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THE FALLEN HEROES OF FAITH – LESSON 7

PETER

The Apostle Peter was the most prominent, respected, and powerful leader of the early church from his place in Jerusalem. It is believed by many scholars that he ministered from Jerusalem his entire life, leaving only for brief trips to where he was called to minister for a specific purpose.

There is no evidence at all that he ever went to Rome. However, the Roman Catholic Church tries to establish its legitimacy for an early date by claiming Peter as its first Pope, spent his last twenty-five years as “Bishop of Rome.” No legitimate Christian Scholars outside of the Catholic or orthodox churches place any validity to such a far-fetched claim.

Nevertheless, we do have some credible accounts from the earliest period historians of the manner of Peter’s death. Fox tells of the account, written by Hegesippus, which I will describe here in my own words and comments:

Peter’s martyrdom came during the persecution of Christians by the evil Roman Caesar Nero. Nero had begun persecutions in about A.D. 64. In A.D. 67 Nero assaulted Jerusalem where he killed many Jews and perhaps took a few prisoners. He destroyed some parts of the city. He returned in A.D. 70, and utterly destroyed the city, including the Temple. The Jews who managed to escape death all fled from Jerusalem and Israel seeking safety in other countries throughout Europe and Asia. This scattering of the Jews is called “the Diaspora.”

It was during this period that Nero sought after Peter since he was the main leader of this “troubling group” of Christians. Other believers had learned that Nero’s men were coming after Peter, so they urged him to flee the city and seek safety elsewhere. Peter heeded their advice and prepared to flee, but as he came to the city gate to exit, he had a vision. In the vision he saw Jesus coming to meet him. Peter then asked Jesus, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus answered Peter saying, “I have come to be crucified again.” Peter understood it to mean that Jesus was being vicariously crucified in Peter. The Apostle Peter returned to his place and was taken by Nero’s men to be crucified.

Peter chose to be crucified upside down. He considered himself (humbly) unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as Jesus. This probably took place during Nero’s 67A.D. terror in Jerusalem, and about the same time that Paul was martyred in Rome by Nero.

Would you or I count ourselves worthy to die a cruel death for Christ? Many have recanted, but that dooms them for eternity. I so choose the martyr’s crown.