

FAQ

FROM THE MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS ARCHIVES (2000-2018)

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MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS
messianicapologetics.net

Frequently Asked Questions

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Abbreviations and Special Terms

The following is a list of abbreviations for reference works and special terms which are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as TWOT for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

- ABD: *Anchor Bible Dictionary*
AMG: *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament*
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament
Ara: Aramaic
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)
b. Babylonian Talmud (*Talmud Bavli*)
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.
BDAG: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)
BDB: *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.
CGEDNT: *Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Barclay M. Newman)
CGL: *Cambridge Greek Lexicon* (2021)
CHALOT: *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Holladay)
CJB: *Complete Jewish Bible* (1998)
CJSB: *Complete Jewish Study Bible* (2016)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls
EDB: *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*
EJ: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*
ESV: *English Standard Version* (2001)
Ger: German
GNT: *Greek New Testament*
Grk: Greek
HALOT: *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Koehler and Baumgartner)
HCSB: *Holman Christian Standard Bible* (2004)
Heb: Hebrew
HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible
IDB: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*
IDBSup: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*
ISBE: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
IVPBBC: *IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)*
Jastrow: *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (Marcus Jastrow)
JBK: *New Jerusalem Bible-Koren* (2000)
JETS: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
KJV: *King James Version*
Lattimore: *The New Testament by Richmond Lattimore* (1996)
LITV: *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* by Jay P. Green (1986)
LES: *Lexham English Septuagint* (2019)
LS: *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott)
LSJM: *Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie)
LXE: *Septuagint with Apocrypha* by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
LXX: *Septuagint*
m. Mishnah
MT: *Masoretic Text*
NASB: *New American Standard Bible* (1977)
NASU: *New American Standard Update* (1995)
NBCR: *New Bible Commentary: Revised*
NEB: *New English Bible* (1970)
Nelson: *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*
NETS: *New English Translation of the Septuagint* (2007)
NIB: *New Interpreter's Bible*
NIDB: *New International Dictionary of the Bible*
NIV: *New International Version* (1984)
NJB: *New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic* (1985)
NJSB: *Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (1999)
NKJV: *New King James Version* (1982)
NRSV: *New Revised Standard Version* (1989)
NLT: *New Living Translation* (1996)
NT: *New Testament*
OT: *Old Testament*
REB: *Revised English Bible* (1989)
RSV: *Revised Standard Version* (1952)
t. Tosefta
Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament
Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TLV: *Messianic Jewish Family Bible—Tree of Life Version* (2014)
TNIV: *Today's New International Version* (2005)
TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
UBSHNT: *United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition*
v(s). *verse(s)*
Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*
Vul: *Latin Vulgate*
YLT: *Young's Literal Translation* (1862/1898)
WMB: *World Messianic Bible* (2020)

Matthew 16:18-19

I understand that your ministry questions the existence of the Church, as a second body of elect. How do you approach Jesus' explicit words to Peter that He would build His Church?

This entry has been reproduced from *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?*

Matthew 16:18-19

“I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven” (NASU).

Yeshua's statement, **“I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church”** (NASU), has been traditionally interpreted by Roman Catholicism, that with the Apostle Peter began an unending line of papal succession, with Peter serving as the first bishop of Rome. Protestants, who obviously reject papal claims, tend to offer a variety of other explanations for who or what “this rock” (*tē petra*) is or represents. Some will adhere to “this rock” still representing Peter, or Peter as the main apostle representative of the other Apostles. Some adhere to “this rock” representing Peter's confession of faith in Yeshua as the Messiah (Matthew 16:16). And, others think that “this rock” represents the Messiah Himself, per various Tanach passages which describe God as the Rock (i.e., 2 Samuel 22:3).

I personally view “this rock” as being the Messiah Himself, and with authority being granted by Yeshua to His Disciples, as it can be said that the *ekklēsia* established has “been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Messiah Yeshua Himself being the corner stone” (Ephesians 2:20, NASU). Yeshua is the cornerstone, and the work of God's vessels in the world continue what He has started for His people.

