

Understanding the Keys of the Kingdom **By Paul R. Blake**

“Can you help me understand the keys of the kingdom and the binding and loosing more fully (Matt. 16:18-19)? Jesus told Peter that He would give him the keys to the kingdom of Heaven, and He seems to be speaking specifically to Peter in giving him the keys, so was Peter the one to unlock the kingdom of Heaven? What does the binding and loosing mean?”

Answer: Peter was not singled out to receive the keys of the kingdom alone. While Peter was the leading speaker in Acts 2, he was not the only speaker on Pentecost. And though Peter was the first one to teach and convert Gentiles, it was less about Peter being honored and more about Peter's bigotry. What better testimony of the power of God over man's weakness than to open the way for Gentiles with the apostle who had the hardest time with prejudice against them? In point of fact, all of the apostles were present at Peter's confession, and all of them were under the auspices of Jesus' declaration. Matt. 16:20 defines the context as inclusive of all of the apostles. To believe that Peter was singled out is a common error, an error that forms the Petrine doctrine of Catholicism. In Matt. 18:18, Jesus says the same thing to all of the apostles.

With regard to binding and loosing, Jesus told them they would be guided into all truth (John 16:7-14). In other words, they don't get to decide what to bind and loose. They only get to reveal to others what has been bound and loosed in heaven. They get to open up the way for others to enter the kingdom by means of preaching the gospel of Christ. In fact, the verb form for *eisomai* in that passage is not "will be bound or loosed" but rather "will have been bound or loosed." In short, the apostles didn't bind and loose on earth and God responds in heaven by accepting their decisions; in truth, the apostles simply revealed on earth what had already been bound and loosed in heaven. The Christians followed the apostles' doctrine (all of the apostles, not just Peter), but it was theirs by right of proclamation, not by right of origination. (See Acts 2:42; 1Cor. 11:2; 1Thes. 2:13; 1Cor. 14:37; 2Thes. 2:15).

Too Busy for God **By H. Blake**

Our lives are extremely busy, packed with tasks, activities, entertainments, and checklists. I am somewhat amused (but also devastated) by those wealthy unemployed wives who are so busy with shopping and planning dinner parties that they have to hire nannies to raise their children. In America, the microwave-generation has given way to the internet-generation, with faster and faster access to worldwide information and yet seemingly less and less time to learn it. We are indeed dying of thirst in a river of knowledge. I would venture to guess that most Christians recognize this and feel guilt, especially in the idea that they are not making enough time for God in their daily schedules; even those who attend services faithfully and complete their daily Bible readings technically only devote a few hours a week as "time for God." But the truth is we do with our lives what we want to do, or at least what we choose to do. We are in control of ourselves. If we want to devote more time to God, we will.

But beyond this, the greater truth is that God shouldn't be a part of our lives – He IS our lives. Everything we do and say is influenced by Him, down to the most mundane of tasks and daily interactions. I have heard it described as tinted eyeglasses, where everything we see is colored by God and His plan for us. Not in the shallow way that we should be constantly asking ourselves, "Which breakfast cereal would Jesus choose?" Rather, if our lives are given over to Him, we won't have to ask that question. We won't choose a cereal that is outrageously expensive, or one that is overtly unhealthy, being good stewards of our bodies and resources as a habit of life developed through devotion to a Christian way of thinking.

For most of us, the majority of hours are taken up in the workplace. Where is God while we are there? If he is with us, we will indeed avoid the obvious - dirty jokes, foul language, stealing from the company – but there is again a deeper aspect. We must grow beyond avoiding the negatives to finding the positives, moving from milk of “DO NOT” to the solid food of “DO” (Hebrews 5:12-6:3). If God is with us, working through our hands, the lens through which we see, the seasoning in our speech, we will not only avoid the obvious vices, but we will fully dedicate ourselves to whatever task is given us. We will serve with humility and go the extra mile for customers; we will make effort to improve our efficiency and the effectiveness of the larger company; we will always be on the lookout for good that can be done, in every place, in every moment of our lives. “And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ” (Col. 3:23-24).

If we do it right, this is a much harder task than just squeezing a daily Bible reading in before bed. It requires true devotion, the kind of devotion described in scripture, and it starts with a deeper love for God. Recognizing that He is our Creator, our Savior, our Father, our All in All, what part of our lives should we be so selfish as to withhold? How can we not love Him so much that He is with us every moment of every day? When we say there isn't enough room in our lives for God, maybe what we mean is we haven't made enough room for Him in our hearts. And in truth, the more He is in our hearts, the less we will be tempted to do evil – there will be no place for Satan to gain a foothold (Eph. 4:27). And the more we love Him, the more easily and naturally His Word shall sound on our lips and shine forth in our lives. We won't have to worry about fitting God in our lives – He will be with us wherever we go. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart; you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes” Deut. 6:5-8.

A Moments Wisdom

- When was honey ever made by only one bee in a hive?
- Happiness is not a state to arrive at, but a manner of traveling.
- The sure way to miss success is to pass by the opportunity.
- Our character is but the stamp on our souls of the free will choices of good and evil we have made through life.