

Was the Papacy Established by Jesus? #2

Daniel 11:36; Matthew 16:13-19

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In answer to the questions from last Lord's Day (Was the Papacy established by Jesus in Mathew 16:18 and did Jesus promise to build His Church upon Peter, personally and individually?), Jesus declares, "No". For Jesus Himself was the Rock upon which He would build His Church. Moreover, early Church history likewise provides support that Jesus did not promise to build His Church upon Peter, personally and individually, but upon Himself. Here is a brief sampling from history of some whom the Church of Rome calls doctors and saints of the Church.

Augustine (c. 354-430) was arguably the chief early Church father on all matters related to the doctrine, worship, and government of the Church (between the second and the fifth centuries). Listen to his comments on the words of Jesus to Peter in Matthew 16:18:

Christ, you see, built his Church not on a man [i.e. not on Peter] but on Peter's confession. What is Peter's confession? 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' There's the rock for you [i.e. Peter's confession], there's the foundation, there's where the Church has been built, which the gates of the underworld cannot conquer (John Rotelle, Ed., *The Works of Saint Augustine* (New Rochelle: New City Press, 1993), Sermons, Vol. 6, Sermon 229P.1, p. 327).

Jerome (c. 345-420) was the second-most extensive ecclesiastical writer—after Augustine—in ancient Latin Christianity. He spent time in both the East and the West and was a master of three languages: Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. He wrote:

The rock is Christ, who gave to His apostles, that they also should be called rocks, 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church (Commentary on Amos vi.12-13. Cited by J. Waterworth, S.J., A Commentary (London: Thomas Richardson, 1871), pp. 112-13.

Theodoret of Cyrhus (c. 393—466) was the leading theologian of Antioch in the fifth century. He writes:

For Peter having said, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;' the Lord said, 'Upon this rock I will build My Church.' Therefore call not yourselves after men's names [like "the successor of Peter"], for Christ is the foundation (117 Commentary on 1 Corinthians 1,12. Cited by J. Waterworth S.J., A Commentary (London: Thomas Richardson, 1871), p. 149).

Johann von Dollinger (1799-1890) was a German Catholic priest, theologian, and historian that taught Church history for 47 years and was one of the most influential historians in the Church of Rome at that time. He summarized the early Church fathers of the East and West as to their understanding of Matthew 16:18:

Of all the Fathers who interpret these passages in the Gospels (Matt. xvi.18, John xxi.17), not a single one applies them to the Roman bishops as Peter's successors. How many Fathers have busied themselves with these texts, yet not one of them whose commentaries we possess—Origen, Chrysostom, Hilary, Augustine, Cyril, Theodoret, and those whose interpretations are collected in catenas [collections of sermons]—has dropped the faintest hint that the primacy of Rome is the consequence of the commission and promise to Peter! Not one of them has explained the rock or foundation on which Christ would build His Church of the office given to Peter to be transmitted to his successors, but they understood by it either Christ Himself, or Peter's confession of faith in Christ; often both together. Or else they thought Peter was the foundation equally with all the other

Apostles, the twelve being together the foundation—stones of the Church (Apoc. xxi.14) (*The Pope and the Council* (Boston: Roberts, 1869), pp. 74).

And yet the Church of Rome and the Papacy at Vatican I (1869-1870) made it necessary for salvation to believe that Jesus established the Papacy with Peter and his successors, and that Jesus promised to build His Church upon Peter (individually and personally).

Therefore, resting on plain testimonies of the Sacred Writings, and adhering to the plain and express decrees both of our predecessors, the Roman Pontiffs, and of the General Councils, We renew the definition of the Ecumenical Council of Florence, in virtue of which all the faithful of Christ must believe that the Holy Apostolic See and the Roman Pontiff possesses primacy over the whole world, and that the Roman Pontiff is the successor of Blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles, and is the true Vicar of Christ, and the Head of the whole Church, and Father and Teacher of all Christians; and that full power was given to him, in Blessed Peter, by Jesus Christ our Lord, to tend, to rule, and to govern the Universal Church; as is also contained in the acts of the General Councils and in the Sacred Canons.... This is the teaching of Catholic truth, from which no one can deviate without loss of faith and of salvation.

