

“Peter” Does Not Mean “Pebble”

by Bill Crews

The truth does not need and is never served by exaggerations and distortions; error does and is.

As an illustration, it is true that in Matthew 16:18 (where Jesus said, “*And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.*”) the Greek word translated “*Peter*” is the masculine word **PETROS**, and that the Greek word translated “*rock*” is the feminine word **PETRA**. It is true that “*thee*” and “*thou*” are second person singular, and that “*this*” is third person singular. And it is also true that **PETROS** and **PETRA** differ in meanings. We know then that the “*rock*” upon which Jesus built His church was not Peter --different words, different genders, different meanings, different persons, and used with different pronouns.

But it is **not** true that the word **PETROS** means “a little rock, a pebble.” In our zeal to emphasize the fact that **PETROS** and **PETRA** do not have the same meaning, we sometimes exaggerate and distort, perhaps unintentionally and perhaps only because we have heard others say it and accepted what they said without personal investigation. I have heard it in sermons and read it in articles, but we need to correct it. It does not serve the cause of truth!

Vine says of **PETRA**, “denotes a mass of rock as distinct from **PETROS**, a detached stone or boulder, or a stone that might be thrown or easily moved” (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Vol. III, p. 302). See Thayer also (*Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 507). **PETROS** can refer to a stone that can be moved or even thrown, but it certainly does not mean “a little rock, a pebble.” **PETRA** is the word used in such passages as Matthew 7:24-25; 27:51, 60; Luke 8:6, 13; Romans 9:33 and 1 Corinthians 10:4.

But what is the “*rock*” upon which Christ built His church? Isaiah 28:16; 1 Peter 2:5-8; Acts 4:11-12 and 1 Corinthians 3:11 (read this passage especially) will show that it is Christ, not Peter; and that Jesus was referring, not to Peter, but to the grand confession that Peter had made in Matthew 16:16. The identity of Jesus was the theme of the whole conversation. The Catholic Church is wrong! The Lord’s church was not built upon Peter; he is not its foundation.

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