

The New Testament Church

Part 5: The Foundation of the Church

Isaiah 28:16; I Corinthians 3:9-11

I. INTRODUCTION: I

- I. **2** I don't know much about constructing buildings, I can barely drive a nail straight.
 - A. But one thing I do know is this: the foundation is the most important part of the building.
 - B. If you don't get the foundation right the building will never be right (e.g., ** leaning *Tower of Pisa*, the care with which our contractor laid the foundation of our Michigan house).
 - (1) "Foundation is a force sufficient to withstand any pressure or stress placed upon it. Its purpose is to counterbalance the force of gravity so that what goes up doesn't come down." (Chumbley, *The Gospel of Matthew*, p. 297)
 - (2) "Modern engineers have greatly refined methods of construction, but they have never improved on rock as the best foundation on which to build." (ibid.)
2. **3** Consider the highest skyscraper in North America, *One World Trade Center* (aka *Freedom Tower*):
 - A. It took over 8 years to build, weighing thousands of tons, and rises 1,776 feet above street level.
 - B. The foundation extends 110 feet below street level to solid bedrock. Getting the foundation down to bedrock took many months of blasting and excavation.
 - C. The foundation forms a large box measuring four city blocks long by two city blocks wide.
 - (1) Excavation (including the original WTC twin towers) crews ended up digging up more than 1 million cubic yards of fill, which was dumped in the Hudson River.
 - (2) This fill dumped into the river added 28 acres of new prime real estate to Manhattan.
 - (3) The building's foundation is a cubic concrete and steel pedestal 187 feet tall and 200 feet wide resting firmly and directly on bedrock.
 - (4) **4** The foundation consists of 24 jumbo steel columns, each nearly sixty feet tall and weighing over 70.5 tons.
3. **5** "Men (as well as buildings and bridges) need a sure foundation—a place to stand' (Archimedes)—on which to construct their lives." (ibid.)
4. The church Jesus built is a much more important "structure" than *One WTC*, so it surely must have a sure foundation.
 - A. Like *1 WTC*, Christ's church is built on a sure foundation (Isa. 28:16) of bedrock: "*upon this rock I will build My church*" (Matt. 16:18).
 - B. One commentator, William Barclay, said the identification of this rock, this foundation, is "one of the storm-centres of New Testament interpretation." (ibid.)
 - C. So, what did Jesus mean by this figure of speech? Who or what is the "rock"?
5. **6** Let's study what the Bible teaches concerning the foundation on which Jesus built His church.

II. DISCUSSION:

- I. **7** Historical Views: Historically, the four most popular views concerning the rock are:
 - A. *The disciple interpretation*, which understands it to refer to every disciple, of whom Peter is a representative (Origen 12.10; cf. John 1:42; I Timothy 2:15).

