

# The Keys Of The Kingdom Of The Heavens – Matthew 16:19

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- Chapter 17 Authority Given To The Kings  
Completed Bride

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The “keys of the kingdom of the heavens” (Matt. 16:19) refer to future authority that shall be given to the King’s completed bride. The noun form of the Greek word for key is *kleis*. It is found only six times in the New Testament (Matt. 16:19; Luke 11:52; Rev. 1:18; 3:7; 9:1; 20:1). The verb form is *kleio*. It is used sixteen times. The noun *kleis* comes from the verb *kleio*, which means to close.

We will learn the basic meaning of the noun *kleis* and its actual significance in Matthew 16:19 from the verses where it is used. (1) “I shall give to you the keys of the kingdom of the heavens; and whatever you may bind on the earth [declare unlawful] shall have already been bound [future perfect passive participle, declare unlawful] in the heavens and whatever you may loose on the earth [declare lawful] shall have already been loosed [future perfect passive participle, declared lawful] in the heavens” (Matt. 16:19—translation). This refers to authority that shall be given to Christ’s completed and perfected bride in the kingdom. (2) “Woe to you lawyers! Be-

cause you took away the key of knowledge, you yourselves did not enter, and you hindered the ones entering” (Luke 11:52—translation). The Lord Jesus was condemning the lawyers for taking the authority to misinterpret the word. In doing this, they took away the entrance to knowledge. (3) “And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand on me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the living One, and I became dead; and, behold, I am living forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of hades” (Rev. 1:17, 18—translation). This speaks of Jesus Christ’s power or authority over death and the underworld. (4) “And to the messenger of the assembly in Philadelphia write at once; These things says the holy One, the true One, the One having the key of David...” (Rev. 3:7—translation). The key of David refers to the Lord Jesus Christ’s authority in the messianic kingdom. (5) “And the fifth angel sounded a trumpet, and I saw a star having fallen out of the heaven to the earth: and to him was given the key of the pit of the abyss” (Rev. 9:1—translation). In the light of the context, this refers to the Lord’s giving Satan the authority to open the abyss to release demons from the pit during the tribulation period. (6) “And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain on his hand” (Rev. 20:1—translation). This authority will be exercised after the tribulation period prior to the 1,000 year reign of Jesus Christ.

The keys of the kingdom of the heavens are not the abilities to open and expound the gospel truths during the dispensation of grace. A common erroneous view is that Jesus Christ gave Peter the keys, and Peter opened the door first to the Jews (Acts 2) and to the Gentiles (Acts 10). The keys are not presently given to either the universal assembly or to the local assemblies as a means of preparation for the kingdom. Proper distinction must be made between the kingdom and the assembly.

The text identifies the keys as the keys of the kingdom: “I shall give to you the keys of the kingdom of the heavens.... For the Son of man is about to come in the glory of the Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his deeds. Truly I am saying to you, There are some of the ones standing here, who shall by no means experience death until they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom” (Matt. 16:19, 27, 28—translation). Jesus Christ will give the keys of the kingdom to His perfected people, not to imperfect assemblies. This authority is not given to any local assembly. It will be given to the general assembly of the firstborn which will constitute the bride of Christ when she shall be made like Jesus Christ without spot or wrinkle. Then she will be given the kingdom, and the assembly will rule and reign with Christ and exercise that power in the kingdom.

The error of identifying the kingdom with the assembly is serious. Such authority could never be committed to imperfect people. Peter was the spokesman for the disciples, but the keys were not given to Peter. Notice that the verb “shall give” is future active indicative of *didomi*. Jesus Christ is continuing to build His assembly; but in the future, He will give the keys of the kingdom to His perfected assembly that He is building. The assembly must be perfected in order to reign and rule over the nations. Church history proves that the attempt by certain ecclesiastical organizations to exercise authority during the present age that will be exercised by the perfected assembly in the future kingdom has been the source of untold evil and disaster.

The authority of the kingdom in Matthew 16:19 differs from the authority in Matthew 18:15-18. The Lord Jesus did not promise to give kingdom authority to the local aspect of the assembly. Limited authority promised to the assembly is exercised in the local aspect of the assembly in time. The context of the authority of Matthew 18:18 proves that assem-

bly discipline is the subject under discussion. The Greek subjunctive mood, which is the mood of probability, is used over and over again in Matthew 18:15-18—“Now if your brother may sin [aorist active subjunctive of *hamartano*, which signifies the probability of your brother’s sinning] against you, go and rebuke him between you and him alone; if he hears [aorist active subjunctive of *akouo*, expressing the possibility that your brother may not hear you], you, you have gained your brother. But if he hears not, take with you one or two more, in order that by [instrumental use of *epi*, which means by] the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be confirmed. And if he refuses to hear them, tell the assembly; but if he refuses to hear [aorist active subjunctive of *parakouo*] even the assembly, let him be to you as the Gentile and the publican. Truly I am saying to you, whatever you may bind [aorist active subjunctive of *deo*, showing the possibility of your binding] on the earth shall have already been bound [perfect passive participle of *deo*, which means having been already bound and continuing in that state] in heaven: and whatever you may loose [aorist active subjunctive of *luo*, showing the probability of your loosing] on the earth shall have already been loosed [perfect passive participle of *luo*, which means having been already loosed and continuing in that state] in heaven” (Matt. 18:15-18—translation).

The keys of the kingdom are absent from Matthew 18:15-18 because this passage does not refer to authority that shall be given to the perfected assembly in the future. The context of Matthew 18:18 limits the authority in three respects: (1) It is obviously conferred on the local assembly. (2) It delegates to each assembly the authority of discipline among its own members and is therefore limited to its own affairs. (3) There is no mention of the keys of the kingdom.

In the first and purest period of local assembly history, the

assembly was intermixed with that which did not pertain to it. Judas was among the twelve disciples. Simon Magus was a member of the assembly in Samaria (Acts 8). Among the first public servants were Demus in one assembly and Diotrephes in another. There is no perfect local assembly. The sinning brother within a local assembly sins against God, and his sin against God is a reflection against the assembly. Therefore, the brother against whom he sinned should rebuke him between the two of them. If he refuses to hear the brother, the brother should take two or three witnesses. If he fails to hear them, they should take the matter to the local assembly. The local assembly is the last court of appeal on earth. If he refuses to hear the last court of appeal, the assembly should treat him as a pagan or a publican. Each assembly must judge things within its own assembly. One assembly has no jurisdiction over another. This is exemplified in the seven local assemblies in Revelation 2-3. Each assembly must take care of its own problems.

There is as much difference between the keys of the kingdom and limited authority in local assemblies as there is between our decaying bodies and the perfected body we shall have when we see Jesus Christ face to face. The assembly must be perfected in order to rule and reign with Christ over the nations on the earth. The apostle Paul rebuked the assembly in Corinth, because its members supposed they were presently reigning with Christ. Nevertheless, they were going to heathen people to settle matters that arose in their assembly. Since the saints shall judge the world in the future, we should be able to take care of small matters in the local assembly without going outside its membership (I Cor. 6:1-3). A perfected assembly in the kingdom will exercise unlimited authority. This authority signified in the “keys” has not yet been given to us. Hence, the context of Matthew 18:18 limits the authority there to the local assembly. The keys of the kingdom of the heavens will be administered in the kingdom by a perfected assembly, whereas limited authority is presently administered by imperfect men in the local aspect of the assembly.