

Is the Church built on a “Petrine Rock?”

by
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There seems to be much confusion about Jesus’ declaration in Matthew. The Catholic Church is speciously founded on it and Protestants to a large degree are equally confused about the meaning of Matthew 16: 15. “What is the big deal?” you ask, “There is nothing vital here.” My apology to my Catholic brethren, but my response is: “Look at the Catholic Church. They are cultic, if not a cult based on proof texting, man-made (Pharisaic) traditions, and eisegesis of Scripture.”

In Matthew 16: 15-18 Jesus asked the disciples: “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (verse 16).

Jesus then replied to Peter: “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that *you are Peter*, and on *this rock* I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (verses 17-18).

The Original Language

There are several factors in the Greek text of this passage that argue against the idea that Peter is the rock upon which the church is built. *First*, whenever Peter is referred to in this passage (Matthew 16), it is in the second person (“you”), but “this rock” is in the third person (verse 18). Moreover, “Peter” (*petros*) is a masculine singular term and rock” (*petra*) is a feminine singular term. Hence, they do not, they cannot, have the same referent.

Prolificacy in Writings

The Catholic Church posits that Peter was the “Prince of Apostles” but there is no scriptural basis for this only myth and tradition. What is more, the same authority Jesus gave to Peter (Matthew 16:18) is later given to all the apostles.

As one reads through Acts there is a definitive shift from a Petrine domination to a Pauline primacy. It is the case that despite the Catholic claim that, “He [Peter] is recorded more than any other disciple, . . .”(www.Catholic.org). It is Paul’s writings that permeate half of the New Testament. Even John is more prolific than Peter, writing the Gospel of John, First, Second, and Third John, and Revelations. Peter wrote only First and Second Peter.

(Matthew 18:18). So Peter is *not* unique. It would seem that in Matthew 16:18 Jesus was praising Peter for his accurate statement about Him (“You are the Christ”), and was introducing His work of building the church on Himself (Jesus) as the Rock; the capstone (see 1 Corinthians 3:11)¹.

Ephesians 2:20 affirms that the church is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the capstone.” Two things are clear from this: first, that *all* the apostles, not just Peter, *are the foundation* of the church; second, that the only one who was given a place of uniqueness or prominence was Christ, the capstone.

Indeed, Peter himself referred to Christ as “the cornerstone” of the church (1 Peter 2:7) and the rest of believers as “living stones” (verse 4) in the superstructure of the church. Scripture rightly glorifies *only* Messiah—only He is worthy (Rev. 5:12).

¹ For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.