

## Christ Our Rock

The Rock of Ages: Christ as Cornerstone

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Although it is not something we in America would necessarily take note of, there was a significant Israelite anniversary this past week. It occurred on Wednesday. If you will remember (from Genesis 22:17), God promised Abraham that his descendants would possess the gate of their enemies. Mr. Armstrong always interpreted this to mean that the vital sea-gates around the world, particularly the sea-gates, such as the Panama Canal, Suez Canal, the Cape of Good Hope, Cape Horn, Hong Kong, and other places like that, would be held in Israelitish hands. Therefore the Israelite nations would control shipping and commerce, and the movement of people and goods all around the earth. And of course, in times of war they would be strategic military points.

Well, the great Rock of Gibraltar is one of those great sea-gates. It controls commerce and shipping in and out of the Mediterranean. This past Wednesday it celebrated its 300<sup>th</sup> year in British hands.

I would like to read a bit from an article I got out of the *International Herald Tribune* this past Wednesday. It is titled, "The Rock Celebrates as Spain Seethes."

Gibraltar—The Rock celebrated its 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary Wednesday of its capture by British forces, escalating tensions that have been building all summer between Spain and Britain over control of the territory.

So we know from this that there are things simmering under the surface, although it is just from Spain. Most of the residents, as we will see, want to remain under British rule.

Going down a bit farther in the article:

Gibraltar, a ridge of land near Spain's southern tip that is about 5 square kilometres (or 2 square miles) of limestone and shale, has been under British rule since August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1704, when it was captured by a British and Dutch fleet during the War of the Spanish Succession. The Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 formally ceded Gibraltar to Britain, but Spain says that its representatives were not allowed to fully participate in the negotiations. It calls the treaty an 'imposed agreement' rather than a willful one.

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Nearly 99 percent of the population rejected the sharing of sovereignty with Spain in a November 2002 referendum. On the eve of the celebrations Spain's foreign minister Miguel Angel Moratinos called on Britain to give up what he described as 'the last European Colony' on the continent. 'It is very strange that in the European Union in the middle of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the military occupation of the part of the territory of one member state by another member state is being commemorated,' he wrote in an opinion article in El Pais, Spain's largest newspaper. Britain has largely dismissed Spanish concerns.

Sounds like a colonial power, does it not?

Just about everyone, though, has seen the awesome, nearly impregnable mass of rock that is Gibraltar if only as the symbol for the Prudential Insurance Company. "Get a piece of the Rock" was how their slogan used to go. I do not know if they use that slogan anymore.

If you think about it, it is only 2 square miles. But, it is such an important piece of real estate, and it is so imposing to look upon, you can understand why it has that effect upon the mind. It really is a source of power, that massive rock called Gibraltar.

Now, as we go through this sermon, I want you to please keep this massive, solid, immovable rock in mind so that you can get an idea of some of the immensity, power, and sheer hugeness of our topic today. Not the topic itself, but the subject of the topic.

I am going to speak about a Rock today—our Rock, Jesus Christ.

By understanding this identification of Him as The Rock, perhaps we can come to a better understanding of Him, and His character, and His place in our lives, and in the church of God, and in the world.

Now, those of you who are here in Charlotte/Fort Mill can see the seal that we have on the wall. It has a great mountain in the background. It is not there just by chance. The mountain is a symbol of God. It is a rock, a huge rock, and it is shown in the distance under which there are sheep grazing. It has been a part of the idea of the church of God from the very beginning.

Christ as a Rock is found in both Testaments. The Hebrews, when they spoke of The Rock in terms of God, used two different words.

The first one you will probably recognize, especially those of you who have studied a great deal into the place of safety, the term *sela*. The other one is not quite as well known, although you may have run across it from time to time, and it is *sur* (pronounced *tsur*); both mean roughly the same thing. They mean rock, crag, cliff, or mountain.

*Sela* specifically means crag, cliff, or rock. *Sur* means rock, boulder, or mountain.

