

The Dominion Mandate: The Authority of the Keys

Dr. John Carmichael

[Gen 1:26-28 NASB95] 26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

[Mat 16:18-19 NASB95] 18 "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. 19 "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."

[Mat 18:18-19 NASB95] 18 "Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. 19 "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.

- From the beginning, God created humanity to rule. Genesis 1:28 shows the first command God ever gave humanity: "Be fruitful... fill the earth... and subdue it."
- Humanity was created to exercise dominion under God's authority. But when Adam sinned, that dominion was lost and the world came under the influence of darkness.
- The good news of the gospel is that Jesus came to restore what Adam lost.
- One of the ways He restored our authority is through what He called "the keys of the kingdom."
- Dr. Paul King, *Rediscovering Binding and Loosening*, "The early church understood this as real spiritual authority. Throughout church history many leaders taught that believers could bind evil and release the work of God through prayer and spiritual authority."
- Barclay: "Their regular sense, which any Jew would recognize was to allow and to forbid. To bind something was to declare it forbidden; to loose was to declare it allowed.
- **The church works within the boundaries and for the will of God in heaven.** The future perfect verbs ("will have been bound", "will have been loosed") suggest that the heavenly decision preceded Peter's declaration of it on earth. (NBC)
- Historically in the church this meant exorcizing demons, extending God's forgiveness, pronouncing doctrines, and prescribing certain practices. (LITSNTC)

What does it actually mean for believers to bind and loose?

To understand the authority Jesus gave His church, here are three truths about the keys of the kingdom.

I. Jesus Gave Authority to His Church

- a. Matthew 16:18–19 Jesus said He would build His church and the gates of hell would not prevail.
- b. Then He gave the church, not individuals, the keys of the kingdom.
- c. Keys represent authority and access. In the ancient world, the person with the keys had authority to open and close doors.
- d. Jesus was saying: The church is not powerless. The church carries authority.

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- e. This passage is not a description of the “gates of Hades” coming against the church. Rather, this passage describes the church on the offense, actively coming against the gates (strong spiritual walls) of Satan’s kingdom. The gates of Satan’s areas of control will not be able to hold back or stand up against the church as it reclaims territory (meaning human lives) for God and rescuing people from the power of death. In the end, nothing can stop the power of Christ’s church from accomplishing God’s purposes on earth. (Fire Bible Notes)
- f. [Luk 10:19 NASB95] 19 "Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you.
- g. Application: Believers should stop living like victims. When facing oppression, temptation, fear, or spiritual attack: we pray with authority; we stand on God’s Word; we exercise our authority in Christ.
- h. You don’t fight from defeat. You fight from Christ’s victory.

II. Binding Restrains the Work of the Enemy

- a. [Mat 18:18 NASB95] 18 "Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.
- b. The word bind means to restrain or restrict.
- c. Jesus used the same imagery in Matthew 12:29, when He spoke of binding the strong man before plundering his house. [Mat 12:29 NASB95] 29 "Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong [man?] And then he will plunder his house.
- d. Many Christian leaders throughout history understood this as believers resisting and restraining the work of the devil through spiritual authority.
- e. [Jas 4:7 NASB95] 7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.
- f. Application: We bind the enemy when we: resist temptation, reject lies, pray against spiritual oppression, stand on the authority of Christ.
- g. Instead of saying: “I guess the devil is just attacking me.”
- h. We say: “In the name of Jesus, this has no authority over my life.”

III. Loosing Releases the Work of Heaven

- a. Jesus also said: “whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”
- b. If binding restrains darkness, loosing releases the power of God.
- c. King, “Throughout the ministry of Jesus, people were loosed from sickness, oppression, and bondage.”
- d. [Luk 13:12 NASB95] 12 When Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed (added: LOOSED) from your sickness."
- e. Jesus came to set people free.
- f. Application: Believers loose heaven when we: pray for healing, speak forgiveness, declare truth, preach the Gospel, pray for deliverance.
- g. We loose: freedom, healing, salvation, restoration
- h. The church is meant to open prison doors.

- **Jesus restored the believer’s authority so we can bind the works of darkness and release the power of heaven.**
- Jesus did not leave His church powerless. He gave us the keys of the kingdom.
- That means: darkness does not have the final word, the enemy does not have ultimate authority, the church carries spiritual authority in Christ.
- The dominion Adam lost, Jesus restored.
- The church is called to: bind the works of darkness, loose the power of heaven, advance the kingdom of God.