- B. *The confession interpretation* (popular in the Greek and Syrian churches), which believes it is the *faith* Peter confessed.
 - C. *The Catholic interpretation*, which asserts the supremacy of Peter and his successors (contrary to contemporary Roman dogma, this interpretation cannot be sustained patristically and did not become dominant in Roman Catholic exegesis until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries [Luz 62]).
 - D. *The Christological interpretation*, which understands the rock to be Christ (Augustine held this view and it was “the dominant interpretation of the church in the Middle Ages” [Luz 60]), (all four interpretations are from *The Church of Jesus Christ*, p. 11)
2. **8** Catholic Interpretation: Roman Catholicism claims the apostle *Peter* is the foundation on which Jesus built His church (BTW: This interpretation is not exclusive to the Roman Catholic Church.).
- A. ** This claim is based, at least in part, on the word play (in the original Greek) Jesus uses in Matthew 16:18: “*thou art Peter (petros = stone), and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*” “Peter” was the nickname given to “Simon the son of Jonah” by Jesus (Jn. 1:42).
 - B. **9** Reasons why this contention is false:
 - (1) *Fellow apostles didn’t agree*: Peter’s fellow apostles certainly did not take Jesus to mean Peter was to be the chief of the apostles (**Matt. 18:1**: “*At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, ‘Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’*”; Matt. 20:20-28: mother of Zebedee’s sons sought exalted positions for her boys, James and John; **Mk. 10:35-41**).
 - (2) *Semantically Peter doesn’t fit*:
 - (a) Jesus said: “*And thou art Petros*” referring to Peter (Gr. *petros*, masculine in gender referring to “isolated rocks or small stones” TDNT).
 - (b) However, Jesus said the church would be built upon a *petra* (Gr. feminine in gender referring to “a large and solid ‘rock.’” TDNT; i.e., huge mass of rock, as in bedrock).
 - (c) If Peter is the “rock” upon which Jesus built His church it seems odd to me Jesus would use two different words for “rock” (“*Petros*” = stone; “rock” = “large solid rock,” i.e., bedrock); “the use of two different forms for rock in this verse implies they are to be distinguished from each other.” (Chumbley, *The Gospel of Matthew*, p. 299)
 - (i) If Jesus meant to name Peter as the “rock” upon which He built His church “He could have done so simply by saying, ‘You are *Petros* and on this *petros* I will build my church,’ or, ‘You are *Petros* and on *you* I will build my church.’” (Ibid.)
 - (d) Notice also when Jesus refers to the “rock” upon which He will build His church, He says, “on this rock.”
 - (i) The word “*this*” (*houtos*) is a demonstrative pronoun which refers to a thing, it is not a personal pronoun (e.g., you) which refers to people.
 - (ii) ** Pronouns must agree with their antecedents (i.e., noun that comes before it; the noun for which the pronoun is substituting) to be grammatically correct, “*this*” does not agree with the antecedent “*Petros*.”
 - ✓ For example, in the sentence: *Craig lost a glove and he can’t find it.* “Craig” is the antecedent of the personal pronoun “he.”

- ✓ In this case the use of “this” (i.e., Craig lost a glove and this can’t find it.) is obviously inappropriate; the pronoun does not agree with its antecedent.
 - (iii) By using the pronoun “this”; “He (Jesus, cvt) points away from Peter to another antecedent, viz., what Peter had just said (v 16, cvt, “*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*”).” (Ibid. p. 299)
 - **“The demonstrative pronoun ‘this’ logically should refer to something other than the speaker or the one spoken to and would be appropriate only if Jesus were speaking about Peter in the third person and not speaking directly to him” (Garland, 170)” (Ibid.)
 - (iv) “It is upon deity, not humanity that Christ build His church.” (Ibid.)
- (3) **10** Historically Peter doesn’t fit:
- (a) A French Roman Catholic (Jean de Launoy, a 17th century priest and historian) surveyed the writings of the “church fathers” concerning the identification of the “rock.”
 - (b) In the various patristic writings he found: 1) seventeen interpreted Peter as the “rock,” 2) forty four interpreted the “rock” as the faith Peter confessed, 3) sixteen said Christ Himself was the “rock,” and 4) eight said the apostles were the “rock.” (Ibid.)
 - (c) So Launoy’s survey of these ancient commentators found that 68 of 85 (80%) believed Peter was not the rock. (Chumbley, *The Gospel of Matthew*, p. 299) Interesting? Yes! Conclusive? No!
 - (d) **11** Too late: The argument that Peter is the “rock” also comes much too late.
 - (i) New Testament documents never refer to Peter as the “rock” upon which Jesus built His church or imply such. It wasn’t until A. D. 198 that the argument of Peter’s supremacy is first asserted by Tertullian (Stauffer, p. 29).
 - (ii) “The argument made today by Catholic theologians was not perfected until Leo I, was bishop of Rome from A. D. 440-461. (Stauffer, p. 29) and “did not become dominant in Roman Catholic exegesis until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries [Luz 62]” (Chumbley in *The Church of Jesus Christ*, p. 11).
 - (iii) ** “Anglican scholar George Salmon scarcely understates the matter when he writes of such exegesis, ‘It takes one’s breath away to read a commentary which finds so much more in a text than lies on the surface of it. If our Lord meant all this, we may ask, why did He not say it?’ (*Infallibility of the Church*, 334 in Chumbley, *The Gospel of Matthew*, p. 298)
- (4) **12** Logically Peter doesn’t fit:
- (a) If Jesus founded His church on Peter, He founded it upon a man; a man with many spiritual weaknesses. But His church is perfect! **Col. 1:21-22:** “...He has reconciled 22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.” Peter was far from perfect:
 - (i) Peter showed lack of faith when attempting to walk on water (Matt. 14:22-33).
 - (ii) Peter showed cowardice when he denied the Lord three times (Matt. 26:69-75).
 - (iii) Peter showed instability and favoritism when he caved to the political maneuvering of the Jews against the Gentiles (Gal. 2:11-14).
 - (b) ** “Can one who, in the words of Paul, walked ‘not uprightly according to the truth’ be a sure foundation for the church (Matt. 14:22-33; 26:69-75; Gal. 2:11-14)?” (Stauffer, p. 29)

(5) **13** Contextually Peter doesn't fit: What is the topic of discussion in Matthew 16:13ff?

