

THESIS ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Biblical Theological Studies
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Adventist University of Africa

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Title: THE MEANING OF *EPI TAUTĒ TĒ PETRA* IN MATTHEW 16:18 : AN EXEGETICAL-THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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Matthew 16:18 remains a problematic text even after centuries of scholarly findings and recommendations. The question that continues to divide Bible scholars is: What or who is the foundation of the church in Matthew 16: 18? In order to further investigate this question, this study attempted to answer three sub questions to help elicit meaning out of it. First, what is the relationship between the nominal phrase Πέτρος, and πέτρα since their gender and cases do not match? Secondly, what is the sense of πέτρα in the clause, και ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρῃ? And thirdly, how does the contextual and linguistic component furnish the understanding of the phrase ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρῃ?

This study was an exegetical and theological attempt to explore the contextual meaning of ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρῃ using the historical grammatical method. After following due process, the following observations emerged: (1) According to

Matthew's narrative, Jesus Christ encountered solid unbelief among the political and religious elite of Israel but a few struggled to hang unto him. (2) In order to ascertain the depth and width of the conviction and persuasion of these and further gauge general perception, Jesus occasioned the Caesarean discourse. (3) The Greek text shows that there could be no lexical link between Πέτρος and πέτρα but their usage by Matthew was to contrast the two by using appropriate καὶ to emphasise the fundamental significance of πέτρα in the grand scheme in the life and work of Jesus. (4) The use of the demonstrative ἐπὶ with the dative case indicates the special importance Matthew attached to his purpose of showing that the historical Jesus and none other could be Messiah as demonstrated by his life and works. (5) Exegetical data culminates in Jesus' injunction on his disciples not to share his identity in order not to fuel the fires of hatred in the political and religious leaders led by Satan.

Based on the strength of the observations made, several conclusions could be drawn considering the meaning of ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ in Matthew 16: 18. First, Matthew wrote for the express purpose of presenting Jesus Christ as the Messiah, and divine son of God in fulfillment of biblical Old Testament prophecies in the context of strong unbelief prevalent in the upper Jewish religious culture that was obviously against him.

Secondly, the original audience understood Christ clearly giving the context of unbelief and his insistence on keeping their new understanding to themselves until the right time. Thirdly, the meaning of ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ in Matthew 16: 18 is an anaphorical reference to the identity of Jesus as the Messiah, son of the living God as found in Matthew 16:16. This expression becomes the fundamental engaging principle of the New Testament believers; the acceptance that the God who created

also assumed human form in the person of Jesus for the ultimate salvation of humans from sin.

This study employed syntactical, historical-biblical, and lexical tools in bringing out meaning from Matthew 16:13-20, and concluded that it seems improbable for Christ to build His church on a human being; that leadership squabbles among believers ought to be done with, while living and proclaiming the kingdom principles take center stage.

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A thesis

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by

Mustapha Nyuma Kondorfilu

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The statement in Matthew 16:18¹ has received various scholarly interpretations from the earliest centuries. Yamell understands this passage to be a passionate area in the New Testament exegesis² even though a clear definite solution could not be suggested to these studies on this text. Literary and textual concerns and even translational issues were raised but suggested meanings lacked clear historical, theological and grammatical analysis leaving room for this study. For instance, some believe that when Jesus talks about *petra* he refers to Peter.³

¹ Unless otherwise shown, all quotations of Scripture in English are from *New King James Version (NKJV)* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1980). References to the Greek text are from the common texts of Barbara Aland et al., eds., *The Greek New Testament (GNT)*, 4th rev. ed. (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/United Bible Society, 1993); and Eberhard Nestle et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece (NA27)*, 27th rev. ed. (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/United Bible Society, 1993).

² Malcolm B. Yarnell III, *Upon This Rock* (Forth Worth, TX: Riley Center, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008), 1.

³ Apostolos Makrakis seems to imply that the harm done to this passage could be deliberate and uncritical. Apostolos Makrakis, *Interpretation of the Entire New Testament*, vol. 1, *The Four Gospels*, trans. Albert George Alexander (Chicago, IL: Orthodox Christian Educational Society, 1949), 300; Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew*, *The New International Version Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 561-562. See also Oscar Cullmann, *Peter, Apostle, Martyr* (London: Student Christian Movement, 1962), 18-19; and Joseph Augustine Fitzmyer, "Aramaic Kephā' and Peter's Name in the New Testament," in *To Advance the Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 115; W. Mundle, "πέτρα", *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (NIDNTT)*, ed., Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975) 3:383; See Donald Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, *Word Biblical Commentary 33A* (Dallas TX: Thomas Nelson (Word), 1993), 6, 60-670; George Arthur Buttrick, ed. "The Gospel according to St. Matthew: Exposition," *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon, 1951), 7: 451-452; Charles Laymon, ed., *The Interpreter's One-volume Commentary on the Bible: Introduction and Commentary on Each Book of the Bible Including the Apocrypha* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon 1971), 629-630. Carol C. Meyers, "The Temple," *Harper's Bible Dictionary (HBD)*, ed. Paul J. Achtemeier (Philadelphia: Harper & Row, 1985), 1025.

This assumption is laden with Jewish Messianic concept limitation (Isa 50-53; 61:1-5), contextual, and theological limitations (Matt 16: 13-15). The Jews constantly nursed the hope of a Messiah figure who would free them and establish a kingdom (Isa 41, 42: 1-7 ;). This Messiah would: (1). Bring about justice for all nations (2). Be a teacher. (3). Achieve his goals tenderly but successfully. (4). Serve as a covenant between God and His people. (5). Give light and hope by healing all manner of disabilities and set others free from bondage.⁴

Matthew, being Jewish may have been fully aware of these expectations as he did set out to write his gospel account; and he accounts that “then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet saying” (Matt 2: 17, 18). This appears to be the overarching theological theme of the book of Matthew. Therefore, any suggestion that Matthew had in mind another person could constitute a false historical theological assumption. Further, Orville Jenkins avers that there could be two separate forms of πέτρα in Greek but are not in focus in the text.⁵

Rather, it could be the person or the statement that person made that was contrasted with the general concept of a rock; therefore, the common form of πέτρα was used as feminine. Moreover, MacFeat observes that there could be an ancient alliteration between petros and πέτρα where two or more words are grouped together because they sound the same.⁶ Both sides of the debate are unanimous on the

⁴ See Roy E. Gane, *Isaiah - Adult Bible Study Guide 1Q 2021* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2021), 111.

⁵Orville Boyd Jenkins, “Petros the Rock and the Rock of the Church,” accessed February 6, 2021, <http://orvillejenkins.com/theology/petrosrockofthechurch.html>.

⁶Scott MacFeat Jr., “‘Petros’ and ‘Petra’: An Ancient Alliteration or Something Else? Matthew 16: 18,” paper submitted at Capital Seminary at Lancaster College for the course BIB543 – Backgrounds in Interpretation, July 29, 2019, 1.

probability that Jesus spoke Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek indicating a phonetic relationship between petros and πέτρα.⁷

Frank Hardy points out that Πέτρος and πέτρα could not be proper nouns but Greek nouns.⁸ Additionally, Ridderbos suggests that the difference between the two words could be insignificant.⁹ Archibald Thomas Robertson traces the distinction between Πέτρος and πέτρα to ancient Greek context adding that this distinction may exist only in Matthew 16: 18.¹⁰ Matthew Henry emphasizes the foundation aspect πέτρα as a stone or source as opposed to Πέτρος the person of Peter.¹¹ Charles Spurgeon insists that this passage could have posed no challenge had the Romanists not twisted it.¹²

Joseph A. Fitzmyer argues that Jesus may have used *kepha* for both Πέτρος and πέτρα in Aramaic. He also wonders why the Greek could not employ Πέτρος for both.¹³ Arguably, establishing the lexical relationship between Πέτρος and πέτρα could be difficult giving the linguistic, historical, and geographical backgrounds. However, whatever position one takes, the context and purpose must bear on the

⁷MacFeat Jr., “‘Petros’ and ‘Petra.’”

⁸Frank W. Hardy, *Christ's Use of Rock Symbolism in Matthew 16:13-20*, PDF file, February 16, 2010, <http://www.historicism.org/Documents/Jrnl/Matt16.pdf>; See also A. J. Maas, *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew with an Explanatory and Critical Commentary*, 4th ed. (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1928), 181-83.

⁹H. N. Ridderbos, *Matthew*, trans. by Ray Togtman (Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library, 1987), 303. See Cullman, *Peter, Apostle, Martyr*, 19; Nigel Turner, “Matthew 16:18: The Petros-petra Wordplay—Greek, Aramaic, or Hebrew?” *Jerusalem Perspective* 46-47 (September-December 1994): 32–36, 38, <http://www.jerusalemerspective.com/2718>.

¹⁰ Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Rio, WI: AGES Software 2000), 1:118.

¹¹Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the New Testament* (Albany, GA: The Ages Digital Library, Ages Software, 1997), 57.

¹²Charles Spurgeon, *Popular Exposition – Matthew* (Albany, OR: The Ages Digital Library Commentaries. Ages Software, 1997), 226

¹³ Fitzmyer, “Aramaic Kephā’ and Peter’s Name in the New Testament,” 115, 116.

intended meaning. From the Greek, Πέτρος appears in the nominative masculine, and πέτρα on the other hand appears noun dative feminine corresponding with ταύτη, demonstrative pronoun dative feminine, and feminine noun ἐκκλησίαν.

In this case, the gender and case of Πέτρος appears incongruent with that of the object of the verb οικοδομήσω. It is evident that Matthew chose his words on purpose. If the two words were interchangeable, then why didn't Jesus say; you are *kepha* and upon this *kepha* I shall build my church? It seems, Matthew uses the words with the intention to underscore the inherent difference existing between the lexemes, giving πέτρα a function. Anthony John Maas asserts that “though the lexical argument may be inconclusive, it does inform that Matthew used two different Greek words “because the Greek language imposes the distinction of genders on the translator of Matthew’s Aramaic gospel from which he cannot extract himself”.¹⁴

Accordingly, the differences between the lexis seemingly highlights the difference in meaning. Moreover, the καὶ separating σὺ εἶ Πέτρος, and ἐπὶ ταύτη τῇ πέτρᾳ could be either copulative, adjectivally and contrastively connecting the subject of the clause with its complement;¹⁵ or cumulative, functioning adjectivally by incorporating all current and previous data up to the present or at the time of measuring or collating. It needs to be demonstrated whether πέτρα contributes to the contrastive connection between the subject, Jesus, and His referent.¹⁶

There are two leading propositions to this exegetical enigma. The Roman Catholics hold that Peter is the πέτρα, rock, and by extension the first pope. Majority

¹⁴ Maas, *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 181-183.

¹⁵William Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., rev. and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), s.v. *καί*.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 487.

of Protestants and other orthodox denominations hold that Peter's confession serves as the basis of the rock foundation though some Catholics, like Eusebius, share the same view.¹⁷ This study hoped to expand existing Protestant and other orthodox positions by providing a new perspective. The inadequacies or lacuna of the former proposition may appear endless, but a few are heightened:

A survey of the Catholic claim indicates that its evidence primarily rests on three biblical texts (Matt 16:13-19; Luke 22: 31-, 32; John 21:15-17).¹⁸ In all of these, Peter's superiority is emphasized but in John 16: 1-14 Jesus encourages the sad disciples by predicting that the Comforter (identified as the Holy Spirit in John 14: 26) was to come and continue His ministry. Similarly, in Matthew 18: 15-18; Jesus ascribes the privilege of "binding and casting" on all disciples, not Peter alone. Moreover, Peter's trial and denial of Jesus placed him below the other disciples (Luke 22:31-32).

Again, Acts 20: 28 indicates that the privilege to "feed my sheep" was not exclusively for Peter and Peter himself would emphasize this corporate responsibility (1 Pet 5: 1-4). In essence, Jesus taught equality in the kingdom of God (Matt 19: 27, 28), servant hood among believers (Matt 20: 20-26, Luke 10: 35-43), and the call to remain different regarding leadership (Matt 23: 4-10). In summary, the Roman Catholics claim appears to ignore Matthew's purpose and context which warrants this present probe.

¹⁷ Eusebius *Commentary on Psalms* M.P.G., Vol. 23, Col. 173, 176; Winter, *St. Peter and the Popes*, 53; Eusebius "Commentary on Psalm 17," in *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, ed. and trans. by William Webster (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1995), 176. See also Caesariensis *Commentarii in Psalmos* Patrologiae cursus Completus: Series Graeca (PG), ed. J. P. Minge vol. 23 (Paris: Garnier Freres, 1857), 176. Origen *Commentary on Matthew* 12:10. ANF 10:456; GCS 40:85-86.

¹⁸ See Jesse C. Stevens, *Was Peter the First Pope?* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1973), 2.

Augustine of Hippo suggests that the text refers to Peter but more precisely to his faith or confession.¹⁹ Later, he would state that Peter could not be the rock on which Christ shall build his church.²⁰ Aurelius Ambrosius indicates it could mean the deity of Jesus Christ for only as such could he declare Peter the foundation of the church.²¹ Again, Pope Leo 1, though not down playing the significance of Peters' confession assured that it is the primacy of Peter that would form the foundation of the churches' authority.²² While the permanency of the church could be implied in the passage, its true relevance appears to be with the second half of the text, "and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it."²³

This study sided with Ambrose's suggestion of the deity (identity) of Jesus Christ, but not with his assertion that because of that identity, Jesus made Peter the foundation of the church. This study investigated the literary context, structure, and thought flow of Matthew through the linguistic approach.

Hardy maintains that the conversation between Jesus and His disciples (Matt 16: 13-20) deals with two questions (verses 13, 15), two answers (verses 14, 15) and a follow up response.²⁴ The response consists of a blessing (verses 17-18, a promise (verse 19), and a command (verse 20).

¹⁹ See Augustine of Hippo *Letters* 53:1:2 (A.D. 412); Chrysostom, *Homily 54 on Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 3*; Hilary of Poitiers *On the Trinity Book 6 Chapter 36*. See also Ambrose, *The Sacrament of the Incarnation of Our Lord* 4.32-5.35. FOC 44:230-1; CSEL 79: 239-240.

²⁰ Augustine *Sermons, Sermon* 265.6, 258-259, n.9; see *Retract.*, i, 21.

²¹ Aurelius Ambrosius *Expositions of Christian Faith* Vol 4. 5.57, trans. H. de Romestin E. de Romestin and H.T.F. Duckworth, from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 10*.

²² Pope Leo 1, *Letters* 10:1, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe, from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, vol. 12*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895). Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604010.htm>.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Hardy, *Christ's Use of Rock Symbolism*, PDF file.

Robert H. Gundry argues that there is a possibility that Jesus may have used Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek in His teaching ministry, even though a majority of scholars affirm the use Aramaic alone.²⁵

Statement of the Problem

Matthew 16:18 remains a problematic text after centuries of scholarly debates. A perusal of literature indicates the controversy between the Roman Catholic persuasion which sees no textual difference between Πέτρος and πέτρα; and the orthodox and other lines of thought, which observe differences in the usage of the two words, appears to be widening day by day. This standoff constitutes a major problem that continues to divide the church of God. It controls, if not misdirect, the issues of headship or leadership of the church and the source of authority in doctrinal questions.

From the purpose, content, and context of Matthew's gospel, it could appear unwarranted to conclude based on Jesus' play of words, that Peter is the foundation on which Jesus would build His church. The forgoing analysis attempts to fill the lacuna in this debate.

The question that continues to divide Bible students is: who, or what is the foundation of the church referred to in Matthew 16:18? In order to answer the main question, this study answered three sub questions to help elicit meaning:

1. What is the relationship between the nominal phrases Πέτρος and πέτρα since their gender and cases do not correspond?
2. How does the author employ these terms, and how were they used in the writing of the time?

²⁵ Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 330–336; see also pp. 333–34.

3. How do the linguistic, syntactical, and contextual components furnish the understanding of the phrase ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ?

Purpose and Significance of the Study

Following from the problem stated above, the objective of this study was to first identify the relationship between the nominal phrase Πέτρος and πέτρα. The second objective is to identify how the author employs the terms Πέτρος and “πέτρα” in the clause, and how are they used in the writing of the time? The third objective is to show how the linguistic, syntactical, and contextual elements contribute to the understanding of the phrase ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ?

