

Matthew 16:19

Commentaries

& Parallel Translations

Assembled by C. White

"And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (NKJV)

A. Commentaries

Barnes' Notes on the Bible

Whatsoever ye shall bind ... - See the notes at [Matthew 16:19](#). These words were spoken to the apostles. Jesus had before addressed the same words to Peter, [Matthew 16:19](#). He employs them here to signify that they all had the same power; that in ordering the affairs of the church he did not intend to give Peter any supremacy or any exclusive right to regulate it. The meaning of this verse is, whatever you shall do in the discipline of the church shall be approved by God or bound in heaven. This promise, therefore, cannot be understood as extending to all Christians or ministers, for all others but the apostles may err.

Clarke's Commentary on the Bible

Whatsoever ye shall bind, etc. - Whatever determinations ye make, in conformity to these directions for your conduct to an offending brother, will be accounted just, and ratified by the Lord. See on [Matthew 16:19](#) (note); and, to what is there said, the following observations may be profitably added.

Οσα εαν δεσητε - και οσα εαν λυσητε. Binding and loosing, in this place, and in [Matthew 16:19](#), is generally restrained, by Christian interpreters, to matters of discipline and authority. But it is as plain as the sun, by what occurs in numberless places dispersed throughout the Mishna, and from thence commonly used by the later rabbins when they treat of ritual subjects, that binding signified, and was commonly understood by the Jews at that time to be, a declaration that any thing was unlawful to be done; and loosing signified, on the contrary, a declaration that any thing may be lawfully done. Our Savior spoke to his disciples in a language which they understood, so that they were not in the least at a loss to comprehend his meaning; and its being obsolete to us is no manner of reason why we should conclude that it was obscure to them. The words, bind and loose,

are used in both places in a declaratory sense, of things, not of persons. It is ὁ and ὅσα, in the neuter gender, both in chap. 16, and here in this: i.e. Whatsoever thing or things ye shall bind or loose. Consequently, the same commission which was given at first to St. Peter alone, ([Matthew 16:19](#)), was afterwards enlarged to all the apostles. St. Peter had made a confession that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. His confession of the Divinity of our Lord was the first that ever was made by man; to him, therefore, were given the keys of the kingdom of heaven: i.e. God made choice of him among all the apostles, that the Gentiles should first, by his mouth, hear the word of the Gospel, and believe. He first opened the kingdom of heaven to the Gentiles, when he preached to Cornelius. It was open to the Jews all along before; but if we should suppose that it was not, yet to them also did St. Peter open the kingdom of heaven, in his sermon at the great pentecost. Thus, then, St. Peter exercised his two keys: that for the Jews at the great pentecost; and that for the Gentiles, when he admitted Cornelius into the Church. And this was the reward of his first confession, in which he owned Jesus to be the promised Messiah. And what St. Peter loosed, i.e. declared as necessary to be believed and practised by the disciples here, was ratified above. And what he declared unlawful to be believed and practised, (i.e. what he bound), was actually forbidden by God himself.

I own myself obliged to Dr. Lightfoot for this interpretation of the true notion of binding and loosing. It is a noble one, and perfectly agrees with the ways of speaking then in use among the Jews. It is observable that these phrases, of binding and loosing, occur no where in the New Testament but in St. Matthew, who is supposed to have written his Gospel first in Hebrew, from whence it was translated into Greek, and then the force and use of the expression will better appear. Dr. Wotton's *Miscell. Discourses*, vol. i. p. 309, etc., etc.

"The phrases to bind and to loose were Jewish, and most frequent in their writers. It belonged only to the teachers among the Jews to bind and to loose. When the Jews set any apart to be a preacher, they used these words, 'Take thou liberty to teach what is Bound and what is Loose.'" Strype's preface to the *Posthumous Remains of Dr. Lightfoot*, p. 38.

Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

Verily I say unto you,.... To them all, what he had said before to Peter; See Gill on [Matthew 16:19](#), what is said here, refers to things and not persons, as there also.

