

Upon This Rock: Introduction: Literal v. Allegorical Hermeneutics; the Catholic's Invention of the Pope: Aramaic Trumps Koine Greek in Mt. 16:18

UPON THIS ROCK

THE DEDICATION OF GRACE DOCTRINE CHURCH

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I. INTRODUCTION

Matthew 16:13 - 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?"

v. 14 - So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

v. 15 - He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

v. 16 - Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

v. 17 - Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

v. 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."

This conversation between the Lord and Peter appears in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke but these Gospels carry the narrative no farther than Peter's response in verse 16. The Lord's quote recorded in verses 17-18 appear only in Matthew.

Controversy results when at least two people, having opposing views on a given issue, enter into a quarrel, each with the attitude he is right and his adversary is wrong. Sometimes this is a civil discussion while on other occasions, according to James 4:1-2, it can lead to murder. On a national scale it can result in such tactics as sanctions, tariffs, and the severing of diplomatic relations and if these fail, all-out warfare. However, when the topics of the debate are biblical controversies the results range from schisms, to discord, to the splitting off into denominations.

Bad hermeneutics lead to bad translations from which far worse interpretations produce devastating conclusions. Once the New Testament canon was completed Lucifer realized he would never be able to literally destroy its corpus of twenty-seven books. But the father of lies was wise enough to realize that he could confuse those who chose to study its message.

Near the end of the first century the Apostle John completed the final book of the canon. Revelation was finished circa A.D. 96. In the second century, the Christian faith grew rapidly under the rulership of the Antonine Caesars. It was during this time that those who taught the Word did so from literal-grammatical-historical hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics (from the Greek verb ἐρμηνεύω, *hermēneuō*) is the science of interpreting Scripture and the art of discerning its message for application to life and circumstances. However, in the third century, a trend developed at the theological school in Alexandria, Egypt, that stressed an allegorical approach to Scripture. In opposition to this was the theological school at Antioch, Syria, which subscribed to the established system of literal interpretation of the Word.

In the mid fifth century a series of circumstances brought these two schools into controversy over the doctrine of the hypostatic union. Cyril of Alexandria falsely accused Nestorius of Antioch of heresy and succeeded in discrediting Nestorius at the Council of Ephesus. This led to the demise of the literal school at Antioch and the rise of the allegorical school at Alexandria. It was this latter system of hermeneutics that was adopted by the Roman Catholic Church.

The system of biblical interpretation at Alexandria taught that a literal reading of Scripture leads to confusion and contradiction. This was considered to be God's way of telling the theologian that God's real message is hidden in allegory and the interpreter's challenge is to decipher what lies beneath.

Get this logic: theologians are unable to figure out what a passage means from a simple reading of the text but they are wise enough to figure out an alleged hidden meaning. This is the allegorical approach and the term is defined for us by John Nist:

Allegory, the veiling of a moral lesson or abstract principle in the language of a seemingly literal story.¹

Because of the ascendancy of the Alexandrian school's influence in the mid fifth century, allegory became the dominant system of hermeneutics during medieval Christianity:

***Allegory.** In the medieval discipline of biblical exegesis, allegory became an important method of interpretation, a habit of seeking correspondences between different realms of meaning (e.g., physical and spiritual) or between the Old Testament and the New.²*

¹ John Nist, *Speaking into Writing: A Guidebook for English Composition*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1969), 46.

² Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 5.

Allegory therefore is a system that enables the interpreter to expand on a passage requiring nothing more than a vivid imagination. When supporting one passage by referencing second, the interpreter allegorizes the latter in order to justify his predetermined view of the former. There is no structure, no serious reference to context, no substantial recognition of the historical setting. Whenever any of these principles is recognized it is to justify the preconceived opinion of the interpreter.

Therefore, the literal-grammatical-historical system allows the Scripture to speak to the interpreter while the allegorical system permits the interpreter to speak to the Scripture. Allegorical interpretation was the standard from around the year 500 until the Reformation which began in 1517. It is during this millennium that abundant heresies emerged out from the Catholic Church and the impact on those it recruited is best described as religious tyranny.

What we are about to study is a passage from which the Catholic Church arrogated its power and justified its specialized priesthood. It is not an allegory but it does contain metaphors. Because of the allegorical hermeneutic practiced by the Catholic Church, the metaphors of this passage are interpreted as giving authority to the Catholic Church which we will discover is not justified.

We will begin our study by taking a quick overview of some of the assumptions the Catholic Church has drawn from Matthew 16:17-18. You will also note that these examples do not recognize the doctrine of dispensations.

II. THE CATHOLIC'S INVENTION OF THE POPE

1. In Matthew 16:16 Peter correctly identifies Jesus as the Messiah with the statement, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."
2. This indicates that Peter clearly recognizes Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament messianic prophecies. However, Peter, along with the other apostles, is still under the impression that the Lord will immediately set up His earthly kingdom.
3. This is not the case, however, because the cross must come before the crown. Nevertheless, Peter has made a clear statement regarding the true identity of Jesus as Messiah.
4. The Lord then acknowledges the accuracy of Peter's response, issues a beatitude to him, and confirms the source of his knowledge in:

Matthew 16:17 - Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."

