

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?

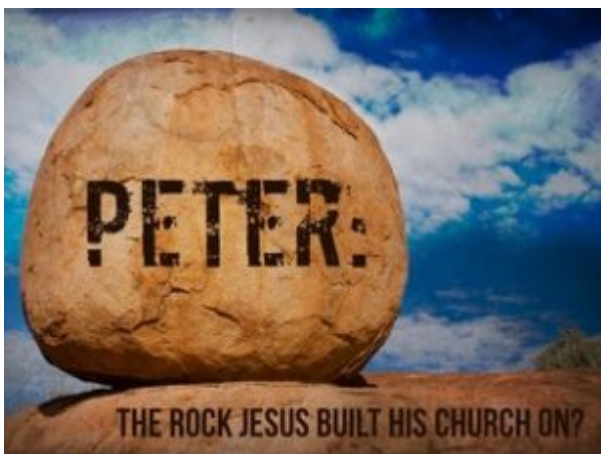
## Jesus Referred to Peter as a "Rock"

In [Matthew 16](#), Jesus was speaking in front of a rather large cliff face near Caesarea Philippi. There is no doubt that this is historical, that is, it actually took place.

**"You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church"—[Matthew 16:18](#) NAB**

The Greek word for Peter is "**Petros**", which means "**a small stone**," whereas the Greek word for "**Rock**" means "**a large rock**." Jesus was using a play on words, to illustrate that he would be the foundation the church is built on.

However, notice how the following translation renders [Matthew 16:18,19](#):



"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." ([Matthew 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, less likely, in 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.”

Also notice:

**“Come to him, a living stone, rejected by human beings but chosen and precious in the sight of God, and, like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it says in scripture: ‘Behold, I am laying a stone in Zion, a cornerstone, chosen and precious, and whoever believes in it shall not be put to shame’”—1 Peter 2:4-6 NAB**

***“Christ is the cornerstone (cf. [Is 28:16](#)) that is the foundation of the spiritual edifice of the Christian community (v. 5). To unbelievers, Christ is an obstacle and***

***a stumbling block on which they are destined to fall (v. 8) cf. Rom 11:11”—NAB footnote on 1 Peter 2:4-6***

Peter is obviously referring to Jesus Christ, not himself.

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.”—Catholics claim*

This is an unscriptural assumption, which cannot be proven. Jesus is the head of the Church, period. This is easily proven biblically:

**“He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he himself might be preeminent”—Colossians 1:18 NAB**

**“Christ is also the head of the church” (Colossians 1:18 NLT).**

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](#). Catholics claim:

*“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, the successor of Peter, is the Vicar of Christ.”*

There is zero proof of any succession of Popes leading back to Peter. There are only the 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. **“Christ is also the head of the church” (Colossians 1:18 NLT).**

*Catholics claim: “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 of the entire chapter 15 of Acts, especially Acts 15:13-21, 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 other 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.