Geneva Study Bible

Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

People's New Testament

18:18 Whatsoever ye shall bind. What was said to Peter (Mt 16:19) is addressed to all the apostles. It is spoken to all a second time (Joh 20:23). All had the keys as well as Peter. The apostles were, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, to establish the rules of the church discipline, as well as to announce the conditions of salvation by the gospel. These rules and conditions, found in Acts and the Epistles, bind and loose men. As they were to speak and write as moved by the Holy Spirit, what they announced would be ratified in heaven.

Wesley's Notes

18:18 Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth - By excommunication, pronounced in the spirit and power of Christ. Whatsoever ye shall loose - By absolution from that sentence. In the primitive Church, absolution meant no more than a discharge from Church censure. Again I say - And not only your intercession for the penitent, but all your united prayers, shall be heard. How great then is the power of joint prayer! If two of you - Suppose a man and his wife. Matt 16:19.

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary

18. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven-Here, what had been granted but a short time before to Peter only (see on [1324]Mt 16:19) is plainly extended to all the Twelve; so that whatever it means, it means nothing peculiar to Peter, far less to his pretended successors at Rome. It has to do with admission to and rejection from the membership of the Church. But see on [1325] Joh 20:23.

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary

18:15-20 If a professed Christian is wronged by another, he ought not to complain of it to others, as is often done merely upon report, but to go to the offender privately, state the matter kindly, and show him his conduct. This would generally have all the desired effect with a true Christian, and the parties would be reconciled. The principles of these rules may be practised every where, and under all circumstances, though they are too much neglected by all. But how few try the method which Christ has expressly enjoined to all his disciples! In all our proceedings we should seek direction in prayer; we cannot too highly prize the promises of God. Wherever and whenever we meet in the name of Christ, we should consider him as present in the midst of us.

J.W. McGarvey in his commentary on Matthew

"The words "bind" and "loose" were commonly used among the Jews in the sense of forbid and allow. Abundant instances of this usage have been collected by Lightfoot. They relate to the binding and annulling of laws and rules. In this sense the Greek word "luo", rendered "loose", is used very many times in the New Testament, but it is translated by the word "break" or "broken" in Mt 5:19 Joh 7:23 10:35. The power here given to Peter was soon after extended to the rest of the apostles (Mt 18:18). The apostles were to lay down, as they afterward did, the organic law of the new kingdom, defining what things were prohibited and what permitted. Their actions in this behalf would of course be ratified in heaven, because they were none other than the acts of the Holy Spirit expressed through the apostles."

John MacArthur

You want to know how we can know what heaven is approving and disapproving? It's right here, isn't it? I have the authority if a person comes up to me, I can say to that person, "Have you received Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior?" If he says yes, I say then your sins are forgiven...your sins are loosed. If someone says to me, "I have never received Jesus Christ." I

have the authority based on the Word of God to say to that individual, "Your sins are retained, your sins are not forgiven." And I have the authority to know that what I said to that individual, heaven has already said because heaven has revealed it right here. That's that authority. It is not some authority isolated from the Word of God. That's why the promise of the keys came on the heels of a divine revelation from the Father. As long as the Father is giving you the Word on the basis of the revelation of the Father, you have the authority. And I can say to a person you are forbidden to do that. Why? Because the Bible says so. I can say to another person you're free to do that because the Bible says so.

So that Peter had that right. The disciples had that right. So does the church because we have heaven's word on the matter. You understand? So it isn't some authority based on title. It isn't some authority based on office, or some human worthiness, or some elevation or some intelligence level, or some wisdom level. It is that the authority of the church lies in the fact that the church has heaven's word on everything and it can take heaven's word and make it authoritative in the lives of people.

Now, beloved, that is why we never compromise the Word of God cause it's the only authority we have. And God has put His church in the world and given His church His word so that His church can stand as a light, as a standard setting the pattern that is God's pattern. We pray Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven, and it can be as we enact heaven's decisions by the implementation of this Word of God which is authoritative. That's why I say so often that the church has to take God seriously. We're God's standard in the world. And we have to say to this world you can't do that. Your sins are bound on you. That's what heaven says in this book and heaven is in agreement with us, it's already settled there.

