

Series: The Kingdom of Jesus

Message: The Keys to the Kingdom –Part 2

Scripture: Matthew 16:13-28 (Focus vs. 13-20)

Introduction: The heart of this passage is the statement from Jesus to Peter and the other disciples concerning the keys of the kingdom. Jesus gave to the Apostles and the church the keys. The passage breaks down into 3 parts.

- The Needed Confession
- The Keys given by Jesus
- The Needed mindset

Last week we examined the confession of Peter in answer to Jesus question. Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Peter's belief & confession was essential for Jesus to know that His disciples understood who He is. Once Jesus knew they believed He is God, He could begin to explain to them the truths concerning God's plan for expanding the kingdom on earth through the church.

Today we seek to understand the meaning of these keys. As God allows next week we will consider the mindset needed to use the keys given to us by Christ.

After telling Peter he was blessed to have God reveal this eternal truth Jesus says; "And I also say unto you".

This indicates that Jesus has more blessings to share with Peter because of his belief & confession concerning Jesus. Jesus then says to Simon; "You are Peter (little stone).

In John 1:42 we see that when Jesus first met Simon Jesus declared to him that he will be (future) called Cephas or Peter.

Now He has become this stone which God can make useful to build His kingdom.

The Phrase which followed this blessing has been a source of debate and division in the Body of Christ for the entire 2,000 years. This is due to sin, not the truth of God's word.

Jesus called Peter a little stone and then says upon this "Rock" (Giant Cornerstone) I will build my church. This church built by Jesus cannot be stopped by the gates or barriers which hell may try to use to hinder the kingdom of God.

The controversy has been the definition of the word "rock".

The images used here by Jesus are of a temple and a kingdom. Some believed Peter to be the rock and believed Jesus gave to Peter the sole authority of Christ to begin the church and to lead with infallibility the church. The system of popes was produced by this belief. This is not Biblical truth. This was not Jesus intent. It is not even logical if one simply reads the rest of the chapter. If one looks at Peter's ups and downs both before the resurrection and afterwards it is clear that he was not infallible. He did not even view himself in this manner. In his New Testament letters he calls all of us "little stones" but stones that are alive & growing building Christ's Temple with Jesus as the cornerstone, not Peter.

Some have said Jesus is the Rock. This is true. Others have said the truth of the confession declared by Peter is the Rock or truth upon which the church is built. This is also true.

No matter how we understand the word Rock it is clear that Jesus is the one who builds His church. It is not the people who build the church, Jesus does it.

Jesus does work through the people whose lives are joined to Him. However apart from Jesus we can do nothing.

In our rejection of Simon Peter as the Rock, and the doctrine it produced we must be careful not to remove from Peter the blessing Jesus clearly gave to him. Peter would be the first one to use the keys of the kingdom. At Pentecost Jesus gave to Peter the privilege of being the first to share the Gospel with Jesus. Peter was then blessed to be the first Apostle to open the door formally to the Gentiles in his encounter with Cornelius. Peter was a strong leader of the Apostles and church. The other Apostles however also used the keys of the Kingdom as well. Once the work of the Apostles was complete the keys of the kingdom were given to all who belong to the kingdom of Jesus.

Let us now seek to define this concept of keys. The key of David is symbolic of the eternal throne promised to David's heir. Jesus has received the key of David. When one is given the key to a kingdom He is given authority to lead, guide and make use of the kingdom. By Jesus giving the keys of the kingdom of God upon earth to the Apostles and church it meant they were able to work as Jesus led them through the Holy Spirit. They and we are able to accomplish Jesus purposes with His Authority and His power. (Matt. 28:18-20)

A key is also clearly for use in opening doors. A key is not the same as the door. Jesus is the door. He alone brings salvation. He is eternal life. He has given the key for the church to open & close this opportunity of the Gospel under His leadership. People must respond to the Gospel for themselves yet the opportunity to hear the Gospel depends upon the church.

When thinking about this concept of opening and shutting we see that sometimes as the church follows Christ in one direction it means not going in a different direction. An example of this was the Apostle Paul being forbidden to go to Asia by the Spirit. His going to Macedonia with the Gospel meant at the time Asia would not have the opportunity. The sovereignty of Jesus as Head of the church must be trusted. Today we have the resources and numbers of believers to take the gospel to every person if we are willing to obey Jesus.

Jesus told the disciples that if the people reject the gospel they were to move on wiping the dust off their feet. This is a form of closing the door as well. It is critical that we not make this choice of wiping the dust off our feet too quickly. We must be certain we are being led by the Holy Spirit.

It is essential to understand that the giving of the keys is a stewardship. Jesus is the owner of the kingdom. The steward manages what the owner puts into his care. The steward is accountable to the owner and manages according to the owner desires. The steward is given the keys but is not the owner.

The Apostles were in a unique and one time position. As the church was being formed the Apostles were given the spiritual gifts to be able to teach, speak, and write the eternal Word of God. They were given the responsibility to provide structure and administration for the church. The Apostles, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, established the officers and ordinances of the church (Pastors, Deacons, etc.) (Baptism & Lord's Supper) (Church Discipline).

After the passing of the Apostles the foundation of structure and the doctrines of the church were established and the Word of God was completed. Then the keys were then passed down to every believer to be led by the Holy Spirit to develop and implement strategies for taking the gospel of the kingdom to the world. Clearly, the church through the centuries has not been perfect. Even the Apostles were not perfect.

Today we must consider how to use the keys to the kingdom to reach our world with the Gospel of Jesus Kingdom. We must:

- Be sensitive and obedient to the Holy Spirit
- Be faithful stewards of all the resources God has provided for us to take the gospel to the World.
- Be faithful to the Word of God in our organization and strategies for sharing gospel.
- Be focused and faithful to take the Gospel to everyone near us in the most effective way.
- Be faithful to take the Gospel especially to the people who have never heard as led by the Spirit.
- Remember the principle of stewardship. The church is not ours. The keys do not belong to us. The keys belong to Jesus and we must use them as He leads. We will give an account to Jesus for our Stewardship as individuals and as a church.

Commitment Thoughts:

Jesus offers the gift of eternal life to you?

As His follower are you using the keys faithfully?

- Sharing the Gospel
- Following the Word & Spirit
- Modeling the Principles of the Kingdom