Messianic examination of Matthew 16:18-19 has often tended to focus more on the issue of binding and loosing—a well-documented Hebraism regarding prohibiting and permitting—and how what is in view pertains to the establishment of *halachah* or orthopraxy for the faith community.¹ This is an authority which the Messiah granted to the Apostles. As the issue of *halachah* is considered by today's Messianic people, there is a delicate balance which is often desired between Apostolic authority in the Messianic Scriptures, and fairly considering many of the perspectives and views of the Sages and Rabbis of Judaism. Yet, to the person interested in ecclesiology and the identity of God's chosen, more attention should understandably be focused on Matthew 16:18 and not 16:19, and to the assembly Yeshua stated He would establish.

Stern, in his *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, was only seen to comment on the term *ekklēsia*, which is rendered as “community” in his JNT/CJB. He made some connections between *ekklēsia* and *qahal*:

“Community, Greek *ekklēsia*, which means ‘called-out ones,’ and is used in the Septuagint to translate Hebrew *kahal*, ‘assembly, congregation, community.’ The usual English translation of *ekklēsia* is ‘church’; and from it comes the word ‘ecclesiastical,’ meaning, ‘having to do with the church.’ The JNT sometimes uses ‘Messianic

¹ For an important review, consult Raymond F. Collins, “Binding and Loosing,” in David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:743-745.

As Matthew 16:19 is rendered in a version like the CJSB, “I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven.”

community' or 'congregation' to render *ekklēsia*. What is being spoken about is a spiritual community of people based on trust in God and his son the Messiah Yeshua. This can be all people throughout history who so commit themselves, or a group of such people at a particular time and place, such as the Messianic community in Corinth or Jerusalem. The phrase, 'the *ekklēsia* that meets in their house' (Ro 16:5), refers to a particular congregation. Unlike 'church,' *ekklēsia* never refers to either an institution or a building."²

While making a connection between the Greek *ekklēsia* and the Hebrew *qahal*, as well as some useful observations on the usages of *ekklēsia* in the Apostolic Scriptures—conspicuously absent from Stern's remarks on Matthew 16:18, is how, precisely, *qahal* is used in the Hebrew Tanach. What "community" or "assembly" was being established by Yeshua here?

More recent Messianic Jewish reflection on Matthew 16:18 can be seen in the commentary *Matthew Presents Yeshua, King Messiah*, by Barney Kasdan (2011):

"Many English Bibles translate the word *ekklēsia* as 'church' but this is merely an English adaptation of the Greek which itself is derived from the Hebrew *kehilah*. Upon this inspired confession of Yeshua's messianic identity the entire community of New Covenant believers (both the Jewish and Gentile branches) would be built. In fact, the physical setting of this dialogue strongly confirms this view. One can imagine Yeshua standing at the foot of the massive cliff at Caesarea Philippi and bending down to pick up one of the many stones. It would have been a graphic object lesson as he quite logically held up a small stone as a symbol of Peter and then pointed to the massive cliff as symbolic of the foundational confession of Yeshua's messiahship."³

Kasdan interjects his own observations here: the community which Yeshua came to establish has two branches, or is composed of two sub-communities. Yet, other than making some kind of connection between *ekklēsia* and *kehilah*, we do not see that much more we can really evaluate regarding what congregation or assembly Yeshua was intending to establish.

It might be that the answer, of what assembly Yeshua intended to establish, can be easily deduced by conducting one of the most basic parts of Inductive Bible Study: seeing where the verb "**build**" appears elsewhere, either in the Apostolic Scriptures or Septuagint. This is one important feature of the discussion over "upon this rock I will build My community" (Matthew 16:18, TLV), which I have yet to really see any Messianic examiner consider in detail.

The verb translated as "**will build**" in most English Bibles, is the Greek future active indicative *oikodomēsō*. Here are some key places where *oikodomēsō* appears in the Greek Septuagint (LXX), which need not escape an examiner's notice:

"Lord Almighty, God of Israel, you have revealed to the ear of your servant, saying, 'I **will build a house for you** [LXX: *oikon oikodomēsō soi*; MT: *bayit ebeneh-lakh*].' Because of this your servant found his own heart to pray to you this prayer" (2 Samuel/2 Kingdoms 7:27, LES).

"It will be that if you watch everything, whatever I command you, and you walk in my ways and you do the right thing before me by keeping my commands and my ordinances just as David my servant did, then I will be with you. I **will build for you a faithful house** [LXX: *oikodomēsō soi ikon*; MT: *u'baniti lekha bayit*] just as I built for David" (1 Kings/3 Kingdoms 11:38, LES).