So, the church is the authority in the world. That's right. And those who are in the church are authoritative in the world as long as they enforce the Word of the living God revealed to them through the Spirit. And so we have authority. And we don't worry about what the world says, we're not going to change our message. We're not going to compromise. Our reason to exist in this world is to glorify God and we glorify God when we hold up the standard of His Word, don't we?

From [The Church that Christ Builds, Part 2](#) by John MacArthur

Allen Ross

The meaning of the binding and loosing in the verse probably refers to **people** and not to teachings (see 18:18 for "whatever"). The keys then speak of the permission of entering the kingdom or being excluded from it. The meaning of this idea is clarified by the teaching of Jesus in Luke 11:52. There Jesus denounced the teachers by saying that they had taken away the key of knowledge and had not only failed to enter the kingdom themselves but had hindered others from doing so. This meant that by their approach to Scripture they were making it impossible for people under their teaching to accept the revelation about Jesus and enter the kingdom. In strong contrast, Peter, by confessing Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, had received the revelation and so was to be given the "keys." The metaphor of the "keys" refers then to the clear teaching about Christ and the proclamation of the Gospel. Peter, by proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, which by revelation he was understanding more and more, would open the kingdom to many and shut it to others. See Acts 2:14-39 and 3:11-26, and the result that the Lord was adding to the church those who were to be saved (Acts 2:45). There we see how Jesus would be building His Church. But the

proclamation of the Gospel message would also alienate and exclude people as well (see Acts 4:11-12; 8:20-23).

From Peter's Confession And Christ's Church by Allen Ross

Ray C. Stedman

Peter, for instance, was called as a fisherman, and we are told in the Gospels that the moment of his call occurred when the Lord found him casting a net into the sea. That work of fishing for men is characteristic of the Apostle Peter. He is always beginning things, initiating new programs. To him was committed the keys of the kingdom by which he could open the door to the new things God was introducing. On the day of Pentecost he used one of those keys and as a result caught 3,000 fish in his gospel net. You find that characteristic of this man all through his written ministry.

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Ron Ritchie

Before the cross, God the Father had revealed to Peter that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Based on that revelation Jesus had then said, "...I will build My Church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it." And then he gave Peter and the other apostles the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" to open the doors of salvation to the Jews, the Samaritans, and soon the Gentiles (Matthew 16:13-19).

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Jesus' teaching here was a reminder as well to the disciples who were called to build the church of Jesus Christ after his resurrection. He had told Peter on an earlier occasion that he was going away, but before he went away he was giving him a task. He would build the church upon the fact which Peter had already confessed, that he was the Christ, the Son of the Living God. He said, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall [have been] bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall [have been] loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:19.) This teaching was in fact a reminder of the Great Commission our risen Lord gave his disciples: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20.)

(From 'Are You Prepared For Jesus' Second Coming?' Copyright (C) 1995 Discovery Publishing, a ministry of Peninsula Bible Church.)

David Guzik

The idea is not that Peter will admit people to heaven, but that Peter opened the door of the kingdom to both the Jews (Acts 2:38-39) and the Gentiles (Acts 10:34-44).

From David Guzik's Commentaries on the Bible

IVP Commentary

Jesus Authorizes His Agents to Admit People to the Kingdom (16:19)

The authority belongs not only to Peter (v. 19) but to all who share his proclamation of Jesus' identity (18:18). The realm of *heaven* here contrasts strikingly with the powers of *Hades*, or "Sheol," the realm of the dead thought to lie beneath the earth (16:18; compare Heb 2:14; Rev 1:18). *Keys* opened locked doors or gates, but the carrying of keys especially symbolized the authority of the person who bore them. One who carried keys to a royal palace was the majordomo, as in Isaiah 22:22 and Revelation 3:7. Supervisors held the keys to the temple courts among Jesus' contemporaries (as in *ARN* 7, 21B), and in Jewish lore prominent angels carried certain keys (for example, 3 Baruch 1:2; compare *b. Ta`anit* 2a).

