and he was the one who denounced Simon Magus for trying to purchase the gifts of God from the Apostles (Acts 8.18-23).</p>	<p>Yes, this is true. Just as it is true that when Peter was out of line on a doctrinal issue, Paul rebuked him.</p> <p>Gal 2:11-12 11 Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed;</p>

	<p>NKJV</p> <p>If the ability to rebuke indicates positional authority, that would place Paul over Peter.</p>
<p>Paul, three years after his conversion, went to Jerusalem to be confirmed as an Apostle by Peter. Otherwise he would not have been accepted as such by his hearers (Gal 2:1).</p>	<p>Scripture says that he met with Peter and James, and says nothing about confirmation. Indeed it is in Acts 9:26 where Paul is accepted by the other apostles and it is Barnabas who causes him to be accepted, not Peter.</p> <p>Acts 9:26-28 26 And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. NKJV</p>
<p>Peter demonstrated his supremacy over the whole church when he went about visiting all the churches in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria (Acts 9.31,32), whereas St. Paul visited only those cities where he himself had preached (Acts 15.36).</p>	<p>This does not say that Peter visited all the churches, but rather that he went through all parts of the country:</p> <p>Acts 9:32-33 32 Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all parts of the country, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda. NKJV</p> <p>The reference to Paul simply refers to one of his missionary trips. Based upon the scripture record, Paul was the most widely traveled of all the apostles.</p>
<p>Peter was the first apostle to set out for, and enter the empty tomb (Lk 24:12; Jn 20:6).</p>	<p>Again, this does not suggest that he was a leader. Scripture records that most of them were unsure as to whether to believe what they were told and Peter “ran” to the tomb. Peter gets credit for checking it out, but that does not make him “pope”.</p>
<p>Matt 16:6-7 7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread." NKJV</p>	<p>Matt 16:6-7 7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread." NKJV</p>

<p>Peter was first to convert a Gentile, having beheld a vision that gave him to understand that there was to be no distinction between Jew and Gentile (Acts 10.9-35). He defended this action before the Jews and convinced them that it was God's will to save the Gentiles as well as themselves (Acts 11.1-18).</p>	<p>This is true, but again has no bearing on leadership over the apostles.</p>
<p>Christ teaches from Peter's boat, and the miraculous catch of fish follows (Lk 5:1-11): perhaps a metaphor for the pope as a "fisher of men" (cf. Mt 4:19). Peter leads the apostles in fishing (Jn 21:2-3,11). The "bark" (boat) of Peter has been regarded by Catholics as a figure of the Church, with Peter at the helm.</p>	<p>Peter was a fisherman and had a boat. There is nothing special about a fisherman having a boat and this does not make him the leader, there are numerous people down at the docks – the assumption made here is a major stretch. The reference to be “fisher of men” was not singular as is claimed here, but plural “fishers of men” (Matt 4:19, Mark 1:17). There is no singular use of this term in the Bible.</p>
<p>During Herod's persecution of the Church St. James was apprehended and beheaded, without there being any great commotion among the Christians, but when St. Peter was cast into prison, "prayer was made without ceasing by the Church unto God for him" (Acts 12.1-5). The whole Church was aroused when its head was taken captive, and an angel from Heaven came to release him (Acts 12.6-11).</p>	<p>James was killed and therefore prayer for James was no longer necessary. He was with the Lord. Peter was still alive and thus it made sense to pray for his well-being. Note that rather than being an indication of any positional superiority for Peter, this is an indication that that the early church did not pray for the dead.</p>
<p>Jesus Christ uniquely associates Himself and Peter in the miracle of the tribute-money (Mt 17:24-27)</p>	<p>In this case, we are not told who was present. It may only have been Peter and Jesus, and in any case, a comment was originally made to Peter by those who received the temple tax, so they involved Peter first, not Jesus. To suggest that there is any basis for making Peter a leader or uniquely singled out in this case would require numerous unsubstantiated assumptions.</p>

Note that none of the arguments give any direct indication of positional authority over the apostles, and many are indeed not even in concert with scripture. Using the same approach, arguments could be made for positional authority for other apostles, and indeed a much stronger argument could be made for Paul having authority over the apostles, if indeed any such position existed. That fact is, though, that scripture gives absolutely no indication that any such position ever did exist, indicating that the only head of the church was Jesus.

Examination of the Claims for Pope Paul

Now that we have examined the arguments which are put forward to support the claim that there may have been a Pope Peter, let us try a

different approach to see if the approach taken to argue in favour of Pope Peter is sound, or if that same approach is applied to a different apostle, would we arrive at the same conclusion. If we do arrive at the same conclusion, we know that the argument is not unique and thus the approach is faulty since by definition there could not simultaneously be two popes under the definition of the role established by the Roman Catholic Church.

The following chart is a summary of the argument in favour of the Apostle Paul being the first pope, following the same approach taken in the previous section for Peter.

