

Upon this Rock

An Exposition of the Glories of Christ in
Matthew 16:13-18

B. P. Harris

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in
Matthew 16:13-18

Along with the Foundation of the Faith

Including an excerpt from *Church Principles of the New Testament*,
Vol. I, where a fuller version may be found.

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An Exposition of the Glories of Christ in

Matthew 16:13-18

Matthew 16:13-18 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? ¹⁴ And they said, Some *say that thou art* John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. ¹⁵ He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? ¹⁶ And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. ¹⁷ And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. ¹⁸ 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. KJV

This portion of Scripture is so important for the spiritual well-being of every Christian for it reveals to us the Lord Jesus Christ in all His glory. In these verses the Holy Spirit reveals to us every aspect of our Lord's glorious Person. It reveals to us His Human Nature in that He is "Son of Man." It reveals to us His Divine Nature in that He is the "Son of the Living God." And it reveals to us His work in that "He is the Christ." All three of these aspects are revealed to us as the fullness of His Name—He is the LORD Jesus Christ. It reveals to us the means of our salvation and the basis of our faith. It is the glorious Name by which all men and women are to be saved, as Scripture declares—"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12 KJV).

In this light, we find that Scripture designates the LORD Jesus Christ the Rock or Bedrock of the Church, but it also designates Christ the Foundation of the Church, and also the Chief Cornerstone of the Church. Why does the Holy

Spirit use all three designations when speaking of Christ? In what way, is Christ the Bedrock of the Church and the Foundation? Are not these two designations the same, or are they different? And what does it mean that Christ is the Chief Cornerstone? We will find that these three designations correspond to His wonderful Name, and as such become the ground of the Church and the testimony of the saints. So with this in mind, let us first consider the designation of Christ as the Bedrock.

Christ as the Bedrock

“Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?” This age old question is a question that every man and woman living upon earth will have to answer, if not in this lifetime, then, most certainly, in the next when all human beings will appear before the LORD of heaven and earth.

Philippians 2:9-11 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:¹⁰ That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth;¹¹ And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* LORD,[†] to the glory of God the Father. KJV

This question, recorded for us in the Gospel of Matthew, was given to the disciples by our Lord when they

[†] Capitalization of LORD is mine. Paul is referring to the fact that Jesus Christ is the LORD. In other words, He is the LORD God of the Old Testament, the One who eternally existing in the form of God the Father, being the image of the invisible God (cf. Col. 1:15). He is more than just a mere human being, but is God manifested in the flesh (see I Tim. 3:16). Yes, we should also confess that Jesus is Lord, meaning our Master, but He is our Lord because He is our LORD.

both came into the coasts or district of Caesarea Philippi. How appropriate it was for our Lord to ask this question in this place, for Caesarea Philippi, which lay at the base of Mount Hermon, was an area that lay in the Jewish territory of Dan, but was also a city named after a Gentile, Tiberius Caesar. Why was this significant? Because the answer to that question would bring salvation not only to the Jew, but also the Gentile!

Moreover, it was also appropriate to ask that question in that place, because all around the slopes of Mount Hermon there were temples erected to different false gods, including a temple located at the very summit. In fact, the very name of Mt. Hermon itself was associated with a heathen god. It was named in the Old Testament as Baal-Hermon.

Judges 3:3 *These nations are:* the five lords of the Philistines and all the Canaanites and the Sidonians and the Hivites who lived in Mount Lebanon, from **Mount Baal-hermon** as far as Lebo-hamath. NASB

Consequently, the answer to our Lord's pointed question in the midst of such idolatry would point those worshippers to the one true God, the LORD Jesus Christ, who would speak of His own Temple, wherein mankind could worship the one true God in spirit and truth.

Additionally, it was also appropriate to ask that question in that place, for it was covered with many boulders, rocky crags, and exposed bedrock, upon which those false temples were erected. It thus provided a fitting backdrop for our Lord's imagery that He, Himself, would build His own Temple, the Church, upon the one Rock, the Bedrock that was Himself, against which the gates of hell would never prevail.

And, finally, it very well could be that some of these ancient temples were already in ruins, or at least, in the process of decay, caused by the nature of that area, wherein rock is turned into shingle (small pieces of rough rock caused

by weathering). As such, our Lord would be emphasizing that the Temple He would build would survive the ravages of time and/or the attack of hell (indicated by His metaphorical use of the phrase “gates of hell”). Our Lord was saying His Temple, the Church, would last forever, for it was built upon the incorruptible Rock, the solid Bedrock that was Himself.

Perhaps, it might help to provide a description of this area as related by one Sir Charles Warren of the Palestinian Exploration Fund of London, who led an expedition to this area of Mt. Hermon in the mid 1800’s. He provides a description of the summit of Mount Hermon where the bedrock of the mountain was exposed, and where in some places the exposed rock was covered with that small shingle we talked about which he says was “possibly caused by the disintegrating influence of the frequent frosts and thaws on the summit.”¹ He writes the following concerning a ruined temple upon the summit.

“The oval is formed of well-dressed stones, from 2 ft. to 8 ft. in length, 2 1/2 ft. in breadth, and 2 ft. thick...and the position they occupied can only be ascertained by the cutting in the rock made to receive them...These stones follow the inequalities of the ground; where it is shingle they are set in two or three inches; where it is rock [bedrock] there is just a level place cut down to receive them...at the north-west angle and west side the rock has been cut down to afford room for the building, and part of the lower portion of the wall appears to be cut out of the rock.”²

This account is significant for it demonstrates to us how those temples were constructed upon the bedrock of the

¹ Palestine Exploration Fund, *Our Work in Palestine: Being an Account of the Different Expeditions Sent Out to the Holy Land by the Committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund Since the Establishment of the Fund in 1865* (Bentley & Son, London, 1877) pg. 248-249

² Ibid., pg. 246-247

mountain (which significance we will shortly explain). And it demonstrates to us the distinction between stones that were laid as a foundation upon bedrock, and the bedrock itself.

So, with all this as background, let us begin our study of this important portion of Scripture. We will begin with the concept of the one who builds, which in Scripture is called a masterbuilder, first in light of the Temple of God in the Old Testament, and then in the light of the Temple of God in the New Testament—the Church.

A masterbuilder not only reveals the plan of the building to be erected, but also reveals the place where it is to stand. As such, it should not surprise us that Scripture reveals to us the place where God chose to erect His Sanctuary. We are told that God chose Mt. Zion as the place where His Temple should stand.

Ps. 78:67-69 Moreover he refused the Tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim: ⁶⁸ **But chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved.** ⁶⁹ And he built his sanctuary like high palaces, like the earth which he hath established forever. KJV

Not only that, we are also told that God actually chose the very spot upon Mt. Zion where His Temple should be built. He chose the threshing floor of Ornan.

I Chron. 21:18, 26, 28-30; 22:1 “Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up, and set up an altar unto the LORD **in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.** ²⁶ And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD; and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering. ²⁸ At that time when David saw that the LORD had answered him in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there. ²⁹ For the Tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt offering, *were* at

that season in the high place at Gibeon.³⁰ But David could not go before it to enquire of God: for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of the LORD. **22:1** Then David said, **‘This is the house of the LORD God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel.’**” KJV

This is significant, as we will presently see, for in many places upon Mt. Zion the bedrock actually breaks the surface. And, as with the threshing floor of Ornan, it was in those areas of exposed bedrock that many times threshing floors would be located. Additionally, such locations, on top of hills, or on the top of mountains, were also sought after, because one could better catch the slightest breeze to blow the chaff away, as is mentioned in the quote below.

“The threshing-floor...was a fixed site (Gen.50.10; 2Sam.24.18); no doubt, as now, **a flat rock-surface in the hills**, or a clay floor in the plains, outside the village, usually to the [West] to catch the breeze.”³

Therefore, we see that the Temple of God was built upon the very “bedrock” of Mount Zion, which was also known as Mount Moriah, in the place called the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite (II Chron. 3:1).

II Chronicles 3:1 Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where *the LORD* appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared **in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.** KJV

God has always been in control of the place where His Temple should be placed. He was the One who chose Eden as the place to plant His Garden (a forerunner or type of

³ William Coleman Piercy, ed., *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (E. P. Dutton and Co., New York, 1908) pg. 19

the Temple), and He was the One who chose the bedrock upon Mount Moriah to build His Temple in Jerusalem.

So, with all this in mind let's now consider the Temple of this dispensation—the Church.

I Corinthians 3:16 Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you? NASB

Has God, indeed, also chosen the place where this Temple should be built? To answer that question we must now return to the Gospel of Matthew, to the very portion of Scripture we are considering.

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus says, “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it” (NASB). As many know, there is interplay in the Greek language between the name of **Peter**, and the Greek word translated, **Rock**, on which the Church is built. In the Greek it would appear as follows—Κἀγὼ δέ σοι λέγω, ὅτι σὺ εἶ **πέτρος (Peter)**, καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτῃ **τῇ πέτρᾳ** (the Rock) οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, καὶ πύλαι Ἰδοῦ οὐ κατισχύσουσιν αὐτῆς.

A very wooden and literal rendering of the Greek would elicit the following translation: “And I also say to you, that you are **Peter** (rock), and upon this, **the Rock** (Bedrock), I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.” As one can see Rock (τῇ πέτρᾳ) is articular (meaning it has a definite article). The significance of this will be seen later, but there is no doubt that the Holy Spirit is making a contrast between **πέτρος** (Peter) and **τῇ πέτρᾳ** (the Rock).

Now, before we proceed, perhaps it might be helpful to mention that some discount this contrast between **πέτρος** and **πέτρᾳ** because it is affirmed that Christ spoke in Aramaic where no such distinction exists. But it really makes no difference for us today whether Jesus spoke in Aramaic or in

Hebrew in this exchange. Why? Simply because no one knows the exact Aramaic or Hebrew words that were used by our Lord in this discourse. Yes, if the Lord was speaking in Aramaic there may have been no difference between the two words He might have used for rock. But that would not necessarily make a difference because, as we will see later, the Lord could still communicate with body language a distinction, even between the two exact Aramaic words. That this may have indeed been the case is demonstrated by the two different Greek words chosen by the Holy Spirit when inscribing this conversation in Greek. (Some conjecture He used the Aramaic word *kepha*.)

In other words, let us assume the Lord spoke in Aramaic (or Hebrew) and used the exact same word in referring to “Peter” and the “rock” in that conversation. He still could have made a distinction between each usage of the word by including body language (e.g. pointing to Peter when using the first instance of the word, and then pointing to Himself when using the second instance of the word). Thus, the Holy Spirit may have chosen two different words in Greek to show this distinction of body language. There simply is no way to come to a definitive conclusion regarding the meaning of the text when one appeals to a different language used by our Lord on that day—for we do not have a record of that language. If we had the actual language recorded for us, then, of course, one could justify a particular interpretation, but the fact is, we do not have a record of the words actually used, i.e. unless one wants to postulate (which some do) that Greek was the language spoken on that occasion.

Thus, as we said before, what we do have is the fact that the Holy Spirit chose two distinct Greek words to forever record for us in Scripture this conversation; this, in itself, proves that Jesus was making some type of distinction between the two usages of the word in His conversation with Peter, for the mind of the Lord and the mind of the Holy Spirit

are always one. If Jesus originally spoke in Aramaic or Hebrew, then the Holy Spirit communicated to us our Lord's exact intended meaning for us in the Greek language. In other words, the Holy Spirit is authoritatively interpreting for us the meaning of our Lord (if, indeed, He spoke in Aramaic or Hebrew) by the Greek words He inspires Matthew to record. So with that in mind, let's examine this distinction that the Holy Spirit reveals to us.

In the Greek language, the Rock (πέτρα) is in the feminine gender, and Peter (πέτρος), his name, is in the masculine gender. They are two different words, yet they are certainly similar. However, there is a nuanced difference which I believe was intended by the Holy Spirit. The Greek word *petra* (πέτρα) is used of fractured rock arising out of the ground; it is even used of those large rocks or stones hewn out of bedrock; but also many times, it is simply used of the actual bedrock itself. On the other hand, *petros* (πέτρος) is never used of the bedrock as a whole; it is only used of rock arising out of bedrock, and/or the rock or stones hewn out of bedrock; it never is used of the bedrock proper.⁴ Thus *petros* is never used of a bedrock base suitable for building upon.

