

On the Way to the Cross – Kingdom Rule

As we walk with Jesus on His journey to the cross, we will often hear Him discussing the “kingdom of God” and “the kingdom of heaven.” In **Matthew 18** the disciples come to Him and asked, “*Who then is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?*” This gives Jesus an ideal opportunity to describe His kingdom and what persecutive they should have of it. As the Lord goes through various illustrations that clearly explain the difference between the world system and His kingdom, He makes this statement, “*Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*” “*Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together (on earth) in My name, I am there in the midst of them*” (**Matthew 18:18-20**).

The section I'd like us to concentrate on first is **verse 18**, and it concerns the “**keys of the kingdom of heaven.**” Earlier in **Matthew 16**, when Simon Peter confesses Jesus as the Christ, we hear a very similar declaration. *Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven”* (verses 17-19). If you intend to operate effectively in God's kingdom you must learn to make good use of these **keys** - ‘on earth’. They are the **keys** that will unlock success by establishing the “**rule**” of the “**kingdom of heaven**” here on earth. In this context, the verb “**rule**” means ‘to be in power’, ‘to be in control’, ‘to be in command’, ‘to reign supreme’ or ‘to prevail’. Therefore, the “**rule**” of the kingdom of heaven on earth is a very powerful force. It has to do with absolute authority, complete control and total dominion (in every situation). The kingdom of heaven's “**rule**” is supreme! And this “**rule**” is meant to operate on earth! “On earth” is also mentioned in the Lord's Prayer - “*Your kingdom come. Your will be done **on earth** as it is in heaven.*” Therefore, God's divine purpose for the church (here on earth) lines up perfectly with the characteristics of heaven. That being the case, whatever God has willed (permitted) in heaven is meant to manifest on earth. Heaven is always the measure that is to be use on earth. Heaven is our standard!

In **Matthew 28:18** Jesus declares, “*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.*” **Philippians 2:10** says, “*That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth.*” The King of heaven has supreme authority in three realms - in heaven, on earth and under the earth! But it doesn't stop there... “*For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him*” (**Colossians 1:16**). Jesus has absolute authority because all things were created through Him and for Him! And He has passed this great authority on to His bride - His church on earth! That is why we can use the **keys** of the kingdom of heaven and bring down His “**rule**” here on earth.

Back to **Matthew 16:17-19**... Notice how Jesus mentions that the gates of hell shall not prevail against His church. Implying that His **church** has the authority, freedom and ability to unlock the gates of hell. But with what? The answer is found in what Jesus says immediately after He's made that powerful declaration.... “**I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.**” The gates of hell cannot prevail (prove superior to) the church of Jesus Christ because we have the keys of the kingdom! Yes, we have the authority to unlock (loose) all those things that the gates of hell are keeping imprisoned (bound). Therefore, whatever is kept 'bound' by the gates of hell can be 'loosed' by the church! “*And have*

made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth" (**Revelation 5:10**). With the **keys** of the kingdom we rule and reign on the earth as kings and priests! Hallelujah!

That answers the question: "With what?" But how does this take place? The second part of the same verse tells us. "Whatever you bind (forbid) on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose (permit) on earth will be loosed (permitted) in heaven." Again, this has to do with authority. Heaven's "**rule**" is heaven's measure! The gates of hell itself cannot stop the "**rule**" of God's mighty kingdom from being established. Now, **Matthew 11:12** makes perfect sense, "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." Another translation says, "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence, and violent people have been raiding it." We have the **keys** that can establish total victory in both the natural and spiritual realms! Whatever we permit on earth is 'released', and whatever we forbid on earth is 'bound', and nothing can reverse this authority.

Isaiah 22:22 says: "I will place on His shoulder the key to the house of David; whatever He opens no one can shut, and whatever He shuts no one can open." Throughout the Bible, 'keys' symbolise or represent authority! When talking to Peter, Jesus assured Him that he will be a pillar in His church; signalling that the church will come out victorious in every situation. That's why Jesus added, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven." What an honour! What a privilege! When Jesus arose on the third day, He held in His hand the very **keys** that were later handed over to His church. "Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it" (**Colossians 2:15**). Jesus unlocked the gates of hell, and even death itself, and then handed the keys over to you and me. We are no longer controlled by the fear of death because we are going to live forever! "Oh Death, where is your sting? Oh Hades, where is your victory?" (**1 Corinthians 15:55**) Whatever weapon hell had at its disposal, cannot stop us from being victorious. No weapon formed against us will prosper!

