

DOCTRINE OF THE ROCK

1. The vocabulary:
 - a. The Hebrew word for *rock* is tsûr (צוּר) [pronounced *tsoor*] and it means *rock, cliff*.
 - b. Another word often translated *rock* in the Bible is çela' (עֲלֵא) [pronounced *SEH-lah*] and it can mean *craggy rock, fortress, stronghold*. This word is not really the subject of this study.
 - c. The Hebrew word for *stone* is 'eben (אֶבֶן) [pronounced *EH-ben*]; this can refer to smaller stones, even precious stones, whereas tsûr means *boulder* or larger. This is not the primary subject of our present study, although there will be some references to this word.
 - d. The Greek word for rock is πέτρα, which is the feminine form.
 - e. Another Greek word for rock is πέτρος is the masculine form, which means *piece of rock*; it is also the proper name for Peter. This is not found in the New Testament except in connection with Peter.
 - f. The Greek word for stone is λίθος and it corresponds well with the Hebrew word.
2. Our first Hebrew word tsûr is found at the very beginning to be a type. In Ex. 17:6, Moses is commanded to strike this rock and out of it would come waters which would cause the Jews to live. This is one of the most important events of the Old Testament, as it is mentioned in Psalm 78:20 105:41 114:8. Of the Jews it was **said in the New Testament: And all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock** which followed them; and the rock was the Messiah (I Cor. 10:4). The Greek word for *rock* here is πέτρα. This identifies the Hebrew word tsûr with the Greek word πέτρα, establishes the rock of the Old Testament as a type of Jesus Christ and identifies Jesus Christ with both of those words (which is the actual focus of our study). I should point out that in order for an incident or a thing in the Old Testament to be a type, it **does not** have to be so identified in the New Testament. Several are, such as this example.
3. This is also mentioned in Psalm 78:15–16, 20. However, there is a twist in this passage which is important. The Psalmist does not mention Moses. The Psalmist tells us that **God struck the rock**. Psalm 78:4b sets the tone and tells us of Whom the Psalmist is speaking: **But tell to the generations to come the praises of Yahweh; and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done**. From thereon in, the *He* referred to is Yahweh, or God. Examine vv. 5, 11–15. In those four verses, the Psalmist begins to list some of the historical things which God had done on behalf of Israel. No mention is made of Moses. **He divided the sea and caused them to pass through; and He made the waters stand up like a heap...He brought forth streams also from the Rock...Behold, He struck the Rock, so that waters gushed out** (Psalm 78:13, 16a, 20a). As the Bible says, in the witness of two or three shall all things be confirmed. An important verse like this should certainly have a match somewhere in the Bible. Isa. 48 speaks of Yahweh and His relationship with the Jews. **Thus says Yahweh, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, "I am Yahweh, your God, who teachers you to profit, Who leads you in the way you should go...Yahweh has redeemed His servant Jacob."** **And they did not thirst when He led them through the deserts. He made the water flow out of the rock for them; He split the rock and the water gushed forth** (Isa. 48:17, 20b–21). **But Yahweh was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief, if He would render Himself as a guilt offering...by His knowledge, the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities. (Isa. 53:10a, 11b).** **Jesus answered and said to her [the Samaritan women he asked a drink from], 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."** (John 4:10) **But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear and immediately there came out blood and water** (John 19:34).
4. In the passage which we studied, Moses both stood upon a rock and also Yahweh placed him in the cleft of a rock, to allow him to gaze at a portion of the glory of God without being consumed by God's perfect righteousness. **For in the day of trouble, He [Yahweh] will conceal me in His shelter in the secret place of His tent He will hide me; He will left me up on a rock** (Psalm 27:5). Since Christ died for our sins, we stand upon Him, upon His righteousness rather than our own for justification. **Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as grace but as what is due; but to the one who does not work, but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness...for not comprehending God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law with reference to righteousness to each one who believes** (Rom. 4:4–5 10:3–4). We also are in Christ, **which is a place of protection, justification and righteousness. There is now therefore, no judgement for those who are in Christ Jesus...For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord** (Rom. 8:1, 38–39). David also wrote of the Rock in which he took refuge in Psalm 18:2: **Yahweh is my Rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God,**

