

# The Rock

Matthew 16:18-19; Ephesians 3:10

Dr. Paul Cannings

## A. Unmovable (vs. 18):

1. Tell, speak – After recognizing that God spoke to Peter (Jesus being in the nature of God would know that without having to ask), Jesus follows the declaration provided by God, by now saying to Peter what all this means in relation to development of the church. It makes sense that Jesus took things from here because He is the head of the church, and the church is His body (Ephesians 1:22-23; He determines how it is structured; 1 Cor. 12:1-4).
  - a) This was the turning point in Jesus's ministry. From this point on He will speak more to the disciples than to the crowds. He begins to prepare His disciples for His death and resurrection.
  - b) The people not believing that He is the Messiah was a sign that they would not accept Him, because by now He had performed many miracles (15:29-31), and they still did not accept Him as the Christ. There are three groups that are represented, 1) the Pharisees, 2) the Sadducees, 3) the people.
2. Upon this rock – The indirect object of what Christ is explaining but this is what Peter is provided by God.
  - a) Jesus made a wordplay on Peter's name. Peter (*Petros* in Greek) means "a movable rock or stone." The word translated "rock" (*petra* in Greek) means "an immovable rock formation or rock mass." Scholars have debated whether the "rock" was a reference to Peter himself, Jesus, Peter's confession, or the truth of Peter's confession—that Jesus was the divine Messiah.<sup>[1]</sup>
3. Upon this rock – This is the massive bolder that is the foundation upon which the church would become immovable (1 Corinthians 10:4; 3:10-11; 1 Peter 2:8; Christ is also the cornerstone, Ephesians 2:20-22).
  - a) The word translated "rock," is not the same word as Peter, but is of a similar meaning. Nothing can be more wrong than to suppose that Christ meant the person of Peter was the rock. Without doubt Christ Himself is the Rock, the tried foundation of the church; and woe to him that attempts to lay any other! Peter's confession is this rock as to doctrine. <sup>[2]</sup>

4. Build – The word ‘build’ here means to edify a believer so that they are built up to spiritual maturity. It is through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, like in the case of Peter, illuminating the true meaning of God’s Word (John 14:16-17) that we are strengthened from the inside out.
  
5. My church – The church belongs to Christ because it is a collection of faithful believers gathered as free citizens (Ephesians 2:19) in a public assembly, called by a herald to worship Christ.
  - a) The word “church” (16:18) simply means “the assembly of those called out.” The “powers of hell” (16:18) was a figure of speech that referred to death. Even death would not prevail against this special community. What would the Messianic community be like? The community that Jesus revealed would be different from anything His disciples had ever imagined.<sup>[3]</sup>
  
6. Gates of Hades will not prevail – The gates that are possessed by Satan and his demons and for all those who are dead and are placed in an intermediate place before being cast into the lake of fire. The presence of death and the activity of Satan will not have greater strength than the church that Christ establishes.
  - a) Hades, or Sheol, is the realm of the dead. “Gates,” which were essential to the security and might of a city, indicate power. So, the expression “gates of Hades” in the Old Testament and later Jewish literature, which is basically the same as the “gates of death,”<sup>260</sup> refer to the realm and power of death. “For a moment my soul was poured out to death; I was near the gates of Hades with the sinner. Thus, my soul was drawn away from the Lord God of Israel, unless the Lord had come to my aid with his everlasting mercy” (*Pss. Sol.* 16:2). Jesus thus promises that death will not overpower the church, his own family of faith (cf. Matt. 12:48–50).
  
7. Gates of Hades will not prevail – Death will not overcome the church that Christ establishes. At the point of death, we will immediately be in the presence of the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8).

## **B. The Power (vs. 19):**

1. I will give – It is Christ church; so, He will provide the church a permanent possession of His keys so that the church is equipped to deal with the onslaught of Satan’s attacks.
  
