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The Rock, The Cornerstone

Matthew 16:18 (ESV)

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Many have used this verse to teach that Peter is what the church is built upon. We discuss that topic at some length in our teaching titled "[The Error of Dispensationalism](#)" from the position that YHWH would not need to build a second church as He already had one.

Today we are going to take a look at what it means to be the rock upon which the church would be built.

Consequently, we will also show why Peter cannot be the rock upon which any church of YHWH can stand.

First we'll look at how the word "rock" is used in Scripture.

Matthew 7:24-27 (ESV)

"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a **wise man who built his house on the rock**. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but **it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock**. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

The rock in this parable is a firm foundation, what a house should be built on, right? So why couldn't Peter be that foundation?

Well, let's continue looking.

Psalms 78:35 (ESV)

They remembered that **God was their rock**,
the Most High God **their redeemer**.

2 Samuel 23:3 (ESV)

**The God of Israel has spoken;
the Rock of Israel has said to me:**
When one rules justly over men,
ruling in the fear of God,

Isaiah 44:8 (ESV)

Fear not, nor be afraid;
have I not told you from of old and declared it?
And you are my witnesses!
Is there a God besides me?
There is no Rock; I know not any.”

Deuteronomy 32:4 (ESV)

“**The Rock**, his work is perfect,
for all his ways are justice.
A God of faithfulness and without iniquity,
just and upright is he.

Psalms 94:22 (ESV)

But the Lord (YHWH) has become my stronghold,
and **my God the rock** of my refuge.

Psalms 18:2 (ESV)

The Lord (YHWH) **is my rock** and my fortress and my deliverer,
my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

Psalms 19:14 (ESV)

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in your sight,
O Lord (YHWH), **my rock** and **my redeemer**.

Psalms 95:1 (ESV)

Oh come, let us sing to the Lord (YHWH);
let us make a joyful noise to **the rock of our salvation!**

2 Samuel 22:47 (ESV)

The Lord (YHWH) lives, and blessed **be my rock**,
and exalted **be my God, the rock of my salvation**

Nearly every reference in Scripture to a rock refers to YHWH, the redeemer, or salvation. There are many other references as well that you can look up for yourself as you test this teaching. YHWH is all of those things, Peter is not.

We know salvation comes only through faith in the Messiah. Yeshua is YHWH's plan for salvation. Through Yeshua's sacrifice we are redeemed. The only way to the Father is through the Messiah.

We would submit that Peter is not the rock, but that Yeshua is.

So, if Peter is not the rock, then what was Yeshua saying in Matthew 16?
We believe the Messiah was referring to himself when he used the words “*on this rock*”.

There are a number of reasons why we see this as being the most likely scenario, here are three of those reasons:

- 1.) Messiah was the Word made flesh, not Peter.
- 2.) The Word is the foundation.
- 3.) Messiah is called the cornerstone.

Messiah, the Word Made Flesh

John chapter 1 tells us that Messiah was the Word made flesh, not Peter.

Messiah only said and did what the Father said and did. (John 5:18-20, John 12:49, John 8:28)
We have no indication that this is the truth of Peter. In fact, Peter is rebuked by the Messiah for his words and actions on multiple occasions.

It doesn't make a lot of sense even logically for the church to be built upon a man the Messiah rebuked, rather than the spotless lamb. It is through the Messiah that we find our way to the Father.

Messiah was our example of how to live out the Torah. We are to live as He did. (1 John 2:6) It doesn't say that about Peter.

As the Messiah is the Word and our example, He is our foundation.

THE WORD IS THE FOUNDATION

If we are saying the Word is the foundation, we need to know what it means for something to be a foundation.

Based upon the definition found in the Random House Dictionary, here is what a foundation is.