If you want to differentiate between the two, *sur* is the bigger, more massive one. It is the one that is best translated as mountain. It is immense and huge, while *sela* has the idea of a rock as part of a mountain, but a very large rock.

So, if there is any difference, *sur* suggests a more massive rock formation than *sela*. However, both are speaking of large, impressive rocks. So, the difference between them is minimal.

Of course, the Hebrews would use other words if they were talking about stones and such which are smaller, more moveable, more manipulatable rocks.

On the New Testament the primary word is *petra*. When the translators of the Septuagint tried to replace both *sur* and *sela*, they used *petra* most often, rather than to come up with a separate word for each. In the feminine gender, *petra* means "an immovable mass of rock," while *Petros* (which is the name of the Apostle) suggests a moveable stone or boulder. It can be a large rock, but the difference here is moveable. It is something not quite so impressively massive and enduring as *Petra*.

Now, if you will all remember the great rock city in Jordan that is named *Petra*. This is why it is named what it is named.

Before, when people who inhabited the place spoke Aramaic, they called it *Sela*. So, here in that one location we have the two main biblical words for rock—*sela* (the Hebrew/Aramaic word) and *petra* (the Greek word).

Basically, all three of these words mean the same thing. There is hardly a dime's worth of difference between them. All three mean **big, big** rocks.

Deuteronomy 32 is a very important song of Moses. And the idea of The Rock is a major theme within this song.

**Deuteronomy 32:1-4** "Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. Let my teaching drop as the rain, my speech

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distill as the dew, as raindrops on the tender herb, and as showers on the grass. For I proclaim the name of the LORD: Ascribe greatness to our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He.

So, as Moses begins his song here, he begins by saying he wants his words to fall on their ears in a pleasing way as teachings from God. And then he says, "I want to proclaim the name of the Lord, and ascribe greatness to Him." And then the first thing out of his mouth is 'He is the Rock.'

Like I said, this is a very important theme of this whole song. What do you think he meant by 'Rock?'

Thinking about this, if this is the first thing that he said as part of proclaiming the name of the Lord, it give us this idea of The Rock—the preeminence that many of us did not think of before. The first thing that Moses thought of when he thought of God and His Name is The Rock.

It is very interesting. Probably most of us had not thought of it quite in that way. But, evidently Moses thought that was a major image of God as The Rock.

Now, the set up here in verse 3 and 4 suggests that after the word "The Rock," the rest of the verse defines or modifies what The Rock entails. The rest of the verse tells you what you are supposed to get out of this image of The Rock. It is the things that maybe the Israelites or Moses himself was able to understand from this term.

So, if this is the case, God as The Rock implies aspects of perfection because that is the first thing that he mentions—that His work is perfect. It implies justice, truth, and righteousness. When he thought of God as The Rock these qualities came to mind.

So, what qualities come to mind when you think of Gibraltar? Or Half-Dome, or El Capitan, or the Matterhorn, or Mount Rushmore? Or the biggest of them all, Mt. Everest? Or for you in the Pacific Northwest, Mt. Hood; for those of you who have been to Japan, Mt. Fuji? For those of you down in Georgia—Stone Mountain. We could go on all around the world talking about impressive mountains. What do you think of when those images come to mind?

Obviously, 'massive' would be one of the first. Certainly, for the snow-capped ones, you might think of 'majestic.' Those in the Pacific Northwest may not think of stability (!) due

to their memories of Mt. St. Helens; but certainly I would think that to most of us the words enduring, strong, unchanging, reliable, and solid would come to mind. Many of us might just simply say tall, impressive, and beautiful. I have seen pictures of Mt. Fuji done by Japanese artists that are just amazing. Obviously, pictures of them taken with a camera are just downright gorgeous of some of these mountains. Imposing might be another term; immovable. How about just plain 'awesome!'

