

# The Christian

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## THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

We may be shocked at the presumption of men claiming the power to forgive sins by virtue of holding the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and still not know the import of these keys and by whom and to whom they were given. We ask the reader's attention to the following remarks on the subject.

1. There is no promise in the Bible that any man or body of men would give these keys but Christ. He alone had this power.

2. There is no promise that any other person but Peter would receive these keys nor hint to that effect. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. xvi: 19.)

Literal keys open and shut, or lock and unlock gates, doors, safes, &c. The key of knowledge is figurative. It differs from literal keys in this—it opens but never shuts. It turns only one way, while other keys turn backward and forward. The key of knowledge opens a secret or turns a mystery into a revelation. When a mystery is revealed the work of the key is done. We understand the keys of the kingdom to be the keys of knowledge. Jesus speaks of the mysteries of the kingdom and not of its doors or gates. He tells his apostles that their eyes and ears said and heard what many prophets and wise men sought for in vain. It was given unto them to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. See Matt. xi: 25. Luke x: 21, 23, 24 & 8: 10. These men became stewards of the mystery of God (1 Cor. iv: 1.) to declare or make known the mysteries to mankind.

Gravitation was once a mystery known only to the Creator. Newton had the key which opened this mystery for all mankind. So of electricity and the power of steam. They were hidden mysteries till made known to their discoverers who had the keys and opened them for the benefit of all. Would sane men now claim the keys of these mysteries and talk of their power to open and shut what is already open and no man can shut?

How sinful man can be saved and restored to Divine fellowship was long a secret in the mind of God. The life and death of a Glorious Person was the centre of that secret or mystery, and of this God was pleased to give hints at different times and in divers ways. He told the serpent that the seed of the woman would bruise his head and would in the struggle have his heel bruised. Eminent men, such as Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Joshua, were types of the woman's seed, and all the divinely appointed sacrifices typified pointed to his death. Inspired prophets spoke of him, and all nations longed for his advent. In the fulness of time "the desire of all nations" was born. Jesus grew in stature and in favor with God and man. "But the world knew him not." At his baptism when

passing into public life, God said of him. "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," while the Spirit of God like a dove descended and abode on him.

On the coasts of Caesarea, Philippi, Jesus asked his disciples, "But whom say ye that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." Jesus blessed Peter because his Father had revealed this unto him. He calls this Truth which God had revealed to him "This rock" said he would build his church on it and the gates of hades or death would not prevail against it. Thus were gradually opened to Peter the secrets of man's redemption. Jesus calls him "rock," and the secret which God revealed to him "this rock." What a vast difference between Peter and "this rock." Peter was rock—part weak, part strong. He is now applauded by his Master for his grand confession, and in a few minutes after he is severely rebuked for contradicting Him and relishing the things of man rather than the things of God. When his Master was betrayed Peter felt so strong as to draw his sword on the whole multitude, and on the same evening so weak as to quail before a menial, and with bitter oaths deny Him. But "This rock" is all strong. As soon as the great Truth was uttered by God at the Jordan, Jesus was led into the wilderness to meet all the temptations of the devil who assailed his divinity. "If thou be the Son of God" do so and so, said the tempter. But Jesus so completely foiled him that from that day no demon denied His divinity. Jesus was now enduring the contradiction of sinners who tried in every way to overcome him. But he maintained his Godly divinity amid it all. Peter saw him rendering good for evil, always "going about doing good," healing the sick, expelling demons, grandly demonstrating that no earthly power could prevail against his divinity. Peter would hear the high priest condemn him to death because he said he was the Son of God, and witness his death on the cross. All this he did witness. He saw the gates of hades close upon the soul of his Master, and thought they did prevail, and never expected again to see this lovely person. But Jesus had said they shall not prevail, and Peter saw his Lord alive again, and death conquered. The grand truth had now triumphed over Satan, wicked men and death, and the Conqueror was invested with all authority in heaven and earth. After Jesus had appeared at different times to His apostles, He charged them to go and declare among all nations what they had seen and heard of His sufferings and triumph, and to offer salvation in His name to every one who would accept of it on His easy terms. When the Spirit came upon them and all was ready, Peter preached the gospel with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. When the people heard Him open the mystery so clearly and personally, they were pierced to the heart, but did not know what to do to be saved. They were convinced that Jesus was the Son of the living God now in heaven, and that they were sinners of the deepest dye, but they knew not what to do. When they asked: What shall we do? Peter told them so plainly that three thousand gladly received his word and obeyed the Lord Jesus, and thus entered into the kingdom of heaven—the church of the living God. Did any one else use the key on that day? Certainly not. Did any other of the apostles need the key? No, for Peter told the whole secret of Christ's person and work, and how they could be saved in His name. Did he ever lock up that mystery? Never. His key was not to shut, but to open. When the secret was thus opened, all the apostles proclaimed the glad tidings to the Jews. Others too engaged in the glorious work and the good news spread down to Samaria, so that many of the Samaritans heard, believed and were baptized. The terms of salvation then made known remain unchanged until this day and he that be-