"Forever I will provide offspring for you and **will build** [LXX: *oikodomēsō*; MT: *u'baniti*] your throne for generation and generation" (Psalm 89:4, NETS).

"For I **will build you, and you will be built** [LXX: *oikodomēsō se kai oikodomēthēsē*; MT: *eb'neikh v'niv'neit*], O virgin Israel! You will seize your tambourine, and you will come out with an assembly of people playing" (Jeremiah 31:4 [38:4], LES).

² David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1992), 54.

³ Barney Kasdan, *Matthew Presents Yeshua, King Messiah: A Messianic Commentary* (Clarksville, MD: Lederer Books, 2011), 174.

Matthew 16:18-19

“And I will return the exile of Judah and the exile of Israel, and **I will build them** [LXX: *oikodomēsō autous*; MT: *u’benitim*] just as also the former time” (Jeremiah 33:7 [40:7], LES).

When Bible readers encounter these varied usages of *oikodomēsō*, they all pertain to either the establishment of the Davidic monarchy, the building up of the Temple of God, or even the end-time restoration of Israel. It also appears in Mark 14:58, in reference to the work of Yeshua: “We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days **I will build** [*oikodomēsō*] another made without hands” (NASU).

Two notable definitions of the verb *oikodomeō*, provided by BDAG, include “**to construct a building, build**” and “**to help improve ability to function in living responsibly and effectively, strengthen, build up, make more able.**”⁴ AMG offers the definition “to rebuild or renew a building decayed or destroyed,”⁵ which is something that surely fits the context of the restoration of God’s people in the eschaton.

With some of these passages in view—notably Jeremiah 31:4 and 33:7—it legitimately sits within the semantic range of definitions to render Matthew 16:18 as “**upon this rock I will rebuild My assembly.**” And, the assembly which Yeshua came to build/rebuild was hardly a new *ekklēsia* of chosen, but rather a restored Kingdom of Israel brought to fruition via His work, and certainly enlarged to incorporate the righteous from the nations.

If Matthew 16:18 can be directly associated with various Tanach promises about God restoring, i.e., rebuilding Israel—then what does this do to a number of the claims from either dispensationalism or bilateral ecclesiology, about “the Church” being a separate entity, perhaps related to but ultimately separated from, Israel? **It severely weakens, if not demolishes, such a claim.** The assembly in view, in Matthew 16:18, is none other than an explicit claim from the Messiah *to restore Israel upon the work of Himself*, and subsequently the Apostles. The assembly of Israel He came to rebuild (*oikodomēsō*) surely involves the fulfillment of the many promises of regathering and the end of exile for the Jewish people and the Twelve Tribes at large—but also the expansion of Israel to include the righteous of the nations into an enlarged Kingdom realm.

There is not a huge surprise in my mind, why some of the finer details of Matthew 16:18—beyond *ekklēsia* and *qahal* being somehow related—have not really been explored by a number of today’s Messianic Jewish leaders and teachers. No different than the Christian teacher who wants to dismiss Matthew 5:17-19, affording a degree of continuity and validity to the Torah of Moses—so does Matthew 16:18 not affirm the establishment of a new entity of elect, but instead affirms how the Messiah’s mission was to restore Israel. This is not just an anticipated national restoration of Israel, but is a spiritual entity incorporating far more than just ethnic Jews or Israelites into its Kingdom polity.

Sadly, there is rhetoric present in a few parts of today’s Messianic Judaism, where if non-Jewish Believers get to be incorporated into Israel’s Kingdom realm—which has been expanded and enlarged—that one might as well be guilty of promoting replacement theology. Yet, interpreters such as myself have not denied the Jewish right to the Holy Land, nor have we denied the promises to the physical descendants of the Patriarchs; **I am not** going to be making *aliyah* to *Eretz Yisrael*. I am simply one who considers himself as a citizen of Israel’s Kingdom (Ephesians 2:11-13), a realm whose rule reaches beyond the Holy Land. As a non-Jewish Believer, I am a part of the righteous remnant from humanity which has sought the Lord (Acts 15:15-18; Amos 9:11-12), and I surely get to participate in Israel’s restoration and expansion, without expecting to live in territory only specifically promised to Israel’s Twelve Tribes.

⁴ Frederick William Danker, ed., et. al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Third Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 696.

⁵ Spiros Zodhiates, ed., *Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993), 1030.