Delimitation

This study was delimited to the exegesis of Matthew 16:18 within the larger context of verses 1-28. However, since the identity and significance of *epi tautē tē πέτρα* is germane to the rock typology in other parts of scripture, their relevance were investigated. Additionally, the ensuing exegetical and theological implications could have attracted few criticisms and raised further study questions.

Methodology²⁶ and Procedure

This study employed the historical- biblical method to analyze the contextual and literary elements associated with the term Πέτρος and πέτρα. It also explored the

²⁶ The historical-biblical method is defined as “the attempt to understand the meaning of biblical data using methodological considerations arising from Scripture alone.” Richard M. Davidson, “Biblical Interpretation,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000), 12:94. See further discussion of the H-B method in Ekkehardt Mueller, “Guidelines for the Interpretation of Scripture,” in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, ed. George W. Reid (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2006), 1:111-134; Richard M. Davidson, “Biblical Interpretation,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000), 12:68-104.

contextual and theological meaning of ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ thereby organizing it into five chapters.

Chapter one presents a general introduction of the research problem and the Bible text in question, indicating the purpose and method of study. Thereafter, a recognition of certain problems that ensued with relevant evaluations and overviews.

Chapter two presents an overview of the history of interpretation and reports on previous relevant biblical and theological literature on the subject matter.

Chapter three exegetes the text in larger context by surveying isagogical elements. Chapter four gives the theological analysis and synthesis of key biblical concepts relative to χριστὸς, and prophecies relevant to; God of the kingdom; kingdom, church. Finally, chapter five summarizes, makes conclusions based on the findings, and gives suggestions for further study.

Overview

When Jesus addressed His disciples in Caesarean Philippi in the first century A.D, He intended them to understand Him. However, one statement still evades scholarly understanding: Who or what is the foundation upon which Jesus should build His church? Two major sides to this debate have since emerged. The Catholics' understanding of *epi tē tautē* *petra* is that Jesus would build His church on Peter (Petros) given that Petros and *petra* can be used interchangeably. Conversely, Protestants and other orthodox denominations construe the statement that Jesus should build His church on *πέτρᾳ*, a contrasting reference to peter's identification of the Son of man in Matthew 16: 16. This study picked up the debate with the intention of throwing further thought while analyzing previous contributions through historical-grammatical method of study.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION

Matthew 16:18 has been a point of study for centuries. Much of the findings has contributed to the schism between Protestants and Roman Catholics. In this historical review, this was analyzed from the pre Nicene, post Nicene periods, Reformation, and Modern interpretation.

The Early Church or Pre-Nicene Period (AD 75-AD 325)

The pre-Nicene is a period in the Christian history dating AD. 75- AD. 325. The council of Niece was the first to introduce key changes to Christianity and unbiblical practices. It marked the beginning of church and state hegemony that would last for centuries. Since this study was necessitated by previous studies, it was tenable to review some germane literature to its development.

Biblical data suggests that church administration, discipline, and how authority was viewed, was consistent with inspiration (Gen 24:9; Ps 123:2; 27:18; Job 3:19; Mat 6:24; 23:8, 10; Mark 13:35; Luke 6:40; John 3:10, 13:14, 20:16; Eph 6:9; 2 Thess 1:18, 6:15).

However, the death of all the earliest apostles followed by the rise to power by the Roman emperors, who wielded both political and religious authority and ushered in different trends like brotherhood, changed with time. The need to sustain a firm grip on the people called for a source of authority that they could identify with.

Didache¹ (70-140 A.D) seems the earliest document specifically calling for the institution of bishops worthy of the Lord.² Herbermann points out that Pope Camellius emphasized the need to recognize one bishop, one head of the church.³ Furthermore, Ludwig Ott indicates that Ignatius elevated the Roman Community to prominence insisting that only the Roman Community could express “a relationship of superiority and inferiority.”⁴

Post-Nicene Period (AD 321- AD 451)

During the pre-Nicene period, Pope Stephen I (254-257) is believed to be the earliest bishop to lay claim to the primacy of Peter in writing owing to much turmoil at hand. Similarly, in the fourth century, Pope Damasus (366-384) supported earlier claims by indicating that Rome’s power was closely tied to Peter whom he took for the first Pope. Nicolas Afanassieff posits that Irenaeus’ work against heresies brightens his statement on the Church of Rome regarding her role as chief arbiter in disputes and in deciding which doctrines to reject or accept.⁵

Following the same trend, St. Clement of Alexandria writes of "the blessed Peter, the chosen, the pre-eminent, the first of the disciples, for whom alone and Himself the Saviour paid tribute, [who] quickly seized and comprehended the saying."⁶ Tertullian also supported the primacy of Peter without further studies hence

¹ See “Didache,” Wikipedia, accessed May 20, 2019, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/didache.html> and “The Didache,” accessed May 20, 2019, <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04779a.htm>.

² Charles Herbermann, ed., *Catholic Encyclopedia (CE)*, (1913), s.v. “Didache.”

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Rockford, IL: TAN Books, 1960), 289.

⁵ Nicholas Afanassieff, *The Primacy of Peter* (London, UK: Faith Press, 1992), 26–127.

⁶ Clement of Alexandria *Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?* 21:3–5 [A.D. 200].

attributing his monogamous state to primacy role of Peter.⁷ With time, the work of Pope Innocent I continued to sustain the primacy of Rome in the Western Europe by creating a list of successors to Peter⁸ that is still considered authoritative.⁹

With reference to relation of popes to other bishops in Europe, several claims and counter claims to supremacy led to the separation of churches in the West from the East¹⁰ with the West relying on the¹¹ for their claim.

Reformation Period (1450-1750)

In 1517 however, Martin Luther (1483-1546) dramatically challenged the primacy of Peter and other abuses of bishops, carrying forward the spirit of reformation initiated by men like John Wickliffe (1330-1384), John Milike (c. 1305-1374), Davia Biro Matthias, Jan Huss, and Jerome of Praque.¹² For these men, Christ remains the supreme head of the church worthy of worship.¹³

⁷ Tertullian *Antidote for the Scorpion's Sting* 10 [A.D. 211], *Modesty* 21:9–10 [A.D. 220].

⁸ Pope Innocent I. *Letters* 29:1 [A.D. 408]. See also Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes*, 4th Kindle ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 139-144.

⁹ Herbermann, *CE*, “Didache.”

¹⁰ Ernest T. Thompson, *Through the Ages: A History of the Christian Church* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1976), 196.

¹¹ Donation of Constantine “is the text purportedly a decree of Roman Emperor Constantine I, dated 30 March—a year mistakenly said to be both that of his fourth consulate (315) and that of the consulate of Gallicanus (317). ... The text recounts a narrative founded on the 5th-century hagiography the Acts of Sylvester.”

¹² John Penman, “Lessons from the Reformation,” accessed February 23, 2021, <https://maranathamedia.com/article/view/lessons-from-the-reformation>; see also Maura Campanelli, *Pastor, Preacher Judge: The Papacy under Debate in Three Century Writings* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Ann Arbor, 2010), 45.

¹³ *Ibid.*

But, in 1870, the Vatican council I convened to overturn and consolidate the primacy of Peter and other doctrines including Papal infallibility.¹⁴ Vatican II quickly followed in 1962-1965 affirming the primacy and authority of the pope in the documents Dogmatic¹⁵ and Constitution on the Church.¹⁶ Thus, it could be seen that this final document seems to be the product of claims of single bishops and councils without deductive effort. Therefore, Wycliffe, in refuting the payment of tributes to popes by English monarchs could argue that papal claims of authority over kings were “contrary to both reason and revelation.”¹⁷

Previously, Waldenses refused to acknowledge the supremacy of Rome on scriptural grounds only,¹⁸ while Huss and Jerome of Bohemia maintained the same stance with deadly consequences.¹⁹ Papal apologists repeatedly acknowledged that their only rule for measuring their teachings was the documents of councils and decrees other than scriptural reasoning and deductions.²⁰ Hence the need for this study.

¹⁴ See Synod of Bishops, “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission,” accessed March 31, 2016, <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm>.

¹⁵ According to *the English Dictionary online*, “dogmatic is adjective relating to Philosophy medicine adhering only to principles which are true a priori rather than truths based on evidence or deduction. Hence dogmas or beliefs assert in a superior or arrogant way.”

¹⁶ Duffy, *Saints and Sinners*, 6590-6592. See also *Catechism*, nos. 894-95, and *Lumen Gentium*, 22.

¹⁷ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Abrams, WI: Lighthouse Publishing, 1998), 60.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 73.

²⁰ Edward Stillingfleet, *The Doctrines and Practices of the Church of Rome Truly Represented: In Answer to a Book Entitled a Papist Misrepresented and Represented (1837)* (London: The Sun over against St. Dunstan's Church, 1686), 4.

Modern Times (1750- now)

Hummel points out that Caesarea Philippi was the hot bed of emperor and cult worship dating back from the second century B.C up to 41 A.D the time of Jesus' visit.²¹ He concludes that "the very surroundings of Caesarea Philippi proclaimed Jesus' superiority over paganism, Caesars and death; and that Jesus was not only a Jewish Messiah but of the whole world."²²

Given this lucid backdrop, one needs not wonder why a religio-political institution could lately surface and make claims²³ geared towards subverting the very intent of the occasion. In modern times, this passage has been translated and understood in two distinct ways though an intermediate could be the confession itself: some understand it to mean Jesus 'promise to build his church on Peter, and ascribe its fulfillment in the apostle Peter, and by extension, the beginning of the concept of "Potitifex maximus" (Bishop of Bishops).²⁴

Makrakis comments: "but the Papists (Popes) destroy this scriptural passage towards their own destruction, arguing sophistically and erroneously that Christ promised Peter to build upon the latter's person his church."²⁵ Michael J. Wilkins

²¹ Bradford S. Hummel, "Why at Caesarea Philippi?" *Biblical Illustrator* (Spring 2012): 36-38.

²² *Ibid.*, 38.

²³ See "Claims," accessed April 1, 2016, http://www.celticatholicchurch.org/library/prayer/Marian_prayers.html; Pope Leo XIII, "Octobri Mense - On the Rosary," 1891, accessed April 1, 2019; <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Leo13/113ro1.htm>; <http://www.newadvent.org/docs/pi11qp.htm>; cf. J. P. Migne, *Concerning the Extent of Papal Dignity, Authority, or Dominion and Infallibility* #30 (Petit-Montrouge, Paris: Excudebatur et venit apud J. P. Migne editorem, 1858), MacDougall, "Acton Newman" *Relations* Fordham: University Press, p 119-120; *Decretales Domini Gregori ix Translatione Episcoporum*, (on the Transference of Bishops,) title 7, chapter 3. *Corpus Juris Canonice* (2nd Leipzig ed., 1881), col. 99; (Paris, 1612), tom. 2, *Decretales*, col. 205, Augustinus Triumphus *Summa de Potestate Ecclesiastica* 1483 question 6 Latin.

²⁴ Tertullian *On Modesty* Anti-Nicene Fathers. 4.99, CIL 2.1326-27.

²⁵ Makrakis, *Interpretation of the Entire New Testament*, vol. 1, *The Four Gospels*, 300.

ascribes the promise to Peter on the basis of the interchangeability of the two words used— Πέτρος and πέτρα.²⁶ He also argues that the two words have the same sense in Aramaic, and that Matthew used the word Πέτρος in masculine common and πέτρα in feminine as he wrote in Greek.²⁷

However, the final Greek text available renders πέτρα feminine gender dative, probably, to identify the source, not instrument or agent of the action of the verb οἰκοδομήσω, (to build). In this case, the noun πέτρα relates to the noun ἐκκλησίαν (“church”), which is also feminine.²⁸ George Arthur Buttrick, after careful evaluation of the context, conclude that “this church can be founded on a man of Peter’s character.” Apparently, they see *kephas* as the same root for *Petros* and *petra*, and this appears contrary to the evident wording of the Greek text.²⁹

Charles Laymon also concurs with Buttrick that Peter is the one on whom the church shall be built.³⁰ He further claims with other form critics, that Matthew interpolated his own words in the reconstruction of the text. However, as indicated, the text as it is, must be confronted and interpreted as such, instead of ignoring syntactical and grammatical functions therein.³¹

The marginal reading of the Cambridge Annotated Study Bible goes thus: “only here in the gospel is direct mention made of the Church and of the decision-making role of Peter and the other Apostles.” Clearly, this marginal reading could be

²⁶ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 561-562. See also, Fitzmyer, “Aramaic *kephā*’ and Peter’s Name in the New Testament,” 115; Mundle “Πετρα,” *NIDNTT*, 3:383.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 561.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Buttrick, “The Gospel according to St. Matthew: Exposition,” 7:451-452.

³⁰ Laymon, *The Interpreter’s One-volume Commentary on the Bible*, 629-630.

³¹ *Ibid.*

effective only if decision making role is synonymous with the essence of foundational function.

Dearman ambiguously corroborates the Πέτρος foundation, indicating that the “rock signifies permanence and stability of divine protection.”³² It is however, linguistically improbable for Πέτρος to match this description. Such a conclusion seems contextually unwarranted as Matthew interpreted the context of the conversation (Matt 16: 20), and Πέτρος himself demonstrated subsequently (Matt 16: 21-23).

On the flip side of the argument, one observes clear insistence that the promise ought to be fulfilled in *petra* (Rock). William Webster effectively refutes the Roman Catholic claims about the descendants of the pope based on the understanding of *the* church fathers’ interpretation of Rock Matthew 16:18.³³ John Wesley contends that Jesus reflexively alluded to his name signifying rock, i.e. confession.³⁴

James Gray, in the same vain, agitates that Jesus intended to contrast Πέτρος with πέτρα signifying his identity.³⁵ The *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* indicates that it could be possible for some to see no distinction between Πέτρος and πέτρα based on the Aramaic root, and therefore, render it rock.³⁶ However, they maintain that Christ might have intended that distinction, and that Matthew, writing

³² J. A. Dearman, “Rock,” *HBD*, 874.

³³ William Webster, “The Church Fathers’ Interpretation of the Rock of Matthew 16:18,” accessed February 29, 2021, https://www.the-highway.com/Matt16.18_Webster.html.

³⁴ John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* (Albany, OR: The Ages Digital Library Commentaries Software, 1996), 73.

³⁵ James Gray, *Concise Bible Commentary* (Albany, OR: The Ages Digital Library Commentaries Software, 1999), 676.

³⁶ “Upon this Rock” (Matt 16:18] *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (SDABC), ed. Francis D. Nichol (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1980), 5:431-432.

under inspiration could have understood it, and therefore, maintained it in Greek. The Cambridge Annotated Study Bible (NRSV) however, makes a clear distinction between the two words, adding that other ancient authorities add Jesus for πέτρα in strict compliance with linguistic context.

Lawrence O. Richards clearly distinguishes between Πέτρος and πέτρα in consonance with the linguistic context.³⁷ The central literary unit of this passage is the concept of rock typology.³⁸ It is used as a symbol of defense, a steep and inaccessible refuge (Isa 32:2; 33:16); and as an immovable foundation (Ps 40:2); and to move the rock is reminiscent to shaking the world (Job 18:4). This understanding is reflected in the biblical experience.³⁹ However, in the twentieth century, and especially the early eighties, the search for historical Jesus caused many higher critics to nurse the zest to doubt the Biblical text and divine acts and speech.⁴⁰

In summary, the review of literature above indicates different translations, some lacking sufficient treatment and sound methodology in identifying the meaning ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ especially in the linguistic, literary context, and historical background, of the passage, and of the significance of headship and authority of the church, hence in the re-interpretation that followed, this study sought to fill this lacuna.

³⁷ Lawrence O. Richards, *Illustrated Bible Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 482.

³⁸ Victor A. Armenteros, "A Rock in the Path: Possible Jewish Readings of Matthew 16:18," *DavarLogos* 8, no 1 (2009): 59-73.

³⁹ See E. E. Ellis, "Rock," *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed., ed. I. Howard Marshall et al. (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), 1021-1022. See also *Robert Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, n.d.), 823.