- (a) It is not Peter or who Peter is.
- (b) The subject of the passage concerns the identity of Jesus!

Matt. 16:13: "...He asked His disciples, saying, 'Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?'"

Matt. 16:15: "He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?'"

- (c) "the answer, revealed not by flesh and blood but by God the Father, is given in Peter's confession: 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God' (Matt. 16:16)." (Ibid.)
- (d) ****** "The Christ, God's Son—who and what he is—is the 'rock' upon which the church is built. He, both prophecy and New Testament teaching confirm, is the sure foundation, tried stone, precious stone, and chief cornerstone. Anyone or anything else is sand." (Ibid.)

(6) **14** Other:

- (a) Catholic theologians claim Peter established the church in Rome. However, there is no evidence in the New Testament that supports this theory.

(i) There is no mention in the book of Acts that Peter was ever in Rome at any time:

- ☛ Paul was in Rome: Acts 28:17-30: Paul traveled to Rome and met with and preached to "the leaders of the Jews" there and "dwelt two whole years" in Rome, "and received all who came to him, 31 preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 28:30-31).
- ☛ Yet there is no mention in Acts or any New Testament epistle that Peter was ever in Rome.

(ii) Catholic sources claim Peter went to Rome and established the church there in A.D. 42 and was martyred there in A.D. 67; yet in Paul's epistle to the Romans, which was written A.D. 56-58, in chapter 16 Paul sends greetings to ~30 different people, none of which are Peter.

(iii) There is clear evidence in the Roman epistle that no apostle had yet visited Rome when Paul wrote the letter:

- ☛ Paul certainly had not visited Rome: **Rom. 15:22-24:** "For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you. 23 But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, 24 whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while."
- ☛ In the opening chapter of Romans Paul: **Rom. 1:10-11:** "making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. 11 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established..." (spiritual gifts could only be transmitted the apostles; **Acts 8:18:** "And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money,"). Implication? No apostle had yet visited Rome by A.D. 56-58.

- (b) **15** If Matthew 16:18 is teaching the primacy of Peter why don't the parallel passages (Mk. 8:27-31: "You are the Christ."; Lk. 9:18-20: "The Christ of God.") include the statement (i.e., "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church").

- (c) Peter doesn't meet the man-made qualifications the Roman Catholic Church imposes on all its "bishops," including the Pope (i.e., not married).

- (i) Peter was an “elder” (1 Pet. 5:1); one and the same as a “bishop” (Acts 20:17, 28).
- (ii) One NT qualification of a “bishop” is that he must be “the husband of one wife” (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6).
- (iii) Peter met this qualification which would *disqualify* him to be a Roman Catholic Bishop, much less the Pope, in the Roman Catholic Church (Matt. 8:14; Mk. 1:30; Lk. 4:38 all mention Peter’s “wife’s mother”; Paul said “Cephas” had “a wife”; 1 Cor. 9:5).
- (iv) Peter describes himself, not as the “chief elder or bishop,” but as “a fellow elder” and identifies Jesus as “the Chief Shepherd,” not himself (1 Pet. 5:1-4).
- (v) Peter didn’t elevate himself above anyone and refused worship the “Pope” accepts! Acts 10:25-26
- (d) Figurative use of the word “rock” in the Old Testament.
 - (i) Occurs at least 40 times figuratively in OT; twice used to describe false gods in contrast with the Rock of Israel, Who is the living God (Deut. 32).
 - (ii) All other times “rock” is applied either to Jehovah or Christ; never applied to a human.
- (e) Peter wrote and spoke about the church’s foundation and never identifies himself as the “rock.” He applies several OT prophecies about rocks and stones exclusively to Christ (1 Pet. 2:4-8; Acts 4:10-11).
- (f) Peter had no successor! “Coffman makes the astute observation that, ‘Peter knew that he would have no legitimate successor and indicated it in 2 Peter 1:13-15 where he wrote the word of God in order for it to be available, as he said, ‘after my decease’! If a successor had been contemplated, that would have been unnecessary” (252).” (Pope, p. 517) (BTW: *no apostolic succession per Acts 1:22!*)

2 Pet. 1:13-15: “Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, 14 knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. 15 Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.” He accomplished this “reminder” through this epistle!
- (7) **16** But didn’t Jesus give Peter “the keys of the kingdom”?

