

Foundational Matters

by John Hines

Why the church of Christ? It is not difficult to find out who founded the individual denominations. Today, let us turn to what the church is founded on. Upon Peter's answer of the Lord's identity, "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,*" Jesus would say, "... *You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it*" ([Matthew 16:13-19](#)). So, we have the foundation. While the original words for "*Peter*" and "*rock*" are similar, they are not the same. Peter's name means "a piece of rock." The rock the church is built on – this word means a great slab. So, is the foundation of the church Jesus' confession of Peter or Peter's confession of the Christ? It is the latter, as Jesus Himself is the Cornerstone ([Matthew 21:42](#)). The church is built upon Jesus.

The church is not built upon Peter, at least not in the way Catholicism and others teach. Yes, [Ephesians 2:20](#) speaks of the church, "*being built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.*" This is not meant to individually elevate the apostles. It is recognizing the teaching and work, as Jesus was working through the Spirit and through them ([John 16:14-15](#)). Jesus is the Cornerstone. Jesus is the Rock upon which the church is built.

Other fallible men are not the foundation – From councils, to conferences, to church boards, to elders, to preachers – None have the authority of Jesus. "Because I/we say so," has no recognizable weight behind it. It serves no other purpose than to be an example of lording things over the flock. We are mindful of the Ephesians' call to unity – one Lord ([Ephesians 4:5](#)). He is the foundation.

Tradition is not the foundation – Some denominations overtly claim tradition as authoritative. Why is something done? Because it is how the church has always done it. This line of thinking can be done overtly or covertly. When someone asks "why?", this reason has absolutely no standing. Tradition is not the foundation of the church.

In looking at the religious landscape today, how many bodies can truly claim to be founded upon the foundation of Jesus? The Son of God said it – "*Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord'...*" ([Matthew 7:22](#)). It's one thing to say it. It's another thing to do it. Those who actually obey are ones who have dug deep and stand upon Jesus the solid Rock ([Matthew 7: 24-25](#)).

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