lieveth and is baptized shall be saved now, as then, for this is the infallible promise of the Saviour of the world.

But, although the kingdom was opened to the Jews at Pentecost, neither Peter nor any one else, for several years after, knew "that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel."—(Eph. iii. 6.) Peter thought them unclean, but step by step he was led by the Spirit to go and preach to a Gentile audience in the house of Cornelius, as worded in the 10th chap. of Acts. While preaching the gospel of Christ to them the Holy Spirit miraculously fell on them and settled forever the glorious fact "that God hath to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." Here Peter used the second key and opened the kingdom to the Gentiles. Did he shut that kingdom and render it necessary for another to have the key? Certainly not. The same opening serves until the end of time. Others preached the gospel to the Gentiles after the secret was made known by Peter. Finally Paul had charge of that department, as the gospel of circumcision was committed to Peter.—(Acts xiii: 2, 3, 4. Rom. xi: 13. Gal. ii: 7, 8, 9. Eph. iii: 8.)

The glorious gospel of Christ was thus revealed and became the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jews first, and also to the Gentiles, and no power terrestrial or infernal can close it. All men who wish to be saved can now learn from the lips of the only man who ever had the keys of the kingdom, how they can be saved.

The same apostle tells the saved how they can abide in Christ and gain the eternal kingdom. Add to your faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity. 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 Saviour, Jesus Christ.—(11 Peter, 1.)

But although Peter had the keys of the kingdom he never claimed the power to forgive sins. It was said of none but the Son of Man that he had power on earth to forgive sins. Jesus gave the apostles power to heal all diseases and to expel demons, but not power to forgive sins. He sent them to tell infallibly how God would forgive sins through Christ, and speaking metonymically says: "Whosoever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them, &c.—(John xx: 23.) He never said that they could forgive a man his sins against God. Peter tells his hearers to save themselves from the ungodly, (Acts ii: 40.) but never hints that he could save them: Cornelius was to send for Peter, not to save him, but to tell him words whereby he and all his house should be saved.—(Acts xi: 14.) The apostles had a treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of them. The casket is earthly but the jewel is eternal and divine. Miracles were their credential and yet they never claimed the power to forgive sins. But what can be thought of men who have no such credentials claiming such power? Who would prefer being guided by such pretenders to receiving the glorious gospel of the blessed God?

THE BROTHERS throughout the Provinces will read with interest and yet with grief the few lines referring to the death of Brother Journey. When the news first came we were astonished above measure, and for a moment or two stood speechless—trying to fathom the meaning of this severe blow to our bright anticipation—that soon we would have in our midst, as he intended to be home in June, another faithful worker in the cause of Christ.

Our acquaintance, though short, the piety and self-sacrificing spirit exhibited by him, the high esteem in which he was held by those who knew him, led us to expect that he would become a power for good. We are desirous that those to whom he was bound by the ties of nature, should know that we deeply sympathize with them in this hour of sadness, and that we too are sharers in their loss.