Now, the Israelites thought of these same qualities when they called God their Rock. Some of these same ideas went through their head when they considered that God was like a Rock. The ideas of enduring, and unchanging describe God's eternity, and His permanence in the universe. Massive, tall, majestic, awesome, impressive, and imposing express His greatness, and His transcendence. Strong and solid picture His power. Stable and reliable describe His faithfulness, truth and justice—things that we can count on to be the same all the time. Beautiful!

**Psalm 49:14** Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall be consumed in the grave, far from their dwelling.

Now, did you see the word 'rock' in there? It is the word 'beauty.' "And their 'rock' shall be consumed in the grave?"

So, for some reason, I do not know why, they thought of this idea of 'rock' as 'beautiful.' It is one of those strange things that I have come across when I was studying this out. The word 'beautiful' in terms of God and in terms of a rock conveys the description of His holy, righteous character.

Obviously, this in Psalm 49 is talking about humans, but it was interesting that this word 'rock' is thought to mean 'beauty.'

You can see some of the things that we can pull out of this term already just from some of these qualities that we think of ourselves when we think of a great massive rock, like a mountain.

As we read Deuteronomy 32 you will notice something:

**Deuteronomy 32:31-33** For their rock is not like our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges. For their vine is of the vine of Sodom and of the fields of Gomorrah; their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are

bitter. Their wine is the poison of serpents, and the cruel venom of cobras.

**Deuteronomy 32:36-38** "For the LOORD will judge His people and have compassion on His servants, when He sees that their power is gone, and there is no one remaining, bond or free. He will say: 'Where are their gods, the rock in which they sought refuge? Who ate the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offering? Let them rise and help you, and be your refuge.

Notice here that other peoples considered their gods to be rocks as well. Not, just the Israelites, but pagan peoples considered their gods to be rocks too. It is the same idea. But, an obvious difference exists between their rocks and Our Rock, and that is what Moses is here describing.

He is showing that their rocks—using the principle of "by their fruits, you shall know them"—produce bad things in society. They produce societies like Sodom and Gomorrah. The words gall, bitter, poison, and venom are word pictures of disappointment, oppression, destruction, violence, cursing, and death. He is saying that is what these other rocks produce. Societies that are nothing but pits, whereas God, Our Rock (verse 36) has compassion on His servants. We can go to other places where it shows that He gives blessings, and He is a God who produces good fruit.

Even in the Israelitish society, if they had followed His Law, it would have produced a society that other nations would envy because it was so prosperous, bountiful, and peaceful. And of course, they did not follow it, and so it ended up that they, too, ended up producing a society like the others around them that was good for nothing but destruction.

We see here that other peoples considered their gods to be rocks.

Now, let us get back to Our Rock in verse 18—another aspect that the Israelites or Moses pulled out of this idea of The Rock:

**Deuteronomy 32:18** Of the Rock who begot you, you are unmindful, and have forgotten the God who fathered you.

The Rock reminded him of God as Creator, and as a Father to the Israelites. Modern cosmologists would call God in this guise The First Cause—The One from which

everything sprang.

Now, the New King James Version has done us a disservice here in this verse because the last clause should not be translated "And have forgotten the God who fathered you." They put that word 'fathered' in there to align with God's masculine character throughout the Bible. However, this is not what it says here. It would be better translated, "have forgotten the God who gave birth to you."

It actually shows a maternal aspect, not a paternal one. The paternal one is found in "The Rock who begot you." He is also here considered the One who bore them, which is very interesting.

In other words, we could say He is both Father and Mother to Israel. What this means is in a normal way that we think about this is that He created them entirely on His own. There was no collaborator to help Him. They did not help Him. There was no other God. Just the One who became both Father and Mother. He begot them and He also gave birth to them. He was the One involved in the entire process. There was no foreign god to help Him.

There is a similar thought in Isaiah 51:1. We use this primarily as a reference to Abraham, but it looks beyond Abraham to God Himself:

**Isaiah 51:1** "Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, you who seek the LOORD: Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you were dug.