Matt. 16:19: “And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

 - (a) Metaphorically a key symbolizes authority (e.g., key to the city).
 - (b) “In the first century, ‘A key was given to a Scribe when admitted to his office as a symbol of his authority to open the treasury of divine oracles’ (Carr, 212).” (Chumbley, *The Gospel of Matthew*, p. 301)
 - (c) “Peter under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit, was authorized to set forth the terms of admission into the kingdom of God.” (Pope, p. 517; emphasis mine, cvt)
 - (d) Peter, under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14, 15, 16) used the “keys of the kingdom” when he opened its doors in Acts 2 (Jews) and in Acts 10 (Gentiles) by announcing God’s terms for one to enter the kingdom.
 - (i) He did not formulate these terms on his own authority, but was the Lord’s authorized representative (along with the other apostles) and simply repeated the Lord’s commands, for example, as given in the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16).

- (ii) “Every preacher uses the keys of the kingdom when he proclaims the terms of salvation in Christ’ (*Word Pictures*, 134-135).” (Pope, p. 516)
 - (iii) I would quickly add that any Christian who teaches the gospel to an alien sinner is, in a sense, using the “keys of the kingdom”!
 - (e) Furthermore, whatever the “binding and loosing” authority was it was not limited to Peter, but was given to all the disciples: **Matt. 18:18**: “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (see Matt. 18:1: “At that time the disciples came to Jesus...”).
 - (f) Also, the verbs Jesus uses in Matthew 16:19, “bind” (*deo*) and “loose” (*luo*), are future perfect passive: “This form expresses a past action whose effect exists in the present and will continue to exist in the future.” (Chumbley, *The Gospel of Matthew*, p. 301)
 - (i) “This language, however, doesn’t mean Peter or any of the apostles had *carte blanche* authority to determine the terms for admission to the kingdom.” (Ibid.)
 - (ii) The NASV gives the most correct translation of these verses:

Matt. 16:19: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”

Matt. 18:18: “Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”
 - (iii) “...Their authoritative instructions and decisive decrees are in accord with what is already settled in heaven, and are therefore reflective of God’s sovereign will...” (Pope, p. 515; emphasis mine, cvt) **Psa. 119:89**: “Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven.”
- C. I think any reasonable, logical person would agree with this analysis of Matthew 16. The fact Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God” is the sure foundation upon which Jesus built His church and not Peter. **
- D. On his web site (bible.ca) Steve Rudd gives: **20 reasons why Peter Not A Good Choice For The First Pope**:
1. Peter was just one of the 12 apostles (Mt. 10:1-2; Mk. 3:13-19; Lk. 6:13-16).
 2. Peter was just one of the three close friends of Jesus (Mt. 17:1; 26:36-37).
 3. Peter denied the Lord Jesus three times (Mt. 26:69-75; Lk. 24:54-62; Jn. 18:15-18, 25-27).
 4. Peter was a married man (1 Cor. 9:5; Matthew 8:14).
 5. Peter was rebuked by the Lord (Mt. 16:23; Jn. 21:20-22; cvt: Matt. 17:1-8; Jn. 13:6-9).
 6. Peter was rebuked by Paul (Gal. 2:11).
 7. Peter never accepted reverence (Acts 10:25-26); (No man should, Rev. 19:10; 22:9).
 8. Peter was not superior to the other apostles (Mt. 18:18; 2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11).
 9. Peter and the other apostles, in consideration of their demise, wrote letters preserving their combined God-given revelations for all time (2 Pet. 1:12-15; 3:1-2; Eph. 3:3-5.).
 10. Peter along with the other apostles were to “sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Mt. 19:28).

