

Upon What “Rock” Did Jesus Build His Church?

Did Peter lead heaven, or did heaven lead Peter?

Matthew 16.18–19

Based on an article by Troy Cummings

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I. Matthew 16.13–16 – The Background to the Text

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” (Matt 16.13–16).

A. Jesus asked His disciples what people were saying about Him.

1. They explained that people said He was John or one of the prophets,
2. believing that one of them had been resurrected.

B. Had the popular opinion influenced the disciples?

1. Peter spoke up, declaring Jesus to be
2. the Christ, the Son of the living God.

C. What then is the context, or the topic?

1. Jesus wanted to know what people said about His identity.
2. The identity of Jesus of Nazareth was the topic.

II. Matthew 16.17–19 – The Text

A. Why then did Jesus say the following to Peter?

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” (Matt 16.17–18).

B. First, Jesus was keeping His promise

1. that if we confess Him,

2. He will confess us,

32 "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. 33 But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven" (Matt 10.32–33).

C. Second, remember the context and what the topic was.

1. What was the topic?
2. The topic was the true identity of Jesus of Nazareth.

D. Third, that should clue us in on what the "rock," must be.

1. The rock would be the truth about Jesus, both
 - a) His messiahship and
 - b) His deity.
2. Why would Jesus build His church on any other rock?
 - a) All other rocks are feeble.
 - b) Peter was certainly weak as a mere man.

E. Also, in many other languages besides English, gender plays an important role.

1. Matthew recorded this conversation of Jesus with His disciples in Greek.
2. Jesus made a powerful contrast that we do not readily see in English.
 - a) "Peter," which is masculine means stone or rock.
 - b) "Rock," which is feminine means bedrock, foundation rock, or even mountain.

F. What about verse 19?

1. Does it teach that Peter would lead heaven, vice versa?
2. Troy Cummings gave this literal translation of the Greek text,

"whatever you *may* bind upon the earth shall be having been found in the heavens, and whatever you *may* loose upon the earth shall be having been

loosed in the heavens.”

3. Then Troy translated it into a more smooth and modern English,

“whatever you may bind upon the earth will be what has already been bound in heaven, and whatever you may loose upon the earth will be what has already been loosed in heaven.”

a) Jesus assured Peter that he would only be able to bind or loose

b) what heaven had already bound or loosed.

(1) Peter would be a spokesman,

(2) not the head of the church.

III. Other Texts

A. First Corinthians 3 makes it clear there can only be one foundation,

11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ (1Co 3.11).

B. Ephesians 2 refers to the foundation of the apostles,

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 fitted 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 (Eph 2.19–22).

1. Does that mean the apostles are the foundation, or

2. that they laid the foundation by what they taught, primarily the divine Sonship of Jesus?

C. Revelation 21.14

14 Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the

names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (Rev 21.14).

1. This affirms the same truth as Ephesians 2.

IV. The Gates of Hades

A. Jesus assured Peter and the other disciples

1. that nothing could stop His building of the church,
2. not even the gates of Hades,

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” (Matt 16.18).

B. The King James of 1611 uses hell instead of Hades.

1. Hell had a different meaning in 1611 than it does today.
2. Back then it could refer to several things:
 - a) the grave,
 - b) the abode of the dead,
 - c) place of punishment.
 - (1) Today, when people read that in the King James,
 - (2) they think Jesus was promising that not even hell itself
 - (a) could prevail against the church, because
 - (b) He would build something so mighty.
3. However, the Greek word for hell does not appear in the text, but
 - a) the Greek word for Hades does.
 - b) Hades is where the spirits of the dead go.
 - (1) Hades has two places,
 - (a) one of which is a place of torment and
 - (b) the other is a place of paradise.

- (2) Those spirits remain there until the resurrection (Rev 20.13).
 - (a) No one can leave Hades on his or her own.
 - (b) Only the God of heaven can perform such a task.

C. Therefore, in verse 18

1. Jesus promised that death itself could not prevent His building of the church.
2. He would die, but
 - a) even as He went through the gates of Hades to enter it,
 - b) so He would exit through the gates of Hades and
 - (1) reunite with His body and
 - (2) later build the church.

D. So, the "it" of verse 18 does not refer to

1. the church, but
2. His building of the church.

V. The Keys

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" (Matt 16.19).

A. What are the keys?

B. For what do we use keys?

1. We use them to lock and unlock locks.
2. What would Peter and the disciples unlock?
 - a) They would unlock the kingdom of heaven.
 - b) By what they taught, they would open the gates of heaven.