⁴⁰ See for example, Cullman, *Peter, Apostle, Martyr*; Joachim Jeremiah, *Golgotha* (Leipzig, Germany: Burns-Oates, 1926), 24; Max Wilcox, "Peter and the Rock: A fresh Look at Matthew XVI 17-19," *New Testament Studies* 22, no. 1 (1975): 73-88.

Recognition of Difficulties

This study recognized the enigmatic nature of Matthew 16:18 in spite of several studies for centuries. The main challenge to understanding this passage seemed to be the linguistic milieu and the style of delivery. The real issue came down to: Who or what was Jesus referring to when He said “you are Peter and upon this rock I shall build my church”? Further, could there be any functional relationship between Πέτρος and πέτρα; or does the function of τούτη impact meaning? It was important for any probe into this enigma to investigate linguistic, contextual elements, syntactical components, and theological underpinnings to illicit meaning.

CHAPTER 3

THE MEANING OF EPI TAUTĒ TĒ PETRA IN MATTHEW 16:18

Background of Matthew

This section looks at the historical, contextual, and linguistic factors of the pericope that contribute to the understanding of ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ in Matthew 16:18. The historical unit focuses on the reason for writing and the theological agenda of the author. The Jewishness of the gospel of Matthew clearly stands out, though there could be an appeal to the gentile class as a matter of style

While other synoptic gospels take on immense details in their narrative, Matthew seems to zoom in on the grand scheme of the Messiahship and the divine Sonship of Jesus the Christ, and the eternal destiny of the church. In this approach, however, though several personalities come across in events narration but only to highlight either their antagonististic¹ role to the Messiah or in support of the protagonist agenda. Particularly significant is this theme in the identity of ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ. Therefore, the content of Matthew is worthy of note in this study.

¹ Paul R. McCuiston, Colin Warner, and Francois P. Viljoen, “The Influence of Greek Drama in Matthew’s Gospel,” *HTS Theologese Studies / Theological Studies* 70, no. 1 (2014): 1-9.

Historical Context of Matthew

Berkof, building from Gregory, expounds on the five distinct divisions of the gospel of Matthew:² First, the advent of the Messiah (1:1-4:11), second, the public proclamation of the messiah's kingdom (4: 12; 16:14); third, distinct and claim of Messiahship (16: 13-23;39); fourth, the sacrifice of Messiah the priest (24: 1-27: 66), and fifth, the triumph of Messiah, the savior and king (28:1-8). He concludes that Matthew's continued use of "so that (663 times) it might be fulfilled (53 times)" in quotations could be a strong indication that "Matthew had an eye for divine teleology on history."³

As such, Matthew's presentation of the Hebrew messiah in fulfillment of prophecies deliberately recognizes the disciples' misunderstanding of Jesus' profile of the Jewish messiah. Carson & Moo underscore the unpreparedness of the disciples to understand, much less, to associate with the Messiah:

They were unprepared before the passion and resurrection to conceive of a messiah who could be defeated, who could die the ignominious and odious death of the scum of Roman society. To this extent, the disciples' coming to deeper understanding *and* faith was unique: it was in part a function of their place in salvation history, a place rendered forever obsolete by the triumph of Jesus' resurrection.⁴ (Emphasis supplied).

Further, later rabbinic writings seem to indicate the stubborn prevalence of anti-Messiah concepts and narratives that may have lingered in the first century.⁵ Therefore, Jesus' question regarding his real identify exposes the flawed perception, first within the Jewish community and later among his own disciples. In summary, the

² Luis Berkhof, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1915), 1.

³ Ibid. See also Joel Willitts, *Matthew's Messianic Shepherd-King: In Search of 'The Lost Sheep of the House of Israel'* (Berlin, Germany: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 1.

⁴ D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 162.

⁵ Peter Shafer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 97-98.

content arrangement of the gospel of Matthew focuses on the mission and identity of his Messiah figure.

Authorship and Date of Writing

Although the phrase “according to Matthew” is said to have been added around the second century AD., consensus seems have attributed the text to the apostle Matthew Levi⁶ for long, until that consensus appeared to come under attack by historical-critical students. Wallace suggests that “to attempt to ascertain the authorship, it is needful to examine the title’s internal and external evidence.”⁷ Internally, many indicators⁸ point to a Jew and Matthew’s authorship, while further internal evidence within synoptic gospels (Mark 2:24; Luke 5:27-28; Matt 9:9) indicate Matthew by name and among the twelve.

External evidence also points mainly to Matthew. Carson and Moo indicate that the gospel may have come through the Hebrew text.⁹ There is, however, a strong opposition to this consensus.¹⁰ According to Hagner, dating the gospel might seem difficult given the uncertain piece of data. However, he proposes a date pre-70 A.D and warns against dogmatic stance.¹¹

⁶ See Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, lxxvi; see also Edward E. Hindson and Woodrow Michael Kroll, eds., *The KJV Parallel Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1994), 1866. See Bart D. Ehman, *The NT Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 103.

⁷ Daniel B. Wallace, *New Testament Introductions, Argument and Outlines* (Dallas, TX: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1999), 6.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Carson and Moo, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 145.

¹⁰ Ibid.; see W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., For chart of possible opinions on the authorship of Matthew, *Matthew 1-7*, *The International Critical Commentary* (Scotland: T&T Clark 1988), 10-11.

¹¹ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, lxxiii-lxxiv.

Berkhof indicates that the date could range from 63-67 AD.¹² Wallace suggests several factors¹³ in dating the gospels and concludes that even though some fix 80-90 A.D, he prefers an earlier date.¹⁴ Nolland, after much consideration, would settle for a date before the beginning of the buildup of the Jewish war.¹⁵ Beale and Carson report that Bloomberg's suggests a date around 60 AD.¹⁶ Thus, it could be seen that there is as yet, no consensus on the date for Matthew; except that the speculation ranges between pre-70 AD, and post-70 AD. Matthew's gospel indicates that the misconception regarding the true identity of the Messiah was still active (Matt 11: 14, 16) and Jesus corrected that perspective. Additionally, Matthew observes the implication for having a Messiah who would die and resurrect (Matthew 28: 18-19), and asserts that only those who align themselves with the divine Sonship and Messiahship of Jesus would be eligible for adoption as sons and daughters of God (Matt 16:18).

Matthew may have penned his narrative giving his insight into the Messiah's prediction regarding 70 AD and consequent dispersion of both Jews and Gentiles (Matt 24: 15-20). Content wise, Matthew pivotally timed the identification of the Messiah at the height of unbelief among Jews, and theological and historical

¹² Berkhof, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 39.

¹³ Wallace, 10,11: (1) authorship; (2) the solution to the synoptic problem; (3) the date of Acts; (4) whether the Olivet Discourse was truly prophetic or a vaticinium ex eventu; (5) the theological development, especially related to ecclesiology; and (6) the significance of the Jewish nature of the work, especially its anti-Sadducean approach.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁵ John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 16-17.

¹⁶ G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 2.

confusion for gentiles.¹⁷ In summary, the Matthew- Jewish authorship and pre-70 AD date appears to consolidate the presentation of Jesus and the identity of ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ.

Place of Writing and Audience of Matthew

The place of writing the gospel is equally a matter of speculation. Hagner suggests anywhere in Syria, but not Antioch,¹⁸ while H. D. James Morison pegs it at 41 AD.¹⁹ George Duncan Kilpatrick favors Cacaerea and Viiano as the probable places.²⁰ Wallace and others ascribe to Palestine or Syria for a number of reasons.²¹ Thus it becomes probable that the place of composition and destination of the gospel could be either Syria or Palestine.

Purpose of Writing Matthew

Why was the gospel of Matthew written? Wallace sees a number of reasons, ranging from an effort to sustain the messianic hope to the need to be apologetic in defense of Christianity against Jewish attack.²² Regarding the Ocation of the gospel, Wallace indicates that Matthew needed to document the oral tradition floating around in Aramaic and encourage the Jewish Christians who were being persecuted and

¹⁷ George E. Rice. "Interpretation of the Gospels and the Epistles," in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, ed. George W. Reid and Gerhard Pfandl (Silver Springs, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2005), 213-214.

¹⁸ Donald A. Hagner, *The New Testament: A Historical and Theological Instruction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 194.

¹⁹ James Morison, *A Practical Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (London: Paternoster Row, 1882), 45.

²⁰ George Duncan Kilpatrick, *The Origins of the Gospel of Matthew* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 149.

²¹ Wallace, *New Testament Introductions*, 12.

²² *Ibid.*, 13-14.

confirm the hope that gentiles could later become children of God since the gospel was meant mostly for a Jewish audience.²³

Even though Charlesworth contends that Matthew may have forced the Messianic concept on most Jews, and that Jesus Himself never claimed any Messianic role.²⁴ Matthew had a fixed burden to prove that the Messiah who was to come according to Hebrew Scriptures is Jesus the Christ. Craig A. Evans contends that the Old Testament Messianic ideas spread across the ancient Near East and may have fused with Israel's development of later Messianic expectation and the evolution of the Hebrew word Messiah as applied by Matthew.²⁵

He states that the word referred to Cyrus (Isa 44:48) and Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 25:9, 27:6) and also to Priests (Lev 3:5, 16, and David (Jer 3: 10). However, Jeremiah and Isaiah mention Israel as an anointed nation (Isa 41: 8), Israelite king (1 Sam 16:6, 24: 6, 10; 2 Sam 22: 51) and persons for specific purposes including Cyrus and Nebuchadnezzar (Isa 41-53).

At the same time, Isaiah and Daniel present "my servant," a future Davidic king and deliverer (Isa 52: 13-53, 53: 11; Ps 2: 2, Dan: 25, 26) who apparently dies for sinners (Isa 49: 5, 6); or the branch also for a stated reason (Isa 42:1-7, 52:13, Jer 23: 5, 23:6, 33: 15). Matthew quotes from Isaiah to emphasize the quiet healing ministry of Jesus Christ (Isa 42: 1); and cites the ministry of Jesus that re-instates the covenant connection with his people (Isa 42: 6, Dan 9: 47). The title," Son of God" is

²³ Wallace, *New Testament Introductions*, 14.

²⁴ James Charlesworth, ed., *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1992), 5.

²⁵ Craig A. Evans, *Messianic Hopes and Messianic Figures in Late Antiquity*, PDF file, November 2, 2004, https://arts.ucalgary.ca/sites/default/files/teams/2/CLARE/Chair_Christian_Thought/2004nov2_evansmessianichopes.pdf.

the Messianic label used by Matthew and other synoptic writers to elucidate the unique status of Jesus as the promised Messiah (Ps 2: 7; Heb 1: 5; 5: 5).²⁶

Further, other gospel writers equally present Jesus and His disciples as gaining justice for all people by saving them from ignoring God, tormenting spirits, and the bondage of Satan (Luke 10: 19, John 12: 31-33). Matthew then states that Jesus died to ratify the new covenant (Matt 26: 28).

The Genre of Matthew 16:13-20

Matthew, like Mark, is basically topical instead of chronological narrative. Vincent observes that the gospel presented by Matthew is evidently didactic with one-quarter being the actual words of the Messiah;²⁷ with more emphasis on arrangement of matter than style.²⁸ Son of David appears 7 times in Matthew, 3 times in Mark, and 3 times in Luke. Holy city is found only in Matthew. Only Matthew uses the end of the world or the consummation of the age. Moreover, the expression “That it might be fulfilled” as used in this form is characteristic only with Matthew.²⁹ Other expressions such as “that which was spoken” occur 12 times, forming Matthews preferred form of expression. “It is spoken” appears 6 times and is either absent from other presenters or is used in variations. “And behold” appears 21 times to serve as his narrative signal of awe and occurs only 6 times in Luke.³⁰

²⁶ See Dan Liroy, “The Unique Status of Jesus the Divine Messiah: An Exegetical and Theological Analysis of Mark 1: 1, 9-13,” *Conspectus: The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary* 3 no. 3 (2007): 41.

²⁷ Marvin R. Vincent, *Vincent’s Word Studies in New Testament* (Albany, OR: Ages Software 1996), 1:27.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 28

³⁰ Ibid.

Based on the foregoing syntactical constructions and phraseologies, it possible to identify Matthew's emphasis in his gospel: These include but not limited to the following themes:

- (1) That Jesus the promised Messiah has come, Son David, Son of man, Emmanuel, Son of God, following Scriptures.
- (2) That many Jews, especially leaders could not receive Him or His teachings, implying that they stand in danger of damnation afterwards.
- (3) That the promised messianic kingdom has dawned as signified by life ministry, death and resurrection and coronation of Jesus the Christ.
- (4) That this messianic reign continues as both Jews and Gentiles willingly submit to the teaching authority of King Jesus.
- (5) That this messianic kingdom is not only the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and the hope, but will continue until Jesus returns the second time to consummate it.³¹

McCuiston, Warner, and Viljoen posit that Matthew may have employed drama influenced by Greek culture of tragedy in narrating the events in Jesus' life.³² In chapter 16:18 specifically, he narrates and reports the conversions between Jesus and religious leaders (1-4). Next, he narrates Jesus' dialogue with his disciples based on the previous interview (v 5-12), then he reports Peter's confession or revelation of Jesus in the form of a dialogue (v13- 20), and then turns to Jesus' admonition to the rest of his disciples (v 21-29) in a didactic form. Thus, in a combination of genres like drama and dialogue akin to his purpose, Matthew brings his message home to his hearers without muddling the identity of the Messiah he set forth to introduce.

³¹ Carson and Moo, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 159.

³² McCuiston, Warner, and Viljoen, "The influence of Greek Drama in Matthew's Gospel," 2.

Wider and Immediate Context of Matthew 16

In the following section, the literary context is first reviewed giving a brief bird's eye overview of the gospel of Matthew, considering the socio-cultural environment to draw upon ideas and images contemporary with Matthew's cultural milieu. Matthew establishes the limit of periscope and finally, the syntactical structure of Matthew 16 is considered.

In this literary analysis, the book's structure, and the ensuing argument are presented to assess the flow of thought. Eventually, how one understands the train of thought, structure, and argument sets the pace for a credible interpretation. Further, the text also seems to have consistently employed a number of literary techniques.³³ Proponents of Markan priority perceive the linguistics patterns and variations as of Mark.³⁴ Moreover, Matthew employs vocabulary and style that appear to enhance the delivery of the message.

This analysis looks at the larger context of the gospel of Matthew 16:13-20 and that of the canonical text, it also identifies the reason for writing. An overview of what by consensus has been rendered the gospel according to Matthew could help situate the larger and immediate context of Matthew 16:13-20. Chapter 1:1-4: 11 narrates the birth and preparation of Jesus, the king with intervening events. Principally, Matthew begins his good news about the arrival of the kingdom of heaven by tracing, and proving the genealogical link of Jesus that he is no less a person than the descendant of king David and Abraham according to the predicted prophecy.

³³ For example, repetition of formulas, use of same source data, framing, chiasm, parallelism, imperfect parallelism, and narratives. *Ibid.*, 24-26.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

When John called on them to repent and be baptized (Mark 1; 9-11; Luke 3:21-22), he based his authority on the predicted prophecy (Isa 40:3), and got them thinking. In Chapter 4: 12-25: 46 Matthew landscapes Jesus' theological underpinning and sermons and weaves Jesus' actions around major teachings.

In chapter 26:1-28:20, Matthew recaps Jesus' fierce opposition to the ruling Jewish class who actively withstood his teaching authority by undermining his prophetic, priestly and kingly claims. Judas betrays him and his disciples abandon him and is crucified according to prophecy. After three days, he rises as king over death and darkness: the final demonstration of the initialization of the kingdom of heaven but they could not look beyond their noses to see the bigger picture of prophetic mission of the messiah (Mark 14; 1, 2; Luke 22: 12 ;).

In the immediate context of Matthew 16, the events in chapters 15 need to be considered because of their parallel nature in content. In chapter 15, Matthew features Jesus in disagreement with the Scribes and Pharisees over the role, traditions and the commandments of God in framing and understanding the oracles, or the scriptures of God. It is worth to note that each time Matthew relates such controversies, he comments that the religious leaders frame their questions with spirit of unbelief ("testing Him").