⁴ Even before the New Testament, this distinction between these two Greek words was maintained, even in secular writings. The Greek Lexicon of Liddell & Scott state the following: "There is no example, in good authors, of πέτρα in the sense of πέτρος, *a stone*: for in Od. 9. 243. 484. Hes. Th. 675. πέτραι are not *loose stones*, but *masses of live rock* torn up and hurled by giants, cf. Buttm. Lexil. v. ἡλίσσασσι; so, in Pind. P. 1. 42 (πέτρας κυλινδομένα φλόξ. i. e. the fire of Aetna), in Xen. An. 4. 2, 20 (ἐκυλίνδουν πέτρας), Polyb. 3. 53, 4 (τὰς π. ἐπικυλίωντες), *masses of rock* are meant." It should be noted, however, this portion has been deleted from modern revisions of the Lexicon, and, therefore, modern readers might not be aware that Henry G. Liddell's and Robert Scott's original edition of the Lexicon affirmed this distinction. (Please see: Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, Greek-English Lexicon, Seventh Edition [Harper & Brothers, New York, 1883] pg. 1207)

This fine nuance can also be seen in the Septuagint translation of Isa. 2:21 where both words are used in one verse. (Some might discount this since the LXX is translation Greek, but I still think this example is significant and helpful, since the translators had to choose two specific words to communicate what they thought, whether correctly or not, was the meaning of the Hebrew text.)

Isa. 2:21 To enter into the **caverns** (τρώγλας) **of the solid** (στερεᾶς) **rock** (*petra*), and into the **clefts** (σχισμᾶς) of **the rocks** (*petros*), for fear of the Lord, and by reason of the glory of his might, when he shall arise to strike terribly the earth. (Brenton's Version of LXX)

We can see that the LXX use of *petra* is distinguished from *petros* by the added Greek adjective στερεᾶς. The Greek word στερεᾶς brings forth the added description of “solidness” or “firmness” to the Greek word *petra*, showing that *petra*, in this context, is not being used of rock arising out of the ground, or of stones hewn out of bedrock, but of the bedrock itself. The same adjective is used in II Tim. 2:19 bespeaking the “firm” foundation of God, showing the cohesiveness of a solid foundation.

The LXX translators also chose τρώγλας to speak of the hole or the cavern within the solid bedrock. Caverns are usually located below ground formed out of solid rock. The Greek word τρώγλας literally means a hole. It is the Greek word where we get the English word *troglydite*. The New American Standard Bible also confirms this understanding of the word by translating the Hebrew word, *naqarah*, as “cavern.”

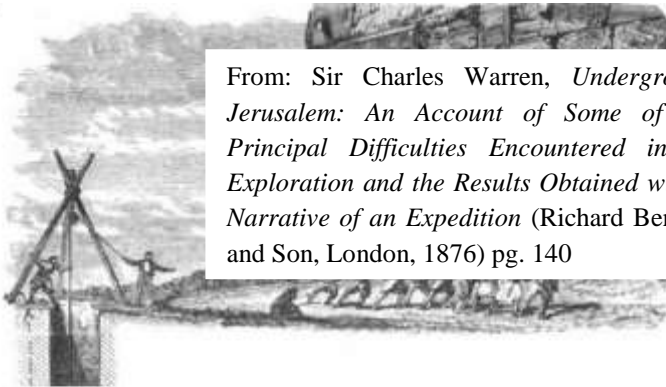
On the other hand, in the same verse, *petros* is used of the *ruddy rocks* that protrude up (crag) from the bedrock (*petra*) of the earth. The word translated “cleft” or “crag” is the Greek word σχισμᾶς in the LXX. It refers to rock that has been fissured or broken away from the main body of rock. Its

cognate word, σχίσματα, is used in I Cor. 1:10 of the fractures or divisive groups within the church in Corinth.

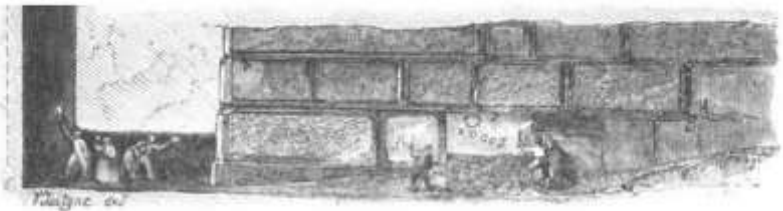
In fact, this Greek word σχισμῶς translates the Hebrew word *saiph*, which, in other contexts, is also used of the branches of a tree, showing a distinction between branches, the trunk, and the root of the tree itself. In other words, a branch is similar to a trunk or root (also being wood) but it is only a part of the tree arising away and up from the trunk and/or root. In the same way, *petros* is like unto bedrock (also being rock), but it is only a part of the bedrock arising away and up from the earth like branches of a tree. Also, in other translations, *saiph* is translated as “top.” Thus, *petros*, which is a crag, is rock that protrudes, arises, or breaks away from the bedrock of the earth. It is usually found, not below the earth, but above the earth.

Another indication that this is the meaning intended for both words is found in the immediate context of the previous verse, which says— “In that day men will cast away to the moles and the bats their idols of silver and their idols of gold, which they made for themselves to worship” (Isaiah 2:20 NASB). Here it speaks of men casting their false idols, first to the moles, and then to the bats. The order continues in verse 21. Moles are underground, paralleling the *petra* of the ground, which is mentioned first, whereas bats fly above ground, paralleling the *petros*, in which are the crags or the clefts that protrude up above ground from the bedrock, which is mentioned second. Moles live below ground and bats many times live above ground in the clefts and caves of rocks. (Of course, we are speaking very broadly. We know that bats also live underground in caverns and caves.) Thus, what we see in this verse is that out from the *petra* (bedrock) of the earth arise the *petros* (surface rocks).

Fig.1 - Excavation down to the bedrock below the SE Corner of the Temple Mount.



From: Sir Charles Warren, *Underground Jerusalem: An Account of Some of the Principal Difficulties Encountered in Its Exploration and the Results Obtained with a Narrative of an Expedition* (Richard Bentley and Son, London, 1876) pg. 140



top,
and
portions
the full

(These
middle,
bottom
are from
page

illustration shown on page 140 in the book referenced above.)

This distinction between *petra* (bedrock) and *petros* (surface rocks) is most instructive when we realize the context in which Jesus uses these two words. We have already seen that the Church is understood to be the Temple of God in this dispensation. This is the underlying imagery used by our Lord when He talks about the building of the Church in Matt. 16:18. And He uses imagery familiar to every Israelite in regard to its construction. The reference of the building of the Church in Matt. 16:18 cannot be divorced from the imagery of the building of the Temple of God. It is important to remember that the rebuilding the Temple, begun by King Herod, was still going on when our Lord spoke these words (John 2:20). This construction was in the forefront of every Jewish mind. Its grandeur was admired by many (Mk. 13:1). As such, it would not be surprising that every Israelite knew the manner of its construction. It must have been the topic of many a conversation. Every Jewish boy probably heard from his grandfather the magnificent manner of its rebuilding, no doubt being told of the great trenches that were dug down to the bedrock (in some places to 80 ft.) to provide a firm and solid foundation for the Temple and the walls surrounding the Temple mount.

In regard to this construction, let me provide some information.

“The stones used in the great Herodian Temple walls were huge rocks carved into blocks, called ashlar. Most weighed between 2 and 5 tons. However, many weighed 10 tons, some 50, and one in particular weighed almost 400 tons.... The wall, because of its tremendous weight, would exert great pressure on the earth below it. To prevent the earth from moving and shifting, causing the wall to collapse, **Herod had the wall begin at solid bedrock. Sometimes**

the bedrock was eighty feet below street level, and it was from here the great wall began its mighty ascent...⁵

And—

“It is necessary to state, before proceeding further, that the Holy City is built upon a series of rocky spurs close to the watershed or backbone of Palestine; and it appears to be quite certain, from the nature of the surrounding country, **that in early times the site of Jerusalem was a series of rocky slopes, the ledges covered here and there with a few feet of red earth.** When, therefore, we get down to the surface of the rock at the present day (provided it has not been cut), we get down to that surface which presented itself to view in olden times, before the first inhabitants built their city... Now this being the case, it is only necessary to throw away all the debris forming the vast plateau of the Sanctuary, and we get a view of **the rock of Moriah**, as it would have appeared to the eyes of King David: although this is of course impracticable on the ground itself, we have been able to do so on paper, and on a model: for, having obtained the height of the surface of rock in all the tanks of the Sanctuary, where rock was to be found, and having obtained the height of the rock along the wall, we have been able to produce a very approximate contoured plan of the rock over all this area; and on some part of this area the Temple of Solomon once stood.”⁶

What we see in these two accounts is this. While bedrock was near the surface in many areas, it was far beneath the surface in other areas, and so, in order to sustain the great weight of the Temple proper (*hekhal*), and in order to sustain the great weight of the walls surrounding the Temple mount itself, the builders would dig down till they found bedrock and

⁵ Rabbi Leibel Reznick, *The Holy Temple Revisited* (Jason Aronson, Inc., Northvale, New Jersey, London, 1993) pg. 16, 18

⁶ Sir Charles Warren, *The Recovery of Jerusalem: A Narrative of Exploration and Discovery in the City and the Holy Land* (Richard Bentley and Sons, London, 1871) pg. 314

upon the *bedrock* great *foundation stones* that had been hewn were laid down. (Please see Fig. 1 on page 13 above.) In some places, because of the great depth of the sloping bedrock, arches were built up from the bedrock in levels over each other to provide a flat and even platform for the surrounding courts of the Temple. Nevertheless, whether close to the surface or far beneath the surface, the hewn *foundation stones* were laid directly upon *bedrock*, thus showing the difference between a *foundation* and the *bedrock* upon which the foundation was laid.

It is interesting to note that part of this bedrock was discovered near the surface in the northern portion of the Temple mount, as it exists today. This bedrock is believed to be the bedrock upon which the northern wall of the *hekhal* (the House, the Temple proper) rested during our Lord's day.

Asher Kaufman in his book on the Temple has this to say of this bedrock.

"Now the outermost northern wall of the House was 5 cubits wide (*Middot* 4, 7). The coincidence lends credence to the idea that the rock ledge (41) formed the rock base to the masonry of that northern wall (Fig. 38). If that is the case, a method employed by the Temple masons of shaping the bedrock to match the masonry has been revealed."⁷

And in his reference above, he gives this caption below the diagram of that proposed method—

"The proposed method of laying the masonry of the northern outer wall of the House (*Hekhal*) **on the existing bedrock.**"⁸

⁷ Asher Selig Kaufman, *The Temple Mount: Where Is The Holy of Holies?* (Har Yérah Press, Jerusalem, 2004) pg. 71

⁸ Ibid.

So we see that because of the greatness of the building, the immense *foundation stones* had to be laid directly upon the very *bedrock* of the mount. This is the imagery behind the use of *petros* and *petra* by our Lord. It is as if He was saying the following to Peter—“And I also say to you, that you are Peter (a hewn foundation stone), and upon this, the Rock (the very Bedrock), I will build My Church (the Temple), and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”

This same manner of construction was even used in the building of an everyday house in Israel as can be seen in the Complete Jewish Bible translation of Luke 6:48.

Luke 6:48 he is like someone building a house who dug deep **and laid the foundation on bedrock (πέτρα)**. When a flood came, the torrent beat against that house but couldn't shake it, because it was constructed well.⁹

Notice that the man dug down deep until bedrock was found in order to insure the quality and firmness of his house. If such construction was utilized for one's own house, how much more would it be utilized for the House of the Lord, the Temple upon Mt. Moriah?

The Lord was not saying that He would build His Church upon Peter. Indeed, such a great building as a Temple could not be built upon one foundation stone, even if it was a stone as great a size like unto what is called the “Western Stone” recently uncovered in Jerusalem along the Western Wall. It lies a few courses up from the bedrock (being placed higher up apparently to stabilize the wall). Yet it certainly could have been used in the first course if desired. It is the largest stone found upon the Temple mount being approximately 45 feet long, 10 feet high and 13 feet wide, weighing almost 525 tons. As great a stone as it is, the Temple

⁹ Please see footnote 12 on page 31 below regarding the use of some Modern Versions of the Bible.

could not be built upon it. But it certainly could have been used as one of many foundation stones used in the construction of the Temple. Today, engineers marvel and wonder how such a great stone as the Western Stone could ever had been transported, maneuvered, and placed into position by builders of that day. Apparently, even modern day cranes could not have handled such an immense stone. It is one of the largest, if not the largest stone ever maneuvered by human beings. Most assuredly, it must have been the topic of every Israelite, as it was such a feat unrivaled in the ancient world. Yet the House of the Lord, as any house solidly built (see Luke 6:18 above), could not have been built simply upon one stone; it surely would have to rest upon solid bedrock, no matter how deep workers might have to dig to find it, for Herod, and Solomon before him, desired that the Temple of God stand unto the centuries. It could not be erected upon one foundation stone, but was erected upon many foundation stones that had first been laid upon *solid bedrock* (see Fig. 2 below).