Whether Peter thus acts as "prime minister" for the kingdom (see Brown, Donfried and Reumann 1973:96-97) or perhaps as a "chief rabbi" making halakhic rulings based on Jesus' teachings (Meier in Brown and Meier 1983:67), he clearly acts with enough delegated authority (compare Acts 10:44; Gal 2:7). Whereas Israel's religious elite was shutting people out of the kingdom (23:13; compare Lk 11:52), those who confessed Jesus' identity along with Peter were authorized to usher people into God's kingdom.

Scholars have proposed many interpretations of "binding and loosing," but in Jewish texts these terms (*'asar* and *hittir* or *sera'*) could refer to authority to interpret the law, hence to evaluate individuals' fidelity to the law as in 18:18 (see comment there). In this context, however, the nuance may be somewhat different from 18:18: Peter and those who share his role (others share it in 18:18) evaluate not those who are in the community, but those who would enter it (10:14-15, 40; this is a role assigned to overseers in the Qumran community—compare 1QS 5.20-21; 6:13-14). In both functions—evaluating entrants and evaluating those already within the church—God's people must evaluate on the authority of the heavenly court. The verb tenses allow (and according to some scholars even suggest) that they merely ratify the heavenly decree (see comment on 18:18; compare Mantey 1973 and 1981; Keener 1987).

Peter must thus accept into the church only those who share his confession of Jesus' true identity (16:16). Of course the church should emulate Jesus' practice of welcoming the unconverted (9:10), but this is not the same as acting as if all comers were true disciples of Christ regardless of their commitment. Today some churches both admit into membership the unconverted and fail to take the message of Jesus' identity to the unconverted outside their walls. The danger of building a church on those not committed to Christ's agendas is that in time the church will reflect more of the world's values than Christ's; this was one way some originally abolitionist churches compromised with the slave trade (Usry and Keener 1996:102-5).

God's Plan Established on Christ, IVP Commentary

Mathew Henry:

The other part of this charter is, to settle the order and government of the church, v. 19. When a city or society is incorporated, officers are appointed and empowered to act for the common good. A city without government is a chaos. Now this constituting of the government of the church, is here expressed by the delivering of the keys, and, with them, a power to bind and loose. This is not

to be understood of any peculiar power that Peter was invested with, as if he were sole door-keeper of the kingdom of heaven, and had that key of David which belongs only to the Son of David; no, this invests all the apostles and their successors with a ministerial power to guide and govern the church of Christ, as it exists in particular congregations or churches, according to the rules of the gospel. *Claves regni caelorum in B. Petro apostolo cuncti suscepimus sacerdotes*-- All we that are priests, received, in the person of the blessed apostle Peter, the keys of the kingdom of heaven; so Ambrose *De Dignit. Sacerd.* Only the keys were first put into Peter's hand, because he was the first that opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, <Acts 10:28>. As the king, in giving a charter to a corporation, empowers the magistrates to hold courts in his name, to try matters of fact, and determine therein according to law, confirming what is so done regularly as if done in any of the superior courts; so Christ, having incorporated his church, hath appointed the office of the ministry for the keeping up of order and government, and to see that his laws be duly served; I will give thee the keys. He doth not say, "I have given them," or "I do now;" but "I will do it," meaning after his resurrection; when he ascended on high, he gave those gifts, Ephes. 4:8; then this power was actually given, not to Peter only, but to all the rest, <Mt 28:19-20; Jn. 20:21>. He doth not say, The keys shall be given, but, I will give them; for ministers derive their authority from Christ, and all their power is to be used in his name, <1 Cor. 5:4>.

Now, 1. The power here delegated is a spiritual power; it is a power pertaining to the kingdom of heaven, that is, to the church, that part of it which is militant here on earth, to the gospel dispensation; that is it about which the apostolical and ministerial power is wholly conversant. It is not any civil, secular power that is hereby conveyed, Christ's kingdom is not of this world; their instructions afterward were in things pertaining to the kingdom of God, <Acts 1:3>.

