Debunking Another Catholic Myth: Peter Given the Keys to the Church

Destroying Rome's authority over the church and apostolic succession with a few verses of scripture

"And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And 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 shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:16-19)

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Peter is the foundation of the church and that Peter was given the keys to the church. They believe Matthew 16:16-19 teaches that Jesus Christ made Peter "the supreme head of the church." Anyone that believes what they read in the Bible knows that Christ is the head of the church (Colossians 1:15-18), not Peter. We also know that the foundation of the church is not Peter, or any of the apostles, but Jesus Christ alone (1 Corinthians 10:4, Isaiah 28:16, 1 Corinthians 3:11, 1 Peter 2:4-8). The Bible says the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF being the chief corner stone thereof (Ephesians 2:20-22). However this study will not focus on who or what is the foundation of the church, rather we will focus on these keys that were given unto Peter. No one can deny that Peter was given keys, but what were these keys? Did he give these keys to someone else before he died? What was given unto Peter? What authority was given unto Peter?

The Roman Catholic Church says these keys given unto Peter were the keys to the Church.² If this interpretation is correct, that would mean Peter has authority over the church, and the extent of authority bestowed upon Peter is relayed in the next verse which states: whatsoever Peter binds or looses on earth is what is bound or loosed in heaven. That is some pretty weighty authority. Now let me say this, I do believe and agree whole-heartedly that Peter was given the keys to the kingdom of heaven however this has nothing to do with the church, the body of Christ.

What is the kingdom of heaven? That's a great question. If we do not understand what the kingdom of heaven is, how can we ever know what Peter had authority over? In order to understand this passage, we must figure out what the kingdom of heaven is. Now Rome assumes the kingdom of heaven is the church. Many Protestant denominations believe the same thing. They believe the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are the same kingdom.

Now if you are unfamiliar with what the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are, check out the Bible study or the audio discussion for an in-depth study on that topic. Briefly stated, the kingdom of heaven is a physical earthly Jewish kingdom that existed in the past under David, Solomon, etc and ceased to exist after the Babylonians came and destroyed Jerusalem. As the Bible says, "The crown is fallen from our head" (Lamentations 5:16). Now "our head" is referring to the nation of Israel, not the Gentiles or the Church (the body of Christ). The kingdom of heaven belongs only to the Jew and

was given only to the Jew and that was never transferred over to the church. The kingdom of heaven is what the Jews were looking for at the first coming of Christ.

The kingdom of heaven is the kingdom of Israel headed up by God's choice. When Jesus shows up he preaches the kingdom of heaven is at hand, that is, the kingdom of David is about to be restored. Now let me ask you this, was David's kingdom physical or spiritual? It was a literal, physical, visible, earthly kingdom.

Check this passage out, "And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him. And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way. And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest." (Mark 11:7-10). Do you see that? They were saying the kingdom of our father David (i.e. the kingdom of heaven) was coming in the name of the Lord! That is what the Jew was looking for in the 1st century. That is what the apostles were looking for after the resurrection of Christ.

"When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? "And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:6-8). Notice the words "restore again the kingdom to Israel." This means this kingdom previously existed. Also this passage makes it clear, that this kingdom is Israel's kingdom and does not belong to the church or the Gentiles.

Well what about Paul preaching about the kingdom of God to the Gentiles and all that? What about what Jesus said in Matthew 21:43 that the kingdom of God would be taken from the Jews and given to the Gentiles? Surely the church is a partaker of the kingdom of God? Amen, Amen you are right! The church does partake of the kingdom of God! However that has nothing to do with the physical, literal, earthly kingdom. According to scripture, the kingdom of God is spiritual and not visible (see the Kingdom of Heaven vs. Kingdom of God study and audio discussion). You see the problem is people fail to make a distinction between the two kingdoms. The problem is they don't obey God and rightly divide the word of truth.

So lets' get back to Matthew 16:16-19. So the Bible says Peter was given the keys to the kingdom of heaven. What does that mean? It means that Peter was given the keys to the literal, physical, visible, Jewish, Davidic, earthly kingdom, which according to scripture, has nothing to do with the church! Do you see that? It's clear. Peter was given great power and authority over something but that something is not and was not the church. Also, Peter was not the only one that ever had authority over the kingdom of heaven.

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah: And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open." (Isaiah 22:20-22).

Notice Eliakim had these keys before Peter did. Now what keys did Eliakim have? It was to the house of David. That is the physical, literal, earthly, Jewish, visible kingdom headed up by God's choice. He had the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Eliakim's keys had nothing to do with the church and he had the same keys that Peter had! You need to get that. Notice the similar language compared to Matthew 16:16-19, "he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open." Peter had the authority to open and shut up the kingdom of heaven (which has nothing to do with the church). For further confirmation go to Galatians 2:

"But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision." (Galatians 2:7-9). The gospel of circumcision committed to Peter was the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. He had the power to open up or shut up the kingdom of heaven for the Jew. Whatsoever he would bound would be bound in heaven and whatsoever he would loose would be loosed on earth.

Did you know Jesus Christ could have come back if the nation repented?

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:19-21).

You see that? If the nation repented as a whole and was converted (born-again), the Lord would have sent unto them Jesus Christ! Through Peter's preaching God was given the circumcision a second chance to get it right and receive and enter into the kingdom of heaven: but they would not. So from 30 AD to 70 AD God gave the Jews 40 years to repent and believe the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. If the nation as a whole did so, Jesus Christ would have come back to earth. This is similar to the Jews wandering around for 40 years in the wilderness when they didn't have to. But because of their unbelief they could not enter in. So because the Jews continued to reject Christ and the Holy Ghost, they could not enter into the kingdom of heaven because of unbelief (See Hebrews 3-4). So after 40 years, God destroys the Temple and Jerusalem

and scatters to the Jews to the four corners of the earth and the kingdom of heaven is postponed indefinitely.

Look at Revelation 3:7:

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." Look who has the keys to the kingdom of heaven now? So much for apostolic succession, huh? By the time John writes the book of Revelation (around 90 AD), Jesus Christ takes back the keys that he gave to Peter. The kingdom of heaven can no longer be brought in, it is postponed, and now God is focusing all his attention on calling out of the Gentiles a people for his name.

We have seen from scripture that the keys to the kingdom of heaven have absolutely nothing to do with the church. These keys deal with the earthly, Jewish, Davidic, kingdom. This is what Peter had authority over. He was given by God the gospel of the circumcision to preach unto the Jew (the kingdom of heaven). Through Peter's preaching, if the nation as a whole repented, Jesus Christ could have returned back then. But they did not, so by the time John writes Revelation, the keys to the kingdom of heaven go back to Jesus Christ and the kingdom of heaven is postponed indefinitely and cannot be brought in by anyone besides the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Therefore the keys given to Peter have not been passed down in an unbroken line of succession, as Rome says, thus destroying with a verse of scripture the devilish doctrine of apostolic succession.

¹ http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12260a.htm

² Ibid.