

Foundations

In **Matthew 16:13-20**, Simon responds to The Lord Jesus' question by declaring that he is 'the Christ, the Son of the living God' and Jesus immediately goes on to talk about foundations, both personally in Simon and corporately in his church.

Personal Foundations Three things have begun to happen in Simon's life.

First, God the Father has shown him that Jesus really is the Messiah. He probably doesn't have all the texts worked out and certainly can not yet have seen Jesus fulfil all the prophecies which the Messiah was going to fulfil, but in his heart is the light of revelation: 'this really is God's Chosen One'.

Second, Simon has started to believe it. He could have just pushed away the idea. Maybe he did to start with, but he has come to the point where he can not hold it in!

So, third, Simon speaks out what he believes and, as a result, Jesus confirms that Simon is Peter, a piece of rock of a different sort. Something has changed with Peter, and it not just a change of name. A spiritual change has taken place, it is internal not external, God-related rather than man-related, a change of life and not just a change of lifestyle.

This new life from God is the first essential of personal foundations. When Jesus speaks to Nicodemus in **John 3:58**, he makes it clear that the kingdom of God is spiritual and only those who have been born 'from above' can be part of it. 'Don't be surprised', he says, 'that I have told you that you need to be born from above'.

Although Jesus only used the phrase 'born again' when speaking with Nicodemus, the same theme flows throughout the New Testament (and the Old!). Peter himself, writing a letter many years later, picks up the same words in **1 Peter 1:22-23** and says that, because Christian believers all have the same Father, they need to love each other genuinely and fervently. He goes on in the next

chapter to talk about all believers as 'living stones' – more of that as we look further into foundations.

Paul, in **1 Corinthians 15:45-50**, shows that there are two kinds of people on the earth; those who are of Adam, earthy, merely natural, and those who are of Christ, heavenly, spiritual, and says that the 'earthy' cannot inherit the heavenly kingdom of God – very clear!

Hebrews 2:10-11 repeats the same wonderful perspective that the Father has when carrying out his plan – his overwhelming desire is to have many sons sharing the glory of the Son of God!

Corporate Foundations But Jesus doesn't just talk about the personal changes in Peter's life which have brought him to the point of faith and a new life. (Back to **Matthew 16** again.)

He also says that, just as Peter is a piece of rock, this is the sort of rock on which he is going to build his church. It is as if he sees a piece of granite and says, 'This is the rock which I am going to build upon and build with'. It doesn't mean (as the Catholic system says) that Peter is himself the foundation, nor just that it is his confession of faith which is the foundation. No, Peter is 'a chip off the block', the sort of living stone which the Lord Jesus can use to put foundations into his Church.

Paul picks up this same understanding in **Ephesians 2:19-22**. There is no doubt that Jesus himself is the cornerstone, but he also uses apostles and prophets as foundation stones in establishing the Church as a whole and in its local form.

In **1 Corinthians 3:5-15**, Paul says more about foundations. He was the one who put in the foundation in Corinth and, as he says, there is only one foundation that can be laid – the Lord Jesus Christ. If lives are not built on that foundation, they cannot be in the Church!

In **1 Corinthians 15:1-11** and **1:19**, he reminds them of the substance of his message, which they believed and were saved as a result. The results were plain to be seen they had been called by God into fellowship with his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But (back in **1 Corinthians 3**) Paul is now talking not so much about personal foundations as about how the Church in Corinth needs to be built on the foundation which he has put in.

First of all, he says that anyone who builds must be careful how they build on the foundation. Perhaps the most important thing is to make sure that the building is actually on the foundation. Apollos or Paul (or anyone else) must be careful to build on spiritual foundations, not man-made ones. It would be no good trying to see the church in Corinth behave as living stones and live as brothers and sisters in the Lord if none of them were spiritually alive. In other words, there is no point in trying to build anything unless the foundations are in place.

Then he says that there is no benefit if perfectly good foundations are built upon with faulty materials. He uses the picture of fire destroying any parts of the house which are not fireproof and says that this is what will happen on 'the day', when the Lord tests everything that has been built on the foundation. Only eternal building materials will survive the flames. It may look good, but if the Lord himself is not putting the materials in place, Paul, Apollos or anyone else will see their work disappear in smoke. Their own salvation will be assured but their work will be nothing in eternal terms. As Jesus Himself said, 'I will build my Church'. See also **Psalm 127:12**.

God's Intended Result Peter paints a clear picture of how the Church functions when the foundations are in place. See **1 Peter 2:1-10**.

1) The old life is put aside (**v.1**). He has talked about being born again in the previous chapter. Now, he says, to make progress, put aside the old life from which you have been bought out (redeemed).

2) Be hungry for spiritual sustenance, so that you can build on the personal foundations in your life (**v.2**). You can only do this if you have tasted the Lord's kindness (**v.3**) – in other words, if your knowledge of God's grace is personal knowledge in your own experience.

