

The Only Rock



Foundations (Day 3)
by Derek Prince

Yesterday, we concluded with the observation, that it is not the apostle Peter that is the foundation on which the Christian Church is built, but Jesus. We also saw that He is the foundation of Christianity. This issue is so incredibly important, that I want to scrutinize Jesus' statement carefully, to understand its true meaning.

In the original Greek of the New Testament there is, in Christ's answer to Peter, a deliberate play upon words. In Greek, the name "Peter" is Petros; the word for "rock" is petra. Playing upon this similarity in sound, Jesus says:

> "You are Peter [Petros], and on this rock [petra] I will build My church." (Matt. 16:18)

Though there is a similarity in sound between these two words, their meaning is quite different. Petros means a small stone or a pebble. Petra means a large rock. The idea of building the Church upon a pebble would obviously be ridiculous, and therefore could not be Christ's real meaning.

Jesus uses this play on words, to bring out the truth He is seeking to impart. He is not identifying Peter with the rock; on the contrary, He is contrasting Peter with the rock. He is pointing out how small and insignificant the little stone, Peter, is, in comparison to the great rock, upon which the Church is to be built.

Common sense and Scripture alike confirm this fact. If the Church of Christ were really founded upon the apostle Peter, it would surely be the most insecure and unstable edifice in the world. Later, in the same chapter of Matthew's Gospel, we read that Jesus began to forewarn His disciples of His impending rejection and crucifixion. The account then continues:

> "Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!' But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offence to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but he things of men.'" (Matt. 16:22-23)

Here Christ directly charges Peter, with being influenced by the opinions of men, and even by the promptings of Satan

himself. How could such a man be the foundation of the entire Christian Church?

Later on in the Gospels, we read that, rather than confess Christ before a serving maid, Peter publicly denied his Lord three times.

Even after the resurrection and the day of Pentecost, Paul tells us that Peter was influenced by fear of his countrymen, to compromise at one point, concerning the truth of the gospel (see Gal. 2:11-14).

Surely, then, Peter was no rock. He was loveable, impetuous, a born leader – but a man just like the rest, with all the inherent weaknesses of humanity. The only rock upon which Christian faith can be based is Christ Himself.

Devotional

Transcript: WD-B052-003-ENG
Last Updated: 03 Feb 2025
Website: derekprince.com



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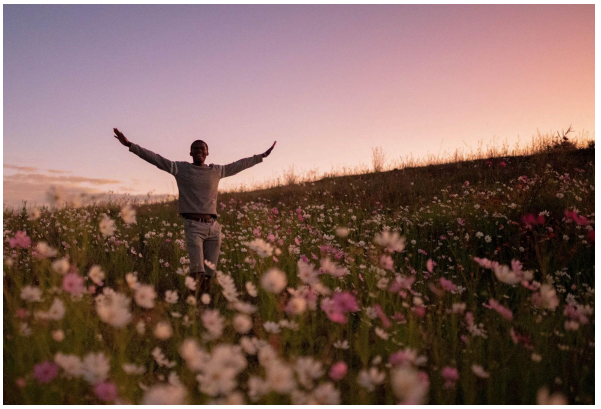

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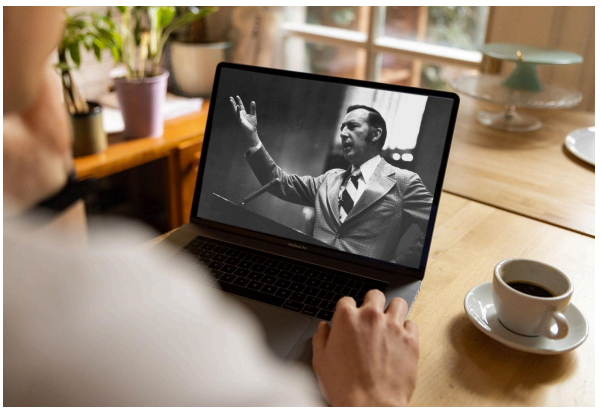

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