

I Will Build My Church

The Purpose and Characteristics of Christ's Church

7 The Church is "One", "Holy", "Catholic", and "Apostolic", Part 6

March 1, 2020

Ephesians 4:4-16

4 *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

8 Therefore it says, "*WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN.*"

9 (Now this *expression*, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth?

10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)

11 And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers,

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;

15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ,

16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

To the Glory of God

Now we're starting this new year by examining just what the Bible teaches about the "Church". And over the last several weeks, we have been looking at the four Characteristics of a true, biblical Church as defined by the Nicene Creed (AD325).¹ And that attempt by the early Church at arriving at "Orthodoxy" (Right Believing) was that a real Church was:

1. One
2. Holy
3. Catholic
4. Apostolic

... and we spent several weeks looking at what it means for the Church to be "One" and "Holy". And so, today, I want to examine what it means for the Church of Jesus to be both "Catholic" and "Apostolic".

III. A Biblical Church is "Catholic"

Galatians 3:26-29

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

So, all throughout the 2,000-year history of the Church, there have been many efforts at distinguishing the *true* Church from the counterfeits, and to make a difference between legitimate Christianity and that which is false. And so, words and terms like "Orthodox", "Biblical", and "Fundamental" were periodically developed to help

¹ The Creed was updated in AD 381 at the *Council of Constantinople*; but the section concerning the Characteristics of an "Orthodox" Church remained the same.

identify the Church of Jesus from ungodly cults and apostate religious groups. And back during the early years of Christianity, the Church began to use the word "Catholic".

Catholic: (Gr *katholikos*) *whole; entire; complete; general; universal.*

Now even though the concept of Christ's Church being "Universal" is clearly taught throughout Scripture, the word "*Catholic*" itself is *not* found anywhere in the New Testament. But an *adverbial* form of this word, however, does appear once in **The Acts 4:18**:

And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all (katholou) in the name of Jesus.

Local Versus Universal

The best understanding of the word "Catholic", in English, is found in the concept of the Church being "Universal". But as we use this concept, we must take great heed that we understand that the Church that Jesus set up is "Universal" primarily *in opposition to* the concept that the Christian Church is "Local". But, even then, there is some confusion. And so, we must explain.

It is true that the Church of Jesus is "indigenous" in the sense that its members are taken from the *local* population. And so, the Church congregates or assembles those local people together. But we must always keep in mind that the Church's *Nature* is *heavenly*, not *earthly*.

And that heavenly Nature is found in the Person of the Lord Christ, the Head of the Church. So, therefore, this *local* Body can participate in the very *same* Oneness, the very *same* Holiness, and the very *same* Apostolicity that all the other true Churches participate in, *regardless* of where they may be located. So, in a very real sense, the concept of the Church being "Catholic" (Universal) is found in its other Attributes:

- ✓ Oneness
- ✓ Holiness
- ✓ Apostolicity

... appearing *everywhere* and *anytime* there has been a true Church or true Christians.

So, the Church's "catholicity" is the acknowledgement that the Church is NOT like the Jewish nation of Israel. And the Church is NOT like the nation of Israel in that the Church is infinitely *superior* to the nation of Israel. We must remember that everything in the Old Testament was *limited* and pertained to this earth and this life. And every vital and important Issue of the First Covenant (i.e., the Temple, Circumcision, Nationality, the Sabbath, Ethnicity, etc.) was all *temporary* Signs and Symbols of the infinitely *superior* Reality of the New Covenant.

So, for example, the Nation of Israel was *limited* to its physical boundaries, while the Church is entirely free from those physical Limitations. Under the inferior Old Covenant, a "saved" person had to have a Jewish mother, he had to be a citizen of the nation of Israel, and he had to be physically circumcised. So, things like Nationality, Ethnicity, Bloodline, Sex, physical Location, and the outward Mark in the foreskin were not simply *important*, but they were part and parcel to what it meant for people to be in right standing with God.