Now, if we look back to Abraham, it is obvious that the Israelites were the seed of Abraham. They were the physical descendants of Abraham, and here in the next verse God through Isaiah tells them to go back to the faith of Abraham and Sarah, and return to their beginnings. It is almost like, "Return to your first love. Go back to the faith once delivered," as Bill Cherry talked about earlier today in the sermonette ["Contend for the Faith"].

Behind all this is, "Who made Abraham?" The Rock, which is Jesus Christ, which is the God of the Old Testament. He is the Father, He is The Rock from which we were hewn; from which we were made.

**Deuteronomy 32:15** "But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked; you grew fat, you grew thick, you are obese! Then he forsook God who made him, and

scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation.

Now this is the last of the 'rock' verses in Deuteronomy 32. I went in this fashion because I wanted to go through this one last to jump off into the next parts of my sermon.

If we look at this in terms of safety, and physical deliverance, we can see the connection a bit better, rather than as spiritual salvation. It does include spiritual salvation, but, if you look at it terms of physical deliverance, physical safety, then this idea of God, The Rock of Salvation makes a bit more sense. We can see the process which went from physical to spiritual a bit better.

Now, let us look at it this way:

The land of Israel, as well as the wilderness of Sinai where they wandered for forty years, at the end of which Moses was writing this here in Deuteronomy—these areas boast countless rock formations. Almost the whole Sinai peninsula is mountainous, and much of the physical nation of Israel—Palestine—is mountainous as well. There are countless caves in these mountains. And on top of these mountains many of which contain fortress-like formations which were highly defensible positions. They were great for people who were hiding out, or needed to get away from someone who was chasing them.

So, running to a rock (to an Israelite from the time wanderings onward) provides a measure of safety. When you ran to a rock, whether to a cave, or just up the mountain to a more defensible position on the ridge or peak, that meant deliverance from certain death or destruction. And thus it becomes a metaphor for salvation—for being saved, for being allowed to continue to live.

In I Samuel 23 we will get a picture of this in the life of David. I want you to see how David used the topography of Israel, particularly the area of Judah, and the surrounding areas, to get away from Saul. The rocks of that territory became his fortress, became his places of safety.

**I Samuel 23:19-26** Then the Ziphites came up to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "Is David not hiding with us in strongholds in the woods, in the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon? "Now therefore, O king, come down according to all the desire of your soul to come down; and our part shall be to deliver him into the king's hand. [They were going to betray David to

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Saul.] And Saul said, "Blessed are you of the LORD, for you have compassion on me. "Please go and find out for sure, and see the place where his hideout is, and who has seen him there. For I am told he is very crafty. "See therefore, and take knowledge of all the lurking places where he hides; and come back to me with certainty, and I will go with you. And it shall be, if he is in the land, that I will search for him throughout all the clans of Judah." So they arose and went to Ziph before Saul. But David and his men were in the Wilderness of Maon, in the plain on the south of Jeshimon. When Saul and his men went to seek him, they told David. Therefore he went down to the rock, and stayed in the Wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard that, he pursued David in the Wilderness of Maon. Then Saul went on one side of the mountain, and David and his men on the other side of the mountain. So David made haste to get away from Saul, for Saul and his men were encircling David and his men to take them.

Saul obviously had a much larger force, and he could at some point surround David even though David was playing the game around the top of the mountain.

**I Samuel 23:27** But a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Hasten and come, for the Philistines have invaded the land!"

Great! God sent the Philistines in to protect David for a while, and Saul had to leave off the pursuit for a while.

**I Samuel 23:28-29** Therefore Saul returned from pursuing David, and went against the Philistines; so they called that place the Rock of Escape. Then David went up from there and dwelt in strongholds at En Gedi.

So, he figured that his luck had run out pretty much in the wilderness of Maon, and he had better find another rocky fortress; and so he went to En Gedi. Obviously Saul already knew his hiding places in Maon.

And so, this gives you an idea of the way that the Israelites considered rocks in terms of fortresses, or places of safety. They were their deliverance, their salvation from a pursuing enemy. It is very easy to see.

