

The Family Catechism Of The Covenant of Peace Church

For the Week of 4/5- 4/11/2020

QUESTION 83: What is the “Office of the Keys?”

ANSWER: The “Preaching of the Holy Gospel” and “Church Discipline”; by which two things the Kingdom of Heaven is opened to believers and shut against unbelievers.

QUESTION 84: How is the Kingdom of Heaven “opened and shut” by the Preaching of the Holy Gospel?

ANSWER: In this way: that according to the Command of Christ, it is proclaimed and openly witnessed to believers, one and all, that as often as they accept with true faith the Promise of the Gospel, all their sins are really forgiven them of God for the Sake of Christ’s Merits; and on the contrary, to all unbelievers and hypocrites, that the Wrath of God and Eternal Condemnation abide on them, so long as they are not converted; according to which witness of the Gospel, will be the Judgment of God both in this life and in that which is to come.

QUESTION 85: How is the Kingdom of Heaven “shut and opened” by Christian Discipline?

ANSWER: In this way: that according to the Command of Christ, if any under the Christian “Name” show themselves unsound either in Doctrine or manner of life, and after repeated brotherly Admonitions refuse to turn from their errors of evil ways, they are complained of to the Church or to its proper Officers, and, if they neglect to hear them also, are by them excluded from the Holy Sacraments and the Christian Communion, and by God Himself from the Kingdom of Christ; and if they promise and show real Amendment, they are again received as Members of Christ and His Church.

EXPOSITION: Having now shown who are to be admitted to the Lord’s Supper by the Church, the Doctrine respecting the Power of the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, comes naturally next in order, which, in addition to other things, teaches in an especial manner, how those who are not to be admitted to the Lord’s Table ought to be kept back and excluded from the Sacraments, lest they profane them by coming. The things which claim special attention in regard to this subject are,

- What is the Power of the Keys given to the Church, and what are the parts thereof?
- Is there any necessity for Ecclesiastical Discipline, and Excommunication?
- To whom is this Power committed; against whom and in what order is it to be

exercised?

- To what ends ought it to be directed, and what are the abuses to be avoided?
- In what does the Power of the Keys differ from Civil Power?

1. What is the “Power of the Keys” given to the Church and what are the parts thereof?

... continued from last week

The “Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven” consist of two parts:

- The Preaching of the Gospel, or the ministry of the Word
- Christian Discipline, to which Excommunication belongs

And by these two, the Church “opens and shuts”; “binds and looses”. It “shuts and binds”, by the preaching of the Gospel, when it declares and testifies to unbelievers and hypocrites, that they stand exposed to the Wrath of God and Eternal Condemnation, so long as they are unconverted. And it “opens and looses” when it declares and testifies to the Faithful and Penitent the Remission of Sins and the Grace of God, for the Sake of Christ’s Merits. It “shuts and binds” by Christian Discipline, when it excommunicates wicked and obstinate offenders, or forbids them the use of the Sacraments, by which they are excluded from the Christian Church, and by God Himself from the Kingdom of Christ; and it “opens and looses”, when it again receives the same persons, if they repent, as members of Christ and His Church.

This distinction, however, must be observed, as it respects the order of those two parts: the “Keys”, by the preaching of the Gospel, *first* “loose” and *then* “bind”; but, in Christian Discipline, they *first* “bind” and *then* “loose”.

Again; the Keys “loose and bind” the same or different persons, by the Preaching of the Gospel; but they “bind and loose” the same persons only, by Christian Discipline.

“Excommunication” is the rejection, or the excluding of a gross offender- one that is openly wicked and obstinate, from the “Society of the Faithful” (Church), by the judgment of the Elders, with the consent of the whole Church, done “in the Name of” and “by the Authority of” Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, in order that the offender, being thus put to shame, may repent, and that such things as bring a reproach upon the Cause of Christ, may be carefully guarded against.

This is not merely an exclusion from the Sacraments, but from the whole Communion of the Faithful, with which the obstinate and disobedient have no connection. It is two-fold:

- Internal, which belongs to God alone
- External, which belongs to the Church

The former is declared on earth by that which is external; while the latter is ratified in Heaven by that which is internal, according to the Promise of Christ; “**Whatsoever you**

shall bind in earth, shall be bound in heaven.” (Matt. 18:18)

