

# PETER THE ROCK



The giving of the keys to Saint Peter painted by Pietro Perugino in 1482

Catholics believe that Peter was the first Pope of the Catholic Church and that Peter is the rock upon which Jesus Christ built His Church and that Peter, the first Pope, was given the “keys to the kingdom of heaven” as scripture records in Matthew 16:18-19.

Tertullian would write in the year 200:

“Was anything withheld from the knowledge of Peter, who is called "the rock on which the church should be built," who also obtained "the keys of the kingdom of heaven," with the power of "loosing and binding in heaven and on earth?" *Tertullian De Corona (The Chaplet)*

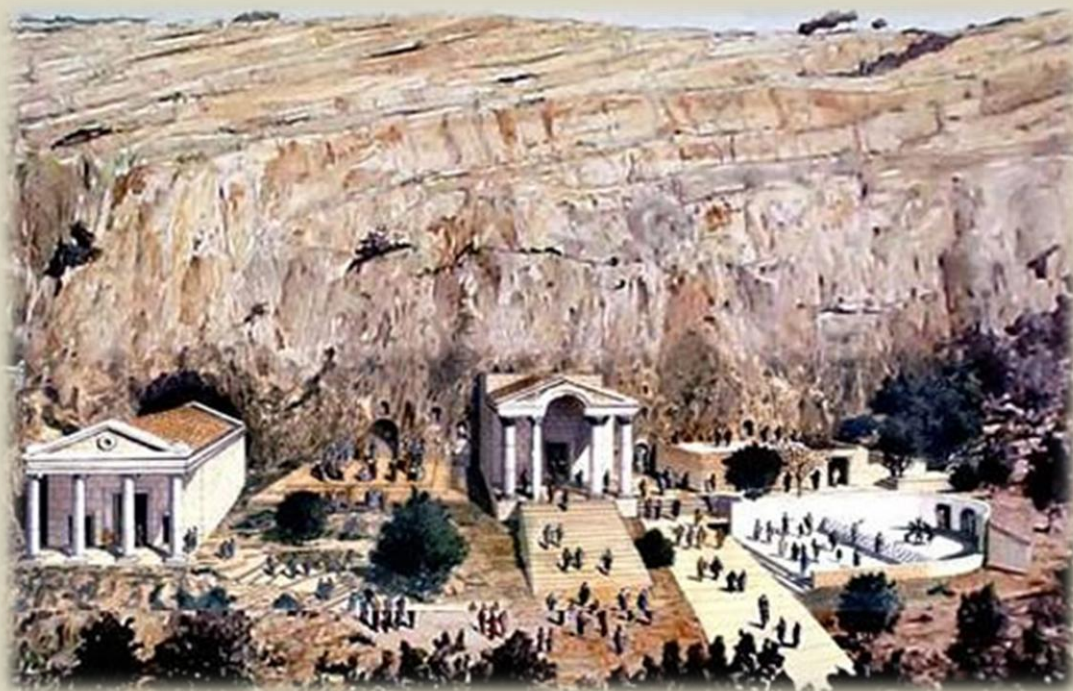
Cyprian would write in the year 251:

“The Lord says to Peter: “I say to you,” he says, “that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell will not overcome it” On him [Peter] he builds the Church, and to him he gives the command to feed the sheep and although he assigns a like power to all the apostles, yet he founded a single chair and he established by his own authority a source and an intrinsic reason for that unity... If someone does not hold fast to this unity of Peter, can he imagine that he still holds the faith? If he deserts the chair of Peter upon whom the Church was built, can he still be confident that he is in the Church?

*The Unity of the Catholic Church 4, first edition*

To find the beginning of the Catholic Church with Peter established as her earthly head and possessor of the keys to the kingdom of heaven we simply need to read Matthew 16:13-19.

"Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" And they said, "Some say, John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets. Jesus said to him in reply, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar- Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."



### The pagan temple of the god Pan at Caesarea Philippi at the time of Christ

Notice that Matthew's Gospel tells us that the apostles were gathered with Jesus in the district of Caesarea Philippi. Jesus and His disciples had traveled from the Sea of Galilee to Caesarea Philippi which is a distance of about 30 miles. It is here that Jesus changed the name of the apostle Simon to Peter and gave him the keys to the kingdom of heaven. But why travel here?

This is a mountainous area that is over 1,000 feet above the sea. Upon the rocks at Caesarea Philippi there was a Temple dedicated to Pan the god of shepherds. It is no accident that Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, brought His disciples to the temple of Pan the pagan god of shepherds.



## Pan god of shepherds

For modern day pagans, the Wiccans, Pan is their god:

“The Horned God is the Great God Pan, the Goat-foot God with a human torso and a human but goat-horned head, the God whose ecstatic worship was so hated by the Church that they used His description for their "Devil" and called Him the lord of all evil. Yet, to the ancients who worshipped Him, and to the modern Pagans and Witches that worship the Horned God is not "the Devil", except to those who fear and reject Nature, and the Powers of Life and human sexuality, and the ecstasy of the human spirit. The Horned God is the God of the Wicca.”

