

The Rock

By Paul Juris

And I say to thee, Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18)

The purpose of this study is to determine from Scriptural evidence, who Christ really established His church upon. When we arrive at a definite conclusion from Scripture, as to who the “rock”· Christ is speaking of in Matthew 16:18 is, we will then have our answer.

Much rests upon the meaning of this verse. It is far too important to be taken lightly. It would be very unwise to jump to conclusions, judge by appearances or take anything for granted. Too much is at stake to chance arriving at the wrong meaning. If Peter is the rock who Christ established His church upon, then most Protestants today are neglecting and failing to give recognition where it is due. However, if Peter is not the rock who Christ established His church upon, then someone is assuming that Peter and his successors were given an authority which in God's sight does not actually exist.

The positive method and evidence which we are about to make use of, should give to anyone who is willing to take God at His word, the answer to this question, beyond a shadow of a doubt. First of all, let us determine whether or not we can arrive at more than one meaning to this verse. If it can appear to have more than one meaning, then it is a verse of Scripture which requires interpretation. You say that Peter is the rock. Another will say, no, that Christ is the rock. So we have two possibilities. This of course places the verse in a position of one that requires interpretation. Now let us go from there.

The following is considered by many to be the best known and accepted method for arriving at the correct interpretation of Scripture. When confronted with any verse of Scripture which can be interpreted with more than one meaning, then the verse in question must be considered in the light of all other Scriptures throughout the Bible which pertain directly to the subject in question. By way of illustration, it is much like assembling the pieces of a jig saw puzzle. One piece of the puzzle in itself usually does not reveal very much. In the puzzle it has a definite place and can only be correctly used in that one place, where it fits. However, when we set about joining other pieces directly connected with this single piece, the picture becomes easier to understand. Depending upon the number of pieces correctly joined together, will determine how much of the picture will be clearly understood.

Now let us apply this thinking to the Scriptures. Any verse of Scripture inspired by the Holy Spirit and contained in the Bible, has one particular meaning by its Author. God, who is the Author of the Bible, had one definite meaning for everything He said and for which He inspired writers of the books of the Bible to write. At the same time, we are aware of the fact that God never contradicts Himself. Also, that the Word of God in itself, cannot contain error. All true Christians uphold the inerrancy of the Scriptures.

These facts, again comparing with our illustration, would be the equivalent of this; although, not knowing exactly where each piece fits, yet we have the assurance and guarantee by God, that all pieces do belong to the puzzle. Also that each has its correct place, according to the intention of its Author. By joining other Scriptures pertaining directly to this subject, from throughout the Bible, to the one in question, the Bible **MAKES ITSELF CLEAR AS TO ITS MEANING**. Truly it may be said that Scriptures (plural)

interprets Scripture (singular). In other words, whatever God says in one place in the Bible, will usually be repeated, confirmed, and in perfect harmony in other places throughout the Bible.

The only positive way to arrive at a meaning which we can be absolutely certain is correct, is to use only parts which belong in the picture. In interpretation, personal opinion, human reasoning, logic, assuming or judging by appearances only, is like putting foreign pieces belonging to another puzzle, into the picture. They can never possibly fit correctly. They cause confusion. They deceive and detract from the true meaning. Let's face it, we cannot expect to be able to understand what God's Word says unless we become thoroughly familiar with its contents. For the Christian, nothing can equal earnest, diligent, consistent, prayerful study of God's Word to prepare him for this task. It is highly desirable to be so familiar and absorbed in the contents of the Bible that along with the leading of the Holy Spirit, the Christian may clearly see where and how the truths obviously fit together to form sound Christian doctrine.

Us all care to present thyself to God as a man approved, a worker that cannot be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. (II Timothy 2:15)

All Scripture is inspired of God and useful for teaching, for reproving, for correcting, for instructing in justice; that the man of God may be perfect, equipped for every good work. (II Timothy 3:16, 17)

Now we should be prepared to apply this method, in order to find God's answer to our question. Once again our question. In Matthew 16:18 is the "Rock" upon which Christ established His church Peter? Or is the "Rock" Christ? God's answer:

For other foundation no one can lay, but that which has been laid, which is Christ Jesus. (I Corinthians 3:11)

And all drank the same spiritual drink (for they drank from the spiritual rock which followed them, and **THE ROCK WAS CHRIST**). (I Corinthians 10:4) *emphasis add*

Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, *The stone which the builders rejected, has become the corner stone; by the Lord this has been done; and it is wonderful in our eyes?*" (Matthew 21:42) (Compare with Psalm 117:21, 23)

For they stumbled or the stumbling-stone, as it is written, "Behold I lay in Sion, a stumbling-stone and a ROCK of scandal: and whoever believes (trusts) in him (Christ) shall not be disappointed" (Romans 9:33)

Let us see what the apostle, St. Peter, had to say concerning this.