The Papacy and Church of Rome “infallibly” claim that this was always the position of the faithful from the time of Christ and the apostles to the present. And yet, early Church fathers and even celebrated Church historians in the Church of Rome have denied this to be the case. I submit both Scripture and Church history flatly contradict that Jesus Himself established the office of Papacy with Peter and his “successors” (such an office is a glaring omission in Ephesians 4:11-14). Nor does Scripture or early Church history make the case that Jesus promised to build His Church upon Peter (individually and personally). That is built upon a foundation of sand.

For the rest of this sermon, I would like to follow-up with an objection that is proposed by Catholic apologists to counter the biblical and historical position that Jesus is the Rock on which the Church is built.

I. Objection Stated.

A. Jesus spoke to His disciples and taught them in Aramaic (a semitic language related to Hebrew)—both languages were spoken among the Jews in Palestine at the time of Christ.

B. This is alleged to be very important because though the Greek text of Matthew 16:18 used two different words (*Petros* for Peter and *Petra* for Rock), it is claimed there was one Aramaic word that Jesus might have used: *Kēpha* (or Cephias, the Aramaic equivalent of *Petros* in Greek according to John 1:42).

C. Thus, it is alleged that as Jesus spoke to Peter in Aramaic, Jesus would have said, “Thou art *Kēpha* (Cephias), and upon this *Kēpha* (Cephias) I will build my church.” It is claimed that this would mean that Peter is the rock upon which Jesus would build His Church, making the two different Greek words used in Matthew 16:18 (*Petros* and *Petra*) a mere stylistic change in the Greek text (both words referring to Peter).

II. Objection Answered.

A. It ought not to be assumed that Jesus spoke the words to Peter in Matthew 16:18 in Aramaic; for Greek was also commonly spoken throughout Israel at that time—the Dead Sea scrolls contain ordinary items of the common people like receipts and contracts written in Greek (see Robert L. Thomas and Stanley N. Gundry, *A Harmony of the Gospels*, pp. 309-312). Christ’s inscription upon the cross was written in Greek, Hebrew (or Aramaic), and Latin (Luke 23:38; John 19:20).

B. Just how common was Greek to Jesus and the disciples? The Gospel writers quote most passages from the Old Testament from the Greek Septuagint instead of the Hebrew text (90% of the cases). Matthew (which is usually cited to be the Gospel that was primarily intended for Jews living in Israel at that

time) cites the Greek Septuagint instead of the Hebrew text 45 out of 54 times or 83.3% (<http://mysite.verizon.net/rjones3/Septuagint/spexecsum.htm>). This demonstrates the prevalent use of the Greek language even within Israel. Thus, it cannot be assumed that Jesus spoke to Peter in Aramaic (as opposed to Greek) in Matthew 16:18.

C. Actually, there are two Aramaic words to distinguish a stone (Cephas) from a rock (*Shua*), which is used in the ancient Aramaic translation—the Syriac Peshitta (**Matthew 7:24-25** and elsewhere in Matthew 13:5,20; Mark 4:5,16; Luke 6:48 [2x]; Luke 8:6,13; Acts 27:29). Thus, if Christ had hypothetically spoken to Peter in Aramaic rather than in Greek, it is not true that there was only one Aramaic word for rock that He could use. He still might have used two different Aramaic words to distinguish Cephas (*Kēpha* a stone) from the Rock, Christ (*Shua*, a rock sufficient to build a house upon). “Thou art *Kēpha* (Cephas/*Petros*) and upon this *Shua* (*Petra*—bedrock), I will build my church.”