1. **the basis or groundwork of anything:**
the moral foundation of both society and religion.
2. **the natural or prepared ground or base on which some structure rests.**
3. **the lowest division of a building, wall, or the like, usually of masonry and partly or wholly below the surface of the ground.**
4. the act of founding, setting up, establishing, etc.: a policy in effect since the foundation.
5. the state of being founded.
6. an institution financed by a donation or legacy to aid research, education, the arts, etc.:
the Ford Foundation.
7. an endowment for such an institution.

Now the first three definitions apply to how we would understand it in Scripture, either metaphorically or literally. We see the Word as being the basis for how we are to live, it is to be what our faith rests

upon, something we guard, or keep deep inside at the center of who we are. Those are also the definitions that best fit the examples we find in Scripture such as the parable in Matthew 7 as mentioned earlier.

What does this have to do with Peter being the rock versus Yeshua?

Well...what do you believe the Creator would want as the foundation of His people? His Word in the flesh?

Or...a sincere apostle with anger issues that had to be rebuked several times. Yes, Peter was a man of great faith and trusted by the Messiah; but he was not the Messiah.

What we don't see in Scripture, is the Messiah, or anyone else for that matter, telling us to obey all that Peter said, and to live as he lived. We only see that *with* the Messiah. We also see the Messiah referred to as the foundation directly.

1 Corinthians 3:11 (ESV)

For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ (Yeshua HaMashiach).

PETER...THE ROCK?

As many of you have likely heard before, we too have heard that Messiah called Peter the rock as a play on words because in the Greek, the word for rock is "petra" or "petros". With the verse in question, the name "Peter" in the Greek is "petros" (G4074 in Strong's) which means a small rock, detached, a pebble. The word the Messiah used for rock is "petra" (G4073 in Strong's). Petra is a large rock, or an attached mass of rock such as a cliff.

While we can see why many say this was done as a play on words, and perhaps it was correct, it doesn't really support the idea that Peter was the rock upon which YHWH would build His church. If anything, it actually exposes the opposite.

Take a moment to remember that name's mean things, especially in that time and culture. Messiah called Simon, "Peter", which means a small rock, something detached from something larger. Is YHWH going to make Peter, a small, detached pebble a foundation? Can a single, detached small stone be what was described earlier as a foundation?

- 1. the basis or groundwork of anything:**
- 2. the natural or prepared ground or base on which some structure rests.**
- 3. the lowest division of a building, wall, or the like, usually of masonry and partly or wholly below the surface of the ground.**

We don't believe so. Yes, the critics, or rather supporters, of such a doctrine would say it's a wonderful example of YHWH using something small and insignificant to do something great. We understand that perspective, but if we look at the times we've seen YHWH use something small for something great, did they to point to the individual or to His own glory? In all instances we can find, it was for His glory. Using Peter in this way would not be to His glory, but would make it about a fallible man.

In case that's not enough, it should also be taken into account that Messiah and Peter were both Hebrews

living in Israel. It's most likely they were speaking Hebrew or Aramaic, not Greek to one another. The gospels may have been translated into Greek, or maybe even originally written in Greek, but the events that took place pertained to Hebrews, not Greeks. The two words for Rock and the name Peter do not have the same relationship in Hebrew or Aramaic that we have found.

Once again it would appear that the Messiah is the better interpretation here. Messiah only said and did what the Father said and did.

John 5:19 (ESV)

So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.

John 5:30 (ESV)

“I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me. ...”

John 12:49 (ESV)

For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak.

As a final note about Peter being the rock, the foundation that YHWH was building a church upon, Peter was never called the cornerstone, the Messiah was.

Mark 12:10 (ESV)

Have you not read this Scripture:

“The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;

In Mark 12 we see Messiah referencing a passage from Psalm 118 that is talking about the Messiah being the stone that the builders reject; and that stone becoming the cornerstone. This means that Messiah, not Peter, is the cornerstone upon which things are built.

