

**Did Jesus refer to Peter as the rock upon which His church would be built?
What are the keys to the kingdom of heaven?**

In **Matthew 16:16-18**, Jesus refers to the ROCK upon which the church will be built. **The Catholic position** is that Peter and his successors have the God-given “full, supreme and universal power over the whole church.” (**Catechism of the Catholic Church - 882**). In **Matthew 16:19** Jesus gives Peter the KEYS to the kingdom of heaven telling him that whatever he bound on earth would be bound in heaven and whatever he loosed on earth would be loosed in heaven. **The Catholic position** is that here Jesus is giving Peter “the office of binding and loosing which ... was also assigned to the college of apostles united to its head.” (**CCC - 881**). What we need to find out is: **Did Jesus refer to Peter as the rock upon which His church would be built? And what are the keys to the kingdom of heaven?**

In answer to the first question we need to look elsewhere in scripture to see what else has been referred to as a rock. In **Matthew 7:24-27** **Jesus** refers to His **words** as a rock, that if obeyed, would support a person during the trials of this life. In **First Peter 2:8** and **Romans 9:33**, Peter & Paul both refer to **Jesus**, in fulfillment of the Old Testament, as a “Rock of Offense.” **Paul**, in **1 Corinthians 10:4**, refers to the rock in the wilderness, which the **Israelites** drank from as a spiritual rock and “the rock was Christ.” **Peter** also refers to **Jesus** in **First Peter 2:6** as a “choice stone, a precious cornerstone and he who believes in Him shall not be disappointed.” This is why I believe when Jesus said “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church” in **Matthew 16:16-18**, He was referring to what Peter recognized and believed about **Jesus**. Peter said in **Verse 16** “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” **Jesus** is the ROCK upon which the church will be built because He is the **CHRIST, the SON OF THE LIVING GOD.**

Peter writes in First Peter 2:4-5, referring to **Jesus** as a Living Stone and to all believers as stones who are being “built up as a spiritual house.” Peter was the first to verbally acknowledge **Jesus** as the Christ, but all others who have recognized **Jesus** as the Christ in response to the preaching of God’s word are also referred to as living stones. Paul writes in **2 Timothy 2:19** “the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, ‘The Lord knows those who are His.’”

Another view as to why **Jesus supposedly referred to Peter as the rock upon which the church would be built** is because Peter was the first to preach the gospel or the good news concerning **Jesus** the Christ on the day the church was born, the day of Pentecost.

The verse in Matthew in which **Jesus However, supposedly refers to Peter as the rock** is nowhere else repeated or specifically supported, five verses later in **Matthew 16:23** **Jesus** refers to Peter as Satan because Peter was setting his mind on man’s interests instead of God’s interests (He didn’t want Jesus to die or suffer **Mt. 16:21, 22**). Peter was also rebuked in

Galatians 2:11-21 by apostle Paul for his hypocrisy in eating only with the party of the circumcision (they taught that non-Jewish Christians or gentile believers, must also receive Jewish circumcision in order to be saved or go to heaven. Paul, earlier in **Galatians 1:6-9**, called this a false gospel and those who taught it would be accursed or anathema.) Other church leaders and even Barnabas, who preached the gospel with Paul, **Acts 12:25; 15:1, 2**; were involved in the hypocrisy with Peter.

Paul also rebukes the church Corinth for the divisions which were present: First at Corinthians 1:12 "... each one of you is saying, 'I am of Paul,' and 'I of Apollos,' and 'I of Cephas,' and 'I of Christ.'" Here we see that believers were rebuked and that **Peter** or Cephas was not recognized as the one supreme leader by the early Christians. **Paul** goes on to write in **1 Corinthians 1:13** "Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you was he? or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" Paul goes on to show that Christ sent him to preach the gospel and that the power of the Christian message was in the preaching of the Cross of Christ.

This then, also answers for us the second question: What are the keys to the kingdom of heaven? Simply answered, **the keys are** the preaching of **the gospel**, the good news that **Jesus** "**died**" for our sins according to the scriptures; and that **He was buried**, and that **He rose again** the third day according to the scriptures: and that He was seen ..." **1 Corinthians 15:1-5, (6-8)**. **Jesus'** sacrifice was the payment for our sins. Those who believe will be loosed from their sins, those who do not will be bound in their sins, see **John 3:16**.

Jesus did not confer on Peter and the apostles a supreme authority but a divine responsibility to be leaders, examples and servants. **Peter** writes in **First Peter 5:1-4** "Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ ... shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight ... voluntarily ... with eagerness, nor yet as lording it over those ... but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory." **Peter** though rebuked by **Paul** still commended him, "... as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you" **2 Peter 3:15**.

I would encourage you to read and study **the two epistles Peter wrote** as well as the other accounts in scripture concerning his ministry in **the book of Acts**.

Peter himself said in reference to all of scripture, "Therefore putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord ... for they (those who disbelieve vs. 7) stumble because they are disobedient to the word" (1 Peter 2:1-3, 8).

Gary Westgerdes

Copyright by: Gary Westgerdes www.thekeysofheaven.com
All Rights Reserved. Permission Granted to Copy and Distribute