11. Peter was not the head of the church - Jesus is the only head of His church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col.1:19)
12. Peter was not selected to be the Vicar of Christ on earth (no references in the Bible).
13. Peter never talked about any “successors” to him.
14. Peter and Paul never wore any of the many titles of the modern Popes (2 Pet. 3:15).
15. Peter and no other disciple(s) were to be “*the greatest in the kingdom*” (Mt. 18:1-4; 20:20-28); rather, they were to be equal.
16. Peter’s name in the Greek is *Petros* (a detached stone, Jn. 1:42) but Jesus said the church would be built upon the “*rock*” or *Petra* (a mass of rock) - Mt. 16:18.
17. Matthew 16:18 Peter is masculine gender and rock in feminine gender; in context they cannot refer to the same thing.
18. Peter and Paul declared that Jesus was “*the chief cornerstone*” (Acts 4:12; Eph. 2:20).
19. Peter and the other apostles were merely the layers of the foundation Stone - Jesus (Acts 4:11-12; Eph. 2:19-20).
20. Finally, Jesus Himself said that “*all authority*” was given to Him both “*in heaven and on earth*” (Mt. 28:18-20).

E. Paul would make a far better “pope” than Peter:

1. The Bible says apostle Paul was certainly in Rome, we have nothing in the Bible that says Peter was ever in Rome.
2. Paul is more front and center in the book of Acts than Peter.
3. Paul is the great apostle whose record we have of going far and abroad to preach the gospel.
4. Paul is the one who has not one recorded bad blot on his life after his conversion.
5. Paul is the one who takes charge of matters and even rebukes Peter to the face.
6. Paul had way more epistles written than anyone else.
7. Paul was a single man.

STOP

3. **17** Christological Interpretation:

- A. Prophecy: The foundation of the church is the subject of prophecy:

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.’*” (NIV: “*the one who trusts will never be dismayed.*”; Christ will never let you down, He will never disappoint you! Why? Because He is the “*sure foundation*”!).

Isa. 8:14: “*He will be as a sanctuary, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, as a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.*”

Was the prophet referring to building a physical, material temple in Jerusalem, or was he envisioning something else? The New Testament provides an indisputable answer.

- (1) Stone/Jesus: Who is this “*sure foundation*” or “*stone*”?

- (a) Through inspiration, Paul combines Isa. 28:16 and Isa. 8:14 to describe Jesus as “a stone of stumbling and rock of offense” to the Jews who refused to believe on Him (**Rom. 9:30-33; 10:1-13**).
- (b) “Peter made the same application, portraying Jesus as ‘a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but with God elect, precious.’ Those who believe on him are ‘living stones’ who are built upon him, as a spiritual house; to them he is a precious stone. But to those who disbelieve, are disobedient, and stumble at the word, he is ‘the stone which the builders rejected,’ ‘a stone of stumbling,’ ‘a rock of offense’ (**1 Pet. 2:4-8**).” (Stauffer, pp. 29-30)
- (i) Paul confirms this: **Eph. 2:19-22**: “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”
- (ii) “The depiction of the apostles and prophets as the foundation of the church in Ephesians 2.20 is metonymy; it is their inspired teaching about Christ, and not their person or office on which the church rests.” (Chumbley, p. 300) cf. 1 Tim. 3:15
- Jn. 14:26**: “...He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”
- Jn. 15:26**: “...the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me...”
- Jn. 16:13**: “...He will guide you into all truth...” (Eph. 3:1-5)
- (c) The risen Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is the only one with the qualifications to be the “sure foundation” of Isaiah’s prophecy.
- (2) Zion/Church:
- (a) Zion is used figuratively to refer to “the holy hill in heavenly places where God dwells and his king rules.” (Stauffer, p. 30)
- (b) It is on this figurative Zion where God has set the Messiah; declared Him to be His Son; seated Him at His right hand; and the Messiah rules with the rod of his strength as “King of kings and Lord of lords”; as “both Lord and Christ” (Psa. 2:6-7; 110:1-2; Acts 2:33-36; Rev. 17:14).
- Heb. 12:22-24**: “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.”
- (c) “When men and women come to God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the church of the firstborn, to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant—they come to mount Zion where the rejected stone became the head of the corner (Heb. 12:22-24; Acts 4:11, 12; Eph. 2:20-22).” (Stauffer, p. 30)
- (3) Tried Stone: “The sure foundation laid in Zion was a ‘tried stone’—one that, as metal, had been tested and proved to be of enduring quality; a stone that showed no weakness; one that would not crush or crumble beneath the weighty trials of life. Jesus, the tried stone, was ‘a man approved by God unto you by mighty works, and wonders, and signs’ (Acts 2:22). But how was Jesus tested and why did God approve of him?” (Stauffer, p. 30)