But under the superior New Covenant, all those temporary and earthly "Signs", "Qualities", "Characteristics", and Symbols are *completely* irrelevant.

Galatians 3:28

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 5:6

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.

Romans 2:28&29

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

The Revelation 21:22

I saw no temple in it [the City of New Jerusalem], for the Lord God the

Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

So, the way to understand the *catholicity* of the Church is that Christ's Church *does* and *should* believe and teach the very *same* things about the Essential Truths of the Scriptures, *everywhere* and *anywhere* two or more are gathered in His Name.

The History of the Term "Catholic"

Now the very first recorded use of this word "Catholic" was written by Ignatius of Antioch in his letter to the Smyrnaeans, in AD 112. In that letter, Ignatius mentions that:

"...where Jesus Christ is, there is the *universal* church"

Early Church Leaders believed and taught that all genuine believers trusted one God, confessed one Faith, had one Baptism, and shared one Mission. So, in that sense, the "*catholic* Church" was the single, real, and *authentic* Church which Christ established and over which He is Head, as opposed to the other religious groups that laid claim to being "Christian" but were teaching and believing things *contrary* to the Word of God.

From about the third Century on, the word "Catholic" came to be used as particularly synonymous with "biblical Orthodoxy". So, the "*catholic* Church" stood apart from and was opposed to the various heretical groups. Around AD 200, Clement of Alexandria wrote:

"The one Church is violently split up by the heretics into many sects. In essence, in idea, in origin, in pre-eminence we say that the ancient Catholic Church is the only church. This Church brings together, by the will of the one God through the one Lord... those who were already appointed [for Salvation]; whom God fore-ordained, knowing before the world's foundation that they would be righteous."²

By the middle of the 4th Century, in addition to the ideas of

² Henry Bettenson, ed., *The Early Christian Fathers: A Selection from the Writings of the Fathers from St. Clement to St. Athanasius* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), page 247

"Authentic" and "Orthodox" (as opposed to False and Heretical), the word "Catholic" had incorporated the idea of the Church's extensive reach to every land and every class of person. Cyril of Jerusalem lecturing to those believers preparing for Baptism, around AD 350, clearly had this idea in mind when he wrote that the Church:

"... is called, 'catholic' then because it extends over all the world, from one end of the earth to the other; and because it teaches universally and completely one and all of the doctrines which ought to come to men's knowledge, concerning things both visible and invisible, heavenly and earthly; and because it brings into subjection to godliness the whole race of mankind, governors and governed, learned and unlearned; and because it universally treats and heals the whole class of sins, which are committed by soul and body and possesses in itself every form, of virtue which is named, both in deeds and words, and in every kind of spiritual gifts."³

And as we have already seen, in AD 381, the Nicene Creed defined the attributes of the true Christian Church as being:

One, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

... And by the middle of the next Century, the word "Catholic" was inserted into the Apostle's Creed. By the 11th Century, when eastern and western Churches divided, the Churches in the East preferred to use the term "Orthodox" (as in the "Greek Orthodox Church" or the "Orthodox Church") to describe themselves, while those in the West maintained the word "Catholic", even though both words essentially mean the same thing.

So, from the 2nd to the modern period, the word "Catholic" was a descriptive term used for *exclusion* and *definition* in the same way that "regular" is distinguished from "irregular". And we still do that today as we tend to categorize religious groups or organizations as being "cults" or "Evangelical".

As more regional heresies sprang up in the early Church, the term "Catholic" was important in the battle for Truth. Powerful men of God like Augustine refuted the heretics (or the *schismatics* as they were

³ Cyril of Jerusalem, in his Catechetical Lectures, trans. E. W. Gifford, *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, vol 7 (reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), ppg 139-140

called then) by asking how they could claim to be a part of the one, true, universal Church when their Teachings could not be found in the Bible.

