

# “Who Do You Say I Am?”

## – Matthew 16:15-19

It is very important that we understand fully this scripture over which there has been much debate.

One denomination has used this short scripture to claim it is the only true church.

Upon whom is the true church founded and what is the role of Peter within that church?

**Matthew 16:15-17** [NIV] *“‘But what about you?’ he asked. ‘Who do you say I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus replied, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.’”*

This is the first record of any of Jesus Christ’s disciples actually knowing who Jesus Christ was and it even then had to be revealed by God the Father.

Jesus knew that now there was at least someone who had recognised Him as the Messiah [Messiah and Christ both the same, one is Hebrew the other Greek, each means anointed one.]

Kings were anointed to office by anointing, as they still are.

The Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One of God’s Divine King over humanity all are within the name of Jesus our Saviour.

What Peter discovered by revelation is that even the highest human titles are inadequate to describe Jesus.

When people described Jesus as Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets, they were setting Jesus in the highest category they could find. These were great tributes but **not** good enough for Jesus.

This passage of scripture also shows us that our discovery of Jesus Christ must be a personal discovery.

Jesus said *“what do **you** think of me?”*

**True Christianity never consists of knowing about Jesus, it always consists of knowing Jesus personally in an intimate relationship.**

**Matthew 16:17-19** [NIV] *“Jesus replied, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.’”*

It has always been difficult to approach this passage of scripture calmly and without prejudice, for this is the Roman Catholic foundation of the position of the Pope and of the church.

It is taken by the Roman Catholic church to mean that to Peter was given the keys that admit or exclude any person from the Kingdom of God.

Also to Peter was given the power to absolve or not to absolve a person of their sins.

It is also further argued by the Roman Catholic church that Peter, with these tremendous rights, became the first Bishop of Rome, and that this power descended to all the bishops of Rome, and exists today in the Pope, who is the Bishop of Rome and head of the church.

Let us then try to find the true meaning of this passage of scripture.

In this passage of scripture there is a play on words.

The Greek for Peter is “*petros*” and a rock is “*petra*.”

What Jesus said was “*you are petros [a smooth stone or pebble] and upon this petra [a massive rock face] I will build my church.*”

In Jewish thought and language the rock [Hebrew “*ce la*” or “*tsûr*” meaning lofty, craggy rock or stronghold, a cliff or strong refuge.] Used extensively to describe God.

**[Deuteronomy 32:4, 31; 1 Samuel 2:2; Psalms 18:2, 31, etc.]**

Applied to Abraham who was the foundation of the nation of Israel, by the Jewish people.

The “*petra*” on which the Christian church is founded is Jesus Christ.

**[1 Corinthians 3:10-11; 1 Corinthians 10:4]**

**1 Peter 2:4, 6-8** [NIV] “*As you come to him, the living Stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him,*” ... “*For in Scripture it says: ‘See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.’ Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,’ and, ‘A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.’ They stumble because they disobey the message, which is also what they were destined for.*”

The “*him*” is Jesus Christ described here as a living [Greek “*zaō*” life itself] stone [Greek “*lithōs*” a stumbling stone.]

A “*cornerstone*” Greek “*akrōgōniaiōs*” meaning chief cornerstone.

This chief cornerstone was laid so as to give strength to the two walls with which they were connected, if careless you could stumble over this stone as you were turning a corner, so Christ proved to be a stumbling stone to the Jews and all who seek to earn salvation by works instead of faith in Jesus Christ.

If we fail to see Jesus Christ as Head of the Church [**Ephesians 1:22**] we blindly stumble over this cornerstone.

**Romans 9:30-33** [NIV] “*What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the ‘stumbling-stone’. As it is written: ‘See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.’”*

**If we seek righteousness by works or rituals we blindly stumble over this cornerstone.**

**Psalms 118:22** [NIV] “*The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone;*”

The capstone is the central stone of an arch which holds the whole arch together.

Jesus referred to this in **Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17-19** where He is rejected by His people.

**Acts 4:8-13** [NIV] *“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: ‘Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is ‘the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.’ Salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.’ When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realised that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.”*

Peter assured the rulers and elders that only through belief in Jesus Christ whom they had rejected and crucified could they receive salvation from their sins.

No other man could ever offer, whatever title he may be given or assume, absolution of their sins.

**Ephesians 2:18-22** [NIV] *“For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow-citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”*

Only through Jesus Christ do we have access to God the Father by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that the Father sent at the request of Jesus Christ. [**John 14:15-18**]

We do not need a priest or vicar as a mediator between us and God. [**1 Timothy 2:5**]

## **In Conclusion**

So was Peter the rock who alone received the keys of the kingdom?

By looking into the entire Bible, not just one scripture, the answer is ‘no’.

Even Catholic writers have come to the same conclusion.

Looking at the Greek terms for stone and rock in **Matthew 16:18**, and comparing what was taught in the rest of the New Testament, and specifically in **1 Corinthians 10:4**, shows that Jesus, not Peter, is the rock [“*petra*”].

The Catholic renditions that appeal to the Aramaic are clearly not consistent with the original Greek on this subject.

In **Ephesians 2:20** it is Jesus who is shown to be the chief cornerstone.

**Ephesians 2:19-20** also shows that the foundation of the church is the historical leadership of the writings of the apostles and prophets. Hence the Church is built on Jesus Christ with the apostles and prophets, **not** just Peter.

After the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the true head of the Church [**Ephesians 1:17-23**] and the true shepherd given to all the disciples [**John 20:19-23; Acts 2:1-4**], **not** just Peter.

Understanding about the keys in scripture shows that it was all the apostles who were given the keys to open doors.

For example, the church in Philadelphia **Revelation 3:6-8**, but this was also directed to all the seven churches in Asia **v4**.

The fact is that the main part of the true church shifted from Jerusalem and Ephesus in the first century to Smyrna in the second century and **not** Rome, is also consistent with Biblical [**Revelation 1:11 – Revelation 3:22**] and historical records.

Note that the binding and loosing of church authority was given to all those who became apostles [**Matthew 18:18-20**] **not** just Peter.

The simple fact is that the original teachings held by the original and true Christian Church were best preserved in Ephesus and Smyrna, and **not** Rome, during the first and second centuries.

Thus the true Church of Jesus Christ still has the right doctrines and thus the “*keys to the kingdom.*”

For an in-depth academic study on this subject, that quotes many Roman Catholic writings which I have used to come to the conclusions arrived at in this article, please visit [www.cogwriter.com](http://www.cogwriter.com) and download article ‘*Peter and the Keys*’.