5. According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia* (CE) (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/>) we learn the following assumptions made from this verse.
6. CE: "Christ pronounces on the Apostle a peculiar and personal blessing, declaring that his knowledge regarding the Divine Sonship sprang from a special revelation granted to him by the Father."

7. **Observation:** It is from this correct literal interpretation that popes have claimed the authority to issue encyclicals ex cathedra. An encyclical is an official document containing the text of a pope's pronouncements on doctrine. Ex cathedra refers to the authority of his office and his personal infallibility.
8. The establishment of the office of the pope is assumed from the next verse:
Matthew 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."
9. **CE:** "The word for 'Peter' and for 'rock' in the original Aramaic is one and the same; this renders it evident that the various attempts to explain the term "rock" as having reference not to Peter himself but to something else are misinterpretations."
10. **Observation:** First of all there is no "original" Aramaic. The passage is Koinē Greek, but it is true that in the Aramaic the two words are the same. It is from this standpoint that the Catholic Church assumes Peter to be head of the "church."
11. **CE:** "Here then Christ teaches plainly that in the future the Church will be the society of those who acknowledge Him, and that this Church will be built on Peter."
12. **Observation:** This "society" is assumed to be the Catholic Church and Peter holds the office of chief pastor which is said to be a permanent office.
13. This is the passage by which the office of the pope is validated. Further, Peter is also arrogated supreme authority over the church which others have inherited from him down to the present hour. This is referred to as the "primacy of the pope":
14. **CE:** "If anyone shall say that Blessed Peter the Apostle was not constituted by Christ our Lord as chief of all the Apostles and the visible head of the whole Church: or that he did not receive directly and immediately from the same Lord Jesus Christ a primacy of true and proper jurisdiction, but one of honor only: let him be anathema."
15. **CE:** "If anyone shall say that it is not by the institution of Christ our Lord Himself or by divinely established right that Blessed Peter has perpetual successors in his primacy over the universal Church, or that the Roman Pontiff is not the successor of Blessed Peter in this same primacy: let him be anathema."
16. To this presumed authority is imputed a host of powers and prerogatives that not only go unmentioned in this passage but are found nowhere else in Scripture.
17. It is from Matthew 16:17-19 that the Catholic Church has not only assumed plenipotentary authority over all of Christendom but also authority over the interpretation of Scripture by which they have utilized the allegorical method since the fourth century.

18. The most arrogant conclusion of all is that the pope is able to add or subtract from Scripture as he so decrees.
19. None of these things can be legitimately claimed by the pope or anyone else.
20. Therefore, this passage needs to be examined from the literal-grammatical-historical method of biblical analysis. Once done the passage will reveal quite a different emphasis—the mystery doctrine of the universal church, baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ, and empowered by Him to advance in the divine plan to the ultimate glory of the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

III. MATTHEW 16:17

Matthew 16:17 - “Jesus answered and said to Peter, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.”

1. The Lord confirms that Peter’s statement of His identity is accurate because it has an irrefutable Source: God the Father.
2. Peter has identified Jesus as “the Christ, the Son of the living God.” This phrase combines the title Messiah with the designation “Son of the living God.”
3. Messiah is rendered in the Greek as **Μεσσίας, Messias** and in the Hebrew as **מָשִׁיחַ Mashiach** and means the Anointed One. In the Old Testament, when someone was anointed it was always by divine mandate.
4. The definition of Messiah in the Jewish mind concerns the divinely Anointed One who would enter into human history, deliver the Jews from oppression, and inaugurate His promised earthly kingdom.
5. The title “Son of God” is used fifty times in Scripture and it makes reference to the eternal deity of Christ, a doctrine summarized by Robert P. Lightner:

There was never a time when Christ was not the Son of God. When the title Son of God is used of Christ, it has nothing to do with His birth or with Mary being His mother. Christ is never called God’s child (*tekno*) in Scripture, but He is called God’s Son (*huios*) many times. As such he has an eternal relationship with the Father.

Three things are signified by the term *son*. “It signifies that a son is a separate person from his father; a son is an heir, not the servant, of his father; and the son has the same nature as his father.” Christ’s sonship and deity go together.³

³ Robert P. Lightner, “Christ Is the Eternal Son of God,” *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology: A Practical Guide to the People, Viewpoints, and History of Prophetic Studies*, gen.ed. Mal Couch (Grand Rapids: Kregal Publications, 1996), 396.

6. The title indicates Messiah's divine presence as observed by Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 3:25 where he referred to the fourth Man in the fire as the "Son of God."
7. Peter adds the concept of "living God" in order to emphasize that he recognized the fact Jesus is the Son of God who not only *is* eternal life but that in His true humanity he also *had* eternal life.
8. Thus Peter's statement indicated his comprehension of the hypostatic union, that Jesus of Nazareth is undiminished deity and true humanity in one Person.
9. Up to this point, no one in the Lord's ministry had identified Jesus as precisely as did Peter. His fellow disciples had just related to the Lord that the general population regarded Him as a prophet on a scale with John the Baptist, Elijah, and Jeremiah.
10. As a result of Peter's correct response, he is commended with a beatitude, "Blessed are you, Simon, Bar-Jonah."
11. Simon is Peter's real name which is made evident on the occasion of his being introduced to the Lord by his brother Andrew in John 1:42.