Read [HERE](#)

## Ruins of the Temple at Caesarea Phillipi





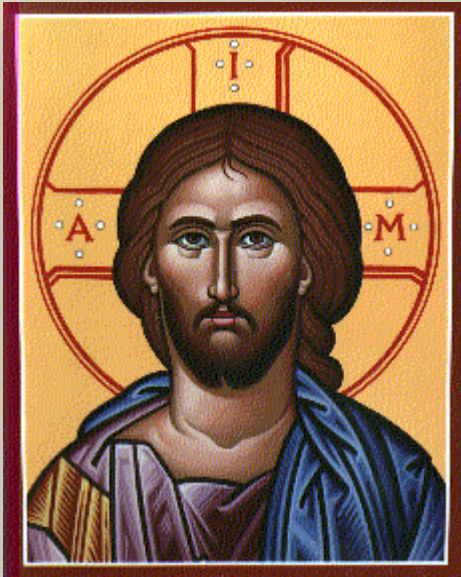
A sign at this site reads:

*THE GROTTA OF THE GOD PAN*

“This cave is the nucleus beside which the sacred sanctuary was built. In this “abode of the shepherd god” pagan cult began as early as the 3rd century BC. The ritual sacrifices were cast into a natural abyss reaching the underground waters at the back of the cave. If the victims disappeared in the water this was a sign that the god had accepted the offering. If, however, signs of blood appeared in the nearby springs the sacrifice had been rejected.”

Consider that Jesus would have been speaking to the disciples in Aramaic the common language of the Jews. The word for “rock” in Aramaic is “Kepha”.

Now imagine Jesus speaking to the apostles with the pagan temple built upon the rock of Caesarea Philippi in the background. He turns to the apostle Simon and says in Aramaic:



“Blessed are you Simon Bar-Jonah for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are kepha and upon this kepha I will build my church.”

Jesus is clearly contrasting the rock upon which the pagan temple was built with Peter, the rock upon which His Church would be built and the gates of hell would never prevail against it.

### Changing Simon’s name

Why did Jesus change Simon’s name in the first place? Anytime a person’s name is changed it signifies a mission, a calling, given to them by God. By changing Simon’s name Jesus is giving Peter the authority to govern His Church. The Jewish apostles would have known the significance of a name change from the scriptures.

Genesis 17: 3-5 “My covenant with you is this: you are to become the father of a host of nations. No longer shall you be called Abram; your name shall be Abraham, for I am making you the father of a host of nations.”

Genesis 17: 15-16 “And God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her; I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.”

Genesis 32:28 “Then he said, "Your name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed.”

### SAINT PETER

Because Catholics believe that Peter is the rock on which Christ’s Church is built we will encounter several objections.

**Protestant Objection:** The inspired word of God is written in Hebrew and in Greek. Vernacular translations are not inspired. The New Testament is written in Greek and in Matthew 16:18 two Greek words are used for “rock”. One is “**Petros**” translated in English as “Peter” and the other is “**Petra**” translated “rock”. Two different Greek words cannot both refer to Peter.

Here is the Greek text of Matthew 16:18. In **red** are the two Greek words for rock, “petros and petra.”

καγω δε σοι λεγω οτι συ ει **πετρος** και επι ταυτη τη **πετρα** οικοδομησω μου την εκκλησιαν και πυλαι αδου ου κατασυσουσιν αυτης



**Catholic answer:** In Greek the word for rock "Petra" is feminine. Therefore since Peter was a male Jesus could not have used a feminine noun. Therefore, rather than making Simon's name "Petra" (feminine), Jesus changed Simon's name to "Petros", which is the masculine form of this noun for "rock". We see the same principle in other languages, for instance Juanita for the feminine and Juan for the male. The Greek word Petra means rock. The Greek masculine form Petros means rock.

City of **Petra** Jordan



Ancient monastery at **Petra** Jordan



Author **Petros** Markaris



Tennis star **Petra** Kvitova

**Protestant Objection:** Petros, which is translated into English as "Peter", means "little stone."

**Catholic answer:** In Greek the word for "stone" is lithos not petros or petra. We can see evidence for this in another passage in the inspired Greek scripture when we see how the passage below is translated:  
1 Peter 2:8 "A stone (lithos) that will make men stumble and a rock (petra) that will make men fall"

**Protestant Objection:** There is no proof that Jesus spoke Aramaic so He never would have used the word "kepha" which means "rock."

**Catholic Answer:** Even though the New Testament was written in Greek and translated into English we see biblical evidence that Jesus spoke Aramaic the common language of the Jews.

Matthew 27:46: "eli eli lema sabachthani" Mark 5:41 "Talitha kourai" Mark 7:34: "Ephphatha,"



We also have an infallible definition of the word “petros” from scripture.

In John 1:42 Jesus meets His future apostle for the first time. Jesus turns to the fisherman Simon and says: “So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas (which means Petros)”

In this passage of John, we see the connection made between the Aramaic word for *rock* "Cephas" and the Greek word "petros" translated in English as Peter.

