

BUILT UPON THE FOUNDATION

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Jesus Christ is the rock upon which all of true Christianity rests. He said to His disciples that upon the Rock of Christ He would build His Church. There are some who mis-read Jesus' words to Peter in Matt. 16:18 as saying that Peter was the rock upon which He would build, but this is an oversight by some who do not look closely at the Greek words used in the verse.

Matt 16:18: "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

The word translated here as Peter is from the Greek word petros which literally means a piece of stone. Jesus continued to instruct by saying that He would build His Church upon the rock - which is translated from the Greek word petra. The word petra is not a piece of rock, but is THE ROCK! It is literally much larger and more complete by definition than a petros. He further explained Himself by stating, "I will build My church". This statement alone should have cleared up any question of who would be the builder of the Church.

About 50 miles south of the Dead Sea lies the famed city of Petra. It is appropriately named "the rock" because the entire city is carved from a rock, not merely built with rocks - which would be petros. In a symbolic fashion, the Body of Christ is also being carved out of the Rock Jesus Christ.

As the master teacher Jesus instructed us to be aware of how we would build so that we would not be disappointed when tests and trials descend upon us.

Matt 7:24-25: "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock."

He went on to tell the story of the disappointment which was awaiting all those who failed to build upon the proper foundation, calling the wrong foundation sand. We likewise should take heed how we build - both individually and corporately as the Church so that what we build will stand the test of time and trials. In this parable Jesus defines the foundation as "these sayings of mine". So it would be proper to describe the foundation of the building as the sayings of Christ. When we believe and obey the sayings of Christ, we will automatically be building upon Christ Himself as He and His word are synonymous with one another (John 1:1). Jesus said to His disciples that He would build His Church and the gates of Hell could not prevail against what he would build (Matt 16:18). It is important to understand that only what He builds is guaranteed to stand. Also it is implied that what is built upon His sayings through obedience is the same as Jesus doing the actual building. When we build with Him, we also become His building.

1 Cor 3:9: "For we are God's fellow workers;..., you are God's building."

The apostle Paul was not confused at all about who the rock was that the Church would be built upon, writing to the Church in Corinth "that Rock was Christ" (1 Cor 10:4). As an apostle Paul was sent to be a co-laborer with the Lord to build His Church. He was an architect of the dwelling place which the Lord is building, through supernatural means, without "hands" (Acts 7:48). His desire is that we would be fitly framed together and be built together for a dwelling place of God (Eph 2:21).

1 Cor 3:10: "According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it."

The Greek word which Paul used in this verse which is translated as "master builder" is the word *architekton*, from which we get our English words architect and architecture. According to my Random House Webster's Dictionary architecture is 1. The profession of designing buildings, communities, etc. 2. The character or style of [the] building. 3. The design or structure of something. We can reasonably imply the nature of true apostolic ministry from this. A true apostle is sent to plan and carry out the design of the building (Body of Christ), communities of Christians (congregations, churches), to consider the structure which will need to hold together the entire building when completed, and the character or style of the building. Style represents the type of the building, and Jesus Himself is the type or pattern for the building of the Church. The apostle is very interested in the end product looking like the plan or pattern, which is Christ. It is the Body of Christ that he wishes to see built. The usage of the word character in the definition is quite appropriate because if we are truly building upon the teachings of Jesus, then the character of Christ will be manifested in what is built. The apostle's heart is that Christ would be manifested throughout the entire building.

Gal 4:19: "My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you.."

As with the example of the city of Petra, the entire building that God wishes to dwell in must be built with the Rock of Christ from start to finish. He is the Alpha and the Omega, both the beginning and the end. Jesus Christ must be all in all, the cornerstone and the capstone, the door, the walls, the windows, in all and through all, He must be in every part of the building or it could not properly be considered His habitation.

1 Cor 3:10, 11: "...But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

As Christians the Lord has commissioned us to make disciples and teach others to observe all things which He commanded us to do (Matt 28:19,20). Each time we accomplish this we are causing the habitation of God to be built and are influencing someone to build with lasting workmanship upon the rock, because they are building with

and obeying His words. Each of us is called with an individual calling, and God intends for each of us to accomplish a portion of the building of the habitation of God. Each member has a part and an individual calling to accomplish (Eph 2:10). Each member of the Body was created by God with a particular significance in mind which is according to His own plan and purpose.

1 Cor 12:18-21,27,28: "But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."... 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, ..."

God has planned in advance the work which would be done. He also has planned in advance the workers who will accomplish the work. We are all called in one body but with differing jobs to perform, yet with the same goal of advancing the Kingdom by building the Body of Christ, which is the habitation of God. The Lord has specifically laid out His plan for raising up the workers to accomplish His goal of completing the habitation of God.

Eph 4:11-12: "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.."

The equipping or perfecting ministries are also called the five ascension ministries. These ministries are called this because the Lord sent them from His ascended throne. They have the calling to prepare the saints as valuable workers for the Lord. The work is to be done by workers, the building is to be built by builders. These ministries are called specifically to raise up and train the workers to do the work of the Lord accurately and efficiently. Each of them likewise has a part in the process of producing a mature Church which is a perfected man, functioning in the full stature of Christ, and speaking the truth in Love (Eph 4:13-15).

The apostles and prophets are often called the foundation of the Church as Paul recorded in Eph 2:20, "having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone". The foundation is not literally the apostles and prophets - meaning that we do not lay down members of the Body who are called to these ministries - pour mortar over them and then build upon their cemented bodies. To say the foundation is of the apostles and prophets is a figure of speech, just as much as to say that Jesus is a corner stone. Figures of speech are given as a form of language used to provide emphasis and furnish additional force to the message being presented. In this case the emphasis is being placed upon the foundation-laying ministries of the apostle and prophet who are figuratively building out from the corner stone of Jesus Christ. This is the figure of speech anthropopatheia which literally means to give attributes from the earth to that which is divine. Jesus is not literally a corner stone which is laid in the ground. However, the figurative message here is that like a corner stone He is what all the

construction in the building must be measured from and continually checked back to see if it "lines up". Likewise the ministries of the apostle and prophet are sent with a specific ability and calling to be sure the foundation lines up correctly or the building will get further and further out of alignment from the "Rock" as it is built. In Isaiah 28:17 the Word says, "Also I will make justice the measuring line, and righteousness the plumb line.." The plumb line is a weight that's hung down by a string, it will hang straight down so a check can be made to see if what is built is straight and lines up vertically. When a carpenter says "the wall is plumb" it means it is straight up and down. The Church needs to be plumbed in righteousness. Justice is the measuring line and as we build out all the measurements must be taken from Jesus the corner stone. A deeper point that the Holy Spirit is making to us in this passage is not that apostles and prophets are a foundation to be built upon, but that they are sent from the Lord with the purpose of laying a foundation which "lines up" with Jesus the corner stone. When these ministries are received and function properly they are adept at laying the foundation of Christ in individuals, and in the congregation of Christ. The entire building is intended to be built upon Christ, and intended to look just like Him when it is completed. These ministries are called of God to accomplish the very important duty of laying the ground work that others will build upon, as well as checking the building as it progresses to be sure all is going according to the pattern or the blueprint of Jesus Christ. Each member has a part in the process, some are foundational, some are finish, but all are called to participate in the completion of the building.

Eph 4:16: "from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."