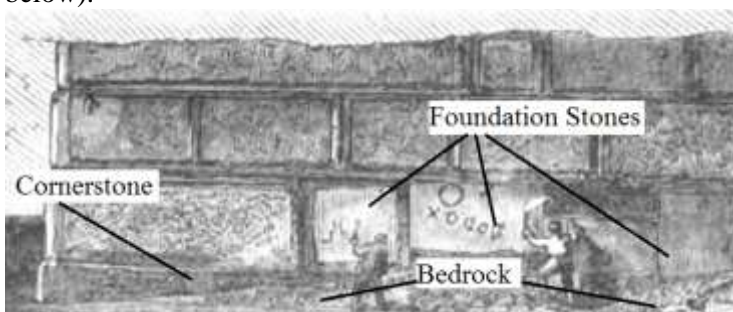


Fig. 2 - This is the bottom portion of illustration on page 13 (Fig. 1). One can see how the Foundation Stones are laid upon the Bedrock. The Cornerstone is also fitted into the Bedrock and is also considered a Foundation Stone. In this illustration from the Temple Mount in Jerusalem one can also see that since the Bedrock slopes gently upward, the Cornerstone and the Foundation Stones also follow the same slope, stepping upward.

Josephus has this to say about this building project by King Herod and this layer of multiple foundation stones—

“And now Herod, in the eighteenth year of his reign, and after the acts already mentioned, undertook a very great work, that is, to build of himself the Temple of God, and make it larger in compass, and to raise it to a most magnificent altitude...”

“**So Herod took away the old foundations, and laid others,** and erected the Temple upon them, being in length a hundred cubits, and in height twenty additional cubits...Now the Temple was built of stones that were white and strong, and each of their length was twenty-five cubits, their height was eight, and their breadth about twelve; and the whole structure, as also the structure of the royal Cloister, was on each side much lower, but the middle was much higher, till they were visible to those that dwelt in the country for a great many furlongs, but chiefly to such as lived over against them, and those that approached to them.”¹⁰

These foundation stones, used in the construction of the Temple, also remind us of the description given to the New Jerusalem, which rest upon twelve great foundation stones.

Rev. 21:14 And the wall of the city had **twelve foundation stones**, and on them *were* the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. NASB

This is the background imagery used by our Lord. The Rock, upon which the Church will be built, is not built simply upon Peter, simply upon one mere foundation stone, not even if Peter was a “great” foundation stone, as great as the “Western Stone” found in Jerusalem, or even if he was a greater stone than all the other eleven apostles as foundation stones. Peter is still just one mere foundation stone and one

¹⁰ William Whiston, Tr., *The Works of Flavius Josephus* (George Virtue, London, 1841) pg. 471-473

foundation stone cannot support the entire Temple of God. Only bedrock can support the entire Temple. A foundation stone may help to support that which is above it, but it is the bedrock beneath that foundation stone that support it and everything else above it. And, in our Lord's discourse, that Bedrock is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Now that we have shown the distinction between *petros* and *petra* and the distinct manner in which a Temple was built, perhaps, it might now aid us in understanding what occurred in Matt. 16:18 by imagining the body language that may have occurred with the words spoken by our Lord to Peter. If we imagine the gestures the Lord may have made when speaking those words to Peter, perhaps it might help crystalize the truth within our mind. (Of course, this use of body language is mere speculation, but Scripture does show that body language was utilized for emphasis in those days, just as it is used in our days. Cf. Luke 18:13; Jn. 11:41; Acts 26:1.)

Upon hearing Peter's confession, maybe our Lord slowly walked toward Peter, with His arms stretched upward to heaven, and with the approbation upon His lips, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." Then, taking another step closer to Peter, maybe He reached forward with His two hands now firmly grasping Peter by both shoulders and, looking directly into his eyes, said to him, "And I say to you" (in response to what Peter had just said to the Lord), "Thou art Peter (*a foundation stone*)."

Then, perhaps, after releasing His hands from Peter's shoulders, and taking a step backward, He turned to His other disciples and then said to them, "And upon this, the Bedrock,"—perhaps placing His own hand over His own breast in order to emphasize His own Person in contradistinction to the person of Peter—"I will build my Church."

Here, by having the very same words spoken, but with the added communication of body language, we see that a completely different message is communicated than those who wish to assert that Peter was the one upon which the Lord was saying He would build the Church.

Jesus is making a direct response to Peter's confession to Christ and is reaffirming to him that his new name is Peter. It must be remembered that Peter had already received this name many months before. He received the name when he first met the Lord after the Lord's baptism and before the Lord returned to Galilee.

John 1:42 He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him, and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas, (which in Greek is Peter). NASB

So what our Lord is doing, is now giving Simon Peter context for his new name. He is telling Peter that because of his confession of faith, he will be a part of the Temple which Christ will now build as the Son of the Living God. He tells Peter that he is a rock (*petros*), a foundation stone, and that He, the Christ, is the Bedrock (*petra*) upon which Peter will be laid.

A Christian in the 19th century had this to say regarding this truth—

"Again, the distinctive significations of *πετρος* and *πετρα* are most precisely marked in Mat. xvi. 18. Here *πετρος*, a stone, stands alone, without even the definite article; whereas *πετρας*, rock, is preceded both by the definite article and demonstrative pronoun, '*ταυτη τη πετρα*,' this the rock, or, this very rock. "Thou art a stone, (*πετρος*) and upon this the rock I will build my Church." Supplying the obvious ellipsis, the meaning of our Lord's words may be thus correctly rendered,—'I say unto thee, that thou art *Petros*, a stone, (i.e. a lively stone, 1 Pet. ii. 5,) and upon this very rock (on which thou art building) I will build my Church.'"

“The omission of the definite article before *πετρος* in this passage must be noticed. Had our Lord intended to point out Peter, or Peter's faith, as the rock on which He would build His Church, it is manifest that He would have addressed him by the usual personal denominative, *ο Πετρος*, which is much more definite and emphatic than simply *πετρος*. Nothing can be more plain than that our Lord intended by this *unusual* omission of the article to fix the attention of His disciples not on Peter, but on Himself, under the appropriate corresponding metaphor, the “Rock,” placed in juxtaposition with a “stone,” and rendered most distinctive and emphatic by the definite article and demonstrative pronoun, *και επι ταυτη τη πετρα κ.τ.λ.*, “and upon this very rock I will build my Church.” Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that our Lord really intended to found His Church upon Peter, or Peter's faith! Then, it is manifest He would have addressed Peter by his *usual* and emphatic name, *ο Πετρος*, and would have also used the same word in the second member of the sentence, to indicate the identity of the foundation of His Church with Peter. The meaning, under the present supposition, would then be clear and definite, ‘*συ ει Πετρος και επι ταυτο τω πετρω οικοδομησω κ.τ.λ.*’

The force of the omission of the article before *Πετρος* in ver. 18, is rendered still more obvious by the recurrence of the usual personal denominative only four verses below, viz. in ver. 22: “And Peter (*ο Πετρος*) taking him,” &c. And in ver. 23 our Lord addresses him personally and emphatically by the same name: “And turning round, he said unto Peter, (*τῷ Πέτρῳ*) get thee behind me, Satan!”¹¹

Now, it is true, as our brother shared above, the anarthrous use is quite noticeable in the narrative before us. However, it should also be mentioned that some simply explain the absence of the article because *πετρος* is considered salient within the direct statement of Jesus. Both explanations have their merit.

¹¹ J. Tomlin, “The Pope's Arrogant Claim to Supremacy,” *The Christian Guardian and Churchman's Magazine* (J. H. Jackson, London, 1851) 129-30

It, indeed, is common for a proper name to be anarthrous upon its first usage and then articular in every subsequent usage. For instance, the first solitary usage of Peter is anarthrous in Matt. 8:14 and every other occurrence of his name in the gospel (minus this passage in question) is articular. Yet this is not a hard and fast rule; the opposite is true in the book of Acts. After an initial anarthrous use in Acts (not counting the initial use in the apostolic list of names) Peter's name sometimes appears articular (i.e. Acts 2:14, 37) and sometimes anarthrous (e.g. Acts 2:38; 3:4).

And, as far as the other viewpoint, those who consider it anarthrous simply because it is salient, that, too, sometimes is not true. For example, the name of Paul is sometimes used in a salient manner in the book of Acts, yet remains articular (e.g. Acts 19:15; 23:20 Byz). And, if we widen our corpus to include extra-biblical literature we sometimes find proper names both anarthrous and articular in places where the name would normally be considered salient

So both viewpoints have their merit; the anarthrous use of *petros* may be significant indicating the use of *petros* as a proper **noun**, and not as a proper **name**, or the anarthrous use of *petros* may not be significant, simply being a case of saliency, and so it should continue to be understood as a proper **name**. I do not believe one viewpoint can be dogmatically asserted above the other. But equally so, I do not believe one, necessarily, negates the other. In other words, *πέτρος* can be understood both as a proper **noun** and as a proper **name** without ever diminishing the emphasis on the rock-like character of the person. Simon is called Peter because he is firm as rock and as such he will be a foundation stone within the Temple of God. Either way the context points to him as being a stone within the Temple of God being built upon the Bedrock that is Christ.

This is all the more confirmed when we look at the greater context of that declaration. Let's read the entire declaration below.

Matt. 16:13-20 “When **Jesus** came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, ‘Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?’ ¹⁴ And they said, ‘Some *say that thou art* John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.’ ¹⁵ He saith unto them, ‘But whom say ye that I am?’ ¹⁶ And Simon Peter answered and said, ‘Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ ¹⁷ And **Jesus** answered and said unto him, ‘Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.’ ¹⁸ 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.’ ¹⁹ And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.’ ²⁰ Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.” NKJV

The whole context begins with the name, **Jesus**, and focuses on the fact that Jesus is more than a mere man, more than the man named John, more than the man named Elijah, more than a man named Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. Jesus had asked His disciples as to whom the people were saying the Son of Man was, and the disciples responded with the conjectures listed above, but Peter was the one that says that **Jesus** was the Christ (the Anointed One), the Son of the Living God. The focus begins with the name of Jesus, reflecting the truth of who He is (the Son of Man), followed by the name, “Christ,” because He has been anointed by God. And, finally, that He is the Son of the Living God because He was eternally begotten of Him.

Thus, what we see is that Jesus is being understood with an additional *name* or *title* based upon a truth of His Person in the same way Peter received a new name or title based upon a truth of his person.

This becomes all the more significant when we remember that Matthew uses “Christ” not only as a title in his Gospel, but also as a proper name. And like most uses of proper names in Greek, its first occurrence is anarthrous, and its subsequent occurrences are articular. It seems to be used as a proper name in the following verses: Matt. 1:1, 16, 18; 11:2; (16:16?); 24: 5, 23; 26:68; 27:17, 22. And it seems he presents it as a title in the following verses: Matt. 1:17; 2:4; (16:16?); 22:42; 23:10; 26:63. That means he uses it as a proper name ten times and uses it six times as a title. In fact, our Lord specifically calls it a name in Matt. 24:5 and what is interesting is that Peter, himself, calls “Christ” a name in his own epistle (1 Pet. 4:14).

So, the context of the passage is relevant to us in that the Father makes known to Peter our Lord’s true character and the name or title He prophetically received by God (cf. Ps. 2:2). He is telling Peter that the additional name of Jesus is—Christ, and that *name* or *title* is revelatory of who He is!¹²

So, when we get to our Lord’s affirmation to Peter, we see by the context the Lord is making a comparison—as the Father revealed to you a name that bespeaks a truth about Me, I have revealed a name to you that bespeaks a truth about you. You declared that I am Christ, “Anointed.” Indeed, I have declared to you that you are Peter, a “rock,” “a foundation stone.” There is a marked contrast being made in this context.

Equally, we see that both pronouncements are made known by Divine revelation. Jesus’ name—Christ—was made known by the revelation of God the Father to Peter. And Simon’s name—Peter—was made known by the revelation of God the Son to Peter. And, if we take Peter’s declaration to be

¹² Some Bible translations translate Christ as a name, rather than a title in Matt. 16:16. For example, Tyndale’s Bible and the Bishop’s Bible (both preceding the King James Version) translate it thus.

a declaration, not only about Jesus, that He was the Son of the Living God, but also that His name is Christ because He is anointed of God, then we should be consistent and see that Jesus is making a similar type of declaration about Simon.

In other words, Jesus is saying that Simon is the son of Jona; and Peter is saying that Jesus is the Son of God. Simon's additional name of Peter is affirmed by Jesus; and Jesus' additional name of Christ is affirmed by Peter. Simon is also called Peter because it signifies an aspect of his work as an apostle and disciple of the Lord—it bespeaks the fact that he will be a rock unto his brethren, becoming a foundation stone of the Temple God; and Jesus is also called the Christ because it signifies an aspect of His work as one sent by God—it bespeaks the fact that Jesus is the anointed one, anointed by God as a prophet, priest and king, destined to rule as King of kings over all the earth as the Son of the Living God.

Moreover, to any Israelite this name or title is all the more significant because it was the Christ, the Messiah, who was specifically designated by God to be the one to build the Temple of God.

