

Possibly, the most divisive scripture in the entire Bible is Matthew 16:18. Let me note that this verse was not intended to be such a verse; on the contrary this verse carries a very simple message. Interpretation of this verse has shaped Western civilization and as a result has shaped our world. It matters not if one is a Catholic, a Protestant, a Muslim, and a Jew or of some other faith, this verse has impacted your life. **The divisions that “misinterpretation” of this verse has created in the world will never be reconciled.**

Matthew 16:18 (KJV)

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. This wording in the King James Version is probably the closest to how it has been read and understood over the centuries. Below is the major false interpretations of which I speak quoted from the [Douay-Rheims Bible](#) which is still often the Bible of choice of English-speaking [Traditionalist Catholics](#) according to the Wikipedia Encyclopedia. Please note the three highlighted phrases, because I will explain them in truth, later.

18 "Thou art Peter"... "As St. Peter, by divine revelation, here made a solemn profession of his faith of the divinity of Christ; so in recompense of this faith and profession, our Lord here declares to him the dignity to which he is pleased to raise him: viz., that he to whom he had already given the name of Peter, signifying a rock, St. John 1. 42, should be a rock indeed, of invincible strength, for the support of the building of the church; in which building he should be, next to Christ himself, the chief foundation stone, in quality of chief pastor, ruler, and governor; and should have accordingly all fulness of ecclesiastical power, signified by the keys of the kingdom of heaven."

18 "Upon this rock"... "The words of Christ to Peter, spoken in the vulgar language of the Jews which our Lord made use of, were the same as if he had said in English, Thou art a Rock, and upon this rock I will build my church. So that, by the plain course of the words, Peter is here declared to be the rock, upon which the church was to be built: Christ himself being both the principal foundation and founder of the same. Where also note, that Christ, by building his house, that is, his church, upon a rock, has thereby secured it against all storms and floods, like the wise builder, St. Matt. 7. 24, 25."

18 "The gates of hell"... "That is, the powers of darkness, and whatever Satan can do, either by himself, or his agents. For as the church is here likened to a house, or fortress, built on a rock; so the adverse powers are likened to a contrary house or fortress, the gates of which, that is, the whole strength, and all the efforts it can make, will never be able to prevail over the city or church of Christ. By this promise we are fully assured, that neither idolatry, heresy, nor any pernicious error whatsoever shall at any time prevail over the church of Christ."

The Roman Church used these interpretations for the establishment of the Papacy and its doctrines. The Pope, being the successors of the apostle Peter is infallible. The major doctrine is "**Apostolic Succession**." I do not want to spend too much of my time decrying the falsehood of this cult, but I want you to understand how they have used that doctrine in centuries past to eradicate every so-called opposition to the "church." This is why I make the claim that it has impacted the world. What I have mentioned above came as a result of the campaigns of the Roman Church.

Rome is the last of the four Gentile Powers, and is anti-God in every description. Think for a moment; how could a religion bearing its name is pro-Christian? Catholicism is the religion of Rome, not Jerusalem. Jesus forewarned, "For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many." **Matthew 24:5 (NIV)**

The devil does **three** things to the Word of God. He **adds** to it, he **subtracts** from it, and he **alters** it. That was exactly what he did *in the garden* of Eden. He also tried it on the second Adam, the Lord of glory, *in the wilderness*. He tried his tricks on Jesus **three** times, but the wise God has suffered His word to be written. Therefore Jesus was able to say all three times, "It is Written," as to say it is written, **you cannot add to it**, it is written, **you cannot subtract from it** and finally, it is written, **you cannot alter it**. Anyone who does this deliberately is clearly a devil. Others are simply blinded by the prince of darkness. Do you ever wonder why there are so many so-called Christian religions or denominations?

THOU ART PETER / UPON THIS ROCK

Now for the truth; PETER, the apostle whose name was changed from Simon to Peter was indeed a rock, but he was not the ROCK. He was a part of the foundation, but not the CHIEF CORNERSTONE (capstone). We are taught about the ROCK or STONE in so many verses of the Bible. "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; ²⁰And are built upon **the foundation of the apostles and prophets**, Jesus Christ himself being the **chief corner stone**; ²¹In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: ²²In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. **Ephesians 2:19-22 (KJV)**. Does this sound like the church to you?