Back to our foundational scriptures... Notice, Jesus didn't say, "key"; but "keys". This means that there must be a particular key for every situation we may face. A key that unlocks salvation; another for healing; another for prosperity; another for deliverance, etc. Therefore, we need to know what key to use in any situation in life. We must have the right key in hand at all times! More importantly, we need to get the key 'right' - use it correctly! In this regard, God's Word provides us with the knowledge and understanding. To qualify for supreme **authority**, we must operate in line with God's Word. This is the only way to discern spiritual matters.

Now that we have established that the church has the **authority** on earth to "loose" (permit) and "bind" (forbid); and that this authority is backed up by God's supreme "**rule**" in heaven; we need to become familiar with the procedures for using such great authority. So back to our opening verses: "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

According to this passage of scripture, there are only two requirements when using the "keys of the kingdom of heaven."

1. There must be agreement between at least two. "By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be

established" (**Matthew 18:16; 2 Corinthians 13:1**). But what are we to agree with? We are to agree with the Word of God. When we agree with God's Word He is obliged to watch over it to ensure that it is performed (**Jeremiah 1:12**). Consequently, what Jesus has stated shall come to pass. "...It will be done for them by My Father in heaven." Think about it! If we stand together in agreement with God's Word, we can exercise the great authority that Jesus has handed over to His church. We can rule and reign on the earth as kings and priests!

2. There must be "fellowship" centred around the Name of Jesus. When ever we gather together in the name of Jesus, He is there in our midst, and His presence establishes His Rule. If you wish to have heaven's "**rule**" manifest, you must first have heaven's King present. The way to ensure that the King is present in any situation is by coming together in His glorious name. Can you see how important it is to 'act' like a church and not be individualistic? It's the church that has been given the "keys of the kingdom of heaven," therefore, these **keys** are most effective within a church setting.

In the New Testament, the Greek word "eklesia" (church) has two different applications; (1) it refers to the whole company of the redeemed of which Christ said, "*I will build My church*" and which is further described as "*His Body*", and (2) the singular number of professed believers that assemble in a building or district. In **Matthew 18:18-20** the Lord is definitely discussing matters relating to the local church or assembly. Notice that the preceding verse says, "*If he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church*" (Verse 17). Therefore, when Jesus says, "*Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven*" (verse 18), He must also be referring to the assembly of believers.

As a congregation we have the power to establish the "**rule**" of God's mighty kingdom here on earth. And as mentioned earlier, that means *'to be in power', 'to be in control', 'to be in command', 'to reign supreme' or 'to prevail'*. What an awesome responsibility we have every time we gather together in His name! Maybe that is why we are encouraged to have church as often as possible. "*Not forsaking or neglecting to assemble together [as believers], as is the habit of some people, but admonishing (warning, urging, and encouraging) one another, and all the more faithfully as you see the day approaching*" (**Hebrews 10:25**).

Look at how God has it all covered... When we use the "**keys of the kingdom of heaven**" correctly we have both God the Father and God the Son backing us up. This brings the might of Heaven's Rule (the One seated on the throne, and the One seated by His side) into every negative situation we may be facing. We have been given the "*keys of supreme authority*" on earth to permit (loose) and forbid (bind) anything that is permitted or forbidden in heaven - in line with God's Word. What's more, we can boldly unlock that which has been imprisoned by the evil forces of hell!

Remember what **Revelation 5:10** declares, "*And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth*" With the **keys of the kingdom** in our hands we rule and reign on this earth! That said, I would like us to make a habit (every time two or three of us are gathered together) to use the **keys of the kingdom** to establish the heaven's Rule here on earth. So let each one of us not be neglectful. Let's use these keys wisely - to God's glory!