MESSIAH IS THE CORNERSTONE

For those that do not know what a cornerstone is:

“A cornerstone of a building is an important part of construction as it is the first stone to be set and determines the position of all the pieces to be laid afterwards. Cornerstones have been part of building since the Great Pyramids.” (<https://www.reference.com/home-garden/cornerstone-building-9d8b9413986edfa1#>)

“Until the development of modern construction, the stone was usually at a corner, possibly as the first of the foundation stones, and it was a real support.” (<https://www.britannica.com/technology/cornerstone>)

So in ancient times, the cornerstone was a single stone that was the basis for the entire rest of the structure; it WAS the foundation. This is one more indicator that the proper understanding of Matthew 16 should lay with the Messiah (who is the Word) being the rock, and not Peter.

In Scripture, the words used for cornerstone are very similar and it is found multiple times. Here are how four lexicons define this word (κεφαλή) used in the Greek.

- (a) “the head,”
- (b) 1) the head, (2) met: a corner stone, uniting two walls;
- (c) head, ruler, lord, the head (as the part most readily taken hold of), literally or figuratively;
Derivation: from the primary κάπτω (in the sense of seizing);
- (d) 1) the head, both of men and often of animals. Since the loss of the head destroys life, this word is used in the phrases relating to capital and extreme punishment.
2) metaph. anything supreme, chief, prominent
3) of things: the corner stone

As you can see, the place of a cornerstone is very important. The cornerstone is the “head”, or the head of all the stones. It is the supreme, chief, most prominent stone. If stones had leadership, the cornerstone would be that leader.

While some belief systems tout Peter as the head of the church, we would disagree. If Peter is the “head” of the church, then he’s the head, the ruler, the lord, supreme, chief, and most prominent.

Is that how Peter is described in Scripture? Is the “head” of the church defined or identified as Peter?

Ephesians 1:20–23 (ESV)

that he worked in **Christ (Messiah)** when he raised him from the dead and **seated him (the Messiah)** at his right hand in the heavenly places, far **above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name** that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put **all things under his feet** and **gave him as head over all things to the church**, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 4:15 (ESV)

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the **head, into Christ (Messiah)**,

Ephesians 5:23 (ESV)

For the husband is the head of the wife even as **Christ (Messiah) is the head of the church**, his body, and is himself its Savior.

Colossians 1:13-18 (ESV)

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of **his beloved Son**, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. **He** is the image of the invisible God, the **firstborn of all creation**. For **by him all things were created**, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And **he is before all things**, and in him all things hold together. And **he is the head of the body**, the church. **He is the beginning, the firstborn** from the dead, **that in everything he might be preeminent**.

Scripture is very clear on who the head of the body is, and it’s not Peter. The “head”, the cornerstone, the preeminent of everything...that’s the Messiah.

If that isn’t enough, look who the prophets testify about:

Isaiah 28:16 (ESV)

therefore thus says the Lord God,
“Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion,
a stone, a tested stone,
a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation:
‘Whoever believes will not be in haste.’

Psalms 118:22 (ESV) (as mentioned earlier)

The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.

1 Peter 2:7-8, in addition to the Messiah quoting it in Mark 12, quotes Psalm 118:22
So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,

“The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone,”
and

“A stone of stumbling,
and a rock of offense.”
They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

Finally, in Acts 4 and Ephesians 2, Messiah is specifically named as the cornerstone. Further evidence that Peter is not the rock, the stone, the foundation, or the cornerstone upon which the church was built.

Acts 4:11 (ESV)

This Jesus (**Yeshua**) is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, **which has become the cornerstone**

Ephesians 2:19-22 (ESV)

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus (**Yeshua the Messiah**) **himself being the cornerstone**, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

Some may try to use Ephesians 2 to show that Peter is the rock, the foundation. However, as we just read, the apostles (plural) **and** the prophets are the foundation all of whom are set upon **the rock, the Cornerstone**, Messiah Yeshua. If it was truly Peter, who was the rock, Paul would have reiterated that here, but he didn't.

We hope that this teaching has blessed you.

Remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom!

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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