Zech. 6:12-13 And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, **Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the Temple of the LORD:** ¹³ Even he shall build the Temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, **and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne:** and the counsel of peace shall be between them both. KJV

This, of course, will be literally fulfilled in the millennium according to Zechariah, but spiritually it referred to the Temple of the Lord's body, which rose on the third day, and into which we are joined, being bone of His bones and flesh of His flesh. This is what was behind our Lord's

pronouncement in John 2:19, a statement that the Jews did not understand.

John 2:18-21 The Jews therefore answered and said to Him, ‘What sign do You show to us, seeing that You do these things?’ ¹⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘**Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.**’ ²⁰ The Jews therefore said, ‘It took forty-six years to build this Temple, and will You raise it up in three days?’ ²¹ But He was speaking of the Temple of His body.” NASB

The resurrection of the Lord was the first step in the building of the Temple of the living God in the dispensation of grace (in that He was the rejected stone that became the Chief Cornerstone, which bespeaks a different aspect as we will shortly see). No one understood this at that time, but all Jews most certainly believed the Christ would somehow be involved in the building of the Temple. Therefore, most certainly this would have been in the mind of Peter when Jesus (whom Peter had just called the Christ) declared to Peter the following declaration—“And upon this, the Bedrock, I will build My Church,” i.e. the Temple.

Therefore, knowing the distinction of the two Greek words, *petros* and *petra*, and knowing the intended focus upon the meaning behind the proper noun and proper name of Peter (*petros*), and knowing that the Christ was prophetically called to build the Temple, and knowing that the imagery of the first century construction of the Temple was in the forefront of every Jewish mind, no one would have thought that our Lord was saying that He was going to build the Church upon Peter or that such an edifice could ever be constructed upon one foundation stone. It simply does not make any sense when the Scriptural, grammatical, and historical contexts are taken into account.

Yes, indeed, no doubt, our Lord was honoring Peter, and, yes, indeed, He was saying that Peter was going to play a large role in the building of the Church, perhaps greater than

any other of the eleven apostles (being the first one to be given the keys of the kingdom), but the Church was going to be built first upon the LORD Jesus Christ, Himself, as the Bedrock of the Church, being the promised Rock of Israel, who we know is none other than Jehovah Himself.

This distinction is further emphasized by the inclusion of the demonstrative pronoun ταύτη (this) in the declaration. If the Lord was declaring that Peter was the one upon whom He would build His Church one would have expected the repetition of personal pronoun “you” (σύ), not the inclusion of the demonstrative pronoun “this” (ταύτη), which points to our Lord. Thus it would have been written as follows—Κἀγὼ δέ σοι λέγω, ὅτι σὺ εἶ πέτρος, καὶ ἐπὶ σοι, τῇ πέτρᾳ οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν κ. τ. λ.—“And I say to you, that you are Peter, and upon **you**, the rock, I will build my Church,” etc.

Or He could have simply dropped the second reference to “rock” and simply said—Κἀγὼ δέ σοι λέγω, ὅτι σὺ εἶ πέτρος, καὶ ἐπὶ σοι οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν κ. τ. λ.—“And I say to you, that you are Peter and upon **you** I will build my Church,” etc.

Or, if He wanted to communicate that Peter was the rock, and wanted to emphasize this by still repeating the word, the Holy Spirit could have used *petros* again (inflected accordingly), showing He meant Peter, in which case He would have said—Κἀγὼ δέ σοι λέγω, ὅτι σὺ εἶ **πέτρος**, καὶ ἐπὶ τούτῳ **πέτρῳ** οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν κ. τ. λ.—“And I say to you, that you are **Peter** and upon this **rock** , I will build my Church,” etc.

The fact that Matthew did not use any of these alternative readings also shows us that Peter was not the one upon whom the Lord was saying the Church was to be built.

And so, for all these reasons, we see that Jesus is affirming the truth of Peter’s confession by declaring that He, the Christ, is the Bedrock upon which the Church was to be built. He is not telling Peter that he (i.e. Peter) is the bedrock

of the Church; He is telling Peter that he is a foundation stone upon that bedrock. In fact, Peter, himself, many years later, identifies Christ as the “Πέτρα,” the “Bedrock” in his very own epistle, which further affirms this truth as we will now see.

I Pet. 2:8 καὶ λίθος προσκόμματος καὶ **πέτρα** σκανδάλου· οἱ προσκόπτουσιν τῷ λόγῳ ἀπειθοῦντες εἰς ὃ καὶ ἐτέθησαν.

I Pet. 2:8 And a stone of stumbling, and **a rock of offence**, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. KJV

In this verse, of course, Peter is referring to Jesus when he calls Him a “rock (πέτρα) of offense.” He is taking a quote from Isaiah 8:14 which reads—

Isa. 8:14 And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a **rock of offence** to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. KJV

However, it is unfortunate that the KJV translates this Greek and Hebrew phrase as “rock of offense, not only in I Pet. 2:8, but also in Isa.8:14. The translation “offense” causes one to miss out on the wonderful declaration that Peter is making by calling Jesus a Rock, or Bedrock in this verse. Notice that the New American Standard Bible translates the phrase from Isaiah as, “a rock to stumble over.”

Isa. 8:14 Then He shall become a sanctuary; But to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and **a rock to stumble over**, And a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. NASB

This, I believe, gets closer to the truth of Peter’s declaration, for reasons we will presently see. However, unfortunately, even though their translation gets closer, the New American Standard Bible still was not consistent when

they translate from the Greek this same prophecy from Isaiah in I Pet. 2:8. They end up translating the phrase just as the KJV, “a rock of offence.”

Yet, it is important to note that the KJV translators chose to translate this same Hebrew word as “offence” only twice in Old Testament, once in Isa. 8:14 and once in I Sam. 25:31. In the majority of the other places they translated it as “stumblingblock.”

For example, they translate it as “stumblingblock” in Lev. 19:4, which reads: “Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I am the LORD.” Obviously, it does not carry the sense of offence in this verse. Another example is Jer. 6:21 which reads: “Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will lay stumblingblocks before this people, and the fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them; the neighbour and his friend shall perish.” In the same way, the word does not carry the idea of offence in this verse. The same, I believe, should apply to Isa. 8:14; the word in the context should convey the idea of stumbling.

When we come to the New Testament, the Greek word used in I Pet. 2:8 (σκάνδαλον) occurs 13 times in the New Testament. The New American Standard Bible translates the word as “stumbling block” or “stumbling” 10 times out of the 13. For example, they translate it as “stumbling block” in Rom. 14:13 which reads: “Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this-- not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.” And in I John 2:10 they translate it as “stumbling”—“The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him.”

So it is most unfortunate that when we come to I Pet. 2:8 the word is not also translated as “stumbling,” for if they had translated it as “stumbling,” they would have provided, I

believe, the full import of what Peter was saying (and what our Lord was saying in Matt. 16:18).

Fortunately, we have some versions in English which are consistent for the reader in both Isa. 8:14 and in I Pet. 2:8. For example, the Revised Standard Version provides a consistent translation for the reader.¹³

Now, it is true that they translate I Pet. 2:8 as “a rock that will make them fall,” but they maintain the sense of stumbling in both places, as does this other modern version. (See previous footnote referenced below regarding this modern version also, as well as other modern versions.)

Isa. 8:14 He will become a sanctuary, but a stone that makes a person trip, and a **rock that makes one stumble**— to the two houses of Israel. He will become a trap and a snare to the residents of Jerusalem. NET

1 Pet. 2:8 and a stumbling-stone and a **rock to trip over**. They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. NET

So we can see that these two translations emphasize that Peter not only identifies Christ as the *petra* in his epistle, he also identifies Christ as the “the rock to stumble over” that is referred to by Isaiah in his prophecy in Isa. 8:14. Now, let us put this all together in order to see the wonderful significance of it all.

¹³ Perhaps, I should mention here, in the beginning of this book, that I would not recommend such modern English versions of the Bible as the RSV, HCSB, NLT, NET, ESV, NIV, as well as some others, for any study in regard to the Historic Christian Faith as they have weakened key aspects of that Faith by their faulty translation of certain key verses regarding the essential doctrine of the eternal generation of the eternal Son of God from God the Father. The NASB, NKJV, Darby, and, of course, the KJV are all sound in regard to this issue.

In the LXX version of Isaiah 8:14, the Greek word for “rock” is the same Greek word used by Peter in I Pet. 2:8. As we have said, in both places it is used of something that causes one to trip or to stumble over. With this being the case, I would like to suggest one more nuance of translation. I believe that in both Isa. 8:14, and in I Pet. 2:8, it would be better to translate “Rock” as “Bedrock.” Thus, if we adopt, let’s say, the NET translation, it would convey this idea—“Bedrock to trip over.” One might ask why refine the translation even more? The reason is, as we have already mentioned, *petra* is never used of small rocks; it is either used of bedrock, large boulders, or of rocky crags. Now since one cannot stumble or trip over a boulder or a crag, the only usage left within the context of the verse is that *petra* is bespeaking the bedrock of an area that is barely breaking the surface of the soil, thus causing a person walking along the surface to suddenly trip over the slight protrusion of the bedrock. One does not trip over a boulder or crag; one might walk into a boulder or crag, but one does not trip over such a large object!

And so Isaiah and Peter must be referring to a slight protrusion of bedrock, which might appear as a small piece of rock on the surface, perhaps only rising an inch or so above the dirt surface, but in reality, if one were to dig down, one would find it was not a small piece of rock but was in reality the top of a massive outcropping of bedrock below the surface. The idea in the verse is that it was something unexpected; it was stumbled over because it was not seen, being only a slight protrusion of rock over an otherwise level surface. The last phrase of the verse also lends credence to this thought since it also speaks of something unexpected, something not seen—a “snare” and “trap.”

Thus, if we put all of this together, we see that Isaiah is saying that many in Israel will not notice the true nature of Jesus. They will miss the fact of His Divinity, that He is really the Rock of Israel, the Bedrock that is unseen. To them He

appears as a slight rise, a small protrusion of rock, certainly not massive bedrock of the mountain, and so, because they are not paying close attention, being distracted by the things around them, they trip over the *petra*, who is none other than the LORD God Himself. This is why Jesus refers to Himself as the Bedrock that can only be known by Divine Revelation. Many in Israel do not see it, but Peter does and is blessed by Jesus. And, so, in his own epistle, Peter reaffirms his understanding that the *petra* is none other than Jesus, the Bedrock to stumble over to so many in Israel, because they did not see His true nature; but to us who have seen, He is the LORD Jesus Christ, very God of very God.

This assertion of Isaiah and of Peter regarding Jesus as the *petra* is so significant. It shows that our Lord's true Divine nature can only be known by revelation. Men see only a slight protrusion out of the ground. To them they simply see *a small rock in the ground like so many other rocks*. They cannot see what is under the ground. It is hidden from their view. But underground, that slight protrusion is, in reality, that mighty Bedrock of the mountain. And with Jesus claiming to be that mighty Bedrock, He is claiming to be the Rock of Israel! Any Israelite would know that someone who claims to be a strong Rock (bedrock and not just a small stone) would be making a claim to Divinity, for the Scriptures indicates that the Rock of Israel was none other than Jehovah, YHWH, the LORD God Himself.

Psalm 18:2 The LORD is **my Rock** and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, **my Rock**, in whom I take refuge; My shield and **the Horn of my salvation**, my stronghold. (NASB—capitalization of Rock and Horn is mine)

II Sam. 22:2 And he said, The LORD *is* **my Rock**, and my fortress, and my deliverer; (KJV—capitalization of Rock is mine)

Isa. 30:29 You will have songs as in the night when you keep the festival; And gladness of heart as when one marches to the sound of the flute, To go to the mountain of the LORD, to the **Rock of Israel**. NASB

As one can see, Ps. 18:2 specifically calls Jehovah a Rock. It also calls God a Rock and not only that, but also the Horn of salvation, which in the New Testament is applied to the Lord Jesus Christ in Luke 1:69—“And hath raised up an **Horn of salvation** for us in the house of his servant David (KJV—capitalization mine).

The Church’s very existence and stability depends on the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ! Without His Divine Nature we would still be in our sins, for only He, who is very God of very God, is able to deliver us from all evil. The Deity of the Messiah is the basis of our entire salvation from sin and hell, and it is the basis of the Church itself. This means if a “church” does not confess the Deity of Jesus Christ, it is not His Church! It is not built upon the Bedrock of God’s choosing!

As we said before, God chose the bedrock upon Mt. Moriah as the place where His Temple would be built. The Israelites would have been wrong to choose any other location, or to choose the bedrock of a different mountain. God said the Temple must only be built upon the bedrock of Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem. This gives us a present day application. If any so-called “church” simply views Jesus as a “good man,” or a great philosopher, they are built upon different bedrock, upon a different mountain, upon a high place of their own choosing (Deut. 12: 2-5). They cannot be a true Church. A Church must only be built upon the Bedrock of God’s choosing, which is none other than the Deity of Christ Jesus the Lord—He who is the Everlasting LORD, God’s Only-Begotten Son, very God of very God.