I want you to notice the introductory description on this Psalm: "To the Chief Musician. A

Psalm of David the servant of the LOORD, who spoke to the LOORD the words of this song on the day that the LOORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. And he said:"

**Psalm 18:1-3** I will love You, O LOORD, my strength. The LOORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength ["rock" again], in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I will call upon the LOORD, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from my enemies.

**Psalm 18:17-19** He delivered me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me, for they were too strong for me. They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the LOORD was my support. He also brought me out into a broad place; He delivered me because He delighted in me.

**Psalm 18:31** For who is God, except the LOORD? And who is a rock, except our God?

You see, David did not leave this idea of a rock in the physical idea of salvation. He immediately promoted it to God, and real salvation—not just deliverance, but he saw beyond that. He saw God as a complete protection both offensive and defensive. If you would go through the rest of this Psalm, you would see that God not only defended him, but God would do things like send down lightning to take care of David's enemies.

Now, most people would say that this is only figurative language. With God, I am not so certain that it is. We obviously saw that God sent the Philistines to distract Saul, and help David; He would do whatever He needs to do to help or protect His anointed for the work that he had to do.

But, you can see here—what really comes out here—is David's trust in God's strength to protect him. He had no doubt whatsoever that, more than just the idea of a rock as a defense, but that God could really protect him. It did not necessarily matter where he was—it mentions here that God made him come out in a broad place. And even in that broad place, because God was on his side, there was protection. He did not necessarily need a physical rock to protect him, because God was that Rock, God was his Shield, God was his fortress.

So, he takes this idea of God as a Rock to another level.

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He carried his High Tower with him all the time because, God was with him! God was David's doughty defense—his impregnable fortress. He was a massive wall on which waves and waves of his enemies could break themselves on.

And as long as God was there to be his defense, there was nothing that his enemies could do to him.

In Psalm 61, I want you to notice that David saw the Rock as a goal also (particularly at the end of verse 2):

**Psalm 61:1-2** Hear my cry, O God; attend to my prayer. From the end of the earth I will cry to You, when my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

You can get a double entendre out of this.

**Psalm 61:2-6** For You have been a shelter for me, a strong tower from the enemy. I will abide in Your tabernacle forever; I will trust in the shelter of Your wings. Selah! For You, O God, have heard my vows; you have given *me* the heritage of those who fear Your name. You will prolong the king's life, his years as many generations.

Do you see how he is elevating this now?

**Psalm 61:7-8** He shall abide before God forever. Oh, prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him! So I will sing praise to Your name forever, that I may daily perform my vows.

God, to him, is a place of safety to which he yearns to go, to be led to. But, it is not just physical safety that he has in mind. He speaks, notice, of his years lasting to many generations. He speaks of praising and abiding forever. He sees the rock as a heritage—an inheritance—an eternal inheritance—for those who fear God. We would call them the saints and the upright.

This is an early formulation of the "New Testament" concept of eternal life. Obviously, this idea was present all along. But, that is how the scholars think of it.

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In Isaiah 26, you would see a similar thing. David was not the only one to have this revealed to him. This was something that God revealed to other prophets.

**Isaiah 26:1-4** In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah [He is speaking of a time in the future]: "We have a strong city; God will appoint salvation for walls and bulwarks. Open the gates, that the righteous nation which keeps the truth may enter in. You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. Trust in the LOORD forever, for in YAH, the LOORD, is everlasting strength.

Now, you did not see the word 'rock' in there did you, if you have a New King James Version? If you look in the margin, you will see that that last phrase, "everlasting strength" is literally "Rock of Ages." And, it should be translated that way too! "For in YAH, the LOORD, is the Rock of Ages." He is the Eternal Rock, and that is the goal that we are pursuing. We want to be just like God. We are being led to that Rock which is higher than we are.

Like I said, this is an Old Testament formulation of the same idea of eternal life that we find in the New Testament, particularly such verses as John 17:3, where eternal life is to know the Father and the Son.

You see, we are being led to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ—The Rock.