In the early fifth Century, Vincent, a monk, who ministered on the island of Lerins (Gaul), laid down a three-fold "Test" for what is truly "Catholic", which has been taught and used by various groups ever since. This came to be known as "The Vincentian Canon" and has been used, particularly by the Roman religious system, to evaluate the Worth or Value of various Traditions. The *Vincentian Canon* described "catholicity" as:

"That which has been believed everywhere, always, and by all."⁴

Now, as you can imagine, the *Vincentian Canon* proved to be a problem for the sixteenth Century Reformers who, categorically, *rejected* human or Church Tradition as being the "Standard" for defining what is "True and Right". The Reformers developed a different method to determine "catholicity" that was summarized by the Latin phrase "Sola Scriptura". This new Standard⁵ taught that all Truth, all Church Doctrine, all Godly Counsel, and the basis of all Correction must be Scripture and Scripture ALONE. And this is the Standard to which we hold firmly in this Church.

But during the early days of the Reformation, various Leaders of the Roman religious system frequently mocked the Reformers by asking, "*Where was your Church before Luther?*", because everyone knew that the "Protestant Church" had not always existed physically on the earth. But the Reformers would respond by saying that, in reality, they were actually *more* "Catholic" (Orthodox) than the Romans because of their strict adherence to the Word of God.

Much to the dismay of the Romans, the Reformers *perfected* the Argument that the term "Catholic" had more to do with continuing with the universal *Teaching of the Apostles* (**The Acts 2:42**) than it did with any *physical* or *temporal* Continuity. And both Luther and Calvin gave primacy to the "*always*" in the definition of Catholicity rather than to the "*everywhere*" or "*by all*" aspects of the Vincentian Canon. And these men defined "Universal" or "Catholic" as a *Category*, *not* primarily

⁴ <https://episcopalchurch.org/library/glossary/vincentian-canon>

⁵ While it is true that "*Sola Scriptura*" was formulated by the 16th Century Reformers; it is also true that the method of using Scripture and Scripture alone to determine Divine Truth that was able to "save the soul" and "bind the conscience" (bring about Conviction) was used from the very beginning of the Church.

about “space”, but about “time”, and *not* about the Church’s “spatial extensiveness” but about its “temporal continuity”. So, the Reformers spoke and wrote often about how much in common the Protestant Church had with the inspired Scriptures of the Apostles rather than with the historic or church Traditions.

And one of the most famous and most used of the Protestant Catechisms, “The Heidelberg Catechism”, asks:

“What believest thou concerning the Holy Catholic Church of Christ’?”

...and then it goes on to answer:

“That the Son of God, from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers defends, and preserves to himself, by His Spirit and Word, out of the whole human race, a church, chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith; and that I am, and forever shall remain, a living member thereof”⁶

Zacharias Ursinius, a German Reformed Theologian of the 16th Century (and Father of the Heidelberg Catechism), commented on that Article by saying:

“The Church is called, catholic, *first* in respect to place; because it is spread over the whole world, and is not tied or restricted to any particular place, kingdom, or certain succession. The catholicity of the Church, in this respect, commenced at the time of the Apostles; because prior to this time the Church was circumscribed in narrow limits, being confined to the Jewish nation. *Secondly*, in respect to men, because the Church is gathered from all classes of men of every nation. *Thirdly*, in respect of time, because it will endure throughout every period of the world: “I will be with you always even to the end of the world”; and because there is only one true Church of all times, which is of such a peculiar constitution as to embrace the whole world, and not to be tied down to any one particular place”⁷

So, the Reformers argued that since Rome had *knowingly* and *repeatedly* differed from the Apostolic Church’s Teaching, it had

⁶ The Heidelberg Catechism Article 54

⁷ Zacharias Ursinus, *The Commentary of Zacharias Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism*, trans. G.W. Willard (1852; reprint Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1985)ppg. 289-290

invalidated their claim to being “Catholic”, and was, thus, in need of both Repentance and Correction. Dr. Mark Dever says,:

“Among modern Protestants, the idea of ‘*temporal catholicity*’, that is, that the Church existing now is the same Church (in its teaching) in which the Apostles were... has replaced or at least largely supplanted any thoughts of ‘catholicity’ in terms of ‘space’ alone.”⁸

So, in that sense, the concept of *Catholicity* among Protestants has become blended with the concept of *Apostolicity*, and is practically indistinguishable. So, to a Protestant, for the Church to be “Catholic” is for her to also be “Apostolic” in that what makes local assemblies in Union with the worldwide and universal Church is in what we believe and teach, and *not* simply in our physical presence around the globe, and that what we believe and teach is in accord with what the Apostles wrote infallibly in sacred Scripture.

So, Protestants believe that the Church’s *continuity* in the earth (our *Catholicity*) does *not* come from mere physicality, but from the fact that we believe and proclaim Truth, the very *same* sacred Divine Truth that God revealed to the Apostles and that is found in the Bible. But, that also means that the Roman system is really NOT “Catholic”, at all, because they have *knowingly* and *repeatedly* erred from biblical Orthodoxy.

So, every time we proclaim the biblical Gospel, every time we exposit the Scriptures rightly and fully, every time we engage in Communion according to Scripture, every time we study the Scriptures to learn their true meaning, every time we pray to the Father, by the Power of the Holy Spirit, in the Name of the Son, every time we believe what the Bible teaches, every time we baptize a truly saved individual, every time we trust in the finished Work of Christ alone for our Salvation, and every time we engage in Church Discipline, we are announcing and reaffirming the ongoing *Catholicity* of the Christian Church. And may God help us to always continue to do this till Jesus comes.

⁸ Mark E Dever *The Church; One Holy Catholic and Apostolic* (2004 P&R; Phillipsburg, NJ) page 74

IV. A Biblical Church is “Apostolic”

Ephesians 2:19-22

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

We believe in only one Church. There is, and there has only ever been, one true Communion of believers united in the Lord Jesus Christ. And we believe that the one, true Church is a *holy* Church. And we have been *made holy* by the justifying Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the sanctifying Work of God the Holy Spirit. So, we believe in One, Holy, and Catholic Church, the universal worldwide Church united across time and space around the Divine Truth of Scripture. And we also believe that this One, Holy, and Catholic Church is also *Apostolic*.

But what does it mean to say that the Christian Church is “Apostolic”? To those in the Roman religious system and many Anglicans, being “Apostolic” means that the Church adheres to extra-biblical Tradition where the Leadership can be traced all the way back to Peter. And, thus, those who are in positions of Authority in the modern Church have the very *same* Authority as did the original Apostles.

Many Charismatics, Pentecostals, and Full Gospel folk have a slightly different view. Many of them believe and teach that the true mark of being “Apostolic” is that the very *same* Miracles and Healings and supernatural Signs and Wonders are manifested through the Church today as was carried out by the Apostles in **The Book of the Acts**.

Still others believe that being “Apostolic” means that the Church must rid itself of the “shackles” of “denominational hindrances” and to start independent “house churches”, as **The Book of the Acts** records.

The sad Reality is that the vast majority of those in the modern Church really don't have a clue as to what it might mean for the Church of Jesus to be “Apostolic”. They just know that the term sounds sort of “biblical”, and so they like it.

Built on the Foundation of the Apostles

So, just what does it mean for the One, Holy, and Catholic Church to be “Apostolic”? According to the Bible itself, the Church of Jesus is:

Ephesians 2:20b

...built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets...

So, in *this* sense, the Church is not only “Apostolic”, but is also “Prophetic” in the sense that the Foundation on which the Church is built is the:

- Apostles
- Prophets

But *why* did Paul say this? What does it mean that the Church is built on the “**foundation of the apostles and prophets**”? Is the Roman religious system correct to say that Peter was the “rock” on which the Church is built? Is that what Paul was teaching here? No.