Any cult or heretical group that denies the Deity of Christ Jesus is not the Lord’s church. Any “church” that does not confess that Jesus is YHWH, that He is Jehovah, that He

is the Rock of Israel, that church is not a true church. This, of course, would include Jehovah Witnesses, who deny that Jesus is Jehovah, and Mormons who also deny that Jesus is Jehovah.¹⁴ These two are not real churches. Only those who affirm and rest upon the Orthodox doctrine regarding the Deity of Jesus Christ are a true Church of God. Only those who hold to the Historic Christian Faith can be considered to be the Church that is built upon the Bedrock of Christ Himself. How wonderful was the confession of Simon Peter, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God”—the wonderful confession that was given to him by the Father above, and was recorded for us by the Blessed Holy Spirit forever! But, let us continue, for there is more!

Paul also affirms the Deity of Christ Jesus—that Christ is the *petra*, the Bedrock that will cause men to stumble. He tells us this in Rom. 9:33. (I will again use the NET version, since it is consistent with the translation of σκάνδαλον in the verse as something that causes people to stumble or trip over, and then will provide the standard NASB version.)

Rom. 9:33 As it is written: Look! I am putting a stone in Zion to stumble over and a **rock to trip over**, yet the one who believes on Him will not be put to shame. NET

Rom. 9:33 just as it is written, ‘Behold, **I lay in Zion** a stone of stumbling and a **rock of offense**, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed. NASB

¹⁴ The Mormons also deny that Jesus is the LORD, but not in the same sense that Jehovah Witnesses deny it. They deny it in the sense that they do not believe that Jesus is the Everlasting Jehovah, or LORD, without beginning and without end (cf. Gen. 21:33; Ps. 93:1-2; Hab. 1:12). They believe that the second Person of the Blessed Trinity was begotten in time subsequent to God the Father, and so, as a result, could not be consubstantial with the Father.

Now, at first glance, Paul's use of *petra* might seem to undermine the whole concept of the word meaning *bedrock*, for it seems on the surface that Paul is saying that the following is what is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a *petra* (rock) of offence." Even if we change "offence" to "trip over," it still appears as if Paul is still saying the Lord is not only going to "lay" in Zion, a stone of stumbling, but also a rock to trip over. If that was the case, then, most certainly, the rock (*petra*) could not be the bedrock, for bedrock cannot be laid down! (Of course, unless one thinks that the Lord "laid down" the bedrock on the day of creation when He made the heaven and the earth, then one could say the bedrock was laid down in Zion on the day of creation. That certainly would be consistent with what the Lord does. He created Adam to be a type of Christ from the beginning, and He created lambs and lions from the very beginning to be types of Christ, so most certainly He could have created or "laid down," so to speak, from the very beginning, the bedrock on Mt. Zion to be a type of Christ as well). But that is not what I believe Paul is saying. Let me explain.

Search as one may, one will not find a verse from the Old Testament that says, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed." The reason for this is because Paul is not quoting from just one verse in the Old Testament, but from two verses—Isa. 8:14 and Isa. 28:16—which he then strings together. Perhaps this format (with commas) might better illustrate these different verses.

"Just as it is written, 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling, **and,** a rock of offence, **and,** he who believes in Him will not be disappointed.'"

Paul is not saying that what is written is, "Behold, I

lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed.” He is saying, “Just as it is written, **1) Behold, I lay in Zion, a stone of stumbling**, and, **2) a rock of offence**, and, **3) he who believes in Him will not be disappointed**.” And by stringing these three portions together he is following a common Jewish practice called *Charaz*.

Alfred Edersheim mentions this practice in his book *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*.

“A favourite method was that which derived its name from the stringing together of pearls (*Charaz*), when a preacher, having quoted a passage or section from the Pentateuch, strung on to it another and like-sounding, or really similar, from the Prophets and the Hagiographa.”¹⁵

This was a common Jewish practice which Paul, being a Jew, continued to practice (and in Paul’s case, it was done under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit). So, returning to our passage in Rom. 9:33, we see that Paul is simply stringing different portions of text together. I will use the American Standard Version to illustrate.

Rom. 9:33 Even as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence: And he that believeth on him shall not be put to shame. ASV

Verse 33—even as it is written, BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION

(Isa.28:16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, **Behold, I lay in Zion** for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. KJV)

A STONE OF STUMBLING

¹⁵ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Volume 1 (Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1884) pg. 449

(Isa. 8:14 And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for **a stone of stumbling** and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. KJV)

A ROCK OF OFFENCE (BEDROCK OF TRIPPING)

(Isa. 8:14 And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for **a rock of offence (bedrock to trip over)** to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. KJV)

AND HE THAT BELIEVETH ON HIM SHALL NOT BE PUT TO SHAME

(Isa. 28:16 Therefore thus saith the Lord, even the Lord, Behold, I lay for the foundations of Zion a costly stone, a choice, a corner-stone, a precious stone, for its foundations; **and he that believes on him shall by no means be ashamed.**—Brenton's LXX).

Therefore, this verse written by Paul is not contradicting this very first Church principle mentioned by our Saviour regarding the fact that He is the Bedrock upon which the Church is to be built. In fact, as we will now demonstrate, Paul is not only confirming this precious truth, he is revealing to us another wonderful revelation.

By stringing together “a stone of stumbling” from Isa. 8:14, with the first part of the phrase from Isa. 28:16, “Behold, I lay in Zion,” he is telling us that “a stone of stumbling” will be laid in Zion “for a foundation,” thus bespeaking the human nature of the Messiah. And by stringing together “rock of offence,” which would be better translated “bedrock of tripping or bedrock to trip over,” with the stone of stumbling phrase, he is also telling us that this One laid for a foundation in Zion is none other than *Jehovah*, the Rock of Israel, the Bedrock of the Church. Thus, Paul is providing for us, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, a beautiful picture of our Lord's Divine and Human nature.

The verse that Paul partially quotes in Isa. 28:16 says the following in the King James Version—

Isa. 28:16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner *stone*, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

The LXX version that Paul uses says this (as translated by Brenton):

Isa. 28:16 Therefore thus saith the Lord, *even* the Lord, Behold, I lay for the foundations of Sion a costly stone, a choice, a corner-stone, a precious *stone*, for its foundations; and he that believes *on him* shall by no means be ashamed.

Isaiah says that the “stone of stumbling” (not the rock of offence or bedrock of tripping) is actually a foundation stone. And it is laid for a foundation. And he also says it is the cornerstone, which Peter calls the chief cornerstone. This now introduces us to Christ as a foundation and Christ as the Chief Cornerstone. So Scripture strings together three things: a foundational stone (of stumbling), a rock of offence (bedrock to trip over), and the Chief Cornerstone (which we will see the significance of later).

Also in this verse, we see that the stone of stumbling is a “tried stone,” a “tested stone.” Thus, this bespeaks our Lord’s Human Nature. Christ as the Bedrock bespeaks our Saviour’s Divine Nature and Christ as a foundation stone bespeaks our Saviour’s Human Nature.

Christ, as a stone used for a foundation, was “tried.” Oh how our Lord suffered and was tried by the evil of men’s hearts. He was constantly challenged, ridiculed, and contradicted by sinners.

Mark 12:15 “Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?” But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, “**Why are you testing Me?** Bring Me a denarius to look at.” NASB

Luke 10:25 And behold, a certain lawyer stood up **and put Him to the test**, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” NASB

John 8:6 **They were saying this, testing Him**, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. NASB

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, **but One who has been tempted (tested) in all things as we are**, yet without sin. NASB

Not only that, we are told that Satan, himself, came to try our Saviour when He was tempted in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11). Yet, Christ as the Bedrock, as very God, could never have been tested by Satan. Our Lord told Satan, “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test” (Luke 4:12; cf. James 1:13). The finite should never “try,” or to test, the infinite! Our God is majestic and infinite in all His ways and the infinite cannot be measured or tried by man!

Rom. 11:33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out! KJV

Job 11:7-8 “Can you discover the depths of God? Can you discover the limits of the Almighty? ⁸ “*They are* high as the heavens, what can you do? Deeper than Sheol, what can you know? NASB

Job 37:23 *Touching* the Almighty, we cannot find him out: *he is* excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice: he will not afflict. KJV

Yet, in His humanity, our Lord allowed Himself to be challenged and to be tested in all points as are we (Heb. 4:15). In His humanity, He hungered (Matt. 21:18), yet, certainly not in His Deity. In His humanity He grew weary (Jn. 4:6), yet certainly not in His Deity. He was tried by evil men in His humanity, yet His Deity could never be tried or measured. In His humanity our Lord was a tried stone, shown to be perfect in every way, tested like us in all things, yet without sin.

Thus, Christ as a foundation stone bespeaks our Lord's Human Nature that He took upon Himself for the salvation of our souls. Apart from the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin, and so our wonderful Saviour, the Bedrock of the Church, took upon Himself, the likeness of sinful flesh, so He could come and die for us upon the cross. What a wonderful Saviour we have—very Man of very Man and very God of very God. Paul strung these two together in his epistle to the Romans. Christ is the stone of stumbling that was tried and tested (the Human Nature) and He was the rock of offence, or the Bedrock to trip over (the Divine Nature), unionized in one Person, without confusion, without change, without division, and without separation, all for our eternal salvation! So with this in mind, let us now look at Christ as our foundation in contrast with Christ as our Bedrock.

Christ as the Foundation

We now come to the second designation of our Lord in regard to the Church, which is the Temple of the Living God (II Cor. 6:16). Not only is the Lord called the Bedrock of the Church, He also is called the Foundation of the Church.

Paul tells us in I Cor. 3:9-11 that Christ is also the foundation of the Church.

I Cor. 3:9-11 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, *ye are* God's building.¹⁰ According to the grace of God

which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.¹¹ **For other foundation (Θεμέλιον—sing.) can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. KJV**

Now let me paraphrase verse 11 to bring out some of the meanings here. “For no man has the power to lay another foundation *of the same kind*, alongside the one which is being laid, which *foundation* is Jesus Christ.”

Paul changes the verbal tense in this verse. In verse 10 he stated that he had already laid down the foundation in Corinth. He uses the perfect tense of the verb τίθημι. (It should be noted that some manuscripts have an aorist variant of the verb; but since it is in the indicative, it still refers to that which is past.) But in verse 11 he switches to the present tense when he says no one “has the power to lay another foundation, than the one which is being laid, which is Christ Jesus.” He uses the present tense (δύναται) in that no one is receiving the power or ability to lay another foundation alongside the foundation already laid (by Paul), and he also uses a present passive participle (κείμενον)¹⁶ when stating that

¹⁶ Many take this present passive participle, as a perfect participle. Indeed, this present participle is used as a perfect passive in the New Testament (e.g. Lu. 2:16; Jn. 20:6, 7). However, sometimes in the Greek language of the time, it was used with its present sense (e.g. Jos. Ant. of the Jews 7:299; Sir. 22:18). I prefer to take it as a present passive participle showing how God is laying the foundation of the Church throughout the earth through His apostles who are sent forth as “wise masterbuilders.” I take it this way for a couple of reasons. First, Paul already uses the present participle αὐξάνων three verses earlier of God actively doing the present work of “causing growth” (verse 7). Thus the context already indicated the present working of God. Secondly, in Paul’s epistle to the Romans, he uses the present tense τίθημι in Rom. 9:33 when quoting Isaiah’s prophecy that God would lay a foundation in Zion (Isa. 28:16).

God is the One laying the foundation on which all should build.

It is as if he is saying that God has laid, and continues to lay, the foundation of the Church through the entire world, having already laid it through Paul in Corinth. And because of that, Paul is telling them to build upon that foundation, because there is only one foundation and that one foundation is Jesus Christ our Lord, laid down by God the Father through those chosen by the Holy Spirit to do such a work (i.e. the apostles, now sent out unto unevangelized localities).

Since Paul is not quoting the LXX Greek text verbatim (which uses the future ἐμβαλῶ--I will lay), he must have understood that this laying of a foundation was the present work of God in this dispensation. Otherwise, if he thought Isaiah was referring to the laying down of a foundation of the Church as a whole at the beginning of the dispensation of grace, more than likely, he would have used the aorist tense of τίθημι, symbolically representing the fact that God already laid the foundation of the Church for all time when He began the Church in Jerusalem. Thus, it seems that Paul is referring to the fact that God is actively laying down a foundation of the Church in each unevangelized locality in the world. Nevertheless, if one prefers to understand it as a perfect passive, it still demonstrates that we are called to build upon the one foundation laid that was laid by God through His apostles, since, I believe, the context indicates that Paul is referring to the Church in a local sense. As such, Paul would still be referring back to the fact (vs. 10) that he already laid the foundation of the Church in Corinth and, as such all must build upon it and not seek to lay another foundation in competition with the Church he founded. Or, if one prefers to believe that Paul is referring to the Church in a universal sense, i.e. to the beginning of the Church at Pentecost when God laid down the one foundation of His Church for all time and eternity, it would still show the same—that one cannot build on any other foundation than the one foundation of Christ that was laid down by God. (See also the NET translation of this verse, which treats it as a present participle.)