Argument for Supremacy of Paul	Scripture Reference / Comments
Paul is the only apostle who is called God's chosen vessel who will bear His name before Jews and Gentiles (Acts 9:15).	Acts 9:14-16
Paul is the last apostle chosen by God, apart from the other twelve.	Acts 9
The resurrected Christ appears to Paul in a different way than He appeared to the other apostles (Acts 9:3-6).	Acts 9:3-6
Paul publicly rebuked Peter, making him the only apostle to publicly rebukes another apostle and establishing his authority even over Peter.	Gal 2:11
Paul is the only apostle to indicate that he has authority in all the churches	1 Cor 7:17
Paul is the only apostle to call himself "father"	1 Cor 4:15
Paul was given the dispensation of God's grace for the church at Ephesus.	Eph 3:2
Paul is mentioned more in the New Testament than any other apostle, more than Peter.	Paul (or Saul) is mentioned 182 times, compared to Peter (or Simon) total of 179.
The book of Acts, which mentions all of the apostles, discusses Paul more than any other apostle.	Paul is mentioned 127 times, compared to 57 for Peter.
Paul was the first apostle to write a book of scripture.	

Paul wrote more books of the New Testament than any other apostle and thus was able to communicate infallibly on matters of faith and doctrine when he penned these epistles.	
Paul is the first apostle to be taken to Heaven to receive a revelation	2 Cor 12:1-4
Paul is the only apostle Satan was concerned about enough to give him a thorn in the flesh.	2 Cor 12:7
Paul appears to have suffered for Christ more than any other apostle	2 Cor 11:21-33
Paul's missionary journeys were more extensive than any other apostle	
Paul provided the most in-depth theological writings in the New Testament. Peter stated that some of Paul's teachings were hard to understand, thus indicating that Paul's understanding of theology exceeded Peter's understanding.	2 Peter 3:15-16. Note that the book of Romans has been sometimes called the "Theology Book" of the New Testament.
Paul was the first apostle whose writings were recognized as scripture	2 Peter 3:15-16
Paul states that he is an authority speaking the commandments of God	1 Cor 14:37-38
Paul opens the meeting and sets the agenda of the council in Jerusalem.	Acts 15
Peter's input to the council in Acts 15 are accepted after Paul and Barnabas speak the second time.	Acts 15:12. It is interesting to note in comparison that in modern parliamentary procedure, the only person who can speak twice to a motion is the originator (typically the government), which then shuts down further debate. After Paul speaks the second time James closes the meeting with the decision.
Paul was the only apostle with advanced education and formal theological training	Phil 3:1-6
All men will be judged by Paul's gospel.	Rom 2:16
Paul establishes the rules regarding order in the church and church government.	For example, 1 Cor 14
Extraordinary miracles came as a result of Paul's hands and clothing.	Acts 19:11-12

Paul was protected by God from death and serious physical harm.	Acts 14:19, Acts 28:3-6, 2 Cor 11:23
The Jewish exorcists appear to acknowledge Paul as having special authority in the church.	Acts 19:13
The demons acknowledge the authority of Jesus and Paul. Peter is not even mentioned.	Acts 19:15
The Jews recognize that Paul teaches Christianity everywhere, thus appearing to make him the primary teaching authority.	Acts 21:28
Paul is a prophet in addition to being an apostle.	2 Thess 2:3-12
Only Paul is referred to as being set apart for his ministry and called in grace by God from his mother's womb.	Gal 1:15
Paul is the only apostle who works by himself, only later coordinating his efforts with the other apostles.	Gal 1:16-18
Paul is the only person said to bear the marks of Jesus Christ in his body.	Gal 6:17
Widespread interest amongst Christians regarding Paul and his ministry, looking to him as their example and their encouragement.	Phil 1:12-4
Christians served Paul.	Phil 2:30
Paul worked more than the other apostles, sustained by God's grace.	1 Cor 15:10
Paul was to be delivered from every evil deed, and preserved for the Kingdom of God.	2 Tim 4:18
Paul had the largest number of churches under his direct supervision and established numerous new churches	
Paul was in Rome – there is dispute as to whether Peter was in Rome.	2 Tim 1:17
Paul provided direction and correction to the churches on matters of faith and doctrine	

through his letters and in person.	
Paul is the only apostle ever taken up into heaven while alive	2 Cor 12:1-6

Note that by examining the strengths of Paul, we find that the argument for Paul being the first pope is stronger than the arguments for Peter since Paul appeared to be better qualified, had better established credentials with respect to authority over churches, and even the ability to correct and rebuke “Pope Peter” himself.

Conclusion

- 1) As we established at the start of this document, there is not and never was any primacy role in the church other than that held by Jesus Himself
- 2) The test of the claims for Peter as first Pope fail the test of scripture
- 3) The Apostle Paul would have an equal or stronger claim to the position of first Pope if such a position had existed.

Sources

- 1) Internet discussions
- 2) 50 New Testament Proofs For Petrine Primacy and the Papacy, <http://ic.net/~erasmus/RAZ112.HTM>
- 3) 51 New Testament Proofs for Pauline Primacy and the Papacy, <http://members.aol.com/jasonte3/paul51.htm>