D. Since we cannot know with certainty whether Jesus spoke the words found in Matthew 16:18 in Aramaic or Greek from the evidence we have, I submit that Rome cannot credibly build an argument to prove that Jesus said, “Thou art Cephas and upon this Cephas I will build my church.” In fact, such attempts to steer away from the inspired Greek text in Matthew (which God has preserved throughout the ages) seems to indicate they themselves must not think they have a solid case to make from Matthew 16:18. Even the Latin Vulgate (the official and authoritative text of the Church of Rome) makes the same distinction in Matthew 16:18: “Thou art Petrus (masculine) and upon this Petram (feminine) I will build my church.”

E. But what about the several Church fathers (like Papias in the early second century) who mention that Matthew wrote some “sayings” in Hebrew?

1. We don’t know what those “sayings” were if that testimony is true. About four Church fathers seem to take the words of Papias (“the sayings” of Matthew) to mean the Gospel of Matthew (when that is not what Papias said).

2. Until there is manuscript evidence of an original Gospel of Matthew written in Hebrew (and presently there is none—there is one Hebrew manuscript of the Gospels in the Vatican library from the 15th century that some claim is based upon an original Hebrew, but nearly all scholars say is a translation), this simply remains just another theory. So those who claim to have the Gospels from an original Hebrew manuscript (as opposed to a version translated from another language) do not have the overwhelming majority of scholarship supporting their claim. But what we do have are many ancient manuscripts of the Gospel of Matthew and the whole New Testament in Greek (which near universal scholarship testifies is the original language in which the Gospel of Matthew was written).

3. Jesus promised to preserve every jot/tittle of God’s Word (Matthew 5:18). We can be assured that if the Gospel of Matthew was originally written in Hebrew (and especially if it differed from the Greek text) that the Holy Spirit would have preserved a record of such for His people throughout history (it would not be hidden in the Vatican Library).

F. The bottom line concerning Matthew 16:18 is this: the Holy Spirit chose to use two different Greek words that have two different genders to represent Peter (*Petros*) and Christ (*Petra*) in Matthew 16:18, and the fact that *Petros* (a stone that can be carried) is never used to refer to God or to Christ in the Old or New Testaments (whereas *Petra* is used of both God and Christ in the Old and New Testaments) makes it clear that the Holy Spirit did not say or intend to say that upon Peter (*Petros*, a stone) the Church would be built, but rather upon Christ (*Petra*, the bedrock) the Church would be built.

G. Why do I take the time to discuss the objections raised to support the Papacy?

1. The deception is real and widespread. Many have been misled away from Christ to the Antichrist. When deceptions abound, it is even more necessary to take the time to explain and be precise.

2. We need to be confirmed in the faith by sound arguments. We may already know and believe the truth, but to hear it again and to be reminded is good for us (repetition is not our enemy, but our friend).

3. Warnings are not only negative—they are for our good to point out dangers to us (as Jesus does with false prophets in Matthew 7:15-16). Let me emphasize again that I am not intending to bash the people in the Roman Catholic Church. I am warning (as does Jesus) in love to flee from the Papal Antichrist and His deception/lies/tyranny.

4. Please understand that a warning given in love also points us to a truth to protect and defend, not just a danger to avoid. The warning not to touch the hot stove warns a child of a danger, but it also points him/her to a truth: protect your body (which God gave you). The warning to flee sexual immorality warns us of danger, but it also points us to a truth to protect: God's honor, our reputation, and marriage. The warning not to lie warns us of a danger, but it also points us to something precious to protect, the truth and trustworthiness. The warning not to refuse instruction/correction also points us to the truth to respect lawful authority and to humble ourselves under God and lawful authority. To refuse warnings is not freedom, but bondage and leads to misery. So likewise, the warning to beware of and to flee false prophets warns us of danger to our souls, but it also points us to Jesus Christ, the true Prophet, and to His love, mercy, forgiveness, and lordship. Warnings are good for us if we will heed them, but disastrous if we plow through the warnings of God and those He gives to teach and instruct us in His holy ways.

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