So what Paul is saying, is that the foundation (singular) of the Church is Christ Jesus, and God is laying it throughout the world by the Holy Spirit through His chosen vessels. And, as He lays it in different areas, He exhorts us to build upon that foundation that has been laid. He says we cannot lay another foundation of the same kind by ourselves; we must build upon the one foundation. It reminds me of the Scripture that says, “Except the Lord, build the house, they labor in vain who build it.” Perhaps I could paraphrase that thought to get at the idea of what Paul is saying— “Except the Lord lays the foundation, they labor in vain who lay it.”

It has to be God (by the Holy Spirit working through us) that lays the foundation of the church. And the foundation that God, through the Holy Spirit, will lay will be none other than Jesus Christ Himself. He will not lay any other foundation. It's the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. Paul emphasizes this by using a present passive participle. It was not Paul doing the laying by himself; it was the Lord Jesus building His Church upon the foundation laid through Paul by the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we see that the Holy Spirit is ever laying the foundation for the Church to be built upon, and we are called to find, and to respect, that sacred foundation.

But now we must ask ourselves as to why the Holy Spirit designates Christ as the foundation? Is not Christ the Bedrock? A foundation is laid upon the bedrock, so how could He also be the foundation? Are not the apostles called the foundation of the Church? Is not Peter, as a foundation stone, laid upon the Bedrock of Christ? To answer these questions let's first look at some verses.

Eph. 2:20 And are built upon the foundation (θεμελίω--singular) of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone/ KJV

Ezra 5:16 Then that Sabanazar came, and laid the foundations (θεμελίους—plural) of the house of God in Jerusalem: and from that time even until now it has been building, and has not been finished. Brenton's LXX

I Kings 5:17 Then the king commanded, and they quarried great stones, costly stones, to lay the foundation (LXX— θεμέλιον—singular) of the house with cut stones. NASB

What we see by comparing these verses is that the Greek word, θεμέλιος, can be used in the singular bespeaking a foundation as a whole, or in the plural, bespeaking the multiple foundation stones that make up the one foundation of a structure. Thus, a Temple can be viewed as being built upon one foundation or it can be viewed as being built upon a number of foundation stones making up that one foundation. It is a matter of one's perspective. (It should be noted, however, this singular perspective is never used of Peter, in and of himself. It is used of all the apostles together, but never of one by themselves. This singular perspective, together with a singular number, is only ever used of our Lord Jesus. Peter, nor any other apostle, is ever spoken as being a foundation of the Church from the singular perspective. Only our Lord is thus spoken.)

In the Old Testament sometimes the foundation of the Temple was seen as one continuous whole, and at other times it is seen by the individual foundation stones that made up the one foundation. Paul, in I Cor. 3:11, is using the former perspective. He is viewing the foundation as one solid undergirding. It does not mean that Paul is contradicting himself between I Cor. 3:11 and Eph. 2:20, but is simply speaking of the Temple and the foundation from different perspectives to emphasize different truths.

This helps us understand how Christ is also seen as the foundation of the Church. The one common denominator between these two perspectives is that the foundation is made

up of ones who were **first** “sent.” The disciples were sent by our Lord, being called apostles of God. This helps explain why they are the foundations stones in the Temple. Christ Jesus was sent by God His Father, and so was also called an Apostle, explaining why He is the foundation, and the Chief Cornerstone.

Heb. 3:1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider **the Apostle** and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; KJV

In this verse, Jesus is clearly identified as an Apostle; and in John 17:18 He clearly identifies Himself as “one sent” by God, as He clearly identifies the apostles as ones sent out by Him. (We know an apostle means “a sent one.”)

John 17:18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. KJV

This will help explain why Christ can be seen as the one foundation of the Church (and from another perspective how the apostles can be seen as the foundation of the Church). When a new movement is started or a new organization is begun, obviously the first one or ones starting the movement become the foundation of the organization, but they are also considered to be a part of the organization. In Scripture, because the apostles were the first ones of the Church, they were known as the “foundational stones” of the Church, yet, at the same time, they were also known simply as saints within the Church (as was every believer).

One finds the same principle used within the world. Let me use the example of our own nation. Those who first formed the democratic principles of the United States became known as the “founding fathers” of our country. Yet, they were also known as “citizens” of the country. Now, of course, we would never, never call the apostles our “founding

fathers,” for so many reasons, but they were certainly known by Paul as foundational stones within the Church. And, since the Lord Jesus Christ was the very first Apostle (so to speak), He was not only known as “the” foundation of the Church, he was also known as one within the Church singing unto God the Father (Heb. 2:12).

In other words, just as the apostles were seen as a foundation, yet at the same time as simple saints within the Church, so too Christ is not only seen as the foundation of the Church, He is also seen as One within the Church (which will lead us into our final designation of Christ as the Chief Cornerstone).

God had to first send His Son into the world, born of a woman, born under the Law, to save the world before the apostles could ever be sent out (Jn. 3:17; Gal. 4:4-5). He is given first place in all things. But there is more to learn from this. In order to save us (and, thus, be the foundation of the Church) Christ, as our Apostle and High Priest, had to be made like unto us in all ways. As the writer to the Hebrews states—

Heb. 2:11, 14-17 For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified *are* all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, ¹⁴ Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; ¹⁵ And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. ¹⁶ For verily he took not on *him the nature of* angels; but he took on *him* the seed of Abraham. ¹⁷ Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be **made like unto his brethren**, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. KJV

This gives us another reason as to why our Lord can also be called a foundation of the Church (as were the

apostles) and not just the Bedrock below the Church. The reason is because He was **made like unto His brethren** in all things, having been sent out by God as “the” Apostle. He was very God of very God, and so was the Bedrock (*Petra*) on which the Church was built, and He was very Man of very Man, and so was seen as the “Foundation” of the Church. He was worshipped as Christ, the Son of the Living God, by the Church, and so was considered the Bedrock of the Church. And, He was worshipped as the Son of Man, as one made like His brethren, and so was considered the Foundation of the Church. (And, as we will see next, since He sang praise to His Father along with His brethren in the Church, He is worshipped as the Chief Cornerstone of the Church.)

Heb. 2:11-12 For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified *are* all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, ¹² Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, **in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.** KJV

Finally, how wonderful it is to know that in a structure, the foundation, (while being distinct from the Bedrock upon which it was laid) is intimately united with the Bedrock, fitting its contours, and in some places even interlocked with the Bedrock itself.

This presents us with another representation, as we briefly touched upon above. If the Bedrock bespeaks the Deity of the Messiah, then the Foundation would bespeak the Humanity of the Messiah—two natures unionized in one Person, without confusion, without change, without division, and without separation. These adverbs, adopted by the Church during the council at Chalcedon, acknowledged Lord Jesus Christ, who tabernacled in our midst, to be “two natures

inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, and inseparably” united in One Person.¹⁷

Now, of course, the imagery between a foundation and bedrock is not a perfect picture in all ways, and if analyzed to minutely might lead one to wrongful conclusions. For example, a foundation stone is sometimes hewed out of “bedrock,” but our Lord’s human nature was not hewn out of Divinity! No, no, no! A foundation stone is of a similar substance to bedrock, but our Lord’s human nature is not of similar substance to His Divine Nature! And I am sure one could come up with other examples, because this is true of all types and figures used of Christ in Scripture. They were never meant to be scrutinized down to the minutest detail, but were given to us as “symbols,” “hints” and “shadows” of certain truths about our Lord. The same is true of this imagery. It cannot be scrutinized too closely; but if it is taken only in a very general sense, in line with Scripture, it bespeaks the wonderful truth that Jesus Christ was very God of very God and very Man of very Man.

And so, if we look at this imagery as a shadow and hint, what a wonderful picture it is that Christ was not only the Eternal Son of God, as to His Deity, but was also the Son of Man, as to His humanity. Christ is called the Foundation of the Church because He was made like unto His brethren in all things.¹⁸ As such, since they were seen as a foundation, He was seen as the foundation. Yet, unlike them, He was also the Bedrock of the Church because He was the Only-Begotten Son of God, begotten before all time, very God of very God.

And, finally, just as we saw that if certain ones did not hold to the Deity of Christ Jesus (represented by the Bedrock), they could not be a true Church of God, so also if

¹⁷ Philip Schaff, ed., *The Creeds of Christendom, Vol. II* (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 1993) pg. 62

¹⁸ Yet without sin, of course (Rom. 8:3; II Cor. 5:21; I Pet. 2:22; Heb. 7:26-27)

certain ones do not hold to the truth represented by the Foundation, the tried stone, i.e. bespeaking the humanity of the Lord Jesus, they cannot be a true Church of God. Not only are we called to confess Jesus as “our Lord and our God,” like the apostle Thomas (Jn. 20:28), we also are called to confess Christ Jesus as the One who came in the flesh, as declared by the apostle John.

I John 4:2-3 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that **Jesus Christ is come in the flesh** is of God: ³ And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. KJV

As an early Christian once succinctly said (with my own modification), “God became Man that man might become godly!” May we all confess with Paul the apostle—

I Tim. 3:16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: **God was manifest in the flesh**, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. KJV

And so, we have seen why Christ is called the Bedrock of the Church, and the Foundation of the Church, let us now see why He is called the Chief Cornerstone of the Church. Amen.

Christ as the Chief Cornerstone

Like the designation of Christ as the Foundation, this designation also refers to our Lord’s incarnation. This time, however, He is not seen from the perspective of the foundation as a whole, but is seen as one of many foundation stones making up the base of the structure; however, of all

these foundation stones, He is seen as the most important foundation stone, the first foundation stone laid, the Chief Cornerstone (see once again, Fig. 2 above, page 18).

Isa. 28:16 Therefore thus saith the Lord, *even* the Lord, Behold, I lay for the foundations of Sion **a costly stone, a choice, a cornerstone, a precious stone**, for its foundations; and he that believes *on him* shall by no means be ashamed. (Brenton's LXX)

Eph. 2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the **chief corner stone**. KJV

A cornerstone was a stone of greater weight and size that was fitted into the corner of the structure in order to create a perfectly square corner that would guarantee a square structure; it also was important because it tied the two adjacent walls together. If the *Chief Cornerstone* was not cut to a perfect right angle, one would not be able to square the three other corners, which would mean the building would be out of kilter because it did not begin with the proper alignment of the Cornerstone. The Chief Cornerstone had to be perfect in every way. How appropriate that Jesus is also called the Chief Cornerstone.

Not only was our Lord perfect in His Deity (as the Bedrock), not only was He perfect in His humanity (as the Foundation), our Lord was perfect in His work (as the Chief Cornerstone). Yes, the Chief Cornerstone also represents His humanity, but it has the added emphasis of His work. He was perfect in all His work given to Him by the Father.

Being shown forth as the Foundation bespoke the sinlessness of our Lord's Human Nature. It did not have any taint of a sin nature; our Lord came in the likeness of sinful flesh, not in sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3). Being shown forth as the Chief Cornerstone bespoke the fact that the one who was sinless, who was born without a sin nature, also, never once

sinned in all of His living and in all of His dealings with men (I Pet. 2:22). No one could convict Him of sin!

Scripture tells us that the Son was obedient to the Father in all things. He perfectly fulfilled the Law of Moses in every way. No one else could ever completely fulfill the Law. He never broke any part of the Law, down to its tiniest jot and tittle. No one else in all of human history could ever claim that they never broke any part of the Law of God.

Rom. 8:3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: KJV

Rom. 10:4 For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. KJV

Matt. 5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. ¹⁸For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. KJV

Gal. 4:4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, ⁵ so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. NASB

Jesus was perfect in every way, being sinless and living sinless, fulfilling every requirement of the Law perfectly.

John 18:23 Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me? KJV

I Pet. 2:22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. KJV

Heb. 7:26 For such an high priest became us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens. KJV

Yet, in spite of this, we see in Scripture, the builders could not see His worth. They rejected Him. They did not know that the Builder of all things, the Creator of the whole universe, chose Him to be the Chief Cornerstone for His Temple.

I Pet. 2:6-7 Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, “Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.” ⁷Therefore, to you who believe, *He is* precious; but to those who are disobedient, **“The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone,”** NKJV

And so, even though He was innocent, perfect in every way, even though He never sinned, the Chief Priests and leaders could not see Him as chosen of God, but rather saw Him as one unfit and unattractive.

Isa. 53:1-5 Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? ² For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; **He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.** ³ **He was despised and forsaken of men,** A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. ⁴ Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. ⁵ But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.