So, this idea was not just a new thing in the New Testament. This idea also comes from the Old Testament.

Now, if you think of The Rock in terms of biblical narrative, you will probably think of Moses striking the rock, and getting flowing water. That is in Exodus 17. This is, I think we can say, the earliest idea of The Rock found in scripture—of God as The Rock. But, it is very vague at this point.

**Exodus 17:1-7** Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the LOORD, and camped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink. Therefore the people contended with Moses, and said, "Give us water, that we may drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you contend with me? Why do you tempt the LOORD?" And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, "Why is it you have brought

us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" So Moses cried out to the LOORD, saying, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!" And the LOORD said to Moses, "Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. "Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LOORD, saying, "Is the LOORD among us or not?"

We have water, here, gushing from the rock in Horeb, and it sustains the whole congregation of Israel—2 million or more people, and all their livestock. So, this could not have been a dribble to assuage their thirst. This had to have been a river coming out of the rock. People drink and animals drink a lot of water. And they were thirsty people and animals too. And so, what was performed here was a tremendous miracle.

Here we have a rock, who knows how big it was, but obviously this is one of those words that we talked about earlier—either *sela*, or *sur*—a huge rock. And when Moses struck the rock, it says, which God told him to do, a big crack opened, and water came out.

I am sure that it made a huge pool so that the people could come and drink and lead their animals to drink as well. This is the picture that we need to have in mind. Now, when God gives drink for His people, He does not give a trickle.

In Numbers 20:1-12, which I will not read, the Israelites were in Kadesh and were once again without water. They were about ready to kill Moses again. God told him to speak to the rock, and He would perform that same miracle in Kadesh that He performed here at Massah, and Meribah.

But, Moses said, "*Why do I have to do this for you, etc?*" And so, he strikes the rock twice (instead of speaking to it) and God does respond; He performs the miracle, but Moses is punished for disobeying God because he did not go by God's instructions. He is told that he cannot go into the land for doing this because he has misrepresented God in this act before the people.

These are two examples that we need as we move forward in this sermon.

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Now, there is one more thing that I need to add. The Jews have a tradition that the rock that Moses struck in Kadesh (the second time, in Numbers 20) was the same rock as in Rephidim. Now these two places are many miles apart, but the Jews have this tradition that the rock followed them throughout their wilderness wanderings, and when there was a need for water, it was there.

This is a tradition. I do not know the certainty of it, but if you will go to I Corinthians 10, you will see that the Apostle Paul draws on this imagery. The physical rock may not have followed them, but *The Rock* did. He led them:

**I Corinthians 10:1-4** Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual [supernatural rock—*Petra*] Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.

Did you notice that Rock followed them? That is what Paul is drawing on here—this Jewish tradition that The Rock of Rephidim followed them throughout the wilderness wanderings.

But, he is saying that the truth of the matter is that you need not worry about that physical rock. It was the Spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was not some other god, or some different god of the Old Testament. It was Christ.

The Rock that Moses struck was symbolic of the Son of God. He is The Rock. Paul is saying very specifically (you cannot get around it), that the God of the Old Testament—Yahweh—Yah as we saw it there in Isaiah 26:4—is Jesus Christ. The One who is called The Lord in the Old Testament is the same as The Word, Jesus Christ—Same God. He was The One who supplied Israel with manna and water, led them across the wilderness, delivered them from all their enemies, and placed them squarely in the land of promise.

He did all those things for them. In simple terms, all that God was in the Old Testament is what Jesus Christ is today!

Remember the scripture? "Jesus Christ—the same yesterday, today, and forever!" (Hebrews 13)

He was the same God then that He is now! He has the same powers now that He had then. He has the same character now that He had then. He deals with us as He dealt with them. If He said one thing back there, He means it today! That Rock was Christ.

**John 4:5-11** So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water?"

"You cannot reach! You do not have a bucket! How can I ask you for water?" Obviously, she did not get it.