As we have already learned in this Study (Part 1), the Foundation on which the Church has been built is *not* inherently the man, Peter, but the group that he represented (The Apostles), and the *Doctrine* or the *Divine Revelation* of God that the Apostles received from God (through Peter), that “**Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God**”.

In **Ephesians 2:19-22**, we see three overlapping images of the Christian Church. God the Holy Spirit moved upon the Apostle Paul to write down that the Church is:

- **A Kingdom:** with citizens drawn from the various nations of the world (**Ephesians 2:19a**).
- **The Household of God:** a family of Faith (**Ephesians 2:19b**).
- **A Holy Temple:** in which God dwells by His Spirit (**Ephesians 2:21&22**).

And all three of those metaphors are built on the Foundation of the Apostles (plural, not just Peter). Now a building is only as strong as its foundation. And yet we see the Apostles as unworthy sinners, who were saved by Grace, and *not* men who possessed moral perfection in

themselves. So, image how unstable the Church would be if it were built on a man whom Jesus called “satan” (Peter) (**Matthew 16:23**), or any of the other Apostles, who in their own power, would have never even been saved.

We admire the Apostles (and rightly so), *not* because of what they were in their own strength, but rather what they became and did and taught, “by Grace”. The rag-tag group of men, who became the Leaders of the early Church, was so unimpressive that the collective description of them by the most prominent Bible scholars of that day (The Sanhedrin Court) was:

The Acts 4:13b

... they were uneducated and untrained men...

... and that Reality led even these lost religious people to marvel at these Apostles.

The Acts 4:13c

... they were amazed, and *began* to recognize them (the Apostles) as having been with Jesus.

So, it was that these men had “been with Jesus” that made them who they were. It was *not* their *own* glory, *not* their *own* wisdom, *not* their *own* virtue, *not* their *own* spirituality, and certainly *not* their *own* personal righteousness that allowed them and compelled them to build the Church of God. It was simply that these men had been with Jesus. And *that* explained their Mission, their Authority, and their Power. And this is why, against all odds, they *succeeded* in establishing Christianity on the earth, not by who they were, but by and through what they taught and Whose they were.

But why does Paul put it like this, that the Church is built not only on the Apostles, but also on the Prophets? It is because the Divine Revelation of God that came to Man came primarily through these two groups of men.

The Old Testament was revealed to Man by God primarily through the Prophets, and the New Testament was revealed to Man by God primarily through the Apostles. And by placing the Apostles ahead of the Prophets in this verse, Paul was signifying what each of the

Apostles knew and believed and taught that the Revelation that came to the New Testament Apostles was *infinitely* superior to the partial Revelation given to the Old Testament Prophets.

Yet every single Word of the Old Testament is true. Every Word is Inspired, and is just as Infallible, and just as Inerrant as the Words of the New Testament. But every Word of the Old Testament is also *incomplete* and a *partial* Revelation of God containing shadows and signs and types of the *full* and *finished* and *complete* and *final* Revelation of God contained in the New Testament.

The New Covenant (Testament) is an infinitely *superior* Covenant because it is based on infinitely *superior* Promises, made by an infinitely *superior* High Priest, Who offered and infinitely *superior* Sacrifice. So, in *that* sense, the Revelation of the Apostles in the New Testament *completes* and *fulfills* and *finishes* the partial Revelation of God through the Prophets in the Old.

So, based on **Ephesians 2**, what are the Hallmarks of Apostolicity? As we survey the New Testament, looking at the Apostles and their Ministry, what do we learn about what it means for the Church to be Apostolic? At least five things appear to us:

1. An Apostolic Church is "Christ Centered" in its Preaching.
2. An Apostolic Church's Teaching is from the Scriptures Alone.
3. An Apostolic Church is totally Dependent on God's Grace.
4. An Apostolic Church is Faith Seeking in its Evangelism.
5. An Apostolic Church is God Glorifying in its Vision.