In all their testing they found nothing in Him whereby they might accuse Him. Yet, because they did not understand their own sinfulness, because they did not understand that the Law could never make one perfect, and because they did not understand that the Messiah needed to shed His blood upon the cross, dying for their sins and for the sins of the whole world, they felt justified in rejecting Christ as the Chief Cornerstone. After all, they must have thought that God also rejected Him, for God never would have allowed the Roman soldiers to hang the Messiah upon a tree, especially since the one who hangs on a cross is cursed by God (Deut. 21:23; Gal. 3:13). Perhaps, that is why they insisted He die by crucifixion (Jn. 19:5-7); perhaps, in their minds, if God allowed Him to die upon a cross, they could then justify their own actions and mollify their own consciences.

Deut. 21:23 his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance. NASB

Gal. 3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree. KJV

When they saw Christ upon the cross, they must have felt smug in the righteousness of their judgment, seeing Him as cursed by God. They did not understand that His death upon the cross was the culmination of the Messiah's perfect work. The Messiah's last act of obedience was, as Paul says, to die upon a cross.

Phil. 2:5-8 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:
⁶ Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: ⁷ But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: ⁸ And

being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, **and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.**

This was the perfect work of the Messiah. He needed to die upon the cross, becoming accursed of God, not because of anything He did, nor because of anything in or of Himself, but because of everything within us! Who else could ever accomplish this perfect work? There is no one else, because no one else ever, in all of human history, was perfect and sinless. Nor was there anyone else in all of human history who could justly offer Himself for the sins of the entire world. In doing this our Saviour accomplished a perfect redemption, becoming a curse in our stead so that we would not remain cursed ourselves. As Paul said, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law being made a curse for us. This was the perfect work of Christ, accomplishing all the Father gave Him to do, up to and including the shedding of His blood and His death upon the cross.

John 4:34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work. NASB

John 17:4 "I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do. NASB

John 19:30 When Jesus therefore had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head, and gave up His spirit. NASB

Heb. 10:1-14 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. ² For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. ³ But in those *sacrifices there is* a remembrance again *made* of sins every year. ⁴ **For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.** ⁵

Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: ⁶ In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou hast had no pleasure.⁷ Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. ⁸ Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and *offering* for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure *therein*; which are offered by the law; ⁹ Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.¹⁰ By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*.¹¹ And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:¹² **But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;**¹³ **From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.**¹⁴ **For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.** KJV

Oh, how this should teach us to not trust the judgment of man. How this should teach us to not trust in the discernment of the world, and in some cases, the discernment of so-called religious leaders. Our trust must always be in the Lord, and our vision must always be the result of the revelation of God our Father through the illumination of the Holy Spirit within our hearts, always in accordance with the eternal Word of God.

And so we see that Scripture tells us that there was only one Person in the entire universe who was so qualified to accomplish the perfect work of redemption and so be the Chief Cornerstone, and that was the Lord Jesus Christ, because only He was perfect in every way, sinless, having no sin nature. All other men, all other religious leaders, could not meet that standard. Neither an Abraham, nor a Moses, nor an Elijah, nor any other individual, could ever fulfill the requirements needed to be the Chief Cornerstone. Abraham, despite his great faith, could not fulfill the requirements of a perfect work, for his faith failed him in Egypt and also in the story of Hagar. Nor could Moses fulfill the requirements of a

perfect work, for he disobeyed God at the waters of Meribah-Kadesh. And, finally, Elijah could not fulfill the requirements of a perfect work, for his trust and courage failed him in his dealings with Jezebel.

Only one Man in the world could meet the precise requirements—the Man Christ Jesus. He was perfect in His Deity, as God could only be. He was perfect in His humanity, sinless in every way. And He was perfect in His work, never lacking faith in God's provision, never sinning or disobeying any of His commands, nor did He ever lack trust and courage in the face of death, even the death upon the cross. If one tries to substitute any other man, no matter how religious or spiritual he might seem, he will be imperfect and as a result, be an imperfect cornerstone that will cause the building to be out of plumb, out of kilter, not fit to be the Temple of God, the dwelling of the most Blessed Holy Spirit.

And this leads us to our final point regarding the Chief Cornerstone. Since Christ is perfect, the corners will be square and true, holding tight together both the wall of the Temple that is Jewish, and the wall of the Temple that is Gentile. He makes them into one building. By Him, as the Chief Cornerstone, we are kept whole and one.

Paul speaks to this truth in his epistles when he says—

Col. 3:11 Where is neither Gentile nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian or Scythian, bond or free: but Christ is all in all things. TYNDALE

Eph. 2:10-15, 19-21 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.¹¹ Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," *which is* performed in the flesh by human hands--¹² *remember* that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the

covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.
¹³ **But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.** ¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, **who made both *groups into one*** and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, ¹⁵ by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances,* ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, ²⁰ **having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,** ²¹ **in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord.**
NASB

Gal. 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. NASB

Because the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Chief Cornerstone, is perfect in every way, He is able to save all of mankind, whether Jew or Gentile, having cut them out from the quarries of the world, have cleansed them by His precious blood, and then, having formed and polished them into living stones fitly framed into the sacred Temple of the Holy Spirit—which is the Church, the Body of Christ.

Acts 4:10-12 “let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.” ¹¹ **“This is the stone** which was rejected by you builders, **which has become the chief cornerstone.**” ¹² **“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”** NKJV

Are you a living stone cut out from the quarries of the world? If anyone does not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, such a one cannot be saved. If anyone rejects Christ, that one will be rejected by God. If anyone does not hold to the work of Christ upon the cross wherein He died for our sins, if

anyone does not trust in the finished work of the cross, that one cannot be saved. Such a one can never be a part of the Church, the Temple of God. May we pray for the salvation of every soul so that we may all be built into a spiritual house offering up spiritual sacrifices of praise to our Great God and King, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I Peter 2:4-9 And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God, ⁵ you also, **as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.** ⁶ For *this* is contained in Scripture: “Behold I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner *stone*, And he who believes in Him shall not be disappointed.” ⁷ This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, “**The stone which the builders rejected, This became the very corner stone,**” ⁸ and, “A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense”; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this *doom* they were also appointed. ⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for *God's* own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; NASB

Therefore, we can now see why the Lord Jesus Christ is presented in Scripture as the Bedrock, the Foundation, and the Chief Cornerstone, and why each designation is important to the Temple of God upon this earth in this dispensation of grace, wherein the Holy Spirit dwells.

First, the Bedrock bespeaks of Jesus as the LORD, Jehovah, the Word of God. It speaks of His Deity as the Eternal Son of God, the Only Begotten of God the Father, true God of true God.

Second, the Foundation bespeaks of Jesus in His Humanity. It speaks of Him as being made like unto His

brethren in all points, yet without sin. It bespeaks of Him as one born of a virgin, being made in the likeness of sinful flesh, very Man of very Man, all so He could save us from all our sin and death.

And, finally, the Chief Cornerstone bespeaks of Jesus as the Christ, as the Messiah, as the one perfect in every way, obedient to the Father in all things, never committing any sin, fulfilling every aspect of the Law, accomplishing a perfect work of redemption, dying for the sins of all mankind upon the cross, shedding His blood and cleansing those who put their trust in Him, thereby bringing them into the Temple of God by joining them to Himself in perfection, by the imputed righteousness of His Person, all in order to form them into a holy and spiritual house for God in Spirit in this dispensation. “Oh, how wonderful, oh how marvelous is our Saviour’s love for *you and me!*”

All three are necessary for salvation. We must believe in the LORD Jesus Christ. We must believe that He is LORD. We must believe that He is Jesus, the One who came in the flesh, God manifested in the flesh, being made like unto His brethren in all things, yet without sin. And we must believe that He is the Messiah, the Christ, the One who delivers all those from sin who put their trust in Him, the One who secures our salvation by His precious work upon the cross as the Christ, who shed His blood, becoming a curse for us that we might live unto Him. In a real sense, perhaps, we should always write the name of the Son of God as the LORD Jesus Christ. He is our Lord, because He is the LORD.¹⁹ May His

¹⁹ LORD, of course, is the King James Version’s designation for Jehovah in the Old Testament, bespeaking His Deity. When a first century Christian said “Jesus is Lord,” he or she was not saying Jesus is my Master, although He certainly is that, but he or she was saying, “Jesus is LORD,” “Jesus is Jehovah,” Jesus is the YHVH of the Old Testament. So, the reason why Jesus is Lord (meaning Master) is because Jesus is my LORD and my God Almighty!

Church so recognize Him and rest upon Him as the Bedrock, secure with Him as the Foundation, and joined fitly together with Him as the Chief Cornerstone.

And so, in conclusion, we should ask ourselves why it is important for a Church to recognize these aspects of the LORD Jesus Christ. The answer is that, as it was with Moses and as it was with the children of Israel, we are called to make all things according to the pattern. And the very first pattern given to us in regard to the Church as the Temple of the Living God is that it must always adhere to the Faith regarding the Person and work of the LORD Jesus Christ. To be a Church that is pleasing to the Lord, it must not deviate from the Historic Christian Faith, the Faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints that is seen in such confessions as the Nicene Creed, the London Confession of Faith, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and many other accurate Statements of Faith today.

The Nicene Creed is really nothing but Scripture put into summary form (see Fig. 3 below). The first responsibility of every Church is to be sure that it holds to the Faith delivered to the Church by the apostles. What good would it do if a Church follows the right pattern, but not the right Faith? Such a Church would end up having a form of godliness, but not the power, nor, indeed, the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

II Timothy 3:5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. KJV

Unfortunately, many today have departed from the Faith in regard to the doctrine of the Only Begotten Son of God, i.e. the doctrine of Eternal Generation of the Son of God. Such churches are simply falling away from the Faith and slipping off the only Bedrock that keeps them firm and strong. How sad it is to see some churches that still hold to the pattern

of the early Church, but have departed from the Faith given to the early Church. The Faith is inviolate. It was delivered once and for all to the saints. It is our responsibility as a Church of God to contend earnestly for it, and to build ourselves upon it (Jude 1:20), for the Faith is none other than those truths concerning our LORD Jesus Christ, who is our Bedrock, our Foundation and our Chief Cornerstone. Amen.

Therefore, in conclusion, let us look this Foundation of our Faith, those truths that true Christians have always confessed, contended for, and kept close to their hearts.

The Foundation of the Faith

The Faith is none other than what the apostles of our Lord revealed to the Church beginning with Peter's declaration, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." How wonderful are such declarations of Faith for they are blessed by the Lord Jesus Christ, being revealed to us by God the Father through the witness of the Holy Spirit.

In regards to these foundational truths, Paul tells us through Timothy the following—"Have an **outline of sound words**, which words thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus." (II Tim. 1:13 Darby)

Darby's translation best reflects the meaning of the underlying Greek text, for the first word in the verse is the Greek word *ὑποτύπωσις*, which G. V. Wigram defines as a "*a sketch, delineation; a form, formula, presentment, sample.*"²⁰

And W. E. Vine says this—

²⁰ George V. Wigram, *Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Samuel Bagster and Sons, London, 1852) pg. 419

“...hupotuposis (ὑποτύψεις): **an outline, sketch** (akin to hupotupoo, “to delineate,” hupo, ‘under,’ and No. 3), is used metaphorically to denote a pattern, example, ‘form,’ in 2 Tim. 1:13, *of sound words* (RV, pattern); in 1 Tim. 1:16, ‘pattern’ and ‘ensample.’”²¹

Thus we can see that Darby’s version better captures the nuance of the word Paul uses in II Tim. 1:13. The Holy Spirit wants us to have a “summary,” if you will, of those things taught by the apostles, an outline of those things we believe.

As such, the Church has always tried to obey this admonition of the apostle Paul. His admonition is the basis for all Creeds, Confessions, and/or Statements of Faith.

The earliest summary, or Statement of Faith that we have, apart from Scripture, is that called the Apostle’s Creed. Later, after Satan attempted to dilute and alter the Faith, the Church further clarified the Historic Faith into what is now known as the Nicene Creed.

This wonderful “Statement of Faith” became the basis for all other statements or confessions. The Church simply took the truths of God’s Word and strung them together into an outline or sketch. If one looks closely at the Nicene Creed, one can see the beauty of Scripture. It is really nothing else but the verses of Scripture put together in “summary form” (See Fig. 3 below). It was the testimony of a Church under siege by the fiery darts of the wicked one. And even though the Church by that time had succumbed to the wiles of the devil in other areas of Church practice (see the book *Church Principles of the New Testament*), it remained firm in its confession of the Faith as Scripture prophetically declared

²¹ W.E. Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Fleming H. Revell Company, Old Tappan, NJ, 1981) pg. 1248 (Vol. 2)

(Rev. 2:13). It neither added to the Faith, nor detracted from the Faith, but held firm to the Faith, declaring it openly.

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God, Begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very²² God of Very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spake by the Prophets.