2. It is the power of the keys that is given, alluding to the custom of investing men with authority in such a place, by delivering to them the keys of the place. Or as the master of the house gives the keys to the steward, the keys of the stores where the provisions are kept, that he may give to every one in the house his portion of meat in due season <Lu. 12:42>, and deny it as there is occasion, according to the rules of the family. Ministers are stewards, <1 Cor. 4:1; Titus 1:7>. Eliakim, who had the key of the house of David, was over the household, <Isa. 22:22>.

3. It is a power to bind and loose, that is (following the metaphor of the keys), to shut and open. Joseph, who was lord of Pharaoh's house, and steward of the stores, had power to bind his princes, and to teach his senators wisdom, <Ps. 105:21-22>. When the stores and treasures of the house are shut up from any, they are bound, *interdico tibi aqu et igne*-- I forbid thee the use of fire and water; when they are opened to them again, they are loosed from that bond, are discharged from the censure, and restored to their liberty.

4. It is a power which Christ has promised to own the due administration of; he will ratify the sentences of his stewards with his own approbation; It shall be bound in heaven, and loosed in heaven: not that Christ hath hereby obliged himself to confirm all church-censures, right or wrong; but such as are duly passed according to the word, *clave non errante*-- the key turning the right way, such are sealed in heaven; that is, the word of the gospel, in the mouth of faithful ministers, is to be looked upon, not as the word of man, but as the word of God, and to be received accordingly, <1 Thes. 2:13; Jn. 12:20>.

Now the keys of the kingdom of heaven are,

(1.) The key of doctrine, called the key of knowledge. "Your business shall be to explain to the world the will of God, both as to truth and duty; and for this you shall have your commissions, credentials, and full instructions to bind and loose:" these, in the common speech of the Jews, at

that time, signified to prohibit and permit; to teach or declare a thing to be unlawful was to bind; to be lawful, was to loose. Now the apostles had an extraordinary power of this kind; some things forbidden by the law of Moses were now to be allowed, as the eating of such and such meats; some things allowed there were now to be forbidden, as divorce; and the apostles were empowered to declare this to the world, and men might take it upon their words. When Peter was first taught himself, and then taught others, to call nothing common or unclean, this power was exercised. There is also an ordinary power hereby conveyed to all ministers, to preach the gospel as appointed officers; to tell people, in God's name, and according to the scriptures, what is good, and what the Lord requires of them: and they who declare the whole counsel of God, use these keys well, <Acts 20:27>.

Some make the giving of the keys to allude to the custom of the Jews in creating a doctor of the law, which was to put into his hand the keys of the chest where the book of the law was kept, denoting his being authorized to take and read it; and the binding and loosing, to allude to the fashion about their books, which were in rolls; they shut them by binding them up with a string, which they untied when they opened them. Christ gives his apostles power to shut or open the book of the gospel to people, as the case required. See the exercise of this power, <Acts 13:46; 18:6>. When ministers preach pardon and peace to the penitent, wrath and the curse to the impenitent, in Christ's name, they act then pursuant to this authority of binding and loosing.

(2.) the key of discipline, which is but the application of the former to particular persons, upon a right estimate of their characters and actions. It is not legislative power that is hereby conferred, but judicial; the judge doth not make the law, but only declares what is law, and upon an impartial enquiry into the merits of the cause, gives sentence accordingly. Such is the power of the keys, wherever it is lodged, with reference to church-membership and the privileges thereof.

[1.] Christ's ministers have a power to admit into the church; "Go, disciple all nations, baptizing them; those who profess faith in Christ, and obedience to him, admit them and their seed members of the church by baptism." Ministers are to let in to the wedding-feast those that are bidden; and to keep out such as are apparently unfit for so holy a communion.

[2.] they have a power to expel and cast out such as have forfeited their church-membership, that is binding; refusing to unbelievers the application of gospel promises and the seals of them; and declaring to such as appear to be in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, that they have no part or lot in the matter, as Peter did to Simon Magus, though he had been baptized; and this is a binding over to the judgment of God.