... and let me expound on just one of these:

1. An Apostolic Church was Christ Centered in its Preaching

Ephesians 2:20

having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*,

1 Peter 2:4-10

And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual

sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For *this* is contained in Scripture: "**BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.**" This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "**THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone,**" and, "**A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE**"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this *doom* they were also appointed. But you are **A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION**, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were **NOT A PEOPLE**, but now you are **THE PEOPLE OF GOD**; you had **NOT RECEIVED MERCY**, but now you have **RECEIVED MERCY**.

Now as we studied previously, over the last 20 centuries, there has been much discussion about Jesus being the Foundation of the Church. And in one sense, that is true. Paul himself said:

1 Corinthians 3:10&11

According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the Foundation of our *Salvation*, which is primarily what Paul was referring to here. As an Apostle, Paul was one of those who, "like a wise master builder", "laid a Foundation", or he taught people the same Divine Revelation about Who Jesus is that Peter and the other Apostles was given by God. After that, "another" (Teacher/Pastor/Elder, etc.) "is building upon it" or explaining that Revelation in even greater detail and application.

But as it applies very narrowly to the Church itself, Paul went much deeper into the distinction between the Foundation on which the Church is built and the Cornerstone which holds up and secures the Foundation.

Ephesians 2:20

having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*,

Now Paul was *not* teaching here that the Church's Foundation is frail and sinful Man, but rather it is that Divine Revelation which proceeds forth from these specially called and chosen and specially gifted men that are known as:

- ✓ Apostles
- ✓ Prophets

So, the Foundation of the Church is that Divine Revelation which both the Apostles and Prophets personally witnessed, and which they taught, and which they were "moved upon" by the Holy Spirit to pen down in Holy Scripture. But now look closely at the end of **Ephesians 2:20**, which says:

...Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*

Now the KJV renders this, "the chief corner stone", which is redundant as *all* Cornerstones in buildings in the first Century were "chief" or "main".

But the concept of a "cornerstone" reflects the knowledge of architecture in Israel and the Middle East during Jesus' earthly Ministry of the 1st Century. A "cornerstone" was used to facilitate the Foundation and allow no sinking or settling of the Foundation due to soil composition. So, the Cornerstone was a type of "foundation" *under* the foundation which served to make the foundation on which the building was built sure and steady.

The closest thing that we have today to a Cornerstone are "footings" or "footers", which are trenches dug underneath the foundation in which are placed steel rods and poured with concrete. The steel rods of the footings are connected to the foundation, and as the concrete is poured for the foundation both the footings and the foundation become one piece.

In the 1st Century, however, a building's foundation was secured with a "cornerstone" which served the same purpose. So, in Paul's analogy, Christ Jesus Himself personally undergirds the Revelation of

the Apostles and Prophets as to Who Jesus is, which is the Foundation of the Church. So, Jesus plays two roles here:

1. *Personally* being the Focus and Subject of the Divine Revelation (which is the Foundation of the Church) which was in turn Divinely revealed to the Apostles and Prophets in Holy Scripture.
2. *Personally* being the Support and Foundation and Savior of the Apostles and Prophets themselves- as sinful fallen men.

Now the great Mystery surrounding this Issue does not stop with the understanding of and the proclamation of the Apostles and Prophets, but goes further as every single believer, both then and now, must agree with, believe, and confess publicly the very *same* Divine Revelation about Who Jesus is in order to be saved and be a part of the one true Church.

Romans 10:6-17

But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: "DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART, 'WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?' (that is, to bring Christ down), or 'WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)." But what does it say? "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART" — that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same *Lord* is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!" However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?" So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

In fact, as Martin Luther observed:

"All who agree with the confession of Peter [in **Matthew 16:16**] are Peters themselves setting a sure foundation."⁹

The Lord is still building His Church with "living stones".

