The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Jesus personally appointed Peter as the leader of the church, and the pope is Peter's successor to that position. At the root of this doctrine is the claim that Jesus appointed Peter as leader when he called him a “rock.” But is this really what the Bible teaches?

**Jesus Referred to Peter as a “Rock”**

In Matthew 16, Jesus was speaking in front of a rather large cliff face in Judea by Caesarea Philippi. There is no doubt that this is historical, that is, it actually took place.

> “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, a small rock and upon the large rock I will build my congregation {Gr. ekklesia – called out ones}, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against her. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of the heavens, and whatever thou shalt bind on the earth shall be bound in the heavens, and whatever thou shalt loose on the earth shall be loosed in the heaven.” (Mat 16:18-19 Jubilee Bible 2000)

Catholics say Peter is the rock Jesus built his church on. Is this what the Bible really says?

Jesus was making a prediction about the future. Therefore, it was a prophecy. When he was speaking with his apostles here in Matthew 16, he likely spoke in either Hebrew or Aramaic, or possibly Greek. But what we do know is that Matthew is written in Greek. In the original Greek that Matthew wrote in, Petros – “A Piece of Rock” – is in the feminine gender. So Peter, to whom Jesus was speaking, was a small rock who would become one of the twelve foundation stones of the Church.
Whereas Jesus, the “rock-mass,” would be the foundation cornerstone up which the Church was to be built. You can easily see this by looking at Ephesians 2:19-20 (NJB): “So you are no longer aliens or foreign visitors; you are fellow-citizens with the holy people of God and part of God’s household. You are built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, and Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone.”

And also in 1 Peter 2:6 (NIV): “For in Scripture it says: ‘See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.’”

You have to distort the Scriptures to make them say that the Church is built on Peter rather than Jesus.

**Catholic Objections**

“*Isaiah 22 is a reference that Christ makes so that the crowd will know what he is saying. Jesus alludes to the idea that Peter will become his vicar by giving him the keys to loose and bind. Isaiah says that God will take away Shobna’s key and give it to Eliochim so none may shut where he opens and none may open where he shuts.*”

This is an unscriptural assumption, which cannot be proven. Jesus is the head of the Church, period. This is easily proven biblically. (*Col 1:18*)

This assertion about Isaiah 22 indicates that many have possibly never read Matthew 16 carefully. If they do, they’ll find that Jesus does not reference Isaiah 22:20-25.

“*After his speech, the whole crowd knew that Jesus had made Peter head of his church like the vicar of the Judean Kingdom, answerable to no one but Christ. Thus the Pope,*
successor of Peter, is the Vicar of Christ.”

There is zero proof of any succession of Popes leading back to Peter. There are only unprovable assertions of the Roman Catholic Church. Jesus never made Peter head of the Church. The Bible is abundantly clear that Christ is the head of the Church.

“And he is the head of the body, the church.” (Col 1:18)

“In Acts 15, Peter speaks for the Church.”

No, Peter gave testimony at the council in Acts 15 by speaking TO the church. But an honest reading indicates that James was the one who spoke FOR the church.

In Matthew 16:18-19, what Jesus is saying is that “you are Peter, who is a small rock. I am Jesus, as you, Peter, have correctly identified. I am the Christ, and I (Jesus) will build my church on this rock mass, of which I am the foundation.” As we combine this with other scriptures, such as Ephesians 2:19-20 and 1 Peter 4:2-8, it becomes clear that this is indeed the case; Peter, along with faithful apostles and prophets are together foundation stones, which are built on top of the rock-mass, which is Christ. The church is then built upon this entire foundation.

So as we can see from the Bible, The Catholic claim that the pope is Peter’s successor as leader of the church is false.