Peter knew that he was not that STONE, as he tells us, "⁴As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him, ⁵ you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says: "See. I lay in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe. "The stone the builders rejected

has become the capstone, and, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." **1 Peter 2:4-8 (NIV)**

Peter quoted the above words from Isaiah 28:16 and Psalm 118:22. Why has so many failed to see these scriptures, that this is still being debated today? **JESUS CHRIST IS THE ROCK.** Jesus simply waited for the Rock to be identified, and then made the declaration. If Jesus was talking about Peter, he would have said, upon you (Peter)," but he was pointing to Himself and the scripture which testified of Him. Jesus did this right throughout His ministry, pointing to the prophecies about Him.

THE GATES OF HELL

No part of this verse bothers me more than the interpretation of this phrase, "**the gates of hell.**" It simple tells me that many of us never even tried to find out what it means. It is one the most widely misinterpreted scriptures used by preachers today. We simply assumed that we know what it means. Well, it does not mean what we think at all. The word hell is the Greek word **hades**, which speaks of the grave or the abode of the dead. I found one Bible translation that says "**the power of death**" shall not prevail. This is the right meaning of the phrase. It is a figure of speech. It has nothing to do with Satan or the "forces of hell," whatever that means. Hey! Wake Up! We do not wrestle with the forces of hell; our struggles are with "**the powers of the air**"- **Ephesians 6:12.**

Once again, Jesus points His subjects back to the Old Testament prophecies which testified of Him and His works. ¹⁵ But God will redeem my soul from the **power of the grave:** for he shall receive me. - **Psalm 49:15 (KJV).** Have mercy on me, O LORD! Consider my trouble from those who hate me, You who lift me up from the **gates of death** - **Psalm 9:13.** ¹⁰ For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption **Psalm 16:10 (KJV).** This is exactly how Peter understood it and that was exactly what he preached on the day of Pentecost, in Acts 2. The church is not a man that he should die and be buried!

Jesus was simply telling His disciples that He (**THE ROCK**) would be **rejected** and put to death, but offered reassurance and revealed the purpose of the foundation stone spoken of in prophecy. As Isaiah states it; whosoever believes in Him would not be disappointed. The grave would not prevail, because He is the Resurrection and the Life, and would get up from the grave, and become the capstone of the church.

THE CHURCH

The church is not the subject of this discussion and neither is the confession of Peter, the foundation. I know that this will shake up many, even many of my very own persuasion. It is even interesting that the very word **church** was used here. Jesus' message was a kingdom message, not a church message. The church would come as a result of the rejection of the kingdom message, and was born on the day of Pentecost. It was therefore a new revelation. The disciples did not even know what they had started and did not call it the church until after a while. In the book of Acts, the church was referred to as "the way." The word "church" comes from the Greek word, *ekklesia*, which means called out ones.

The Lord's first direct response to the church is in the book of Revelation as the books were addressed to the Seven Churches. The apostle Paul received the revelation of the church and wrote about it in the book of Ephesians. The church is also not the same as the congregation that was in the wilderness in the Old Testament. Otherwise, it would not have been a mystery as Paul described it.

Because of the misinterpretation of the Scriptures above, we have exalted the church to such a place of importance so that we cannot see Christ. For this reason also, wrong assumptions are made about the church at the end of the age.

Finally, Peter was given the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven, (not Heaven). He used it to open the door to salvation through the cross of Jesus Christ, when he spoke at Pentecost. He later used it to open the door to salvation to the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius and then he was done. To the majority of Christians today, Peter has been neglected and Jesus has been made to look like a fool as if he had disciplined Peter in vain. We have resorted to disciple sinners without giving them Peter's command which is found in Acts 2:38. "Repent" as it had started with John the Baptist is the first word of the Gospel, and Jesus (Yahushua) is the Name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Water baptism should be done in the Name of Jesus. Peter did not make a mistake.

Peter was called, prepared and sanctified for a special role, even as a "special witness" (Acts 10:41). There is even the hypocrisy that Roman Catholics who claimed Peter to be their first Pope do not follow Peter's teaching.

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