(a) His character was tested:

- (i) He was made like man, but without sin (**Heb. 4:15**: “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”).
- (ii) He was tested in the wilderness and passed the test (Matt. 4:1-11; 1 Jn. 2:15-17).
- (iii) He was so well-tested He Himself could say: **Jn. 8:46**: “Which of you convicts Me of sin?” No one could! **1 Pet. 2:22**: “Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth”
- (iv) “By his example God’s only Son set before a world of weakness and sin a ‘sure’ foundation for life.” (Stauffer, p. 30)

(b) His will was tested:

- (i) He came to do God’s will: **Heb. 10:7**: “Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come — In the volume of the book it is written of Me — To do Your will, O God.’”; **Jn. 4:34**: “Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.’”
- (ii) The ultimate test of His will was in the Garden of Gethsemane: **Matt. 26:39**: “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”
 - ☛ Each time Jesus prayed this prayer He expressed His total commitment to doing God’s will: “thy will be done.”
 - ☛ After the third prayer God said “no” for a third time: “being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood” (Lk. 22:44).
 - ☛ “When God said ‘no’ the third time, Jesus arose, faced his captors, and surrendered to arrest, trial, and crucifixion.” (Stauffer, p. 30)

Phil 2:8: “And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”
- (iii) His will passed the test; and He became “the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb. 12:2)

(c) **18** His claim was tested:

- (i) Jesus claimed to be the Son of God: **Jn. 9:35-37**: story of the man born blind: “He said to him, ‘Do you believe in the Son of God?’ 36 He answered and said, ‘Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?’ 37 And Jesus said to him, ‘You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you.’” (**Jn. 8:58**: “...before Abraham was, I AM.”).
- (ii) Miracles confirmed it was true: **Jn. 5:36**: “But I have a greater witness than John’s; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish — the very works that I do — bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.”; **Jn. 20:30-31**: “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”
- (iii) In John 6 He claimed to be the bread and water of life that sustains men forever. Was that true? How could He possibly prove that claim? Only by a successful bout with death and victory over death could prove that claim.

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

- (iv) Quoting from Psalms 16:10, Peter applies this prophecy to Jesus of Nazareth: “For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.” (Acts 2:27)
- (v) That “the gates of Hades shall not prevail against” the church assures mankind that Satan is totally unable to stop Christ’s work.

“Death signals the end for most enterprises, but not for Christ’s church. Death would neither stop Christ from building it (vv 21-22, Acts 2.24,27), nor spell defeat for those who comprise it (vv 24-27).”

- (d) The validation of His claim qualified him to be:

- (i) “the Savior of the body,” the church (Eph. 5:23). How could He be Savior, how could He empower men to conquer death, if He had not done it Himself?

Heb. 6:19-20: “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, 20 where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

Rom. 6:9: “knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.” **Isn’t that what we are seeking?!**

2 Cor. 1:9-11: “Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, 10 who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us.”

2 Tim. 1:10: “but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

1 Jn. 2:25: “And this is the promise that He has promised us — eternal life.”

1 Jn. 5:11: “And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.”

- (ii) Overcoming death was His greatest test of all because the resurrection proved His claim and revealed His true identity: **Rom. 1:4:** “and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”

Rev. 1:17-19: “And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, ‘Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. 18 I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.’”

“The apostle John, in the visions of Revelation, saw one like unto the son of man amidst the seven churches. Arrayed in a priestly or royal garment, the son spoke comforting words to those maligned and persecuted churches: “Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and Hades” (Rev. 1:17,18). As the tried stone, rejected stone, precious stone, chief cornerstone, Jesus is the sure foundation who has the keys and power of life and death.” (Stauffer, p. 31)

Heb. 2:14: “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,”

Jn. 6:40: “And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

B. 19 The theme of the first gospel sermons was the identity of Jesus!

(1) Peter’s sermon in **Acts 2:22-36**

- ☛ vv. 22-24: Facts of the case concerning a man, “Jesus of Nazareth.”
- ☛ vv. 25-31: The qualifications to be “the Christ” as set forth by prophecy, viz. “he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ.”
- ☛ v. 32: “Jesus of Nazareth” met these qualifications; “This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.”
- ☛ vv. 33-36: Peter’s conclusion (i.e., What is the true identity of “Jesus of Nazareth?”): “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

(2) Paul’s first sermon in Acts 9:

Acts 9:20-22: “Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. 21 Then all who heard were amazed, and said, ‘Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?’ 22 But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.”

