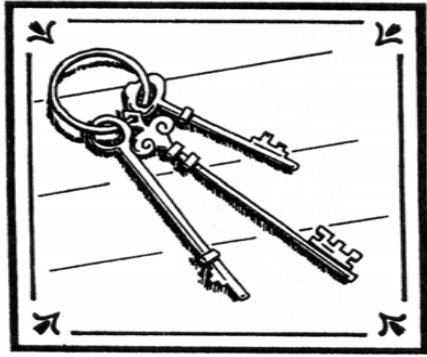


# The Keys of the Kingdom



by John D. Clark, Sr.

“Jesus said unto [Peter]. . . ‘I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.’” (Mt. 16:19)

Artists through the centuries have drawn pictures of Peter standing at a gate in heaven, holding a set of keys and allowing the righteous to enter while turning sinners away. That is not what Jesus meant when he promised the keys of the kingdom to Peter.

When one receives the holy Ghost baptism, he has entered into God’s kingdom, for “the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the holy Ghost” (Rom. 14:17), and “by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body” (1Cor. 12:13). The “keys” Jesus gave to Peter were a special anointing to introduce this kingdom to the three kinds of people on earth in Peter’s time. This is an essential point. Every apostle was anointed with power, but none of them could minister the baptism of the Spirit until Peter unlocked that “door” to the three kinds of people on the earth.

## THREE KINDS OF PEOPLE

After his resurrection, Jesus remained with his disciples forty days, “speaking of things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). The disciples, filled more with zeal than with knowledge, had believed that Jesus’ plan was to overthrow the

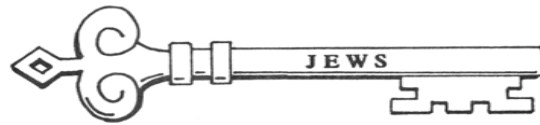
Romans and restore Israel’s past military and political glory. When they excitedly asked, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”, Jesus responded, “It is not for you to know



the times or the seasons which the Father has put in His own power. But you 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 Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:7-8). After saying this, Jesus was taken up into heaven. But note the three groups of people to whom Jesus said the apostles would be sent:

- (1) JEWS (“Jerusalem and Judea”)
- (2) SAMARITANS (“Samaria”)
- (3) GENTILES (“uttermost part of the earth”)

In turn, to each group of people Peter opened the door of the kingdom of God.



The Jews would be the first to hear the gospel (Acts 13:45-46), and with a powerful sermon on the day of Pentecost, Peter opened the door to them: “Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them [the Jews], You men of Judea, and all of you who dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words.” As a result of Peter’s preaching, many Jews that day believed in Jesus, repented of their sins, and were baptized by the holy Ghost into the family of God. On that day, for the first time, Peter used one of his keys to the kingdom of God, the key for the Jews. After Peter opened the Jews’ door, other anointed men could lead other Jews into the kingdom, but Peter had to be the first to do so because he had the keys. Samaritans and Gentiles would be given the opportunity to repent and receive the Spirit, but the

Jews had to be first (Acts 13:46; Rom.1:16).



Next in line to receive the holy Ghost baptism, which is to enter into the kingdom of God, were the Samaritans, who were a bridge between Jews and Gentiles. Philip was the first to preach to the Samaritans. He performed mighty miracles in Samaria, cast out demons, healed the sick, told them about Jesus, and baptized in water those who believed the gospel, “and there was great joy in that city” (Acts 8:5-8). But none of the Samaritans received the holy Ghost! The Samaritans believed the word of God that Philip preached, but that is as far as they could go with him. They could only stand at the door of the kingdom until Peter came from Jerusalem to open it with his spiritual keys.

In Jerusalem, upon hearing of the wonderful results of Philip’s preaching in Samaria, the assembly of apostles “sent unto them Peter and John, who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the holy Ghost (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them, only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the holy Ghost” (Acts 8:14-16). The Samaritan door was now open. As in the case of the Jews, now that Peter had opened the Samaritan door, other Samaritans could receive the holy Ghost by hearing other men preach the gospel. Their door was open; whoever among the Samaritans who desired the waters of life could freely drink. Peter did not have to be present for every Samaritan or Jewish conversion. He merely had to open their doors.



Peter’s last key was one which God had to coerce him to use, for Peter did not even think that such a key existed. No one knew that there was a door through which even Gentiles would be allowed to enter into God’s kingdom. The opening of the

Gentiles’ door (Acts 10) is an incredible story of faith and obedience, beginning with “a certain [Gentile] in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian Band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the [Jews] and prayed to God always.” As this man Cornelius prayed, an angel appeared to him, speaking a few words of encouragement and giving him a directive from God. “Send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side. He will tell you what you ought to do.”

Meanwhile, in Joppa, God was dealing with Peter’s heart so that he would be willing to enter into a Gentiles’ house. With a remarkable vision, God compelled Peter to accept Cornelius’ invitation, and, having arrived in Caesarea, Peter began to proclaim the gospel to Cornelius, and to his family and friends who had gathered in the house. Unlike Philip with the Samaritans, Peter did not have to wait until someone from Jerusalem came to pray for these people to receive the holy Ghost; he had the keys with him! And “while Peter spoke these words, the holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. . . . For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.”

Peter’s work with the keys was now complete. All three doors to God’s kingdom had been opened. First for the Jews, then the Samaritans, and finally for the Gentiles. Since that time, “whosoever will” has been allowed to drink of the Spirit of life freely.

While the door of God’s kingdom is still open, my friend, strive to enter in. Be wise. “Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

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