

Kingdom Living Series

KEYS TO THE KINGDOM

KEY VERSE:

**And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven.
(Matthew 16:19)**

INTRODUCTION

We have learned about the existence of the eternal Kingdom of God and of the King, Jesus Christ. This week we will discover how to gain access to the Kingdom of God as you study the "keys to the Kingdom."

AN APPOINTED KINGDOM

Before Jesus returned to Heaven He told His disciples:

**And I appoint unto you a Kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me.
(Luke 22:29)**

Jesus also spoke of His Church which would extend the message of the Kingdom throughout the world:

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.

And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven. (Matthew 16:18-19)

In this passage Jesus revealed that Peter would be one of the spiritual foundation stones of the first church. This meant he would be a vital part of its growth and development. Peter's name actually meant "a rock" or "stone."

Jesus then said of Himself, "...upon *this* rock I will build my Church" indicating that the Church would derive its existence from Him. He would be *the* rock upon which the Church was built. There would be many other lesser stones (people like Peter). These stones would be an important part of the Church. But Jesus Himself was the cornerstone on which the structure of the Church was to be built.

Jesus then made two comments regarding this Church.

First, He said that "the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." This implied that the Church would have enemies fighting it, but assured that the enemies would not overcome it.

Second, and most important to our study, Jesus promised to give the keys to His Kingdom to the Church.

In the natural world if you possess the keys to a building, it means you have authority there.

The authority Jesus was speaking of in this passage is a spiritual authority. He gave the Church spiritual keys to the doors of His Kingdom. Jesus said "I" will give them. The power and authority of the Church was to flow from Jesus. The use of the word "will" (future tense) meant that the keys had not yet been given at the time Jesus spoke. This power was released in Acts 2 when the Holy Ghost was given to believers:

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

The keys to the Kingdom were the power to bind and loose. To bind something means to put fetters or a bond on it. It is like closing and locking the door to a room. To loose something is to release or set it free. It is similar to opening the door to a room.

The Church would have a position of authority. It would have the keys to God's Kingdom. It would be the instrument through which the spiritual doors to the Kingdom would be opened to the nations of the world. Peter would be the first to use these keys to the Kingdom. He would open the door of ministry to the Gentile nations of the world.

The Church would have the power to loose the spiritual forces of good and bind the spiritual forces of evil. In every difficulty faced by believers, binding and loosing would be the key to victory.

HOW TO ENTER THE KINGDOM

The keys to the Kingdom were given by Jesus to the Church. But specifically, how was entrance to be gained to the Kingdom of God?

John 3:1-21 records the story of Nicodemus, a religious leader at the time of Christ's ministry on earth. He came to Jesus desiring to gain access to the Kingdom of God and, by doing so, inherit eternal life. Jesus told him:

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. (John 3:3)

Nicodemus was confused. He asked Jesus:

How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? (John 3:4)

Jesus explained to Nicodemus that the "born-again" experience of which He spoke was not a physical birth. Through physical birth you are born into a kingdom of this world as a citizen of a nation.

At natural birth, you inherit the basic sin nature:

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. (Psalms 51:5)

Because God's Kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, you must be born into it through spiritual rebirth. You must change your residency from the kingdom of Satan to the Kingdom of God. Jesus said:

That which is born of the flesh is flesh: and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. (John 3:6-7)

Paul explained that you could not enter the Kingdom with a flesh and blood body:

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God... (I Corinthians 15:50)

You enter the Kingdom of God and become heirs of the Kingdom through spiritual rebirth. The way to be born again is by believing that Jesus died to pay the penalty for your sins. You must confess your sins, ask forgiveness, and place your trust in Him:

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. (John 3:16-17)

(Repentance from sin and having faith toward God is covered in a Harvestime International Institute course entitled "*Foundations Of Faith*." If you have not received the born again experience, we encourage you to obtain this course and study more in this area.)

It is through Jesus that you can move from the kingdom of Satan to the Kingdom of God:

(God) Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son. (Colossians 1:13)

REPENTANCE OR REVOLUTION?

When Jesus came to earth to extend the Kingdom of God, some who acknowledged Him as King thought the Kingdom would come through revolution.

They thought there would be an actual physical revolt against the existing ruling powers of the world. But Jesus taught that the key to His Kingdom was not revolution but repentance:

Jesus answered, My Kingdom is not of this world: if my Kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my Kingdom not from hence. (John 18:36)

Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel. (Mark 1:14-15)

From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. (Matthew 4:17)

When Jesus died on the cross two thieves were crucified on crosses near Him. One of them repented and asked:

Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom.

And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise. (Luke 23:42-43)

Repentance is the only way to gain access to the Kingdom of God.

Jesus warned that there would be many false doctrines and false prophets claiming they were the way to the Kingdom:

Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. (Matthew 7:13-14)

There is only one way to enter the Kingdom and that is through Jesus Christ.

Jesus warned that you should enter the gate to eternal life now, because someday the entrance will be shut:

Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able.

When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us: and He shall answer and say unto you, I know not whence ye are. (Luke 13:24-25)

Now the door to the Kingdom is open. You can enter it by repenting from sin. In the time of God's judgment of the world, it will be too late. The door will be closed.

THREE PARABLES ABOUT ENTRANCE

Jesus told a series of parables in Luke 15:1-32. You will learn more about parables later in this course. Parables were natural examples Jesus used to illustrate spiritual truths. Read the parables in Luke 15 about a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son. They all concern entrance to the Kingdom of God.

-The parable of the shepherd seeking the lost sheep illustrates how God seeks to bring those who are spiritually lost into His Kingdom.

-The parable of the woman looking for a lost coin illustrates the diligence with which you should seek for those lost in sin to guide them to the Kingdom.

-The parable of the lost son illustrates the principle of repentance through which you can gain your rightful place as an heir of the Kingdom of God.

ADDING TO FAITH

It is through faith in God and His Son, Jesus Christ that you enter the Kingdom of God:

Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him. (James 2:5)

The Apostle Peter, however, speaks of spiritual qualities you should seek to develop in your life after the new birth experience:

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue: and to virtue knowledge;

And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (II Peter 1:5-11)

After you enter the Kingdom through faith, you must develop a lifestyle consistent with governing principles of the Kingdom of God. If you do not do this, you will soon forget God has cleansed you from sin and return to the old sinful lifestyle.

Peter says that if you go on to spiritual maturity your entrance to the Kingdom will be assured. Later in this course you will learn principles for living in the Kingdom of God which will help you achieve spiritual maturity.

SELF-TEST

1. Write the Key Verse from memory.

2. To whom were the keys of the Kingdom given?

3. What are the keys to the Kingdom?

4. What necessary action must one take in order to transfer from the kingdom of Satan to the Kingdom of God?

5. What did Jesus tell Nicodemus he must do in order to enter the Kingdom of God?

6. What does the passage in II Peter 1:5-11 teach? (You may use your Bible to read these verses again).

7. What does it mean to bind something?

8. What does it mean to loose something?