Draw near to him (Christ), a living stone, rejected indeed by men but chosen and honored by God . . . Hence Scripture says, "Behold. I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, chosen, precious; and he who believes in it shall not be put to shame." For you, therefore, who believe is this honor; but to those who do not believe, "A stone which the builders rejected, the same has become the head of the corner," and, "A stumbling-stone, and a ROCK of scandal," to those who stumble at the word, and do not believe. (I Peter 2:4. 6-8)

This is "The stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the corner stone." Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. (Also the words of St. Peter, speaking of Jesus Christ, as recorded in Acts 4:11, 12)

Turning to the Old Testament we find the following:

O Lord, my ROCK, my fortress, my deliverer. My God, my ROCK of refuge. Psalm 117:3 (18:3).

O Lord, my ROCK and my redeemer. Psalm 18:15 (19:15).

To you, O LORD, I call; O MY ROCK. Psalm 27:1 (28:1).

Be my ROCK of refuge, a stronghold to give me safety. You are my ROCK and my fortress; for your name's sake you will lead and guide me. Psalm 30:3, 4 (31:3, 4).

I sing TO GOD, MY ROCK: "Why do you forget me?" Psalm 41:10 (42:10).

Only in God is my soul at rest; from him comes my salvation. HE ONLY IS MY ROCK and my salvation. (Psalm 61:2, 3).

Only in God be at rest, my soul, for from him comes my hope. He only is my ROCK and my salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be disturbed. With GOD is my safety and my glory, HE IS THE ROCK of my strength; my refuge is in God Trust in him at all times, O my people! Pour out your hearts before him; God is our refuge! Psalm 61:6-9 (62:6-9).

Be my ROCK of refuge, a stronghold to give me safety, for you are my ROCK, and my fortress. Psalm 70:3 (71:3).

While he slew them they sought him and inquired after God again, remembering THAT GOD WAS THEIR ROCK and the Most High God, their redeemer. Psalm 88:27 (89:27).

Declaring how just is THE LORD, ROCK, in whom there is no wrong. Psalm 91:16 (92:16).

Yet the Lord is my stronghold, and MY GOD THE ROCK of my refuge. Psalm 93:22 (94:22).

Come, let us sing joyfully to THE LORD; let us acclaim THE ROCK of our salvation. Psalm 94:1 (95:1).

The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. By the Lord has this been done; it is wonderful in our eyes. Psalm 117:22, 23 (118:22, 23).

Therefore thus saith the Lord God: Behold. I will lay a stone in the foundations of Sion, a tried stone, a corner stone, a precious stone, founded in the foundation. He that believeth, let him not hasten. (Isaiah 28:16).

For I will sing the Lord's renowned. Oh, proclaim the greatness of OUR GOD! THE ROCK-- how faultless are his deeds, how right all his ways! (Deuteronomy 32:3, 4).

They spurned the GOD who made the land scorned their saving ROCK . . . Your were unmindful of the ROCK that begot you, you forgot the GOD who gave you birth. (Deuteronomy 32:15, 18).

And he said: THE LORD IS MY ROCK, and my strength, and my saviour. (II Kings 22:2 (II Samuel 22:2)

FOR WHO IS GOD BUT THE LORD? OR WHAT ROCK IS THERE BUT OUR GOD? Psalm 17:32 (18:32).

Dear reader, some of the pieces of this Scriptural puzzle have been assembled and placed before you for your consideration. What is your decision? Will you take God at His Word and give honor to the only true Rock and Head of Christ's Church, Jesus Christ Himself? Or will you take man`s word for it that Peter is that rock?

If you choose the latter, I think that you ought to be convinced in your own mind that you have made the correct choice. The best recommendation which I can offer would be for you to gather a convincing number of Scriptures from throughout the Bible which definitely state and confirm the fact that Peter is the rock in question. When you complete the list, I would appreciate your sending it to me. I would count it a privilege to hear from you and God would surely bless you for the interest you would be showing in His Word.

In closing, I would have you consider for a moment, the words of these hymn writers which blend in so nicely with the thoughts which we have just considered. May the precious truths contained in these words linger in your mind. May they cause you to more fully realize where God's perfect peace and security may be had, when we are willing to make our stand on Christ the solid ROCK.

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ., the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.
-- Edward Mote

Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy raven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Save me from it's guilt and power.
Not the labors of my hands,
Can fulfill the laws demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

--A. M. Toplady

All Scripture quotations and references are taken from the Catholic Bible. The Confraternity of Christian Doctrine Translation of the New Testament and the Confraternity Translation and Douay Version of the Old Testament.