

Essay - Upon This Rock

“I will build my ecclesia, and the Gates of Hades will not prevail against it”

Matthew 16:13-18 – “When Yeshua and his disciples arrived at Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’ They replied, ‘Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others say Jeremiah or one of the prophets’. ‘But who do you say that I am?’ he asked. Simon Peter replied, ‘You are Ha’Mashiach, the Son of the Living God.’ And Yeshua said to Peter, ‘Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter^{G4074} and on this rock^{G4073} I will build my church, and the Gates of Hades will not prevail against it’.”

It's All Greek To Me

G4074 Πέτρος Petros [masculine]; a piece of rock; a pebble, a grain of sand, a detached stone or boulder, a stone that might be thrown or easily moved.

G4073 πέτρα petra [femine]; a mass of rock, boulder, literally a living rock, a bedrock, – a picture of the Bride of Christ, or the church.

In these days of angst and confusion, we must hold fast to our faith that Yeshua has overcome the world and we are to do the same. It may look like Satan and his minions are gaining the upper hand, but they will not prevail.

Many prophecies have a dual or multiple fulfillment. This statement of Yeshua’s, or prophecy if you will, is one of them. Let’s examine the possibilities and see if we can determine exactly who or what are the rocks Yeshua mentions.

What has been traditionally taught?

In other words, What have you heard this prophecy of Yeshua means? Have you Heard . . .

Four Common Expositions

Simon Peter Is The Rock (According to the Roman Catholic Church)

Simon is called Peter: Petros [**Πέτρος** G4074] in the Greek. The masculine word **Petros** [**Πέτρος**] means: a piece of rock; a pebble, a grain of sand, a detached stone or boulder, a stone that might be thrown or easily moved – and an easily moved pebble is exactly what we see with Peter who doubted when he walked on water (**Matthew 14:27-31**), who denied Yeshua (**Matthew 16:23, Mark 8:33 and Luke 4:8, Luke 22:55-60**), and who Paul rebuked when Peter acted hypocritically by eating differently when Jews from Jerusalem were present (**Galatians 2:11-14**).

According to the Roman Catholic Church doctrines, Simon Peter is the rock is the position upon which the Catholic Church has established its authority. This is stated by several sources:

— **Catechism of the Catholic Church, #552**: “Because of the faith he confessed, Peter will remain the unshakeable rock of the Church.”

— **Pope Leo I**: “Our Lord Jesus Christ . . . has placed the principal charge on the blessed Peter, chief of all the apostles.”

— **Council of Ephesus**: “Philip, the presbyter and legate of the Apostolic See in Rome, said: ‘There is no doubt, and in fact it has been known in all ages, that the holy and most blessed Peter . . . both lives and judges in his successors’.”

This position upon which the Catholic Church has established its authority is not supported by the Greek text.

The Confession is the Rock *(According to Many)*

Luke 8:13 – “*But the ones on the rock [petra] are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy . . .*”

This position may have warrant, for the feminine word rock, or petra [πέτρα G4073] means: a mass of rock, a boulder, literally a living rock, a bedrock!

The feminine petra occurs several other times in the Newer Covenant scriptures:

- the petra of soil upon which belief grows or withers (**Romans 8:5-8**)
- the petra of rock upon which a house is built (**Matthew 7:24-25, Luke 6:46-49**).

In essence, Yeshua may have been saying: “*Blessed are you Simon, son of Jonah, also called Petros [rocky easily swayed pebble that thou art], for the confession you have made is the Petra, [the bedrock] upon which I will build my church.*”

Abraham Is The Rock

Isaiah 51:1-2 – “*Look to the rock ^{H6697} from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; when he was but one I called him, then I blessed him and multiplied him.*”

Another position is that Abraham the rock. Again, this position may have merit: the word tsûr [צור H6697] means a cliff, a rock, a boulder. Abraham’s seed is Yeshua (**Genesis 12:7; Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 19:9; Galatians 3:14**) – the rock foundation upon which all else stands.

Mark Biltz of El Shaddai Ministries believes that Yeshua is referencing scripture pointing back to Abraham. He also believes that Hades will not be able to prevent the righteous dead from rising when Yeshua calls for their resurrection.

However, the rock from which Abraham is hewn is a tsûr; not a petros, nor a Petra!

Yeshua Himself Is The Rock *(According to the Scriptures)*

1st Corinthians 3:11 – “*For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Yeshua Ha’Mashiach.*”

Another common position taken by many is that Yeshua, himself, is the rock and this has warrant and can be easily supported. Yeshua referred to himself as the **stone** [Lithos λίθος G3037] “*upon which many would fall and be broken*” (**Matthew 21:44, Luke 20:18**).

Isaiah 28:16 calls Yeshua a **stone** [‘eben אֶבֶן H68]: “*Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a **stone**, a tried **stone**, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation,*” and **Daniel 2:35** also calls Yeshua the **stone** [‘eben אֶבֶן H68] “*that smote the image, became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.*” However, those stones – lithos, and ‘eben – are not the same Greek or Hebrew words as Petra, although the metaphors are appropriate.

Petra [πέτρα G4073] {femine}; a mass of rock, boulder, literally a living rock, a bedrock:

- a picture of Yeshua
- a picture of the Bride of Yeshua, or the church.

There are also several scriptures that call Yeshua the spiritual **petra**, the **petra** that is Yeshua and a **petra** of offense:

- **1 Corinthians 10:4** – “*They drank of that spiritual **rock** that followed them: and that **rock** was Yeshua.*”
- **Romans 9:33** – “*Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a **rock** of offense . . .*”
- **1 Peter 2:6-8** – “*Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone . . . a **rock** of offense.*”

But Have Your Heard What This Prophecy Of Yeshua Really Means . . . ?

