

UNSTOPPABLE CHURCH

Then and *Now*
in 30 Minutes



Episode 44 - Established

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THE SETTING



Our setting for this episode is **St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City**. This Roman Catholic Church is built on the site of a basilica begun by Constantine in the fourth century AD but has been rebuilt ever since. In the 16th century Michelangelo was very involved in its design and décor. It is huge: 535,400 sq ft (49,737sqm), 15 storeys high, and able to accommodate 20,000 people (with room for a further 300,000 in the square outside). It has a magnificent dome, 138 ft (42 m) in diameter with 16 windows located right above what has been declared to be St. Peter's tomb, following the discovery in the 1930s of an ancient Roman necropolis beneath the Basilica. The tomb is located just behind the 'confessio', a semi-circular space at the level of the grottoes beneath. 'Confessio' is the Latin for 'confession' and refers to Peter's confession of faith that would one day lead to his martyrdom.



St. Peter's Basilica



The 'Confession' - the semi-circular space before St. Peter's tomb



BIBLE READING

[Matt 16:13-20; Jn 21:15-23](#)

KEY IDEAS



Peter's ministry in Acts

We have encountered Peter at several key points in Acts, working primarily among Jews: at the ascension; in the prayer meeting; at Pentecost; in the Temple, when he healed the lame beggar; before the Sanhedrin; confronting Ananias and Sapphira; in Samaria, when he went to see what God was doing among the Gentiles; in Lydda, when he prayed for Dorcas to be raised from dead; in Joppa where he had his vision that took him to Caesarea and the Roman centurion and his household; in Jerusalem, explaining what had happened among the Gentiles; being jailed by Herod but miraculously freed; and at the Council of Jerusalem in AD 49 in chapter 15. But what happened to him then? Well, we can piece some bits of the puzzle together.

Peter's ministry after Acts

After his rescue from jail, "he left for another place" ([Acts 12:17](#)), though we have no idea where. He certainly visited Antioch ([Gal 2:11-21](#)), and may have visited Corinth ([1 Cor 1:12](#)). He was closely associated with churches in North Asia-Minor - "Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" ([1 Pet 1:1](#)), which might explain why the Spirit resisted Paul from going there in Acts 16, because there was work already going on in that region. He finally ended up

in Rome, cryptically referred to as “Babylon” in [1 Pe 5:13](#). Some scholars think he may have gone there to heal the huge Jewish-Gentile divide in the Roman church that is reflected so clearly in Paul’s letter in Romans (chapters 9-11).

He wrote two letters: 1 Peter, written in the early AD 60’s, just as things started to get hot for Christians under Nero, and 2 Peter, written in AD 67/68 before his martyrdom, just as Jesus had prophesied ([Jn 21:15-23](#)). Somehow, Mark (Barnabas’ nephew) linked up with Peter; and it would be Mark who, in the late 50’s or early 60’s AD, would write down Peter’s account of Jesus’ life in what we now call Mark’s Gospel. Our earliest evidence for this is Papias who, writing in AD 140, cites John the Elder: “The Elder used to say: Mark, in his capacity as Peter’s interpreter, wrote down accurately as many things as he recalled from memory - though not in an ordered form - of the things either said or done by the Lord.” Since both Matthew and Luke framed their accounts around Mark’s story, we should be very grateful to him and Peter!

Peter, the Rock

Following Peter’s confession of Jesus as the Christ, Jesus had declared that “on this rock” he would build his church ([Matt 16:18](#)). Roman Catholics see this as his commissioning of Peter as the first Pope, and that an unbroken line of succession links him to today’s Pope, thus giving him Peter’s (and therefore Christ’s) authority. Others, however, see “this rock” as referring to Peter’s confession rather than to Peter personally, and that Jesus was saying that he would establish his Church on every confession of him as Christ, God and Saviour. Either way, the Church is truly established - ultimately not on any human individual, but on the work of Christ alone. And that is what makes it unstoppable.



1. Have you personally made the confession about Jesus that Peter did: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”? And if so, what difference is that making to your life?
2. Peter knew he was primarily called to the Jews, and Paul knew he was primarily called to the Gentiles. But what is God’s calling on your own life?
3. How might a renewed sense of being established on Christ help the Church become unstoppable once again today?



For a behind-the-scenes glimpse into what was involved to create this podcast series listen to Mike and David recounting their experiences!

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