²² The word “very” is from the Latin *verus*, meaning true. Thus the phrase means” true God of true God,” taken from I John 5:20.

Fig. 3 - The stringing together of Scripture to form the Nicene Creed

<p><i>We believe</i> (Jn. 6:69 KJV) <i>One God, the Father</i> (I Cor. 8:6) <i>The Maker of heaven and earth</i> (Ps. 115:15 NASB) <i>All things visible and invisible</i> (Col. 1: 16)</p>	Became	<p><u>We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, And of all things visible and invisible.</u></p>
<p><i>One Lord Jesus Christ</i> (I Cor. 8:6) <i>The Only-Begotten Son of God</i> (Jn. 3:18) <i>Begotten of God</i>, (I Jn. 5:18 KJV) <i>Before the world was</i> (Jn. 17:5) <i>From everlasting</i> (Micah 5:2 NKJV)</p>	Became	<p>And in <u>one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God, Begotten of His Father before all worlds,</u></p>
<p><i>God is Light—Light of the world</i>, (I Jn. 1:5; Jn. 8:12) <i>In Him that is true, His Son, true God</i>, (I Jn. 5:20) <i>First begotten of every creature</i> (Col. 1:15 Geneva) <i>All things were made by Him, and without Him</i> <i>Nothing was made that was made</i> (Jn. 1:3) <i>I and the Father are one</i> (Jn. 10:30) <i>In the form of God, equality with God</i> (Phil. 2:6) <i>Fullness of the Godhead</i> (Col.2:9) <i>By Him were all things created</i> (Col. 1:16)</p>	Became	<p><u>God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten not made, Being of one substance with the Father; By whom all things were made;</u></p>
<p><i>Salvation, came down from heaven</i>, (Titus 2:11; Jn. 3:13 KJV) <i>Became flesh, likeness of men</i> , (Jn. 1:14; Phil. 2:7)) <i>The Holy Spirit will come upon you</i> (Luke 1:35) <i>Mary</i> (Luke 1:27) <i>How can this be, since I am a virgin?</i> (Luke 1:34) <i>Will overshadow you</i> (Luke 1:31-35)</p>	Became	<p>Who, for us men, and for our salvation, came down from <u>heaven</u>, And <u>was incarnate</u> by the Holy Ghost of the <u>virgin Mary</u>, And was <u>made man</u>;</p>
<p><i>Delivered to Pontius Pilate, crucified</i> (Matt. 27:2; Mk.15:15) <i>Suffered , died , and buried</i> (I Pet. 2:21; I Cor. 15:3-4) <i>Raised the third day according to Scripture</i> (I Cor. 15:4) <i>Received into heaven</i>, <i>Sat on the right hand of God</i> (Mk. 16:19KJV) <i>Come again , come with glory</i>, (Jn. 14:3; Matt. 25:31) <i>Judging the quick and the dead</i> (II Tim. 4:1) <i>Of His kingdom there shall be no end</i> (Luke 1:33 KJV)</p>	Became	<p>And was <u>crucified</u> also for us under <u>Pontius Pilate</u>. He <u>suffered</u> and was <u>buried</u>; And <u>the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures</u>; And <u>ascended into heaven</u>, And <u>sitteth on the right hand</u> of the Father; And He shall <u>come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead</u>; <u>Whose kingdom shall have no end.</u></p>
<p><i>Holy Ghost</i>, (Acts 2:33 KJV) <i>The Lord the Spirit</i> (II Cor. 3:17) <i>The Spirit gives life</i> (II Cor. 3:6) <i>Proceedeth from the Father</i> <i>And the Son</i> (Jn. 15:26 KJV; Rev.22:1) <i>Father, Son, and Holy Spirit</i> (Matt. 28:19) <i>Prophets spoke as they were</i> <i>Moved by the Holy Spirit</i> (II Pet. 1:21)</p>	Became	<p>And We believe in <u>the Holy Ghost, The Lord and Giver of life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, Who spake by the Prophets.</u></p>

How wonderful is this portion of the Nicene Creed for it simply takes certain phrases from many different verses of God's Word and puts them together into a concise declaration of Faith. It follows the same practice of the apostle Paul, who often would string together portions of God's Word into a unified whole as we saw above in Rom. 9:33 (cf. also Rom. 3:10-18), which Alfred Edersheim revealed was called *Charaz*, the stringing together of pearls.²³

Therefore, these pearls of God's Word can be strung together as above, or they could be strung together as below. Either way, they bear witness to the same truths.

Along with the Apostles and Prophets of Christ Jesus our Lord we confess the following—

We confess with the apostle, Simon Peter, that we believe (John 6:69)! With the apostle Paul we confess that there is one God, the Father (I Cor. 8:6) who the Psalmist says is the Maker of heaven and earth (Ps. 115:15), and who Paul says created all things visible and invisible (Col. 1:16).

For us, as with Paul, there is but one Lord Jesus Christ (I Cor. 8:6). We believe with the apostle John that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Only-Begotten Son of God (John 3:16, 18) and that, it is He who is begotten of God that will keep us (I John 5:18 ERV, TYN). We confess with John that He existed before the world was (Jn. 17:5) and with the prophet Micah that He is from everlasting (Micah 5:2).

We declare with John that God is light (I Jn. 1:5) and that Jesus is the Light of the world (Jn. 8:12). We also declare, regarding the Son, along with the writer of Hebrews, "Thy

²³ Alfred Edersheim, *Op. Cit.*, pg. 449

throne, O God, is forever and ever” (Heb. 1:8)—being, as John affirmed in his epistle, true God, the Son of God, the Son of Him that is true (I John 5:20).

With Paul, we confess that the Son is the first begotten of every creature (Col. 1:15 Geneva Bible) who was not made Himself, because all things that were made, were made by Him (Col. 1:16; Jn. 1:3). With John we confess that He and the Father are one (Jn. 10:30) existing, as Paul says, in the form of God, and who did not regard His equality with God a thing to be grasped (Phil. 2:6), as He always possessed the fullness of the Godhead (Col. 2:9).

We hold dear the truth, with John, that He came down from heaven for our salvation (Jn. 3:13), as also Paul tells us (Titus 2:11). With John we confess that the Word became flesh (Jn. 1:14) and, as Paul says, that He was made in the likeness of men (Phil. 2:7), or, as the writer of Hebrews says, was “made a little lower than the angels” (Heb. 2:9).

As Luke tells us, we believe that the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, announcing that she would conceive and bring forth a Son whom she would call Jesus; and with Mary we treasure her words, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” We praise God for the testimony of Luke regarding the answer to her question—“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God (Luke 1:26-35).

With sorrow in our hearts, we believe the testimony of the apostle Matthew that He was delivered to Pontius Pilate (Matt. 27:2), and with Mark that Pilate delivered Him to be crucified (Mk. 15:15).

We witness together with Peter that Jesus suffered (I Pet. 2:21), and with Paul, that He died and was buried and was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (I Cor. 15:3-4).

Then, with Mark, we affirm that He was received up into heaven, and sat down on the right hand of God (Mk. 16:19) all the while, rejoicing with John that He will come again (Jn. 14:3) and with Matthew and Paul, that when He comes, He will come with glory (Matt. 25:31) judging the quick and the dead (II Tim. 4:1). We believe, like Luke, that of His kingdom there shall be no end (Luke 1:33).

Then, with Peter, we believe that He received the promise of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:33) who, as Paul says, is the Lord the Spirit (II Cor. 3:17), the Spirit who gives life (II Cor. 3:6).

With John, we affirm that the Holy Spirit proceedeth from the Father (Jn. 15:26) even like the river of water of life that proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev. 22:1). With Matthew, we worship and glorify, along with the Father, both the Son, and the Holy Spirit, honoring that One glorious Name—the Name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). And we believe with Peter that the prophets spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (II Pet. 1:21).

How wonderful are these declarations of the apostles and prophets. With them all we say, Amen!

And here is another format containing the same truths.

We believe

And **we believe** and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.” (John 6:69 KJV)

**In one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of
Heaven and earth,
And of all things visible and invisible**

But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. (1 Cor. 8:6 KJV)

May you be blessed of the LORD, Maker of heaven and earth. (Ps. 115:15 NASB)

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, **visible and invisible**, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: (Col. 1:16 KJV)

And in one Lord Jesus Christ

But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. (1 Cor. 8:6 KJV)

The Only-Begotten Son of God

He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the Only Begotten Son of God. (John 3: 18 KJV)

Begotten of His Father before all worlds

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. (John 1:18 KJV)

“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only **begotten Son** into the world, that we might live through him. (1 John 4:9 KJV)

We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not; but **He that was begotten of God** keepeth him, and the evil one toucheth him not. (1 John 5:18 ERV capitalization of He is mine)

And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee **before the world was**. (John 17:5 KJV)

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, **From everlasting**. (Micah 5:2 NKJV)

The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up **from everlasting**, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was **I brought forth**: (Prov. 8:22-25 KJV)

God of God, Light of Light, True God of True God

But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, **O God**, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. (Heb. 1:8 KJV)

This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that **God is light**, and in him is no darkness at all. (1John 1:5 KJV)

Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, “**I am the Light** of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.” (John 8:12 NASB)

And He is the **radiance of His glory** and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:3 NASB)

We know that the **Son of God** is come, and hath given us a mind to know **him (God) which is true**; and we are in him that is true, through his **Son Jesus Christ**. This same is **very God**, and eternal life. (1 John 5:20 Bishops Bible)

Begotten not made

Who is the image of the invisible God, the first **begotten** of every creature. For **by him were all things created**, which are in heaven, and which are in earth, things visible and invisible: whether they be Thrones or Dominions, or Principalities, or Powers, all things were created by him, and for him, (Col. 1: 15-16 Geneva Bible)

All things were **made through Him**, and without Him nothing was made that was made. (John 1:3 NKJV)

Being of one substance with the Father

I and my Father are one. (John 10:30 KJV)

Who, although He existed in the **form of God**, did not regard **equality with God** a thing to be grasped (Phil. 2:6 NASB)

By whom all things were made

For **by him were all things created**, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: (Col. 1:16 KJV)

Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:11 KJV)

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing **salvation to all men**. (Titus 2:11 NASB)

And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that **came down from heaven**, even the Son of man which is in heaven. (John 3:13 KJV)

I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. (John 6:51 KJV)

And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, And was made man

And the **Word became flesh** and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14 NKJV)

The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end.” And **Mary** said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” And the angel answered and said to her, “**The Holy Spirit will come upon you**, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.” (Luke 1:30-35 NASB)

But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was **made in the likeness of men**: (Phil. 2:7 KJV)

And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate

And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to **Pontius Pilate** the governor. (Matt. 27:2 KJV)

And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and **delivered Jesus**, when he had scourged him, **to be crucified**. (Mark 15:15 KJV)

He suffered and was buried; And the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ **died** for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was **buried**, and that He was **raised on the third day according to the Scriptures** (1Cor. 15:1-4 NASB)

And ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of the Father

So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was **received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God**. (Mark 16:19 KJV)

And He shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead

And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great **glory**. (Luke 21:27 KJV)

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; (II Tim. 4:1 KJV)

Whose kingdom shall have no end

And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. (Luke 1:33 KJV)

And We believe in the Holy Ghost

Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. (Acts 2:33 KJV)

This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? (Gal. 3:2 KJV)

The Lord and Giver of life

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. (II Cor. 3:17 NASB)

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. (Rom. 8:2 KJV)

Who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (II Cor. 3:6 NASB)

Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which **proceedeth from the Father**, he shall testify of me: (John 15:26 KJV)

And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, **proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb**. (Rev. 22:1 KJV)

Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spake by the Prophets.

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the **Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit**, (Matt. 28:19 NKJV)

For the **prophecy** came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God **spake** as they were **moved by the Holy Ghost**. (II Pet. 1:21 KJV)

This is the testimony of Scripture, the testimony of the apostles, and is the faithful testimony of the Church founded upon Christ as the Bedrock. To this testimony of the Scripture and the apostles, we are admonished to always be mindful, as Peter, himself, reminds us.

II Pet. 3:1-2 This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour” KJV

May we always be faithful to Christ as our Bedrock,
Foundation, and Chief Cornerstone, and always proclaim, like
Peter of old, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God!"
Amen.

Fairest Lord Jesus, Ruler of all nature,
O Thou of God and man the Son,
Thee will I cherish, Thee will I honor,
Thou, my soul's glory, joy and crown.

Fair are the meadows, fairer still the woodlands,
Robed in the blooming garb of spring;
Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer,
Who makes the woeful heart to sing.

Fair is the sunshine, Fairer still the moonlight,
And all the twinkling starry host;
Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines purer
Than all the angels heaven can boast.

Beautiful Savior! Lord of all the nations!
Son of God and Son of Man!
Glory and honor, praise, adoration,
Now and forever more be Thine.

Author Unknown
Translated by Joseph A. Seiss

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