2. Keys – By the presence of the Holy Spirit in each believer’s life (Titus 3:4-8) the Helper of Christ permanently places the authority and ability to implement the Word of God to

address all schemes that Satan uses against the church. These keys were given to the other apostles (Matt. 28:18-20; 24:14; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8; 10:42) and to all Christians (2 Tim. 2:2; 1 Pet. 3:15; 2 Cor. 5:20; Rom. 10:11-16; Eph. 6:15; Matt. 28:18-20).

a) The “keys” (16:19) were a symbol of authority to open or close doors (cf. Isa. 22:22). “Lock” and “open” (Matt. 16:19) were terms used by the rabbis to describe what they permitted or prohibited, that is, declared lawful or unlawful. By judicial pronouncement they would lock or open someone with respect to a particular law. The authority given Peter was later given the other apostles (18:18).<sup>[4]</sup>

3. Kingdom of Heaven – The church, in contrast to Satan’s kingdom of death, possesses keys that provide it the power and authority by which the Lord God rules the earth.

4. Bound – Whatever, under the authority provided, is restricted, so that it is under obligation to Christ’s authority will be completely incapacitated in heaven. This is the main point (subject) why the keys are provided to the church to combat the attacks of Satan through His many gates (2 Corinthians 2:11; Ephesians 6:11 – Satan has many schemes) to bring death and ruin to the church (John 10:10; 1 Peter 4:17; 5:8; Revelation 12:10).

a) But overall, it seems that the right to “bind” and “loose” refers primarily to the regulation of conduct, while the keys point to admission and exclusion. <sup>[5]</sup> (Matthew 18:15-20)

5. Putting to an end, Loose – Whatever is decided to once and for all be freed or delivered from any restrictions provided by the authority of Christ as determined by the keys, is considered to be under no restrictions in heaven.

a) "Binding" and "loosing" (also 18:18) were terms regularly used for 'rabbis' legislative authority in interpreting Scripture ("prohibiting" and "permitting"), and thus, could apply to judicial situations as well. (from IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament by Craig S. Keener Copyright © 1993 by Craig S. Keener. Published by InterVarsity Press. All rights reserved.)

b) Discipline was also exercised by the twelve, and here again the role played by Peter is emphasized (Acts 5:1-11). Shutting and opening the door is best viewed in 1 Cor. 5:1-5 and 2 Cor. 2:8. Excommunication from the visible church possible (18:17; 1 Cor. 5:5a; Titus 3:10); so is exclusion from the kingdom (8:12).

### C. Restrains Satan (Ephesians 3:10):

1. In order that – This verse provides the intent, the purpose of the ‘administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God’ revealed through the preaching of the Gospel.
2. Manifold wisdom of God – “The wisdom of God has shown itself in Christ to be varied beyond measure and in a way which surpasses all previous knowledge thereof.” (3:18- 19). In other words, the skillful application of God’s Word in its highest and fullest sense when being applied to real life situations has several different ways of being applied. (James 1:5-9; 3:15-18).
3. Might now be made known – When the mysteries of the Lord are exposed the revelation of God’s saving purposes is proclaimed through Christ.
4. Through the church – The numerous ways of God’s wisdom being exposed takes through the collection of faithful believers gathered as free citizens (Ephesians 2:19) in a public assembly, called by a herald to worship Christ proclaiming the salvific work of the God.
  - a) Furthermore, if the very existence of the church is a reminder that the authority of the powers has been decisively broken, and that their final defeat is imminent, then the overcoming of the second obstacle, namely, ‘the things in heaven’, moves to its completion. Perhaps, as F.F. Bruce suggests, the church appears as ‘God’s pilot scheme for the reconciled universe of the future’. The uniting of ‘Jews and Gentiles in Christ was ... God’s masterpiece of reconciliation and gave promise of a time when not Jews and Gentiles only, but all the mutually hostile elements in creation, would be united in that same Christ’. The church is not only the pattern, but also, the means God is using to show His purposes are moving triumphantly to their climax.<sup>[6]</sup>
5. Rulers and authority – This is a reference to the evil forces of Satan who function with power and authority and have the ability and strength to execute their wicked agenda (Ephesians 6:11-12).

---

<sup>[1]</sup> Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). *Tyndale concise Bible commentary* (p. 412). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>[2]</sup> Henry, M., & Scott, T. (1997). *Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary* (Mt 16:13). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems.

<sup>[3]</sup> Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). *Tyndale concise Bible commentary* (p. 412). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>[4]</sup> Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). *Tyndale concise Bible commentary* (p. 412). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>[5]</sup> Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew* (pp. 426–427). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

<sup>[6]</sup> O'Brien, P. T. (1999). *The letter to the Ephesians* (pp. 247–248). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.