



Matt 16:18: The Debate over Stones & Rocks; Living Stones, Spiritual House, & Bedrock Foundation; Matt 16:19a: Keys to the Kingdom: Baptism of Holy Spirit

5. It is true that the Lord spoke in Aramaic. However, the intent and meaning of our Lord's statements to Peter as recorded in John 1:42 and Matthew 16:18 must be evaluated by their translations into the Greek.
6. The apostles John and Matthew wrote their Gospels under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit whose language of choice was Koiné Greek, not Galilean Aramaic.
7. In John 1:42 John added an instructive parenthesis to his record of the initial meeting between the Lord and Simon:

John 1:42 - Jesus looked at Simon, and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas [כֶּפֶא **Keypha'**]" (which is translated Peter [Πέτρος, **Petros**]).
8. The Lord spoke *Keypha'* which means "rock" in Aramaic but John is led by the Holy Spirit to instruct us that *Keypha'*, "a rock," is translated into the Greek as *Petros*, "a stone."
9. Thus in Matthew 16:18 we read this account of the Lord's comments to Peter as inspired by the Holy Spirit:

Matthew 16:18 - "And I also say to you that you are Peter [Πέτρος, **Petros**: "a stone"], and upon this rock [πέτρα, **petra**: "rock"] I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it."
10. The Catholics assert that the "rock" is Peter; Protestants have a mixed view, some claiming that it refers to Christ while others contend it makes reference to Peter's confession of the Gospel in Matthew 16:16.
11. First of all let's look at the etymology of the words. Dr. Julius R. Mantey is co-author with H. E. Dana of one of the more popular Greek grammars, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto: The Macmillian Co., 1927, 1955). Dr. Mantey wrote an article entitled *Evidence that the Perfect Tense in Matthew 16:19 is Mistranslated*. In this article he writes the following with reference to the words *petros* and *petra*:

In a study of every occurrence of the words for rocks in the Old and New Testaments, the books of Xenophon, Diodorus Siculus, Josephus, Strabo, and Plutarch we discovered that the most prevalent meaning of πέτρα (*petra*) was a mass or cluster of rocks such as a cliff. In about one third of its usages it meant either a huge boulder or bedrock.

Πέτρος (*petros*) always denoted a small rock or stone. It never had the connotation of πέτρα (*petra*). Πέτροι (*petroi*) were used most frequently to throw at enemies.

According to Liddell and Scott πέτρα (*petra*) (rock, a mass of rocks) and πέτρος (*petros*) were never used interchangeably [A *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1397-98]. There is no example in good authors of πέτρα (*petra*) with the significance of πέτρος (*petros*). Πέτρος (*petros*), a stone, piece of rock, is thus distinguished from πέτρα (*petra*).
12. Consequently, we must distinguish between our Lord's historical comment to Peter at the Mount of Transfiguration in Caesarea Philippi and the divine inspiration of Matthew under the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
13. The pun was set up by our Lord at his first meeting with Simon in John 1:42 where the significance of the Greek translation of *Keypha'* is purposefully pointed out to be πέτρος (*petros*).



14. At the Sermon on the Mount the Lord makes clear, through metaphor, the material of a wise man's foundation:

Matthew 7:24 - Everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon a rock [πέτρα, petra].

v. 25 - "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock [πέτρα, petra].
15. The Lord is affirmed by Paul to be the church's foundation in:

1 Corinthians 3:11 - For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
16. In Matthew 7:24 the Lord indicates that His words acted upon may be compared to a house built upon a foundation of bedrock. In 1 Corinthians 3:11 this bedrock foundation is said to be Jesus Christ.
17. Consequently the "rock" of Matthew 16:18 may be viewed as the Gospel which Peter acted upon in verse 16 or the Lord who is said to be the foundation in 1 Corinthians 3:11.
18. The answer of whether the "rock" is the Gospel or Jesus Christ is discovered by examining what is to be built on the foundation. The Lord says, "... upon this rock [πέτρα, petra: "rock"] I will build My church."
19. The word for "church" is the feminine singular noun ἐκκλησία, ekklesiá and it refers in a general sense to any assembly of individuals.
20. The question to resolve is to what kind of assembly does the Lord refer? In Scripture, the assembly of believers can be classified in two ways: (1) the local assembly of believers for the function of worship, or (2) the totality of the body of Christ that makes up the "spiritual house" referred to by Peter in:

1 Peter 2:5 - You, as living stones [λίθος, lithos], are being built up into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
21. The Greek word lithos is a synonym of petros, each referring to a stone. Church Age believers are individually portrayed as stones placed upon the foundation of Christ by means of the Holy Spirit by which a "spiritual house" is being constructed.
22. This spiritual house is also referred to in the New Testament as an ekklesiá, an assembly. This spiritual house is referred to by the Lord as "My church—My ekklesiá"—in Matthew 16:18.
23. Therefore we must distinguish between the two categories of ekklesiá in the New Testament:
 - (1) **The Universal Church.** This is the "spiritual house" mentioned by Peter which consists of believers only. It is under construction throughout the Church Age, a "living stone" being added at the moment any person believes in Jesus Christ for salvation at which point he is baptized into the body of Christ, adopted into the royal family of God, and imputed eternal life.
 - (2) **The Local Church.** This is the assembly of believers, and quite often unbelievers, in a specific geographic location under the teaching ministry of a pastor and the administration of an elected board of deacons. To be a biblically qualified organization it must profess faith alone in Christ alone for salvation, otherwise it may be classed with the blasphemers whom the Lord describes in Revelation 2:9 as a "synagogue of Satan."



