

# Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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## “this rock”

(Jerry Fite)

Jesus said to Peter, “*and I also say unto thee, Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*” (Matthew 16:18-19).

The Catholic Church would never deny the fact that Jesus Christ is the only foundation upon which the church and our lives are built. Paul said, “*For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*” (I Corinthians 3:11). But Catholic tradition has Peter being the “vicar of Christ” or first appointed “agent or “representative” head of the church based upon Jesus’ statement to Peter in Matthew 16:19-20. Did not Jesus address Peter and say he was the rock upon which Jesus would build His church?

Jesus does address Peter, but he makes a distinction between Peter and the rock, as indi-

cated by two different Greek words. Peter in the Greek is “petros” while “rock” is “petra”. The noun “petros” is masculine which would be appropriate in addressing Peter. But “this rock” is “petra” or feminine in gender, indicating that Jesus is not referring to the person of Peter.

The feminine “petra” occurs three other times in the Greek New Testament. The large stone laid before the tomb of Jesus had been “*hewn out in the rock (petra) (Matthew 27:60).* The faithful Jews of old drank the same spiritual drink as they drank “*from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock (petra) was Christ*” (I Corinthians 10:4). Peter, speaking of Jesus writes, “*a stone of stumbling and a rock (petra) of offense; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed*” (I Peter 2:8).

“Petra” or “rock” in the feminine gender is used to denote a massive rock or foundation stone. It is applied to Jesus as the rock for drink to those who par-

take, and a rock of stumbling to those who reject the word.

Jesus, noting the meaning of Peter’s name, emphasizes the meaning of Peter’s confession as being the rock upon which Jesus would build His church. Jesus was confessed to be the Son of God, yet, He was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead (*Romans 1:4*). The resurrected Christ as the firstfruits of the Christian’s own resurrection (*I Corinthians 15:20*) would keep the gates of Hades – the place of departed spirits in death – from prevailing against the hopeful redeemed making up the church. Peter was not this rock, but Jesus was the foundation for the victory over the gates of Hades and thus death.

The binding and loosing authority was not something Peter exercised in place of the other apostles (*cf. John 20:21-22*) or even the church, when members act in accordance with the authority of the ever present Lord (*Matthew 18:17-20*). Peter was not therefore “this rock”, but Jesus was, and still is today.