This spirit of disbelief in the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodian factions in Jerusalem constituted a major stumbling block to Jesus in His convicting and persuasive efforts. Apparently, the Messianic concept of the religious leaders had become distorted over time³⁵ believing in a Messiah who would lead them out of physical oppression and establish the rule of David,³⁶ and not a suffering and dying

³⁵ "The Jews of the First Christian Century," *SDABC*, 5:52.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 274.

one. In Chapter 15, the religious leaders question Jesus (v1-9) and he responds with a disturbing clarification (v 10-19). Then Peter requests for more teaching (v 15) and there is a change place and shift in conversation where Jesus commends faith in Him (v21-28). Finally, there is another change of place and event to demonstrate Jesus' compassion for the people (v 29-39).

Similarly, chapter 16 opens with the religious leaders facing and demanding from Jesus a sign to valid His Messiahship (v 1-12), and essentially repeating the attitude of Satan (Matt 4: 4,5, 9). Jesus issues the same rebuke to the religious leaders establishing that their reading and interpretation of the scriptures were faulty (v 3, 4). There is another intervening conversation with the disciples trying to understand the response of Jesus (v5-12) as in (15: 15-20). From here Matthew emphasizes the important point that there is a persistent misconception of the true identity of the divine Sonship and Messiah figure based on Hebrew Scriptures.

For that reason, the next conversation found in chapter 16:13-20 appears necessary and unavoidable if Jesus is to successfully complete His mission here on earth by creating a community of people who put their absolute trust in Him and for that matter constitute His community or church and as a result, Satan would not be able to defeat them in effect. Therefore, Matthew sets the stage from chapters 15 through 16 for the grand climax of the teaching ministry of Jesus and His evaluative question.

Establishing the Text of Matthew 16:18

The limit of the passage under study seems to be controversial. Regazzi analyses the criteria editors use for determining the limit of a passage especially with the gospels; and defines pericope as a ‘unit.’³⁷ He surveys four separate units based on commentator’s recommendations. Matthew 16:13-19 contains Peter’s confession of Christ, begins with a change of location then change of topic, and ends with Christ’s injunction on his disciples not to reveal his identity. He further notes that while forty-eight commentators include verse 20, Camerlynck does not, as a matter of opinion.³⁸

Matthew 16:13-20 contains Peter’s confession of Christ, and also begins with a change of location then change of topic, and ends with the earlier prediction of Christ’s passion.³⁹ This study considers this pericope because it is the focal point of Peter’s confession of Jesus’ identity (v 18) which is inclusively critical to verse 20 which bans the disciples from telling others that Jesus is the Christ-something that Peter confessed. If Petros was intended a foundation by Christ as many argue, why would Christ place a ban on the disciples including Peter?

Conversely, if Petra was the intended foundation as being argued by this study, the injunction could be germane to current investigation. Matthew 16: 13-23 contains Peter’s confession of Christ, and the first prediction of Christ’s passion, begins with a change of location to Caesarea Philippi, then change of topic.⁴⁰ Finally, Matthew 16: 13- 28 contains Peter’s confession of Christ, and the first prediction of

³⁷ Mark B. Regazzi, “The Limitation of Pericope: A Case Study in Matthew,” (PhD diss., Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, 2000), 8.

³⁸ Ibid., 456.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Christ's passion and call on the disciples to take up the cross, begins with a change of location to Caesarea Philippi and ends before time-based change.⁴¹ It seems that the beginning and end of pericope in chapter 16 lacks common standardization. Based on the opinion of the commentators, the units are marked of, however, the consistency of the event, place and persons stand out.

Compared to other historical narratives such as Acts, Matthew's text is said to be relatively stable⁴² with UBS and NA27 in total agreement. Matthew 16: 18 has no textual variant, though there is a textual variant in Matthew 16:20 which does not significantly affect the meaning of ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ. However, Tischendorf and Gregory highlight a few nuances which would be considered below as their evolution seems germane to the reading of verse 18.⁴³ Except for ἐπὶ ταύτῃ which appears unaccounted for in terms of manuscript origin and date, καὶ γὰρ δέ, ὅτι σὺ εἶ Πέτρος, καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ receive high approval manuscript rating from fifth to 14th century

Lexical and Syntactical Structure of Matthew 16:13-20

In order to properly bring out the meaning of Matthew 16:18, a syntactical structure is critical. This structure is intended to serve not as verse-by-verse commentary but to aid in an analysis of the relationship between words, clauses and phrases in their given context based on the stable text.

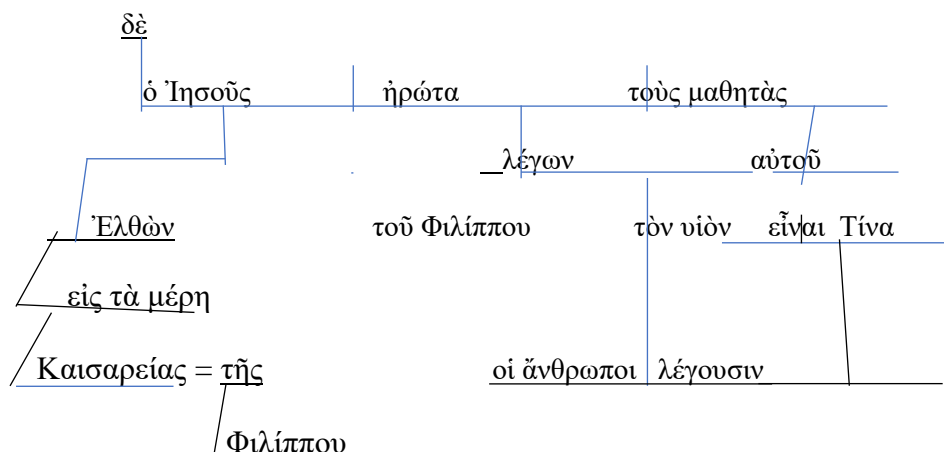
⁴¹ Regazzi, "The Limitation of Pericope," 456.

⁴² Carson and Moo, *Introduction to the New Testament* 158.

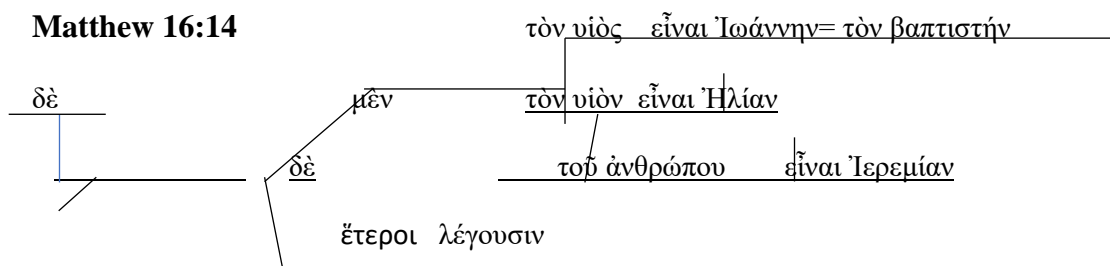
⁴³ See Tischendorf, *Critical Apparatus and Gregory's TEXTKRITIC* (Bible Works Version).

Wallace and Edwards instruct that “words that go below the base line are dependent on- and thus relate to words that are on the base line which are related to words that are to the left of them.”⁴⁴

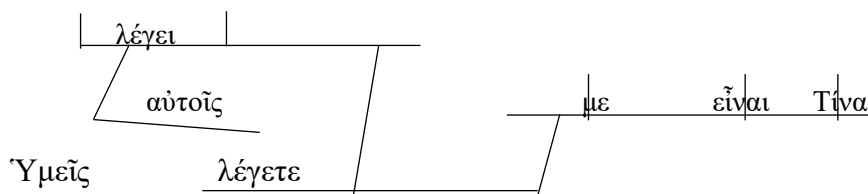
Matthew 16:13



Matthew 16:14

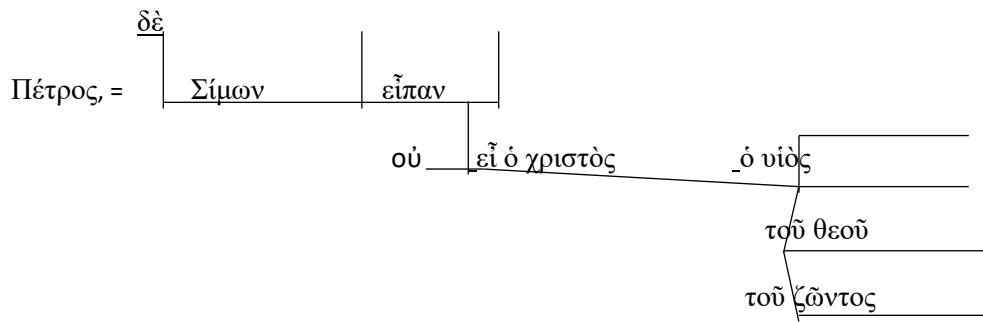


Matthew 16:15

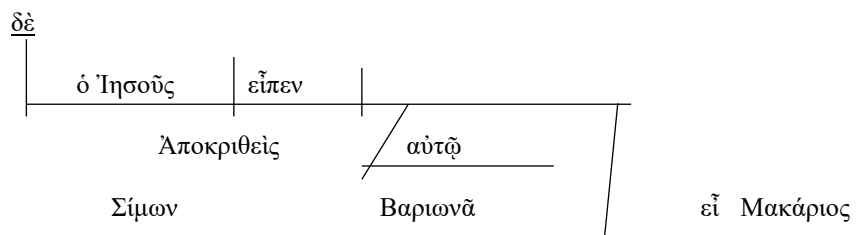


⁴⁴ Daniel B. Wallace and Grants G. Edwards, *A Workbook for New Testament Syntax* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 10.

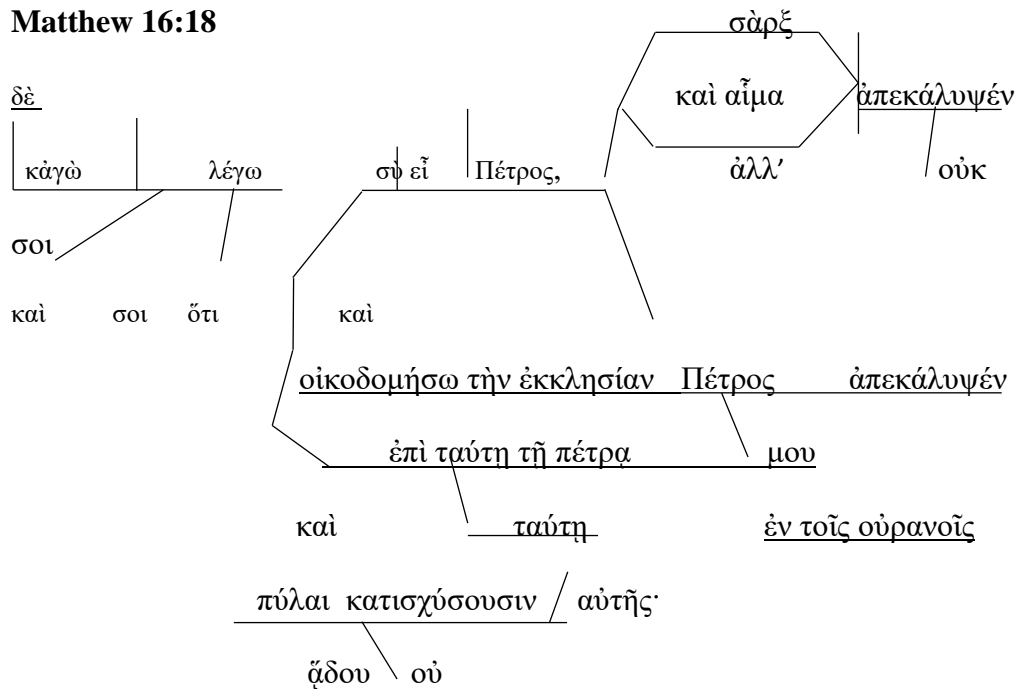
Matthew 16:16



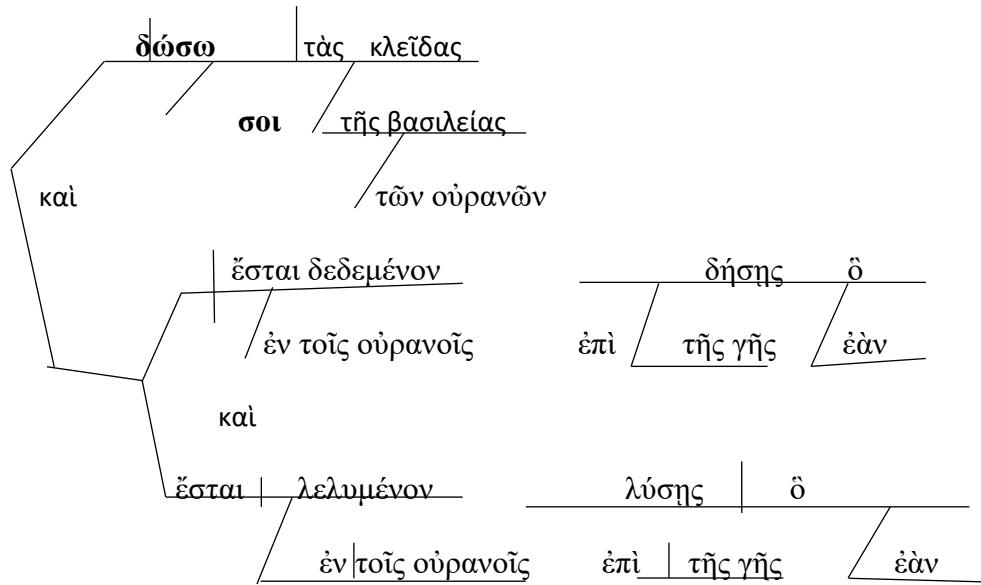
Matthew 16:17



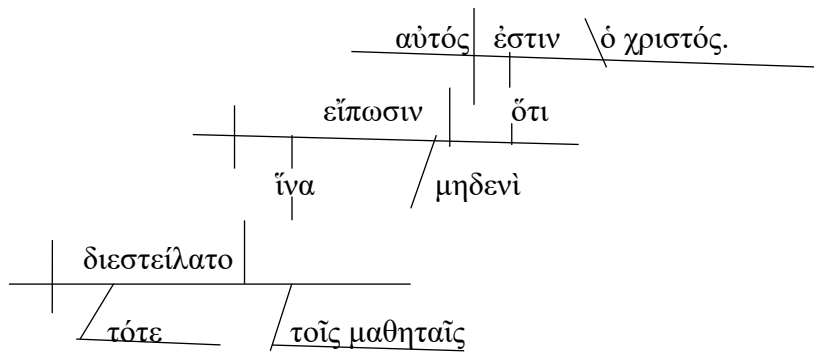
Matthew 16:18



Matthew 16:19



Matthew 16:20



The linguistic consideration along literary structure of Matthew 16:13-20 appears united and symmetrical. The united and symmetrical structure appears in the use of coordinating conjunction, singularity verbal elements, i.e., aorist tense, and the core actors in the narrative.⁴⁵ In contrast, some modern exegetes attribute the fine pattern to certain “Matthean redactor” who polished it.⁴⁶ However, as argued above,

⁴⁵ Yarnell, *Upon This Rock*, 2.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

there is a general consensus that Matthew's text meets the test of inspiration (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21).

The pericope structures above are seen in relation to what preceded Jesus' conversation with religious leaders and their request for a sign (16: 1-4). Furthermore, Jesus' warns his disciples against the wrong teachings of the religious leaders (16:5-12) after he fed the four thousand and moved the area of Magdala as indicated in Matthews 15.

The unity of the pericope also draws upon a coherent narration. The location of the events moves to another region, to the coast of Magdala (Matt 15:39). The coordinating conjunction δέ employed in the pericope from Matt 16:13 connects the location on an equal setting to indicate the relationship of the overarching idea in the narration.⁴⁷ While some translations render the conjunction δέ as "it," others translate it as "and," whereas, others totally ignore the particle and focus on the timing for the next action since δέ could also be transitional to indicate change of location.

The plot of the narrative also provides evidence to the symmetrical unity. The subject, ὁ Ἰησοῦς, with its verb ἠρώτα sets the stage for the subsequent narration. The main verb ἠρώτα, which is imperfect indicative active, develops the narrative by offering further details to the narrations. The aorist participle ἔλθων is aorist participle active subordinated indicates Jesus' highlight of the change of location before the conversation with the disciples. The verbal element λέγουσιν is present to the participle of λέγων, which is subordinated to the main verb.

⁴⁷ Daniel B. Wallace, *Basic of New Testament Syntax: An Intermediate Greek Grammar* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 286.

The pericope focuses on the identity of Jesus. Gerhardsson asserts that Jesus' self-appellation Son of man indicates his evaluation of his humanness.⁴⁸ At this point, Jesus poses the question, *Τίνα λέγουσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι εἶναι τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου;* that includes the messianic allusion i.e., *υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου*. Taken in their syntactic pattern, the clauses *Λέγουσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι εἶναι τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου* tends hypostatically and subjectively (adverbial)⁴⁹ by *τῆς Φιλίππου οἱ ἄνθρωποι*:

The conjunction (*δὲ* v.14) functions principally as a connective linking the following answer to a preceding query. The verbal element *εἶπαν* is second aorist with stem indicating a terminal act in an active mood.⁵⁰ Thus Matthew intends to portray the mannerism of conversation between teacher and student. The list of prophets with remarkable profiles (v.14) include; John the Baptist (John 1), Elijah (1 King 18), Jeremiah (Jer 2) and probably connects with the Old Testament anticipation of someone greater than Moses (Deut 18:18).

The Verb *Λέγει* indicates present active mood of subject Jesus as He directs the question to the disciples. *Δὲ* is coordinating contrastively; *δὲ τίνα με λέγετε εἶναι?* He said to them: but who do you say that I am? (v.16). Matthew maintains the connective coordinating *δὲ* as conversation progresses. *Δὲ Σίμων Πέτρος ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν* is a dependent clause standing in substantial or subordinate (hypotactic) relationship⁵¹ to the main cause; *Σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος*.

The free use of the article *ὁ* with substantives has exegetical relevance in this verse as individualizing which particularizes. It distinguishes the noun, and the

⁴⁸ Yarnell, *Upon This Rock*, 4.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Wallace, *Basic of New Testament Syntax*, 240.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 286.

generic article used to distinguish one category of individual from another.⁵² The syntactical connection validating the protestant and other orthodox proposition appears to be the correlation between the question from Christ, “who do men say that I am? (Matt 16: 13) and the answer from Peter,” you are the Christ the Son of the living God” (v16). This answer seemed to appease Christ who was concerned about the leaven of the Pharisees (16: 12) which was unbelief in regards to Christ’s true identity (16: 4).

This true identity of Christ correspondingly relates syntactically with ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ, upon this rock. The demonstrative pronoun ἐπὶ seems to refer anaphorically, qualifying the true identity mentioned earlier in (16: 16). Regarding the significance of source relative to Πέτρος, and πέτρα; Saint Augustine assures that “the rock is not named from Peter, but Peter is named from the rock even as Christ is not so called after the Christian, but the Christian after Christ.”⁵³

This grammatical function of ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ, upon the same rock relates to Christ’s prohibition (Matt 16: 20) of the disciples to tell others that he was the Christ. The nominal ὁ χριστὸς could be both anaphoric and monadic, being mentioned previously in the larger and immediate context individualizer of the noun, particularizing (generic) the noun from non-Christ.⁵⁴ Next, ὁ υἱὸς is both particularized (generic) and individualized (different category of Son). The Phrase τοῦ

⁵² Wallace, *Basic of New Testament Syntax*, 97.

⁵³ Augustine *Tractate CXXIV*. See Philip Schaff, “Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Series I/Volume VII/Gospel according to St. John/Part 124,” last modified 23 October 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Nicene_and_Post-Nicene_Fathers:_Series_I/Volume_VII/Gospel_According_to_St._John/Part_124.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 102-103.

θεοῦ ζῶντος could also be deitic; indicating noun presence at the time of speaking, generic; distinguishing God from all other creatures.

Expatriating on Matthew's use of wordplay in this pericope and the exegetical richness of Peter's inspired confession, Yarnell comments:

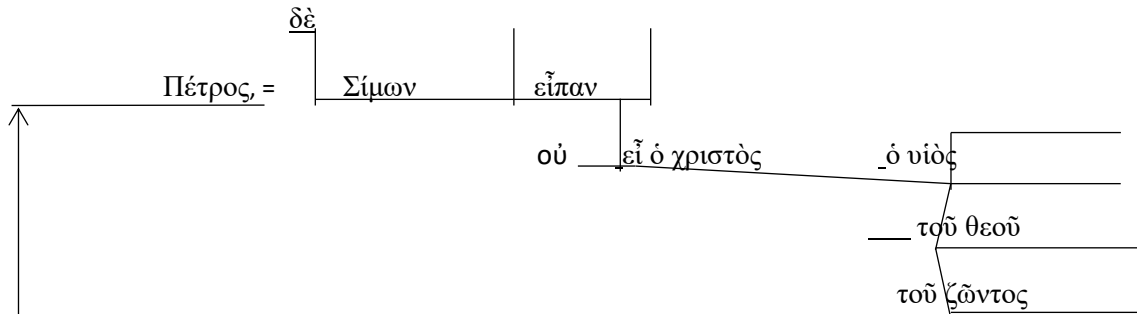
But Jesus is, on the other hand, confessed by Simon as “the Son of the living God,” a title that sets off Jesus as so much more than any other human. Indeed, Simon's ascription of divine generation to Jesus is endorsed by the latter as a revelation by “my Father who is in heaven.” Jesus, who is the son of man, is concurrently the Son of God. Moreover, this God is no mere deity; rather, He is the only God who lives; He is “the living God.”⁵⁵ [Emphasis supplied].

The conjunction Δὲ from verse 17 is coordinating contrastively and linking Jesus' explanation of Peter's confession in verse 16. Αποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῷ· suggests Matthew employed standard Hebraism to say the teacher was in charge spontaneously.

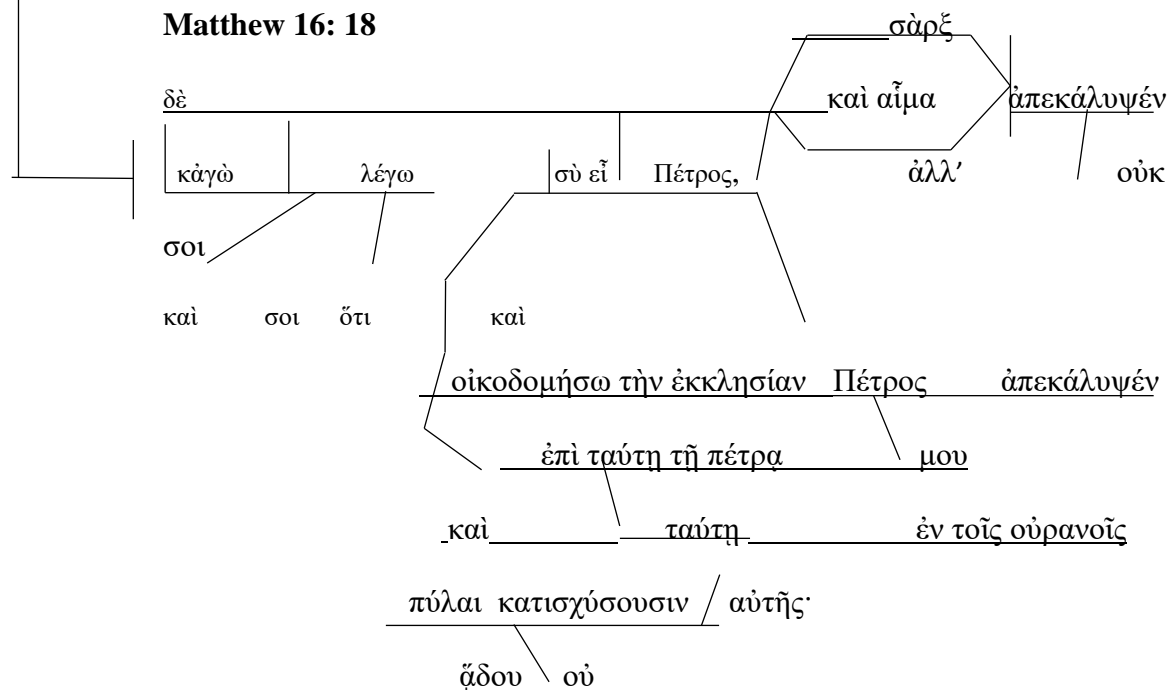
⁵⁵Yarnell, *Upon This Rock*, 4.

Syntactical Relationship between Matthew 16:16 and 16:18

Matthew 16:16



Matthew 16: 18



Verse 18 makes sense in this relationship only because of verse 16, when Jesus anaphorically reverts to it. Therefore, verses 16 and 18 are thematically related.

In summary, the structure of Matthew 16 and its syntactical analysis together with collective evidence from the synoptic writers regards their submission as seeming to lend support to the protestant and other orthodox propositions that Christ

could only have referred to. His true identity is solid with satisfaction that the future church would be protected against the onslaught of His opponent, Satan and his agents through their unbelief and false unbiblical doctrines.

Analysis of Significant Words

The word πέτρα may not be found in the Old Testament with its Hebrew cognate Sela symbolically, or figuratively depicting stability (Isa 16: 1; 2 Chr 25: 12; Obad 1: 3), and defense (Deut 32: 4; Ps 18: 2; Isa 32:2, 28:16; 2 Kgs 14: 7).⁵⁶ From this OT survey, it could be seen that Prophets carefully chose their words under inspiration for a definite meaning. Historically, πέτρα is associated with a rock city of defense in Middle East which is now Jordan.⁵⁷

In the New Testament πέτρα rock is found 16 times in connection with foundation (Matt 7: 24-25, 16: 18; Luke 6: 48, 8: 6, 13); literally, grave or tomb cut out of πέτρα rock (Matt 27:51, 60; Mark 15: 46) for gospel writers. John adds that some in judgment time will call on rocks as false defense (Rev 6: 15, 16). Paul and Luke likewise use the rock symbolism to present Christ as the rock of offense (Rom 9: 33) to the Jews, the spiritual rock (to those in the wilderness) and the only foundation for the church of God (1 Cor 3: 11; Acts 4:12). Peter also corroborates Paul in saying that Christ is the rock of offense (1 Pet 2:8). Therefore, both Old and New Testaments testify that Sela and πέτρα are used figuratively to portray God as a stable, secure foundation and defense for His people.

As observed from this study, there can be no lexical relationship between Πέτρος and πέτρα suggesting similarity as indicated by contrastive or copulative

⁵⁶ James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (1890), s.v. "Petra," accessed April 14, 2021, <http://biblehub.com/greek4073.htm>.

⁵⁷ Dan Gibson, 01.25.08 Mins. Glasshouse Media, 2016, Documentary.

coordinating conjunction καὶ. Additionally, the sense of πέτρα in this second clause seems to be the special function or role of stability and permanence accorded it by Jesus. In this context, Jesus wishes to underscore the firmness of πέτρα, figuratively⁵⁸ the bolder or connected rock (G4073) as opposed to Πέτρος a cut out rock (litos{G3037}).⁵⁹

The conjunction καὶ (G2532)⁶⁰ as a primary particle between σὺ εἶ Πέτρος, καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτη τῇ πέτρᾳ could function copulatively (adjectivally contrasting the subject of the clause to its compliment), or cumulatively (functioning adjectivally by incorporating all current and previous data up to present or at the time of measuring or collating). Since this study argues that there could be no lexical relationship between Πέτρος and πέτρα, it follows that the conjunction bringing the two clauses together must delineate this special usage.

Πέτρος, is a non-figurative noun nominative masculine singular standing separate from πέτρα, a figurative noun dative masculine singular. Pulled together, the train of thought could run like: And I also say to you, you are Peter, stone (corresponding identity), and upon this heaven inspired revelation of my identity, figuratively, “Rock,” I shall build my church and the gate of hell shall not overpower it.

Scholarly opinion on the exact meaning of βασιλείας seems divided.⁶¹ W. G. Kümmel suggests basilica could be eschatological but limits it to the ultimate

⁵⁸ Walter Wilson, *A Dictionary of Bible Types* (Albany, OR: AGES Software, 1999), 420-423.

⁵⁹ Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, s.v. “Petra.”

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), 76.

reality.⁶² The present church abdicates its eschatological vision. The Hebrew sense of the kingdom of God could be dynamic⁶³ as in rule or dominion (Ps 145:11, 13; 103:19). In essence, the Hebrew concept of βασιλείας appears to be the rule or sovereignty.⁶⁴

Further, ἐκκλησίαν indicates primarily New Testament usage to mean the people of God. In OT, the people constituted those who signed covenants with him (2 Chr 14:7) and pledged to observe the laws of God by faith (Exod 26:15; Matth 5:17-19).

Verse by Verse Analysis of Matthew 16:13-20

Robertson sees syntax as “a picture of orderly marshaling of words to express ideas, not merely a medley of words.”⁶⁵ Since Matthew used parallelism to express thoughts and emphasize words, the relationship between these expressions and words will be analyzed and synthesized.

Accordingly, the larger context of Chapter 16 appears to encapsulate the interaction between Jesus and the religious leaders (16: 1- 4) in Jerusalem as in chapter 15; and the first ensuing conversation between Jesus and the his disciples, (v 5-12) before Caesarea Philippi. The discussion with the religious leaders seems to set the stage for the one with the disciples. The first Question from religious leaders demands of Jesus a sign. Jesus answers by assured them of only one sign, but the

⁶² W. G. Kuemmel, *The Promise and Fulfillment: Eschatology Message of Jesus*, trans. Dorothea M. Barton (London: SCM Press, 1957), 68.

⁶³ Ladd, *Theology of the New Testament*, 76.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Archibald T. Roberson, *Grammar of Greek New Testament: In the Light of Historical Research* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1980), 463.

Jonah sign, the hope that death will not hold the Messiah captive in the grave; and rebuked them for their presumption (Verse 4).

Next, Jesus warns His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees (verse 6). When Jesus cautioned his disciples against the leaven of the religious leaders (16: 11), he effectively pointed out three spirits.⁶⁶ (1) The Pharisaic leaven which led to formalism and hypocrisy, (2) The Sadducean leaven which led to rationalism and skepticism, and (3) The Herodian leaven which led to political expediency and temporizing. The disciples relate people's opinions about Jesus' identity (v14), and then Jesus asks for their opinion (v15), and Peter answers (16).

Response: Disciples reason among themselves (v7).

From the second conversation (v13-20) comes question two: Jesus asks, what do men say I the son of man is? (v13) Disciples answer: Some say John the baptizer, some, Elijah, others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets (v13). Question three focuses on their opinion: But what do you say I am? Simon answers (for the group): you are the Christ the Son of the living God (v16).

When Paul wrote to the Galatians regarding the fullness of time, and God sending his son (Gal 4:4-5), he appealed to a long biblical tradition. Before delivering them, God referred to Israel as my son (Exod 4:22-23). Hosea picks up this theme of Sonship (11:1), but even within Israel, the Davidic king is singled out for special Sonship (2 Sam 7:14). David wrote to support the claim to Sonship (Ps 2:7).

At his baptism, the identity of the divine Son was confirmed (Matt 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). In the wilderness of temptation Satan doubted this relationship and demanded proof, and Jesus rebutted three times (Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13). Jesus

⁶⁶ J. Kushaiah. "The Great Confession," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1997), 6:338.

accepts the responsibility of the son (Mark 11:27; Luke 10:22;) and transfers the same attitude to his disciples (Matt 6:9; Luke 11:2; Rom 8:14; Gal 4:6; John 3:16).

Therefore, it is clear from scripture that the filial relationship between God, His people, and Jesus is established. So, when Peter responded, he drew from the scriptural foundation that God the Father impressed on him. Messiah is Hebrew meaning the prince set aside to come as a leader (Dan 9:25, 26). Messiah on the other hand is Greek, denoting a form of proceeding from (John 1:41; 4:25).

In summary, the truth revealed constitutes two elements: (1). Christ's divine Sonship, (2). His Messiahship; and upon these two the church will be built to Christ's satisfaction. Jesus complements: you are happy because flesh and blood have not shown it to you but my father who is in heaven (v 17).

Hebrew basar flesh and Greek σὰρξ flesh, are used in scripture to refer to food (2 Sam 25:11; Zech 1:17; Rom 14:21; 1 Cor 8:13), people (Gen 2:21; 2:23; 9:11, 15, 16, 17; 17:11, 13, 14, 23, 24; 29:14; Exod 4:7; Lev 4:11; Num 16:22), and beast (Lev 7:15). Blood signifies life (Lev 17:11; 2 Sam 23:17; 1 Chr 11:19). When used in combination, they connote people, a human being, or beast. Hence, Christ meant non-human influence in Peter's confession.

Jesus addresses Simon's answer in verse 16: I also, on my part say to you that you are Peter, Πέτρος (, a large piece of rock Amplified bible) and on this⁶⁷ (same) πέτρα (a huge rock like Gibraltar Amplified Bible) I will build my church and the

⁶⁷ Several translations are consistent in their rendering of it (v 17) and ταύτη (this v18). For instance, English Standard Version (this, this). New International Version (this, this). Amplified Bible (this, this). However, Koine Greek Interlinear prefer (it, this) and King James Version renders it in verse 17, and this in verse 18 appear inconsistent in their rendering of ταύτη.

gates of hell shall not prevail against it (18). As indicated above, this verse has been the hot spot of interpretation for centuries, Hardy asserts.⁶⁸

Hardy sees a lexical distinction between Πέτρος and πέτρα, and concludes that Christ could not have intended Peter as the foundation for His church but the confession from Peter's mouth identifies Him.⁶⁹ Davar insists that the Lxx offers more than a translation; it renders the Hebrew Tsur, Rock, 19 times for Theo's (God), and in one of these it gives Κύριε, Lord (Deut 34:4, 15, 18, 30-31; Ps 18:31, 42; 28:1, 31: 2, 6-7, 14, 4:1; Isa 30:39; 17:10).⁷⁰ Other Jewish understanding of rock is revealing; Targumic and Tinnitus literature see Abraham as rock hewn out from a mountain to which he must constantly look.⁷¹

Also, in the Jacob's narrative, God is viewed as the stabilizing Rock foundation for the relationship established.⁷² Thus, the Jewish understanding of rock within the first to the third centuries suggests a clear reference to the symbolism employed in the Old Testament. Furthermore, syntactical and semantic analyses of the Greek text seem to reveal distinction between Πέτρος and πέτρα. Whereas, Πέτρος is a masculine singular proper noun, πέτρα (appears figuratively 16 times in 14 verses) is a dative feminine singular common noun. When ἐπὶ (upon, 11 times in Matthew.) is used with dative, it expresses source or special permanence, and not temporal, agent

⁶⁸ Hardy, *Christ's Use of Rock Symbolism*, PDF file.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 2.

⁷⁰ See Davar, 5.

⁷¹ Ibid., 6.

⁷² See Miguel Fernandez, *Los Capítulos de Rabbi Eliezer* (Valencia, Spain: Institucion S. Jeronimo para la Investigacion Biblica, 1984), 248-249; Teresa Matinez Saiz, *Traducciones Arameas de la Biblia* (Madrid: Editorial Verbo Divino, 2004), 184-186; Carlos de Valle, *La Misna* (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1981, 339.

or cause.⁷³ Therefore, the dative function of πέτρα appears to identify the object of the action word build, with ἐκκλησίαν (church, community) which is an accusative feminine singular.

The demonstrative pronoun, τούτη (this, appears 122 times, 11 times in Matthew; in 119 verses KJV) functions as dative case, is feminine, and related to ἀπεκάλυψέν (revealed this/ it); instead of Πέτρος. At the root of this debate could be what the possible antecedent of τούτῃ is? On the surface, it could be what Peter said in identifying Jesus in verse 16. The Greek New Testament suggests when ἐπι functions with dative case it reads “on the basis of” or “same.” If the identity of Peter by Jesus is intended, there are theological, contextual and grammatical issues to contend with: For instance, most Greek grammatical rules including but not limited to case, gender marching, will be set aside.

On the flip side, if the identity of Jesus by Peter, a referent to Jesus’s Messianic appellation, biblical theological content will serve to settle grammar and syntactical questions though not exhaustively. It is significant to note that it is improbable for the function of ἐπι with Dative to synchronize with Πέτρος which is nominative. Rather it appears from the overlap of ἐπι with dative and accusative indicating a special use of ἐπι denoting an individual or a group on whom some spiritual blessings come to rest (see Matt 7: 24). This could mean that this usage carries a special sense of Jesus’s authority and power over the church while the accusative suggests the anticipated blessing of the church.

Thus, when this grammatical and syntactical dynamics is ignored, and the text is read or translated simplistically, it would appear that Πέτρος is the antecedent

⁷³ See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 376.

pronoun (cataphoric). However, the antecedent clause or referent in this context seems to be Σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος which appears anaphoric; being mentioned earlier and active in the hearer's mind as default and needed not to be repeated.

Finally, if Christ intended Πέτρος (Peter) to be the rock upon which He would build His church, He could have been emphatic. Christ knew what He was saying in Aramaic and his hearer(s) might have had no difficulty associating the words appropriately, as Hardy puts it, "Our emphasis as exegetes now must remain the same as Peter's was then, or we will surely miss the point he was making--and the point Christ was making."⁷⁴ Therefore, it is clear that from the syntactical, lexical, and grammatical usage, Πέτρος and πέτρα appears to be in sync with Old Testament; New Testament, and Jewish literary portrayal, and theology of the Bible.

The mention of gates relative to judgment seems to resonate well with the Old Testament times (Deut 16: 18, 21: 19, 25: 7; Josh 20: 4; Ruth 4: 1; Job 5: 4, 31: 21; Ps 122: 2, 5; Prov 22: 22, 31: 23; Jer 38: 7; Lam 5: 14; Amos 5: 2; Zech 8: 16) where the place of meeting for decision making became known for administration and justice, and settlement of disputes.⁷⁵ From this judicial practice, gates became associated with "power and authority."⁷⁶ Christ probably knew the phenomenon and tied the practice to the work of Satan, His primary adversary.⁷⁷ Freeman indicates that the use of power and authority scenario could be found in modern use, and Jesus not only

⁷⁴ Hardy, *Christ's Use of Rock Symbolism*, PDF file.

⁷⁵ James M. Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible* (Addison, IL: BibleTruthPublishers.com, 2021), 299.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

acknowledges the adversary to his work but designed the law to secure his defeat, that is, faith in his Sonship and Messiahship. Jesus addresses Simon Petros, “and I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind⁷⁸ (declare to proper and lawful) on earth must be what is already bound in heaven; and whatever you lose (declare improper and unlawful) on earth must be what is already loosed in heaven” (v 19 Amplified Bible).

A key was an opener of locks and occurs twice in the Old Testament. One with reference to King Ehud’s servants opening his door to find him dead (Jdg 3:25); and the other referring to the key of David to be given to a successor (Isa 22:22). In the New Testament, it occurs 6 times, 5 times referring to Jesus who has the keys of hell and death, and once while giving Petros the key (Rev 1:18; 3:7; 9:1; 20:1; Matt 16: 18). A key symbolizes the steward’s authority over his master’s household and of who gains entrance into his master’s presence as with David (Isa 22:22); and Jesus’ rebuke of the teachers of the law who take away the key of knowledge from others while they fuse to enter in (Luke 11:52).

Thus, it is evident that the key imagery denotes proven trust followed with certain responsibilities. In the case of Peter, the key shall be given to him is relative to the understanding and confession of who Christ is. In other words, Christ entrusted him with the responsibility of stewardship of the business of the kingdom, connoting the missionary activities that opens the door of salvation (1 Cor 16:9; 2 Cor 2:12). Later when Πέτρος denied him, Jesus would confirm the love Πέτρος has for him (John 12: 15-17), and He later would reinforce this steward responsibility: “feed my sheep.”

⁷⁸ Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 1:120.

Therefore, it is clear that within its context, Christ did not promise to lay the church's foundation on Πέτρος, instead, Christ's church shall be established on the accurate knowledge of who Jesus is (Messiah and Son of God); and thereafter, the person who succinctly expressed that knowledge would bear stewardship responsibility sharing that divine truth with others. It would also in the future church prohibit or bind what is already prohibited in heaven; and loose, or allow what is already allowed in heaven (Deut 32: 2; Job 11: 4; Prov 4:2; Isa 28:9, 29:24; Jer 10:8; Matt 7: 28, 15: 9, 16: 12, 22:33; Mark 1: 22, 4: 2; Luke 4: 32; John 7: 16, 17; Acts 2:4, 5: 28; Rom 6: 17, 16: 17; Eph 4: 14; Heb 6: 1, 2, 13: 9; 2 John 1: 9, 10; Rev 2: 15, 24).

Jesus addresses all the disciples; then He sternly and strictly charges them to tell no one that He was the Christ (Verse 20, Amplified bible). At this point, He had secured the victory He needed in their belief in Him as the divine Son of God and Messiah to establish his church (Dan 11: 35; Hab 2: 3; John 7: 6, 8; Rom 5: 6).

Therefore, he outlined the order of events (verse 21-23) but until then, it was unsafe to take the word out. From these strings of conversations, several syntactical connections are relevant to the meaning of ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ but it must follow observable facts.⁷⁹ The conversations with religious leaders parallel those with the disciples in nine steps:

In step one (Matt 16: 1-4), the scribes and Pharisee's request for a σημεῖον sign, a miraculous act of proof (UBS 4ed.). Προσελθόντες having come to him is verb Aorist participle active normative masculine plural indicating a constant action in the past of the religious leaders. Robertson shows the request for proof of Jesus's

⁷⁹ Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 1:385.

Messiahship resonates with Satan's presumptuous attempt to end his life even before his ministry (Matt 4:6).⁸⁰

Πειράζοντες constantly tempting him, is a present participle active suggesting a dangerous persistent doubt in His teachings. Sensing the same satanic spirit in the religious leaders Jesus responds with a rebuke. Γενεὰ πονηρὰ καὶ μοιχαλὶς σημεῖον ἐπιζητεῖ resonates with the reasoning of those who think they are wise (Rom 1: 21; 1 Cor 3: 20), and judges with evil thoughts following obstinate and pervasive opinions and censurable principles (Jas 2: 4).⁸¹ The coming together of the Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees who customarily oppose each other always signaled a bad omen for Jesus.⁸²

Step two (Matt 16: 5-12) follows with the narrative turning to the disciples with interpretation. Apparently, the conversation with the Scribes and Pharisees might not have taken place in the company of the disciples as indicated in 16: 4, 5), hence their meeting together with Jesus with thoughts on bread. Ὁρᾶτε καὶ προσέχετε indicates mentally staring at, Hebraically, attend to, or experience; holding one's mind toward and being cautious (Matt 24: 11, 24,). He insinuates the pervasive nature of His kingdom principles. In Oriental times, leaven was associated with dough in a state of fermentation;⁸³ and the children of Israel were not to eat unleavened bread on certain occasions (Matt 26: 19, 20).⁸⁴ Verse 12 indicates the misunderstanding (16: 7-9) of the disciple's mind as realigned with Jesus' intended meaning (verse 6).

⁸⁰ Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 1:30.

⁸¹ Joseph Tayler, *Tayler's Greek-English Lexicon* (Rio, WI: AGES Software, 2000), 1:749.

⁸² Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 1:115.

⁸³ Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, 412.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 666.

Step three (16: 13) introduces a change in location and also emphasizes: *μέρη Καισαρείας τῆς Φιλίππου*. The district of Caesarea appears to contrast with the villages of Caesarea in (Mark 8: 27) but the point is poignant; this region was ruled by Herod Philipi and was known for unbelief as shown above.⁸⁵ Here Jesus chose the “best opportunity to give the disciples a special teaching concerning the crucifixion just a little over six months ahead.”⁸⁶ *ἡρώτα τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ λέγων ἡρώτα* He continuously questioned the disciples as shown by the verb *ἡρώτα* imperfect indicative active. *Τίνα λέγουσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι εἶναι τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου*; this query lingers in the minds of many (John 8: 25; Luke 7: 19, 20, 22: 67, 70; Acts 26: 15). *Λέγουσιν* implies among others to name and show in appropriately set discourse (G 3004), moreover, it brings out the main concern in Jesus’ mind and the central piece in Matthew’s narrative; which Herod Antipas may have been acquainted (Mark 3: 21, 31) with;⁸⁷ and further shows the far reaching influence of Jesus’ teachings.⁸⁸

Step four (16: 14) shares the general opinion on who the son of man is as they knew it. Step five (16: 15) also shows a specific evaluation from the disciples. *· Ὑμεῖς δὲ τίνα με λέγετε εἶναι*; *· Ὑμεῖς* seems emphatic: and matters to Jesus.

Step six (16: 16) brings out the ultimate confession. *Ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ Σίμων Πέτρος εἶπεν* with *Ἀποκριθεὶς* being verb Aorist participle passive suggesting Peter was acted upon and speaking for the others, or representative for many who may have known this (John 1: 49, 4: 29, 6:69). *Σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος*.

⁸⁵ Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 1:300.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 1:301.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

effectively acclaims Jesus' Messiahship and divine Sonship constitutes the answer Jesus badly needed.

Step seven (16: 17, 18) confirms the answer given in step six, and subsequently makes a promise. Μακάριος εἶ, Σίμων Βαριωνᾶ, ὅτι σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα οὐκ ἀπεκάλυψέν σοι ἀλλ' ὁ πατήρ μου ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς: Jesus in answering said, you are happy Simon's son of Jona! For flesh and blood does not reveal (this/ it) but my Father who is in the heavens does. F.F. Bruce argues that the confirmation of Peter's confession never implied "church power" but acknowledging loyalty.

The terms in which Jesus speaks of Peter are characteristic, they are warm, generous and unstinted. The style is not that of an ecclesiastical editor laying the foundation for church power and prelatic pretensions, but of a noble-minded Master eulogizing in impassioned terms a loyal disciple (Bruce).⁸⁹ Emphasis is added in κἀγὼ δέ σοι λέγω ὅτι σὺ εἶ Πέτρος, καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτη τῇ πέτρᾳ οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, καὶ πύλαι ᾄδου οὐ κατισχύσουσιν αὐτῆς: "and I also say that you are Peter, and upon this rock I shall build my church."

The continuous train of thought of Matthew could be observed by the connective conjunction δέ at every step. In verse 18 however, καὶ is used as a copulative between the clause σὺ εἶ Πέτρος and ἐπὶ ταύτη τῇ πέτρᾳ suggesting a shift of emphasis from the confessor σὺ εἶ Πέτρος to the identity of the confessed Σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς.⁹⁰ ἐπὶ ταύτη upon this or same, upon the evidence of this (UBS4ed) could serve as alternative readings as demonstrated above.

Step eight (16: 19) refocuses Jesus' attention on Peter's special responsibility. He says that "I will give you the keys of the heavenly kingdom and whatever you

⁸⁹ Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 1:117.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

forbid on earth would have been forbidden in heaven; and whatever you allow on the earth would have been allowed in heaven.” Apparently reference to teachings of Jesus⁹¹ is denoted here, though proponents of papal hierarchy may suggest otherwise⁹².

This step seems closely linked to the idea of creating a community of believers who would be guided and propelled by a set of principles that ensures success in its duties (Deut 15: 3; Jer 32: 33; Matt 4: 23, 5: 17-19, 9: 35, 15: 9, 21: 23, 26: 55, 28: 20; Luke 14: 1-24; Rom 8: 16-30).

Step 9 (16: 20) brings in the injunction not to share this revelation with anyone. Robertson insinuates that the reason for the fear that the identity confessed could be taken as a pretext for political and social unrest which⁹³ Jesus himself had avoided from the beginning. From the studies above though, it can be seen that Jesus had not found the solid foundational belief upon which to plant His church, the community of believers (Matt 8: 26, 8: 26 16: 8; John 3: 12; Luke 12: 28), hence the Caesarean occasion. Outside of this periscope Jesus then openly outlines the full plan for the life of the Messiah (16: 21-28) which Peter would solidly object (16: 22) to thereby, earning the strongest rebuke second only to the one Satan received in the wilderness (Matt 4: 10).