1 Peter 2:5

you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Therefore, whether you understand the "Rock" of **Matthew 16:18** to be Peter (as representative of all the Apostles) as a "small stone" placed on the *mountainous* Rock of the Divine Revelation of Who Jesus is, or as referring to Peter being one with the rest of the Twelve Apostles in his *confession* of that Revelation, the basic Truth is the same:

The Foundation of the Church is what the two main groups of Revelation receiving men believed and taught, the sacred Scriptures.

However, we must not stop there and further conclude that the Lord of the Church is the Cornerstone of the Foundation of Divine Revelation. And all who are saved and who make up the one true Church will agree with that Divine Revelation, and will confess it with their own mouths, publicly.

And that categorically means that the "Rock" on which the Church is built is certainly *not* Peter himself (as Rome and others teach). The Rock on which Christ's Church is built is the Divine Revelation that the Apostles and Prophets *believed and taught*, that the faithful Church has *always believed and taught*, and that every single individual believer has *believed and taught* from the beginning of the church until now:

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God

Without believing and teaching and publicly confessing this Divine Revelation, there is no Salvation, there is no Christianity, and

⁹ John MacArthur; *Commentary on Matthew*

there is no Church. It is that important. There is absolutely no wavering or debate about this Issue; *nobody* is saved and goes to Heaven apart from believing and confessing the Divine Revelation which undergirds the Christian Church.

The Origin of the Word "Apostle"

Now the word that we use in English as "Apostle" is actually a transliteration of an ancient Hebrew word "*shalia*", which at the time of Christ was someone in the Jewish community who acted as an official representative of another, most commonly the Sanhedrin, the Court of Justice, who administered the Law of God to the people. By virtue of his official commission (ordination), a *shalia* had the Authority to speak for someone else.

A good analogy of this would be for a father to tell one of his children to speak to the other children to tell them it is time to eat. The child who is sent is acting on the father's Authority to call the others to stop whatever they are doing and come. And if they heed the messenger, they will be blessed by being able to eat. But if they refuse to listen to the representative of the father, they will have to answer to the father for their disobedience. And by failing to heed the words of the officially commissioned shalia, the others are actually disrespecting the father, not the messenger.

Luke 10:16

"The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me."

The Apostles were Personally chosen and commissioned by Jesus Himself, and Jesus imputed to these men not only the Authority to speak in His Name, but the ability to bring Divine Credibility to what they spoke with Signs and Wonders and Miracles and various Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 2:1-4

For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away *from it*. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just

penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

A shalia also had the power to act on behalf of another. He had something like a “power of attorney” that is used today, which authorizes one person to obligate another person in legal and medical matters. It is also like the Authority given to foreign diplomats who are empowered to speak on behalf of the leader of another nation, and even enter into treaty obligations through his own signature.

The Apostle acted in a very similar way for Jesus. They spoke on His behalf broadcasting the very *same* Message that Jesus Himself preached (The Gospel). But it is important to understand that these men had absolutely *no* Authority to make up their *own* “gospel”, or to speak or do things contrary to what Jesus had spoken and done. But they acted for Jesus, teaching, preaching, baptizing, disciplining, and performing miracles.

So, the Divine Revelation that was received and articulated and written down and confirmed by the Apostles (and Prophets) acting as authorized Agents of God the Father, on behalf of God the Son, through the Power of God the Holy Spirit, is what *established* the Christian Church on the earth. And so, being, “Apostolic” has nothing to do with anyone physically laying hands on other people down through the centuries, but rather what the Church actually believes and teaches. And so, by heralding the biblical Gospel, by expositing the Scriptures rightly and fully, by loving the Word of God and striving to obey it, and by holding all those who profess to be saved to the one single Standard of Biblical Holiness, the Church is and will always remain “Apostolic”.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.