The Best Exposition

The Ground At Caesarea Is The Rock (*According to Yeshua*)

Matthew 16:18 – “*On this rock I will build my church, and the Gates of Hades will not prevail against it.*” The Gates of Hades is the term describing the entrance to the underworld. According to Jewish tradition, the underworld is a gloomy desolate place situated in the center of the earth, the place where the dead reside. Gates are also the place of deliberation and counsel. Kings sat in the gate to pronounce edicts and make judicial rulings. Lot was sitting at the city gates when the angels arrived. Boaz sat in the gate when he purchased Ruth. Ray Vanderlaan, Derek & Sharon Gilbert, and Rob Skiba all believe, as do I, that this is the rock upon which Yeshua will build his church and have all expounded upon the above position. ***Do you agree?***

Caesarea Philippi, which stood at the base of Mount Hermon, was perhaps one of the most evil cities of the day. Historically it is the place where Jeroboam built the golden calf. By the time of Yeshua it had become the religious center for worship of the Greek god, Pan, and was known to the Greeks as the city Panias. The cliff walls above the city, called by scripture the “*high place*”, had been carved out and dotted with many shrines and temples to Pan, and the cave entrance formed what many considered the gate to the underworld where Pan and the fertility gods lived during the winter. At that time, water flowed out of the cave to form one of the main tributaries to the Jordan River.

For Yeshua to bring his disciples into this arena must have been appalling to their minds. But a lesson was in play – when Yeshua asks them who people said he was, Peter must have been taking in the sights of dozens of statues of Pan, who was thought to be the “*god of the shepherds, the son of the living god*” and the altar to Pan that stood in front of the cave. Off to the right of this cave was the Fortress of Nimrod. Just to the left was the location called The Gates of Hades!

Peter, perhaps for the first time in history, gets it! He boldly declares, “*You, Yeshua, are the Son of the Living God!*” To which Yeshua replies, “*I will build my church on this petra, and the Gates of Hades will not prevail against it.*”

Yeshua’s church would be built on the petra of Caesarea Philippi, facing the gates of Hades! At that time, gates were the main defensive structure for a city. The gates were meant to keep attackers out. So, when Yeshua tells his disciples he is going to build his church right in front of the literal Gate of Hades he is declaring that they are to attack evil, to build his church as an offensive agency against the moral and evil corruption of the world – to keep it penned in and on the defense.

He also declares that the underworld will not be able to prevail against it. Ray Vanderlaan puts it this way: “*He didn’t want his followers hiding from evil: He wanted them to storm the gates of hell.*” Water flowing out of the Gates of Hell may appear to increase the farther down the Jordan River one travels, and the evil that flows with it may also seem to increase, but it is the true water that flows out from under the throne that increases, bringing life to all it touches (**Ezekiel 47:1-10, Revelation 22:1-2**).

The True Water

Ezekiel 47:1-10 – “*The man led me back to the door of the Temple, and I saw water coming out from under the doorway and flowing east . . . Going eastward about one-third of a mile the water was ankle deep . . . At about another one-third of a mile the water that came up to my knees . . . At about another one-third of a mile the water came up to my waist, and finally at another one-third of a mile the water deep enough to swim across . . . On both sides of the river were trees, and the water flowed down the Jordan to the Dead Sea, making the water in the Dead Sea fresh enough for fish to live in it.*”

Revelation 22:1-2 – “*Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life. It was shining like crystal and was flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the street of the city. The tree of life was on each side of the river. It produces fruit twelve times a year, once each month. The leaves of the tree are for the healing of all the nations.*”

Conclusions

Many prophecies have a dual or multiple fulfillment. Yeshua's prophecy of the rocks is one of them.

- The rock soil of Caesarea, in front of the Gates of Hades is that foundation upon which Yeshua would build his church that would prevail against any attack that Satan could bring against it.
- Yeshua is also a rock indeed, the foundation upon which all else stands.
- The confession is not that rock, though the confession that Yeshua is the rock is made by many.
- Abraham is not that rock, though Yeshua is indeed his promised seed.
- Peter is not that rock, but is a pebble, a small stone that might be thrown or easily moved.

Do you agree?

The Challenge

Matthew 28:19 – *“Go therefore and make disciples of all . . . for I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

Today Yeshua asks you and I the same question he posed to the disciples, *“Are you willing to confront the evils and corruption of your time?”*

If so, stop hiding in homes, stop hiding in fancy mansions that you call churches, stop hiding in plain sight.

Stop being politically correct, stop cringing at truth.

For crying out loud, STOP acting as if you are on the defense – it is hell and Hades that are on the defense – you and I are on the offense!

We are on the assault, on the offense, and hell's gates will not stand before us. Not the other way around, as many suppose.

Hell's defenses are unable to withstand the power of Yeshua's blood, Yeshua's name, Yeshua's word of testimony.

Hades will not prevent the righteous dead from rising when Yeshua calls them to resurrect.

What do you say?

Final Thought

The prophetic signs are burgeoning and not abating. Upon which Rock will you build against any attack that Satan might bring? Time is incredibly short – Yeshua Ha'Mashiach is coming soon – so be of great cheer, keep looking up, and keep maintaining an attitude of gratitude. Be sure you are believing The Truth, not The Lie. Be sure Yeshua is your Redeemer, King, and High Priest, and your sins are forgiven.