John shows us that all three words mean the same thing. In Aramaic, the word "kepha" means "rock". Jesus speaking in Aramaic changed Simon's name to "Kepha". When John writes about this incident in Greek, he expresses this using the word "Cephas" ( which is a transliteration). John then tells us that "Cephas" is the same thing as "Petros" and "Peter", all meaning rock. John is giving us an infallible definition of "petros" here.

**Protestant Objection:** Jesus is the rock as scripture records. “For they drank from the supernatural rock which followed them and the Rock was Christ.”

**Catholic Answer:** Jesus is the Rock but that doesn’t prevent Him from naming Simon “Rock” as is recorded in Matthew 16:18. In Isaiah 44:8 it says there is no other Rock but God yet in Isaiah 51:1 Abraham is called the “rock” from which Israel is cut.

Consider the following:

In 1 Corinthians 3:11, Jesus is called the foundation of the Church

In Ephesians 2:20, the apostles are called the foundation of the Church;

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus builds upon the foundation

In 1 Corinthians 3:12, the faithful build upon the foundation;

In Acts 4:11, Jesus is called the stone of God’s house.

In 1 Peter 2:5, the faithful are called the stones of God’s spiritual house;

In Revelation 21:22, Jesus is the temple of God.

In 1 Corinthians 3:16, the faithful are the temple of God;

In 1 Peter 2:25, Jesus is called the Bishop of the flock.

In Acts 20:28, the apostles are called the bishops of the flock;

Scripture applies the words “foundation,” “builders,” “stones,” “temple,” and “bishop” to both Jesus and His faithful, therefore nothing prevents Scripture from applying the word “rock” to both Jesus and Peter.





The inspired Greek text of Matthew 16:18 reveals to us something that vernacular translations do not. “You are Peter (rock) and upon this (*tautē*) rock I will build my church.”

In Greek the word *tautē* can mean “this” or “the same” or “this very.”

Matthew 16:18 can rightly be translated: “You are rock and on this same rock I will build my church.”

We can see in these scripture passages of the Protestant King James Bible how *tautē* can be translated:

1 Corinthians 7:20 “Let every man abide in the same (*tautē*) calling wherein he was called.”

2 Corinthians 9:4 “Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same (*tautē*) confident boasting.”

Luke 20:19 “And the chief priests and the scribes the same (*tautē*) hour sought to lay hands on him”

**Protestant Objection 4:** In 1 Corinthians 3:11 Paul says. “No man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Therefore Jesus is the foundation not Peter.

**Catholic Answer:** That Paul has laid a foundation doesn't take away that the apostles are the foundation. Ephesians 2:19-20, “You are ....members of the household of God built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone...”

We all know that a foundation built upon a rock is stronger than one built upon sand.

Matthew 7:24-27 “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”



Jesus to Peter: “feed my lambs, tend my sheep, feed my sheep”

Please read chapter 21 of John’s Gospel. It is one of the most moving accounts in all of scripture.

Saint Thomas Aquinas tells us in his commentary on John the mystical meaning of John 21: The boat is the Church, whose unity is symbolized by the net which is not torn, the sea is the world. Peter in the boat stands for supreme authority in the Church and the number of fish signifies the number of the saved.

In John 18:18 Peter saw a “charcoal fire” when he denied Christ three times. Now in verse 9 of John 21 we are told that there was another “charcoal fire” when Peter is restored to Christ.

Now instead of denying Jesus three times Peter tells Jesus he loves Him three times in John 21: 15-17.

It is Peter who hauls the net full of 153 fish and John tells us in verse 11 that the net was not torn. In Greek the word for torn is **σχισθη** –**schizo** which is where we get the word “schism.”

Peter, as the head of Christ's Church on earth (and all of his successors), was called to help gather all nations and all peoples united in faith in Christ.

Some theologians have speculated that the last Pope will present the Church united, without schism, to Jesus at the end of the world.

Jesus then gives Peter the authority to govern the Church when He tells only Peter to feed His lambs, tend His sheep and feed His sheep. The Greek word for “tend” is **ποιμαινε** (pomino) which means to govern or to rule.

In this passage in John 21, we see Peter repenting, re-committing himself fully to Christ, being given charge of uniting all believers, and we see Peter's role as head of Christ Church being reaffirmed as he is told to govern/rule Christ's sheep, all those in the Church.



In verses 15-19 of John 21 Jesus tells Peter how he will die:

“Truly I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not want to go.”

According to Tradition, Peter was crucified upside down around AD 64.

**Catechism 881** “The Lord made Simon alone, whom he named Peter, the “rock” of his Church. He gave him the keys of his Church and instituted him shepherd of the whole flock. “The office of binding and loosing which was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of apostles united to its head.” This pastoral office of Peter and the other apostles belongs to the Church’s very foundation and is continued by the bishops under the primacy of the Pope.”

Did you know? The early Church was called  
“The Way”

Acts 9:1-3 “Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples.... who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem”

There are some Protestant scholars that agree that Peter is the rock on which the Church was built but deny that the giving of the keys is of any significance.

**Next Topic:** What did Jesus mean when He gave Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven?