

Matthew 16:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Analysis

Jesus makes pivotal declaration: 'And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it' (Greek: σὺ εἶ Πέτρος, καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, 'you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church'). The word play: Πέτρος (Peter, masculine) and πέτρα (rock, feminine). Debate exists whether 'rock' is Peter himself, Peter's confession, or Christ. The 'church' (ἐκκλησία) is Jesus' assembly, not institutional religion. 'Gates of hell' (πύλαι ᾗδου) represent death's power - the church will endure despite persecution and martyrdom. 'Prevail' (κατισχύω) means 'overcome, have strength against' - death cannot destroy Jesus' church.

Historical Context

This is the first mention of 'church' in the Gospels, occurring at Caesarea Philippi near pagan temples. Jesus establishes new covenant community. The rock imagery echoes Isaiah 28:16's foundation stone. Protestant-Catholic debate over this verse centers on whether Peter has primacy (Catholic view) or whether the confession of Christ is the foundation (Protestant view). Early church understood Peter as foundational apostle (Galatians 2:9, Ephesians 2:20) without later papal developments. The church's indestructibility has been validated through 2,000 years of persecution.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What is the 'rock' upon which Jesus builds His church?
2. How has the church demonstrated indestructibility despite persecution, heresy, and internal failures?
3. What does it mean that 'gates of hell' cannot prevail - is the church attacking or defending?

Interlinear Text

καὶ γὰρ	δέ	σοι	λέγω	ὅτι	σὺ	εἶ	Πέτρος	καὶ	ἐπὶ
also	And	unto thee	I say	That	thou	art	Peter	and	upon
G2504	G1161	G4671	G3004	G3754	G4771	G1488	G4074	G2532	G1909
ταύτη	τῇ	πέτρᾳ	οἰκοδομήσω	μου	τὴν	ἐκκλησίαν	καὶ		
G3778	G3588	rock	I will build	my	G3588	church	and		
		G4073	G3618	G3450		G1577	G2532		
πύλαι	ᾗτου	οὐ	κατισχύσουσιν	αὐτῆς					
the gates	of hell	not	prevail against	it					
G4439	G86	G3756	G2729	G846					

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 28:16 (Parallel theme): Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

Colossians 1:18 (Parallel theme): And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

John 1:42 (Parallel theme): And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.

Acts 2:47 (Parallel theme): Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

1 Timothy 3:15 (Parallel theme): But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Hebrews 12:28 (Parallel theme): Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

Isaiah 54:17 (Parallel theme): No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.

Ephesians 5:32 (Parallel theme): This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Proverbs 24:7 (Parallel theme): Wisdom is too high for a fool: he openeth not his mouth in the gate.

Ephesians 3:10 (Parallel theme): To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,