In summary, this study did set out to find out the meaning of ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ in the immediate context of Matthew 16: 18 and the larger context of chapter 16: 1-20.

Matthew’s narrative could be seen in five major divisions depicting the various phases of the life and ministry of the Messiah. The genre of Matthew is

⁹¹ Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 1:120.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., 1:121.

visibly narrative laden with deductive dialogues and drama. From the structure of Matthew, the flow of thought could be seen in all the five divisions without break. In all the narratives, the identity of the Messiah is never foreshadowed by the inclusion of other people.

The Old Testament prophecies describe only one Messiah with stipulated time frame for life, work and death. The New Testament exists to confirm that this Messiah did come to accomplish his work on time. Therefore, from the forgoing semantic, syntactical, literary, contextual and theological evidence the following observations are relevant:

- (1) According to the Matthean narrative, Jesus the Christ encountered solid unbelief among the political and religious elite of Israel but a few struggled to hang unto him.
- (2) In order to ascertain the depth and width of the conviction and persuasion of these and further gauge general perception, Jesus occasioned the Caesarean discourse.
- (3) The Greek text shows there could be no lexical link between Πέτρος and πέτρᾱ but their usage by Matthew was to contrast the two by using appropriate καὶ to emphasis the fundamental significance of πέτρᾱ in the grand scheme in the life and work of Jesus.
- (4) The use of the demonstrative ἐπὶ with the Dative case indicates the special importance Matthew attached to his purpose of showing that the historical Jesus and non-other could be Messiah as demonstrated by His life and works.
- (5) Contrary to the agitation of papal apologists, Peter could not be the rock πέτρᾱ of foundation in Matthew 16: 18 because ἐπὶ ταύτῃ demonstrates

anaphorical function referring to the previous identity of Jesus in 16: 16, or Matthew could miss his purpose of presenting Jesus as Messiah.

- (6) However, Peter representing the disciples and all who would come to Christ; would receive the keys to the kingdom in order to arbitrate in matters of teaching: forbidding and allowing in all morality and conduct in life of kingdom subjects guided by the holy Spirit (John 14: 26).
- (7) Exegetical data culminates in Jesus' injunction on His disciples not to share his identity in order not to fuel the fires of hatred in the political and religious leaders led by Satan. The Messiah's strategy worked well as shown by the malicious identification of Judas Iscariot (Matt 26: 47).

CHAPTER 4

THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

Following the exegetical study of ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ in Matthew 16: 18, this chapter picks up theological analysis and synthesis as the main tenet in eliciting meaning.

From the structure of Matthew, it is evident that Jesus claims the Messiah title (Matt 11:2-11:6); claims the Son of God title (Matt 11:25-11:30); reveals the kingdom of heaven and when it begins (parables of the kingdom); claims divine power (Matt 12:22-12:45); knowledge (Matt 11:25-11:30); authority (Matt 12:1-12:21); and wisdom (Matt 12:38-12:45). He also demonstrates how the kingdom grows (Matt 13:24-13:33), how it will be perfected (Matt 13:44-13:48). A translation of Matthew 16: 18; theology and message to the first century readers; and relevant application are considered.

Theology of Matthew

According to Zahn, Matthew's use of ὁ χριστὸς in presenting the history of Jesus to the Jews sets him apart from other synoptic writers¹ (1:17, 18; 11:2); his express purpose being to prove that Jesus is the Messiah and the eternal King.² Furthermore, Beaton argues that Matthew's Jesus the humble and compassionate

¹ Theodor Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 1909), 1:532.

² *Life Application Bible (NIV)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), 1636. See G. B. Caird, *New Testament Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 39.

Messiah. Matthew's "theologically rich quotation of Isaiah 42:1-4 further underscores the power deeds, even, the inclusion of the marginalized," as the hallmark of the coming of the kingdom of God.³

The Need of a Kingdom

Kingdom theology seems prominent and prevalent in the book of Matthew. Judging from Matthew's genealogy, Jesus Christ would be born in accordance with the Old Testament prophecy and proceed in life works and death by the same prophetic line (Dan 8:14; 9: 20-27). After His baptism, Jesus begins His announcement of the kingdom (Matt 4: 17).

Mark introduces this theme by indicating that the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom is at hand (Mark 1: 14-15). Matthew notifies and calls attention to Jesus as the initialization of the kingdom of God in human affairs by relating the signs validating this claim (Matt 4: 23). Luke raises a similar alarm (Luke 4: 18-21) reporting that Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of the Christ or the anointed one. This new kingdom paradigm runs through the Bible as observed in this study and as Ladd puts it, "it is impossible to understand the message and miracles of Jesus unless they are interpreted in the setting of His view of the world and humanity, and the need for the coming of the kingdom."⁴ Dunham underscores Matthew's kingdom motif in content and structure.⁵

³ Richard Bauckham, ed., *Isaiah's Christ in Matthew's Gospel*, Society for New Testament Studies Monographs Series 123 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 2. See also Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 1:82.

⁴ Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 42. See also Brown, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 1:82.

⁵ Kyle C. Dunham. *The Kingdom Christ and of God: A Traditional Dispensationalist Argument for Inaugurated Eschatology* (Detroit, MI: Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006), 39.

If Jesus meant to make Πέτρος the foundation of His new community as claimed, He could be dealing with an indelible blow to both the prophetic office He established (Amos 3:7), and the prophetic messages themselves. In summary, the synoptic gospels and that of John stress the point that when Jesus appeared in human form, He ushered in the new kingdom on time.

The biblical data traces the history of salvation from creation (Gen 1-2) to the fall (Gen 3:1-14) with God launching His ultimate plan to save humanity (Gen 3:15). With the coming of the Messiah, and in partnership of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 15:25-27; 16:7-15), this plan could finally be actualized, giving all humanity the chance to be part of the kingdom of God by their own choices (Matt 28:18-20).

The Kingdom of God

This study observed that though the OT prophets looked for the day that the Lord would divinely intervene in the affairs on earth and establish the kingdom of righteousness; they equally emphasized the now and the then idea in kingdom perspective.⁶ While Amos (9: 13-15) identifies the kingdom in present worldly terms, Isaiah recognizes the new order as the new heaven and the new earth (Isa 65: 17).

Among the late Judaism literature, the new redeemed order seems emphasized, sometimes depicted in very earthly terms as though the new meant an improvement of the old.⁷ Other times, it's depicting a radical transformation of the old order to present the new in "transcendental language."⁸ However, other apocalyptic literature sustain

⁶ Daegeuk Nam, "The new Earth and the Eternal Kingdom," *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald and General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2000), 949. See also C. B. Caird, *New Testament Theology*, 142.

⁷ G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 232.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 238.

the mundane earthly kingdom, followed by a new transformed permanent order.⁹ Additionally, mention is made of idioms such as “the age to come” were used to stress the now and the then to depict this constancy of expectation. Matthew also employed one with Jesus (Matt 12: 32), while Mark ascribed one in Jesus’ teaching (Mark 10: 30).

Cullman indicates that there seems to be the persistent view that the end-time dualism could be the substructure of redemptive history¹⁰ whereby the play and counter play of human affairs align with or deviate from the purpose and power of God. In effect, though there may not be a New Testament word correlating with ‘eternity’ as the concept seemed apparent, notes Jenni, though not like the Hellenistic view which expected people to be released from time.¹¹ The kingdom of God and the age to come appear to used interchangeably as observed with Mark (10: 30), but the age to come seem to fit with God’s point of view relative to the redemptive plan for humanity.

Therefore, resurrection life, eternal life and the age to come all seem consistent with the kingdom of God. Matthew indicates three versions of kingdom parables consistent with the age to come (13: 39, 40, 49), though the same theme runs through the gospels. In recap, Matthew ensures the Jesus he set out to introduce matches word for word the kingdom of God’s expectation as set in the scriptures.

⁹ Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 228. See also Richard A. Horsley and John S. Hanson, *Bandits and Messiahs- Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (Minneapolis, MN: A Seabury Book Winston Press, 1985), 17.

¹⁰ Oscar Cullman, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1950), 37.

¹¹ E. Jenni, “Time” *IDB*, 4:648.

The Church and the Kingdom

The relationship between ἐκκλησίαν and βασιλείας might clear some misunderstanding of Matthew 16:18. Βασιλείας denotes the rule or governance of. The genitive of source or origin applies here, signifying an attachment to a set of rules, world view, or principles underlining and defining ethics, behavior and or relationship (Matt 5: 1-48; 25: 1, 14); therefore, not visible or tangible. Ἐκκλησίαν on the other hand denotes primarily the call to followership or discipleship (Luke 12: 32).

This concept flows from the OT where Israel embodied the sheep of God's pasture, now embodied in Jesus' disciples (Isa 40:11); the flock of God (Matt 10: 6, 15: 24). Jesus came as the good Shepherd to adequately cater for the needs of His flock (Mark 14: 27; John 10: 11) in fulfillment of Ezekiel 34: 15 to put into the context of salvation.¹² The dynamic concept of the kingdom and indication of the biblical idiom appears not to correlate with the church.¹³ Hence Jesus' announcement: the kingdom is within you, or in you, is at hand (Matt 3: 2, 12: 28, 25:35).

Therefore, βασιλείας denotes the rule of God by His divine principles while ἐκκλησίαν represent the community and empirical beings of the kingdom, but never the kingdom itself.¹⁴ This relationship between the church and the concept of God's rule is worthy of note in this study as it relates to the issue of the reason for existence and foundation of the church. Biblical cannon suggests the OT church existed for the purpose of witnessing to the glory, and power of God (Isa 43:10; 43:12; 44:8; Matt 24: 14; John 1:8; 5:32; Acts 23:11; Phil 2:14-16; Rev 11:10).

¹² See Brown, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 1:279-280.

¹³ F. Godet, *Studies in the New Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1795), 261.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Since they were to be witnesses to the world about God, there could be no possibility for one of them to be made the foundation on which the faith community could be built. Rather, the OT church was built on who God was, His identity, and what He could do for them; deliverance and protection.

The Kingdom of God in Judaism

The kingdom of God may not be in the OT¹⁵ but the thought and idea could be prevalent with the prophets. Judaism sees God kingship from two perspectives: God is seen as king of Israel (Exod 15: 18; Num 23:21; Deut 33; 5; Isa 43: 15), and of the earth (2 Kgs 19: 15; Isaiah 15: 5; Jer 46:18; Ps 29:10; 99:1-4). God may be seen as king, but someday He shall become King and shall rule His people (Isa 24:23; 33:32; 52:7; Zeph 3:15; Zech 14:9).

This concept appears significant to this study because it lays the foundation for the Messianic expectation spanning from Genesis 3:15 to the birth of Jesus (Gal 4:4) at the fullness of time. Further, this study observed that the aversion or outright hatred of the religious leaders to Jesus's life and ministry could be linked to the authority crisis motif that ensues when God invades human realm. Their constant search for flaws in His teachings (Matt 22:23-33; Mark 12:18-27; Luke 13:31-35; John 9:1-12; 20: 27-40); their accusations (Matt 12:22-27; Mark 3:20-30); their constant demand for miracles or signs to validate His claims (Matt 12:38-45; 16: 1-4; Mark 8: 11-13); their plan to kill Him (Matt 26:1-5; John 14:1,2; Luke 22:1,2).

Their condemnation of Him (Matt 27:1,2; Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66-71; John 7:10-31); and His contempt for their hypocrisy (Matt 23:13-36; Luke 11:37-54) all build up the case for power crisis caused by the unbelief that precipitated Jesus'

¹⁵ Godet, *Studies in the New Testament*, 58. The Jews preferred "children of Abraham" to kingdom of God." See Brown, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 1:77.

evaluation of His identity just before He guaranteed that the kingdom of God has true subjects.

The Kingdom of God in the New Testament

The concept of the kingdom of God as analyzed above seems dynamic, changing features and persons as the prophecy unfolds, but never loses sight of the Messiah figure (Gen 12:1-17: 22; Exod 19:1-40:38; 1 Kgs 12:1-33; 2 Kgs 25:1-30, 2 Chr 36:11-21; Mic 5:2, Matt 2:1-6; Luke 2:1-20).

By the time John the Baptist appeared in the fulfillment of prophecy (Mal 4:5-7; Matt 3:1-12) four hundred years of silence had passed. Matthew bridges this gap by noting the birth of the Messiah in the fulfillment of prophecy (Isa 7:14; Matt 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-28). Ladd indicates “the most distinctive fact in Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom was its present inbreaking in history in his person and mission.”¹⁶ Jesus and His mission to earth is the main content, and context, that would constitute an act of God.¹⁷

Kingdom, Church and Satan

Moreover, the Bible writers indicate that there is a critical relationship between the kingdom dynamics and principles, and how the church interacts with these, in the light of personality of Satan. Satan was a creature of God (Ezek 28:11-19) who became self-opinionated (Isa 14:12-146) and fell out of favor with God and the creation of God (Rev 12:7-9).

¹⁶ N. T. Wright, “The Mission and Message of Jesus,” in *The Meaning of Jesus*, eds. Marcus J. J. Borg and N. T. Wright (Pymble, Australia: HarperCollins E-books, 2009), 32.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Satan is synonymous with the Devil, “a contraction from Greek, διάβολος; denotatively, malicious accuser, and is used in the Greek NT and LXX as an equivalent of the Hebrew word Satan, which is an adversary.”¹⁸ He is the opponent of God and humanity (1 Pet 5:8); prince of devils (Matt 12:24); of the powers of the air and this world (Eph 2:4; John 14:30); first sinner (1 John 3:8) was cast out of heaven (Luke 10:18) tempter of the Christ and humanity (Matt 4:3-10; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2). He desired the power and sovereignty of God (Isaiah 14:12-14), to have the apostles (Luke 22:31), resisted Joshua, figuratively (Zechariah), entered into Judas Iscariot (Luke 22:3; John 13:2), into Ananias (Acts 5:2).

As a prince and god of this world, he perverts the Scriptures (Matt 4:6), opposes God’s work (Zech 3:1; 1 Thess 2:18), hinders the gospel (Matt 3:9; 2 Cor 4:4), works lying wonders (2 Thess 2:9; Rev 16:4), is the father of lies (1 Kgs 22:22; John 8:14;), and can appear as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14), savors not the things of God (Matt 16: 22-23) whom Christ defeated (Matt 4:11). Biblical Prophecy predicts that Satan would resist and oppose the works of God by using human instrumentalities (Dan 7: 25; 8: 9-14; 2 Thess 2: 3-9) in his bid to overthrow God from the affairs of men, and reinstate himself as king through them.

Given this personality, Satan reveals his tricks in disposing Christ from His Church. This study observed that even after receiving revelation from heaven of the identity of Christ, Peter opposes Christ and His mission (Matt 16:21-23). Why would Christ rebuke Peter if He had just made him the πέτρᾱ upon which He shall build His church? One possible deduction could be that Peter himself could be confused; in one instance, he was commended for understanding divine revelation (Matt 16:16), and in

¹⁸ *The Oxford Cyclopedic Concordance* (Toronto, Canada: Oxford University Press, n.d). See also N. T. Wright, 48.

another, he was rebuked for misunderstanding, out rightly interposing between Christ and his mission (Matt 16:21-23). Peter also did not see himself as the πέτρᾱ upon which Christ shall build His Church (1 Pet 2:8).

Son of Man

This theme has been addressed previously, but its theological significance needs further analysis.¹⁹ Jesus used it to refer to Himself in the “light of historical and religious background,”²⁰ and by so doing he asserted claim to messianic dignity and Messianic role.²¹ He essentially embodied supernatural character and origin²² though not openly using the idiom son of man, because of its different connotation in prevailing minds. The use of son of man also projected Jesus “in heavenly dignity and probably pre-existence, by implication the one to inaugurate the kingdom”²³ in line with biblical prophecy.

From this theological context, it could be understood that the only legal means to introduce the authority and rule of God on earth was for God to condescend to become human, thereby, submitting to Satanic and human volatility (Gen 3:15; Phil 2:) on His mission to redeem humanity from rebellion implanted by Satan.

In summary, the use of the Hebrew idiom Son of Man served as a fitting tool in facilitating the mission of the Messiah in a manner appealing to both humans and angels.

