

**November 1**  
**We've Got the Keys**  
**Matthew 16:13-24**

**Intro:** Jesus mentions both “my church” and “the kingdom of heaven” only in this passage. “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven” is mentioned in connection with the church both times that the word “church” is found on the lips of Jesus, here and in Matthew 18:18. “The keys of the kingdom of heaven” are given to the church for binding and loosing on earth and heaven. Part of our kingdom work here is the use of these keys.

Jesus is going to give the keys of the kingdom of heaven. What a tremendous gift! What trust he is placing in Peter and the others. These keys will open and close what is both temporal and eternal.

So what are you binding and loosing as part of the church of Jesus Christ?

**I. Properly Identifying Jesus Is the First KEY:** *Who do people say that the Son of Man is? (Matthew 16:13)*

\*\*\*Caesarea Philippi is far north toward Mount Hermon. Its old name was Paneas after the Greek god Pan. Altars to Pan and many other gods are easily visible today in the grotto where a giant spring pours into the headwaters of the Jordan River. Cultures and civilizations collided here at this great spring. Water is so precious in this barren land. This spot is on the edge of Israel. Beyond it the pagans controlled everything. Something think that this settlement was itself called “the gates of hell” because it was the doorway into the pagan world from Galilee.

**II. Properly Identifying Ourselves is the Second KEY:** *And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it (Matthew 16:18)*

A. Note the parallel between the true identity of Jesus: “You are the Christ,” and the true identity of Peter: “You are Peter.”

B. Who Peter is in and of himself: Peter is a wobbly, impulsive human being. Jesus named Simon according to the kind of man he would make him, not who he already was.

C. Peter’s true identity is wrapped up in the true identity of Jesus the Christ.

1. He found out the true identity of Jesus from the Father in Heaven, not from his early father (son of Jonah). This is God’s activity in his life.
2. The confession which he makes about Jesus is of supernatural origin. He is walking in the Spirit, experiencing the activity of the Creator God in his life, when he identifies Jesus as the “Son of the living God.”
3. Peter becomes a Rock later on. He stabilizes the early church. They check with Peter on all matters of relevance. He is the central figure in the Jerusalem church. Why? Because of the activity of God in his life.

D. Peter stands in for all of us here. We are the CHURCH of Jesus Christ, his ecclesia, the gathered assembly.

1. We are in a battle that we will win. The church is victorious. It is glorious—that he might present to himself a glorious church (Ephesians 5:27).
2. We are given keys that will bind and loose things on earth and things in heaven.

**III. Properly Identifying Our Calling is the Third KEY:** *If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me (Matthew 16:24).*

A. Being Christ and the Church is not a state of peace with no problems, health with no suffering, or victory with no conflict.

B. Peter does not understand this yet. When Christ speaks of dying, he rebukes him.

C. When Peter does not accept the suffering, Christ rebukes Peter: Get behind me, Satan. You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men (Matthew 16:23). Peter has just spoken a confession which Jesus said comes straight from the Father in Heaven. It was a moment of divine intervention and understanding, and it was all about the things of God.

Now Peter has slipped right back into the human way of assessing things. He has lost his divine perspective.

D. The way of Victory for Jesus IS the way of Suffering and death. It is the only way to victory. There is no other way.

E. The way of Victory for the Church of Jesus Christ IS the way of Suffering, of death to self. If we want to follow Jesus, this is the way. This is where the things of God are found.

The CROSS IS THE SYMBOL of our faith. It is an instrument of pain and death. You have not heard comfortable and pain-free words when Jesus says, "take up your cross." Those words are full of trouble and death.

\*\*\*I have walked the Via de la Rosa, the Way of Suffering, in the Old City of Jerusalem. I have seen the probable place where they erected the cross upon which Jesus died. I have stood there and contemplated the truth that is found in the crucifixion.

This is the way—walk he in it.

When you have properly identified Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, the Promised Messiah, and you have properly identified his followers as the Church, his glorious Bride, and you have properly identified the calling as the Way of the Cross, then you have the keys that unlock the chains of sin and hell, that provide the secret to life and peace, and that open the way to heaven.