**John 4:12-14** "Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?" Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again [meaning, this water of Jacob's well] but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

Now, here is further proof that The Rock of the Old Testament is the same in the New Testament as He was back then. He is still giving His people water, gushing out as much as they need—great rivers of living water, not still like in a well, but moving water like from a spring, gushing out with some force behind it. Maybe you could think of a geyser just spewing water out as much as is needed. It is flowing water that bestows eternal life.

**John 7:37-38** On the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

And then John helps us to understand what He means here:

**John 7:39** But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

So, it is obvious that water, here, is a symbol of God's Holy Spirit—the essence of God by which He sustains each Christian, and enables to have the mind of Christ, and to live a Godly life all the way into Eternal Life.

As we find in another place, it is the down payment of eternal life. It is the life of God in us. It is a necessary part of our relationship with God; and it flows from the heart of the Rock—Jesus Christ—who now sits at the right hand of God as our heavenly High Priest. It is His job, as The Rock out of which flows this stream of living water, to dispense the Holy Spirit to each one of us as much as we need, as much as we can handle.

The Rock is still gushing out water, and it is open to us to drink.

**Matthew 16:13-15** When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

He was not necessarily interested in what others thought—He was trying to get to something.

**Matthew 16:16-18** Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. "And I also say to you that you are Peter [*petros*], and [but] on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

"This Rock" is *Petra*—the feminine, not the masculine. So, what we have here is that

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Jesus Christ is The Rock on which the church of God is founded. He is that great, massive, craggy rock—that mountain—on which the church of God is built.

Now, this refers back to that imagery that we saw earlier of a massive, immovable, enduring, strong, impregnable rock. This time, it is the idea of a foundation for what will be built upon it.

**Matthew 7:24-27** "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: "and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: "and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

This is Jesus speaking about building on The Rock, because when you build on The Rock, when the rains descend, and the floods come, you will not be washed away. But, if you build on sand, which is an unsure foundation, you are going to end up having a ruined house.

Now, what Jesus provides us then, as The Rock on which the church of God is founded, is a sure foundation.

No man, as impressive as Peter may have been—evidently a great, burly fisherman; a man of great strength of character, especially after he was converted; a man of impetuous zeal for God; a man who was able to be used by God to do a great work among the Israelites and others around the world—is foundation quality alone. He was a man who had sin. That basically shoots down the idea that others have, that Jesus meant Peter here.

Some have said, "Well, He was speaking in Aramaic, obviously, and Aramaic does not separate between *Petros*, and *Petra*. And so, this is something that Matthew did later on." But, it does not matter. Jesus was probably speaking with His hands also. And so, pointing to Peter, He said, "You are Peter. But, on this Rock [pointing to Himself] I will build My church."

It is very obvious, that He meant Himself because just a few days later The Transfiguration occurred, which, to me, is proof and added evidence that He was

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pointing to Himself as The Messiah. (The Son of God, The Head of the Church of God, The High Priest, and The Savior.) Why should He single out Peter in this instance for such glories?

So, The Transfiguration is proof (just after this occurrence here in chapter 16) that He was referring to Himself.

Now, how did they, the Apostles, take this themselves, and preach this? How did they communicate this to others? We will see in Acts 4 that they did not think that Jesus meant Peter. They are being confronted by the Sanhedrin:

**Acts 4:8-10** Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.

Did he say that he did it? No. He said that this man stands before them whole, healed, because of Jesus Christ.

**Acts 4:11** "This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.'

He is quoting the Old Testament, something these member of the Sanhedrin should have recognized from Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 28:16. And he goes on to say:

**Acts 4:12** "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

This reminds me of Moses back in Deuteronomy 32 when he said that, "I am going to proclaim the name of the Lord, The Rock." And, here Peter says that there is no other name by which we can be saved, and he had just mentioned the chief cornerstone. It may not have been an intended reference to that, but it is interesting to me.

What he means here is that salvation begins and ends with Jesus Christ. He is everything to our salvation. You could say (just as in Hebrews 12:2) "He is the Author

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and Finisher of our faith." There is no other way that it is going to happen except on The Rock. Everything starts with Him, and He underlies everything, and makes everything work.