¹⁹ D. L. Bock, “Son of Man,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 2nd ed., ed. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 894-900.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Delver Burket, *The Son of Man Debate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 23.

²² Ibid., 17.

²³ Ibid., 19.

Son of God

Son of God is the prominent Messianic phrase in the discovery or the self-disclosure of Jesus,²⁴ and this expression underlies the divinity of Jesus. In the synoptic gospels, the expression is synthesized from Hebrew religious literature though it may connote varying meanings.²⁵ But the meaning of the phrase could be seen in four ways.²⁶ Creatures of God are referred to as sons of God because they owe their existence from God²⁷ (Exod 4:22; Luke 1:35; 3:38; Acts 17:38).

The phrase could also relate to “child of God” to reflect special relationship with God as objects of His care²⁸ in moral and religious sense (Exod 4:22; John 1:12; 3:3; Rom 8:14, 19; Gal 3:26; 4:5). In Messianic sense, the Davidic king is referred to as such to imply the “divine nature and position of the Messianic personage.”²⁹ Son of God also has some theological meaning.

The New Testament revelation emphasizes this title as being essential for Jesus since it linked him directly to the divine Logos (John 1:1-3, 14). In the fulfillment of prophecy, God would legally assume human nature to free humanity from unbelief or distrust of God (Gen 3:15) and at the same time demonstrate how the principle of the kingdom of God could be lived (Matt 5:17-19). This was a great risk but worth exploring if the human race was to be preserved. Therefore, He utilized biblical rock symbolism to present to willing minds His origin, nature, and potential.

²⁴ Mark Allan Powell, *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical- Literary- and Theological Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 114.

²⁵ Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 158.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Vincent, *Vincent's Word Studies in The New Testament*, 1:348.

²⁸ Ibid., 1:144.

²⁹ Ibid., 1:413.

If Jesus meant Peter in His use of *πέτρος*, as claimed, he would betray all biblical prophecies relative to the messiah concept, confuse theological foundation and implications for the kingdom of God motif, and open the door for Satan to continue planting seeds of distrust in the minds of humanity. However, observations and syntheses from above indicate that Matthew hit his target of presenting Jesus with all demonstrations using various Hebraic idioms and phrases to the Jews and Gentiles as the ultimate fulfillment of biblical prophecies relative to God and His desire to rescue humanity from Satanic distrust and destruction and reestablish His kingdom based on unconditional love and trust.

The God of the Kingdom

The God of the kingdom is strictly used to underscore the point of God's leadership, rule, or expanse of His principles as being dynamic. This is illustrated by the theology of the gospels and His doctrines.³⁰ God has a kingdom and set of principles which He willingly wishes to share with humanity and the foundation principles include knowledge of Him and how He wishes to reveal it (Jer 9:23, 24; John 17:3).

The gospels present Jesus in the context of His conception, birth, life, works, and resurrection (Isa 42:21; Matt 5: 17; 7:12; 22:37-40) to help show that it is the acts of God that define His nature (Jer 9:23, 24). In Judaism, the sovereignty of God was never abated, His presence and involvement in human affairs was ever noticed. "Jesus' proclamation of the presence of the kingdom of God means that God has become redemptive in human history on behalf of his people."³¹

³⁰ B. L. Mack, "The Christ and Jewish Wisdom," in *The Messiah, Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 212.

³¹ Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 81.

He is seeking His people (Gen 49; Isa 1:18-20; 52:13; Zech 11:6; 13:7; Matt 11:28; John 10:10); inviting his people (Isa 1:18-20; Matt 11:28; 22:1; Rev 22:17), the Fatherly figure (Matt 13:43; 25:34; 26:29; Luke 12:32;); and the judging God (Matt 3:12; 25:23, 33, 34, 41). In essence, the kingdom of God is the dominant motif in Hebrew religious thought and the gospels. The New Testament narrative and writings of Matthew shows that Jesus clearly fits these specifications and therefore, the divine revelation respecting His identity became the clue for Him to continue unfolding His mission.

If Peter were the πέτρᾱ in Jesus' thought, once more, the biblical history and messianic concept could need redefinition. This study therefore, observes that Jesus knew well His mission and therefore, acknowledged and personalized Peter's confession, or rather, the heavenly revelation as the fit description of the Messianic divine incarnate God of the kingdom.

Messianic Hope of Israel

Messianic mission and title concept seem significant in Christological and theological understanding of the church since it clarifies the mystery and certainty of the divine kingdom, relative to humanity and their involvement.³² ὁ χριστὸς became not only the title but proper name for Jesus (Acts 3:20), and eventually crystalized the Christian experience in Antioch (Acts 11:20). Why would the first Jewish Christians refer to Jesus as the Christ is still a mystery,³³ but in the Old Testament, the messiah concept denoted theocratic management and recognition; and the objects included;

³² See M. Hengel, "Christological Titles in Early Christianity," in *The Messiah, Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 425.

³³ Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 134.

Priests (Lev 4:3; 6:22;); Kings (1 Sam 24:10; 2 Sam 19:21; 23:1); and Prophets (1 Kgs 19:16).

These anointing conferred special calling and dedication to theocratic ideals³⁴ and the persons concerned were considered holy or separated for designated functions (1 Sam 24:6; 24:9). Anointing carried the sense of divine mission as indicated earlier in this study. From facts explored in this study, there is no indication in the Old Testament that the messianic concept is limited to the 'here and now' as suggested by some.³⁵ From the facts gathered, the following are observable: the Old Testament leaves no room of complexity when it comes to who or which messiah will inaugurate God's kingdom and eventually die on the cross and resurrect on the third day (Isaiah 42; 43; 53). The synoptic accounts do validate this observation followed by Jesus himself acknowledging that He was the Messiah in at least three points (Matt 16:20; John 1:46-49 4:26).

After His resurrection, Jesus made a declaration no other messiah may have made (Matt 28:18-20). Therefore, it seems significant to this study that the Old Testament messianic expectation and the New Testament recognition and recordings of the same correlates with Matthew's presentation of Jesus the Christ. In this way, Matthew leaves no room at all for guessing or conjecture regarding the meaning of ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ in Matthew 16: 18 because in his content and context, he presents the Messiah from birth to resurrection in addition to Jesus' interpretation of the heavenly revelation in Matt (16:16) and His subsequent injunction on His disciples (Matt 16:20).

³⁴ James D. G. Dunn, *The Evidence for Jesus* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1985), 88.

³⁵ See N. A. Dahl, "Messianic Ideas and the Crucifixion of Jesus," in *The Messiah, Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 382.

If Peter was the πέτρα on which He was to build His church and not the heavenly revelation of His divine origin as a Son and Messiah, then all of the Old Testament Covenants and prophecies could be irrelevant to Judaism and could undermine confidence in God's ability to redeem sinners not of Jewish nativity. On the contrary, if Jesus anaphorically referred to the divine revelation in His contrastive analysis of Matthew 16:18, then this study observes that Matthew's Messiah meets exactly the Old Testament messianic prophetic pronouncements and their counter-part fulfillments in the New Testament.

Messiah and Salvation History

This study has analyzed and synthesized the messiah concept previously. However, in this section, its mention is crucial to theological synthesis of the salvation history as it demonstrates the role if any, of the Messiah figure as identified in this study. In the end, a conclusion could assert the involvement of either Peter or πέτρα in the salvation history.

The salvation history seeks to understand the personal involvement of God within human history in order to affect this eternal saving intentions. In the context of Christian theology, this approach views the books of the Bible as a continuous history.³⁶ This study briefly considered three principles of the salvation history³⁷ namely; the Exodus as a saving history; Resurrection of Christ as a saving history, and the church as saving history. First, Exodus (1-14) gives the narrative that brings out the concept of human situation which in this case is the narrative of the bondage

³⁶ "Salvation History," Wikipedia, accessed 3 February 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salvation_history.

³⁷ Christian P. Ceroke, "Principles of Salvation History," *Marian Studies* 16, Article 7 (1965): 29-40.

of the children of Israel on the one hand (Exod 1:8-2:14), and God's intervention to rescue them through Moses by words and acts of God on the other hand. The author of Exodus gives no reason for God's intervention in the situation of Israel and clearly understood the concept.³⁸ However, Jesus would later claim that "for God so loved the world that He gave" (John 3:16) suggesting the divine rationale for divine words and acts. In this rescue mission, Moses played the physical part but Christ spiritually effected the plan (1 Cor 10:4).

Secondly, resurrection of Christ as a saving history demonstrates the involvement of God in the life of Christ, and resurrection is depicted in the New Testament as a Christ-centered divine act (2 Cor 5:19; Acts 2:14-36; 3:12-26). Here too, the human situation is deemphasized while projecting the divine act in the salvation history. Further, an Apostolic preaching emphasizes the power of God in the salvation history in resurrecting Jesus; and claimed the players in the death of Jesus were wicked humans and the act itself was in fulfillment of the biblical prophecy (Ps 15:8; 108:1; Acts 2:23). Ascension was according to prophecy and the primary meaning of the resurrection and ascension points to the fact that Jesus is the Messiah of the biblical prophecy (Acts 2:36; 4:12).

Thirdly, as observed in Exodus and the resurrection of the Christ, the salvation history demonstrates the power of God in saving humanity in difficult situations. Similarly, salvation is documented and preserved in the word of God which is preached and believed (Acts 2:41; 8:14) and produces the community called the church (Ps 105:5; 119:11; Rom 5:10; 8:1, 2).

³⁸ Ceroke, "Principles of Salvation History," 33.

So, when Peter related the heavenly revelation regarding Christ, he echoed the salvific acts of God crystalized in the word of God, and Jesus embraced it and reemphasized that based on the accurate understanding of these track history of salvation. This is seen by God invading the realms of humanity in order to redeem and restore His universe and the nature of humanity (Rev 21; 22) in phases:³⁹

In summary, the salvation history demonstrates supernatural intervention into human difficult situations with saving acts of love and mercy. The biblical messianic concept and hope culminated in the life works, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ who fulfilled all prophecies calling into existence the nation of Israel. Therefore, the divine revelation in Peter's confession could point to one conclusion: the identification of the divine messianic origin of Jesus the Christ, hence the fundamental knowledge for the foundation of the church.

Other Key themes in Matthew include, but not limited to: (1) Jesus Christ the king; denoting that Jesus is the revealed king of kings with a miraculous birth; authoritative life and teaching, wonderful works, and triumph over the grave being His verified identity (Ps 2: 6-8; 2 Sam 17: 12-16).⁴⁰

Application

Based on the skewed understanding of Matthew 16:13-19, the Roman Church system established "pontifex maximus" modus opranda which sees the office of Popes as both supreme to all believers and sovereign. Over centuries, this trend remained until a brief, but incomplete reform in the sixteenth centuries. However, this status quo need not persist anymore. The biblical understanding that Christ, not Peter

³⁹ See "Salvation History," Wikipedia.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

is both the foundation and head of the church ought to bring hope and encouragement to all peoples that, whatever happens on this earth they must constantly look to Christ for the faith that saves eternally and not humans.

Regarding the future leadership of His church, Christ delegated but did not transfer stewardship responsibility to capable, knowledgeable humans in order to completely demonstrate that divine human cooperating has, from the start, been His desire for the world (Phil 2: 4-7). Leadership originates and culminates in Christ (Matt 6: 24, 8: 19, 10: 24, 22: 16, 24, 36, 23: 8, 10, Mark 5: 35; Rev 1: 8, 11, 21: 6, 22: 13). This is why He did not leave shepherds, but under –shepherds over his Church; so that when He returns as the Master Shepherd, He would demand stewardship accountability from His stewards. To further guarantee that His plans for His church fail not, He deliberately superintends her work from heaven through the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth (Matt 5-7; 8: 31-32, 19: 7-8; John 14: 15, 26, 15: 14, 15). So even though false teachings and misrepresentations of His character were already evident from His time; the Spirit of Truth will radically rid the church of all teachings that are not Christ-centered (Matt 12: 31)

Finally, but not exhaustively, leadership squabbles ought to be avoided so that the mission of the Church is not hindered or rendered fussy giving space to disunity, rivalry and power struggles, where character deficient people want to have authority and superiority at all costs including falsifying some otherwise clear Bible texts to support their claims.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter gives a summary of the main findings of this study and ends by making conclusions based on the findings. The summary of the findings accompanies the development of ideas, concepts, and deductions in the various chapters. Based on these findings this chapter draws conclusions on the meaning of ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ in Matthew 16:18.

Summary

Matthew 16: 13-19 has been interpreted severally using different methods and reaching diverse conclusions. This study employed syntactical, grammatical, historical, and lexical tools in bringing out meaning from Matthew 16:13-19. The following observations were made:

There are many studies reviewed leading to two conclusions: firstly, that in verse 18 Christ intended to lay the foundation of the church on Petros (Peter). Secondly, that Christ intended to build His church on Petra (Rock). Further, from biblical and extra-biblical evidence reviewed, this study demonstrate that in context, Christ intended to build His church on Petra and also brings out the confession of Christ's divine identity (you are the Christ, the son of the living God).

Four reasons support this observation: (1), the background and historical context indicate Matthew purposed to be Christo-centric- presenting Jesus Christ as the Messiah, and the divine Son of God in fulfillment of biblical Old Testament prophecies; and by placing chapter sixteen strategically in the structure of his

presentation, Matthew ensured that no less a person than Jesus Christ emerges to fully answer the question; what is the Messiah? (2), strict rules of grammar and Greek syntactical function reveal ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ modifies Σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος anaphorically. (3), καὶ separating σὺ εἶ Πέτρος and ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ functions adversatively copulative rather than cumulative. (4) It is demonstrated from the syntactical, lexical, and grammatical usage of Petros and Petra that they appear to be in sync with OT, NT, and Jewish literary portrayal, and theology of the Bible.

It was further observed that Matthew staged the Caesarean discourse amidst the persistent unbelief amongst the religious class in Jerusalem as the Messiah evaluates His own identity; first from the general public and then from the disciples. The divergence of opinion on the meaning of ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ in Matthew 16: 18 raised the question that warranted this study. Further, review of relevant studies on this study reveals clear efforts to raise grammatical, theological contextual questions but fell short of full exegetical demonstration of answers.

Moreover, this study proposes a translation that could be both Greek-Aramaic text oriented, contextually, and historically sensitive; and that scripture embodies the temple-people symbolism to portray the intimate ties God intended to sustain within the covenant relationship based on His own supernatural firmness and stability.

Theological synthesis reveals that the salvation history demonstrates supernatural intervention into human difficult situations with saving acts of love and mercy. Biblical messianic concepts and hope culminated in the life works, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ who fulfilled all prophecies calling into existence the nation of Israel.

Therefore, the divine revelation in Peter's confession could point to one conclusion: the identification of the divine messianic origin of Jesus the Christ, hence the fundamental knowledge for the foundation of the church. Moreover, it is clear that within its context, Christ did not promise to lay the church's foundation on Πέτρος instead, that Christ's church shall be established on the accurate knowledge of who Jesus was; the divine Son in messianic concept, and thereafter, the person who succinctly expressed that knowledge would bear stewardship responsibility sharing that divine truth with others.

Conclusion

Based on the strength of the observations in this study, several conclusions could be drawn considering the meaning of ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ in Matthew 16: 18.

Firstly, that Matthew wrote for the express purpose of presenting Jesus Christ as the Messiah, and divine Son of God in fulfillment of the biblical Old Testament prophecies in the context of strong unbelief prevalent in the upper Jewish religious culture that was obviously against him.

Secondly, the original audience understood Christ clearly giving the context of unbelief and His insistence on keeping their new understanding to themselves until the right time. This study employed syntactical, historical-biblical, and lexical tools in bringing out meaning from matt 16: 13-20, and concluded that, the thought that in verse 18 Christ intended to lay the foundation of the church on Petros (Peter) appears not based on sound biblical exegesis, which might in turn be influenced by inadequate translation of the text in its context.

Rather, contextual, and intertextual analysis clearly suggest that Christ intended to build his church on Petra, the confession of Christ's identity (you are the Christ, the son of the living God). Moreover, based on Peter's understanding of the

true identity of Christ, the stewardship responsibility of sharing that divine truth with others was placed on Peter together with other believers.

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