24. The Catholics assert that Peter is the “rock” who has been granted plenipotentiary authority by the Lord over “local assemblies.” This authority has primacy in all areas spiritual which includes the power to grant or withhold salvation, forgive sins, determine the methods of worship, assign leadership, and determine doctrine which includes editorial power over Scripture.
25. However, the analysis we have just noted strongly implies that the *ekklesia* to which the Lord refers is the “universal church” over which He possesses full and lasting authority as “Head of the church” according to Paul in Ephesians 5:23.
26. The “universal church” is described as the “body of Christ” while under construction and the “bride of Christ” after the resurrection.
27. Those who enter into this “spiritual house” are eternally protected from death by means of the Lord’s victory over death on the cross. This is the implication of the final phrase of verse 18: “... and the gates of Hades (the residence of all who have died) shall not overpower it (this spiritual house).”
28. In the very context of our passage the Lord addresses this victory in:
Matthew 16:21 - From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.
29. Thus the “rock” is Christ. In order for “stones” to become a part of the building to be constructed on this Rock each must direct his faith toward the Person and work of Christ.
30. In other words, for the “stone” to become a part of this “spiritual house” it must place its faith in the “Foundation.”
31. There is no foundation other than that which is already laid, namely, Jesus Christ. Faith is of no effect if it is not directed toward the true Gospel which reveals this foundation.
32. Consequently, the “Rock” is Christ who is the object of the Gospel expressed by Peter in verse 16, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
Matthew 16:18 - “And I also say to you that you are Peter [a building block], and upon this rock [the bedrock foundation of Christ] I will build My [universal] church; and the gates of Hades [death] shall not overpower it [this universal church].”
33. Now we come to the Lord’s investment and commission of Peter for a special assignment with regard to the “spiritual house” that is to be constructed on this Foundation.

V. Matthew 16:19

- Matthew 16:19 -** “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”
1. Once the Catholic Church assigned unlimited power to Peter and his successors the precedent was established to assign to them unlimited prerogatives.
 2. The unfortunate assumption was that the foundation upon which the church would be built was Peter. Then the assigning to him of the keys to the kingdom was misinterpreted as granting to him the power to determine who got into heaven and under what conditions and to govern those allowed to enter.



3. However, the foundation is Christ and Peter is the first building block to be placed on this foundation. In recognition of this fact, the Lord assigns to Peter the keys that enable all other building blocks to also become part of this “spiritual house.”

4. This needs to be developed so we begin by analyzing the phrase:

τὰς κλεῖδας τῆς βασιλείας τῶν οὐρανῶν:

tas kleidas tās basileias tōn ouranōn:

“the keys to the kingdom of the heavens.”

5. The first thing we notice is that the Lord has invested plenipotentiary authority to Peter. This is indicated by the first person singular future active indicative of the verb:

δίδωμι, *didōmi* -

“I will give”

future: Predictive; predicts an event which is expected to occur in future time and in this case constitutes a prophecy.

active: The Lord confirms that He will make this presentation to Peter at a future time yet to be determined.

indicative: Declarative; a statement of fact regarding a future historical event in the history of the Church Age.

6. One cannot give what He does not already possess. What the Lord promises to Peter are keys, the accusative plural of the noun:

κλεῖς, *kleis* - “keys”; That which opens and closes.

7. In the New Testament *kleis* is used only in a figurative sense for the “power and authority to control access to whatever is behind the locked door” [Allen Myers (ed.). *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*, 1987, 622].

8. Thus, the Lord has promised to invest Peter with power and authority to open and close doors in the “kingdom of the heavens.”

9. There are three spheres in which the kingdom of God functions: (1) the eternal state and (2) the earthly kingdom of Christ, and (3) those believers who enter the “spiritual house” through faith in Christ in any given generation of the Church Age.

10. When a person believes in Christ in the Church Age he is immediately placed upon the foundation of Christ and becomes part of the body of Christ in the “spiritual house” being constructed by the Holy Spirit.

11. When such a believer experiences physical death he enters into the eternal state and is face to face with the Lord in interim body. The exceptions are those alive at the Rapture of the church who are immediately transferred to heaven in resurrection body.

12. At the Second Advent resurrected Church Age believers become part of the Lord’s millennial government which is His earthly kingdom promised to Israel.

13. No one enters into any of these areas of the kingdom of the heavens unless he has the key which unlocks the door.

14. However, at the time Peter is given the power and authority to open the door to these areas, the Church Age does not exist. Therefore, his keys—his power and authority—have to do with access to the universal church.

15. And access to the universal church is clearly stated in Scripture to be the baptism of the Holy Spirit, a concept unknown to Peter, the other apostles, or anyone who had lived up to that point.



16. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is one of the mystery doctrines of the Church Age and is one of the salvation ministries of the Holy Spirit which places the new believer into the body of Christ:
- 1 Corinthians 12:12** - For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.
- v. 13** - For by one Spirit we were all baptized [**Culminative aorist passive indicative of βαπτίζω, baptizō: permanently immersed**] into one body, whether, Jew or Gentiles, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.
- v. 14** - For the body is not one member, but many.
17. It is in this regard that Peter receives his commission from the Lord: "... whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."