Now, look at what Peter, later in his life thought in I Peter. This is what he preached to the people and left for us, the church of God in later ages, to understand.

**I Peter 2:4-8** Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame." Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone, and a stone of stumbling And a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.

So, it is obvious here that Peter thought that Jesus Christ was the foundation stone upon which the church of God was built. He saw himself only as a living stone, a part of the superstructure. But, of course, they are actually part of the foundation as well. But, he did not think of himself in that way.

**I Corinthians 3:11** For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

So, He considered Jesus Christ to be the foundation of the church of God. He is The Rock on which the church of God is built.

If we go to Ephesians 2, he says a similar thing:

**Ephesians 2:19-20** Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone . . .

He got that right out of the Old Testament.

**Ephesians 2:21** . . . in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord . . .

**Romans 9:33** As it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

He quotes that same verse that Peter did.

So, obviously the Apostles considered Jesus to be the foundation of the church. They were only small parts of said foundation. They just did what their Master had told them to do. And so, they were used to establish certain things within the church, and therefore, are part of the foundation.

But, they are not the main part of the foundation. That is Jesus Christ, The Rock.

Now, one other thing. Notice that we saw here that this Rock is also a Rock of Offense. To us, this Rock is everything good, wonderful, and awesome; everything that we hope to become. But, to those who are disobedient, He is a Rock of Offense.

This gives you the word picture of an obstruction in the path. Consider this: if one is hiking up a mountain trail and it is a very craggy mountain—there is only one path to get over this mountain to get to where you want to go—but, in the middle of the path there is a huge rock. That rock is offensive. You cannot get past it. You cannot go around it, you cannot get through it. That rock has caused one a huge problem, because it is in the way.

If a person tries to break this rock, he only ends up injuring himself. It is like a rock that you trip over. You are most likely going to fall and hurt yourself. That is the idea in this stone of stumbling, and rock of offense—which is the side of Jesus that He faces His enemies, and our enemies with.

Remember, the idea keeps coming up that there is disobedience involved in the one who considers Him a Rock of Offense.

Now, let us look at this in a future aspect in Daniel 2. In order to have a complete picture of The Rock, consider Daniel 2—the future aspect.

**Daniel 2:44-45** "And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left

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to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold—the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure."

Who is that Stone cut out without hands, that smites the nations?

Does it not say in the book of Revelation that when Jesus returns He comes with a rod of iron? And that He slays the nations who come against Him? There is no better idea or conception of a Rock of Offense, and Stone of Stumbling.

Notice what Jesus Himself says in this regard in Matthew 21. He is speaking to the Jews specifically here. He quotes some of the same scriptures that Peter and Paul would later quote:

**Matthew 21:42** Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LOORD'S doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"

Now notice what He says:

**Matthew 21:43-44** "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. "And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder."

How is that for a Rock of Offense?

One way to look at this is that if you fall on the Stone, yes you will be broken, humiliated and humbled, but you can be saved.

But, on whoever The Rock falls, it grinds to destruction. There is no fighting God. And those who reject Him end up getting the bad side of The Rock of Offense.

So, there are two sides to this. There is the wonderful side to us as the Great God of all,

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the Awesome, and Majestic Rock of Ages; and on the other hand, there is this side of judgment and destruction on those who would disobey.

**John 5:22** For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, . . .

**John 5:27** . . . and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.

This is that other side of Him.

I hope that in what we have gone through today that you have learned something, and have added to your appreciation of Christ, Our Rock.

**II Samuel 22:2-4** And he [David] said: "The LOORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; the God of my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge; my Savior, You save me from violence. I will call upon the LOORD, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from my enemies.

**II Samuel 22:32-33** For who is God, except the LOORD? And who is a rock, except our God? God is my strength and power, and He makes my way perfect.

**II Samuel 22:47** The LOORD lives! Blessed be my Rock! Let God be exalted, The Rock of my salvation!