

A second interpretation that has been suggested is that when the Lord said, "Upon this rock I will build my church," He pointed to Himself to indicate that He was the One upon whom the church would be built. While it is not impossible that this is the correct interpretation, we must hesitate about accepting it as final, since it might involve an idea of emphasis and of gesture that is not made explicit in the Scripture. We notice, however, that when Jesus said, "Thou art Peter," He used the Greek word, petros which means a little rock. When He continued, "upon this rock I will build my church," He used a related but different word, petra, which means a large rock or cliff. The little rock could indicate Peter, who deserves much praise for his recognition of the importance of the Great Rock, which would be Christ Himself. This second interpretation contains a large element of truth. It is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, through whom alone we can be saved. It is certainly true that the church will be built upon Him. Yet there is a third interpretation which we must also examine.

The third interpretation is that the great rock is Peter's confession. This means that Jesus' deity, which, after all, was the subject of discussion in the previous context, is the foundation upon which the church is to be built.

Thus there is a sense in which the church has been built upon Peter. There is a still greater sense in which it is built upon the Lord Jesus Christ. In the fullest sense, however, the confession of Peter is the rock upon which the church is to be built, and the true foundation of the church is what this confession contained, namely, recognition of the fact that Jesus Christ is indeed the Messiah, the Son of God.

#### THE NATURE OF THE TRUE CHURCH

If studied as a whole, our passage clearly indicates the real nature of the church. It is composed of all who believe in the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is composed of those who believe in His vicarious sacrifice and His bodily