- my Rock, in Whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. Or Psalm 31:2: Incline Your ear to me, rescue me quickly; You be to me a rock of refuge, a stronghold to save me, for You are my rock and my fortress; for You name's sake, You will lead me and guide me.
5. When one is not identified with God the Son, they also will hide in the rocks, in the cliffs, to hide from God's righteousness and justice (Isa. 2:10, 19, 21).
 6. The Rock is identified with Yahweh and the Rock is identified with God. In a song of Moses, he wrote: "For I proclaim the name of Yahweh; ascribe greatness to our God! The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; a God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He...but Israel] grew fat and kicked...then he forsook God Who made him and scorned the Rock of his salvation...you neglected the Rock who begot you and forgot the God who gave you birth" (Deut. 32:3–4, 15, 18). It is clear in the sentence structure of Deut. 32:3–4 that the Rock is identified as God. In Hannah's song, it is even more clear that the rock is God: "There is no one holy like Yahweh; indeed there is no one besides You; nor is there any Rock like our God." (I Sam. 2:2). Along the same lines, David sang, "Yahweh is the God of my Rock and my fortress and my deliverer. My God, my Rock, in whom I take refuge; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge; my Savior, You deliver me from violence." (II Sam. 22:2–3). Notice that in these verses, it seems clear that (1) the Rock is identified as God; yet, (2) it seems equally clear that there are possibly separate entities here, particularly when David calls Yahweh the God of his Rock. If we need more proof that the rock is God and Yahweh is God, David also penned, "For who is God, besides Yahweh, and who is a Rock, besides our God?" (II Sam. 22:32). Oh Yahweh, my Rock and my Redeemer (Psalm 19:14). See also II Sam. 22:47, Psalm 18:31 28:1.
 7. Yahweh is identified with the Rock but is not necessarily the Rock. Here my cry, O God; give heed to my prayer. From the end of the earth, I call to You, when my heart is faint; Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I (Psalm 61:1–2).
 8. The God of Israel = the Rock of Israel. David's song continues: "The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me, He [God] who ruses over men righteously, Who rules in the fear of God." (II Sam. 23:3) See also Isa. 30:29.
 9. God is identified as David's Rock and his salvation. My soul in silence for God only; from Him his my salvation. He only is my Rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I will not be greatly shaken (Psalm 62:1–2; see also 62:5–6).
 10. Yahweh is called a Rock of habitation, a Rock and a Fortress (Psalm 71:3), the Rock of the Psalmists refuge, and his stronghold (Psalm 94:22).
 11. Yahweh is the Rock of the Psalmist's heart (Psalm 73:26).
 12. Yahweh is the Rock (Psalm 92:15 144:1).
 13. Yahweh is the Rock of our salvation (Psalm 95:1).
 14. God is the Rock in Psalm 78:35, the Rock of refuge in Isa. 17:10 and the everlasting Rock (also translated, the Rock of Ages) in Isa. 26:4.
 15. To the unregenerate Jews, Yahweh will be both a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over (Isa. 8:13–14).
 16. There is an exclusivity to this Rock, as told in Isa. 44:6–8: Thus says Yahweh, the King of Israel, and his [Israel's] Redeemer, Yahweh of the armies, 'I am the first and I am the last and there is no God besides Me. And who is like Me? Let him proclaim and declare it; yes, let him recount it to Me in order from the time that I established the ancient people. And let them declare to them the things that are coming [to pass] and events that are going to take place. Do not tremble and do not be afraid; have I not long since announced it to you and declared it? So you are My witnesses. Is there any God besides Me or is there an Rock [besides Me]? I know of none. The very Jehovah's Witnesses who go to this verse for their name, ignore that there is no other Rock besides Yahweh, Jesus Christ, the eternal God of the Universe, the King of Israel. Typical of a group who take all of their doctrines out of context.
 17. Except with regards to Peter, the word πέτρος is not found in the New Testament. Our corresponding word for tsûr from the Old Testament is πέτρα. Our fist use of πέτρα in the New Testament is found in Matt. 7:24–27, where our Lord relates a parable where the person who builds their life upon the Word of Jesus Christ is like the man who builds his house upon a rock (πέτρα). When we build our lives upon the written and the living Word of God, it is like building our house upon a rock, a sure foundation, and nothing will destroy it.
 18. There is some confusion concerning Matt. 17:18, which reads, "And further I say to you that you are Peter (Πέτρος, a rock or a stone) and upon this rock (πέτρα, a large boulder) I will build My church; and the council of the unseen will not overpower it." Those who know nothing about the original languages, assumed that both words for rock were the same. Obviously, this is not the case. Furthermore, this is taken out of context where Peter identifies Jesus as the Messiah (the Christ). The Rock upon which the church is founded is Jesus

Christ, the Messiah, as we have seen for the past dozen or so points from the Old Testament; the church is not founded upon Peter.

19. Jesus Christ became a stumbling stone (λίθος) to the Jews. They attempted to be saved by works and through keeping the Law, whereas salvation was through faith in Jesus Christ. But Israel, pursuing the Law by righteousness did not arrive at [the purpose of] the Law. Why? **Because not by faith** but as though works [took them to righteousness]. They stumbled over the stone of stumbling, just as it is written, "Behold, I lay in Zion, a stone of stumbling and a rock which arouses opposition. And he who believe in Him will not be humiliated." (Rom. 9:31–33 Isa. 8:14 28:16) The bolding of that portion of the verse is Paul's emphasis; he left out the verbs, causing that portion to stand out. Peter quotes the same verse with the same intent; man has rejected Jesus Christ, Who, in this way, is a stumbling stone to them. In pursuing righteousness, they stumble over Jesus Christ. And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but 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 contained in Scripture: "Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner [stone], and he who believes in Him will not be humiliated." This precious value, then, is for you who believe, but for those who disbelieve, "The stone which the builders rejected, this has become the very corner [stone]," and "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." (I Peter 2:4–8 Isa. 28:16 Psalm 118:22 Isa. 8:14)