(3) The identity of Jesus is the central theme of these first sermons because the whole enterprise rises or falls on whether or not Jesus is who He claims to be: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”

(4) ** In the book of Acts we find the apostles’ preaching focusing on Jesus’ identity as “the Christ” (14 times specifically stated; 12 others it is at least inferred):

2:22-36	10:36-43	9:5
4:10-12	13:33-41	9:27
4:33	17:3	9:29
5:30-32	18:5	11:20
5:42	18:28	14:7
8:5	Inferred:	14:21
8:12	3:13-26	17:18
9:20	4:2	26:23
9:22	8:35	28:31

C. 20 “no other foundation”:

(1) **1 Cor. 3:9-11:** “For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building. 10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. 11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” **Why did Paul write this?**

- (a) Because the church at Corinth was rejecting the “sure foundation” of Christ; they were enamored with human wisdom (**1 Cor. 1:12:** “Now I say this, that each of you says, ‘I am of Paul,’ or ‘I am of Apollos,’ or ‘I am of Cephas,’ or ‘I am of Christ.’”).

- (b) Who are these men? Not the foundation! They were simply “ministers through whom you believed” (1 Cor. 3:5).
- (c) By laying another foundation for their faith, Paul said they were “still carnal...and behaving like mere men” (1 Cor. 3:3).
- (d) After this severe rebuke, Paul reminds them that the foundation he, as an inspired apostle, had laid in Corinth is Jesus Christ, it was not Paul, Peter, Apollos, or any other man.
- (e) How did Paul lay this foundation in Corinth? He did so through what he preached!
1 Cor. 2:2: “For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”
Acts 18:5: “When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ.”
- (f) Paul reminded the brethren at Corinth that he had laid “no other foundation [than] can anyone lay...which is Jesus Christ.”
 - (i) The foundation he laid was laid by what he preached at Corinth; Acts 18:5 says Paul preached “that Jesus is the Christ.”
 - (ii) What Paul preached is exactly what Peter confessed in Matthew 16:16. Peter confessed the precise identity of Jesus, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
- (g) The identity of Jesus is the “rock” upon which the church is built! Jesus Christ is the “sure foundation” God laid in “Zion” (Isa. 28:16). Thus, “no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor. 3:11; Acts 4:11-12: “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.”).

III. CONCLUSION: 21

1. Jesus Christ is “the Savior of the body,” which is “the church” (Eph. 5:23, 1:22).
2. His identity is the “sure foundation” God laid at “Zion” (Isa. 28:16); the “rock” upon which He built His church (Matt. 16:18).
 - A. Jesus’ identity was the topic of discussion in **Matthew 16:13**: “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” **Matt. 16:15**: “But who do you say that I am?”
 - B. Jesus’ identity is what Peter confessed: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Matt. 16:16)
 - C. Jesus’ identity is what all men must confess in order to be saved:
Rom. 10:10-11: “For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.’”
Acts 8:37: “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”
3. **22** Paul preached Jesus’ true identity: “...that Jesus is the Christ...” (Acts 18:5).
4. His resurrection proved His claim to that identity:
Rom. 1:4: “and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”
5. If Jesus was not who He claimed to be:
1 Cor. 15:17-19: “And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! 18 Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.”

- A. In other words, if Christ's identity as "the Son of God" is not true, He did not rise from the dead and He is not able to save us!
- B. If this is not His identity He is not the "Savior of the body" (Eph. 5:23) and He could not be the "sure foundation" God laid at "Zion" (Isa. 28:16).
- C. But He is who He claims to be! **Jn. 11:25-27:** speaking to Martha "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?' 27 She said to Him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.'"
- D. **23** Do you believe this? If you do believe, act upon that belief and He will save you!

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