[3.] they have a power to restore and to receive in again, upon their repentance, such as had been thrown out; to loose those whom they had bound; declaring to them, that, if their repentance be sincere, the promise of pardon belongs to them. The apostles had a miraculous gift of discerning spirits; yet even they went by the rule of outward appearances (as <Acts 8:21; 1 Cor. 5:1; 2 Cor. 2:7; 1 Tim. 1:20>), which ministers may still make a judgment upon, if they be skilful and faithful.

(from Matthew Henry's Commentary)

Thomas Nelson:

KEYS, POWER OF

A phrase used by Jesus to describe the authority given by Him to His disciples. In ancient times a KEY expressed the idea of authority, power, or privilege. Jesus told Peter that He would give him “the keys of the kingdom of heaven” <Matt. 16:19>. The result of this authority in Peter’s life would be the power to bind or loose. These words for bind and loose stem from Aramaic words which carried the idea of excommunication and reinstatement, or determining objects either clean or unclean.

The general Protestant view is that the church is the agent of this power or authority to bind or loose, either through its official leaders or through all believers. This authority or power was best applied in New Testament times when the apostles announced the conditions for entrance into the kingdom. This authority was continued through the preaching of the gospel by Peter and the church as described in the Book of Acts.

(from Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary)

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Jamieson, Fausset & Brown, 1871

Matt 16:19. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven--the kingdom of God about to be set up on earth and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven--

Whatever this mean, it was soon expressly extended to all the apostles (Mat 18:18); so that the claim of supreme authority in the Church, made for Peter by the Church of Rome, and then arrogated to themselves by the popes as the legitimate successors of St. Peter, is baseless and impudent. As first in confessing Christ, Peter got this commission before the rest; and with these “keys,” on the day of Pentecost, he first “opened the door of faith” to the Jews, and then, in the person of Cornelius, he was honored to do the same to the Gentiles. Hence, in the lists of the apostles, Peter is always first named. See on JF & B for Mt 18:18. One thing is clear, that not in all the New Testament is there the vestige of any authority either claimed or exercised by Peter, or conceded to him, above the rest of the apostles--a thing conclusive against the Romish claims in behalf of that apostle.

Geneva Bible

16:19 {6} And I will give unto thee the {n} keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt {o} bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

(6) The authority of the Church is from God.

(n) A metaphor taken from stewards who carry the keys: and here is set forth the power of the ministers of the word, as Isa 22:22 says, and that power is common to all ministers, as Mt 18:18 says, and therefore the ministry of the gospel may rightly be called the key of the kingdom of heaven.

(o) They are bound whose sins are retained; heaven is shut against them, because they do not receive Christ by faith: on the other hand, how happy are they to whom heaven is open, who embrace Christ and are delivered by him, and become fellow heirs with him!

People's New Testament

16:19 I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of the heaven. That is, of the church. The office of the keys is to open the doors, or close them. On Pentecost, Peter first opened the doors and declared the conditions of which men could have their sins forgiven, be bound or loosed, and thus enter into the church. Seven years later at Caesarea he declared the same conditions to the Gentiles. While Peter took the lead the keys were given to all the apostles, and to no other mortal. See Mt 18:18 Joh 20:19-28 All that is here said to Peter is said to all the apostles.

John Wesley

16:19 I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven - Indeed not to him alone, (for they were equally given to all the apostles at the same time, John 20:21,22,23;) but to him were first given the keys both of doctrine and discipline. He first, after our Lord's resurrection, exercised the apostleship, Acts 1:15. And he first by preaching opened the kingdom of heaven, both to the Jews, Acts 2:14 and c., and to the Gentiles, Acts 10:34 and c. Under the term of binding and loosing are contained all those acts of discipline which Peter and his brethren performed as apostles: and undoubtedly what they thus performed on earth, God confirmed in heaven. Matt 18:18.

Dallas Willard

The One we work for and with has placed in our hands the keys to the Kingdom of the Heavens. (Matt 16:19) Setting aside centuries of ecclesiastical controversy over the meaning of this passage, we need to simply understand that our confidence in Jesus as the one who "has say over all things in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18) can develop into practical access to the riches of the Kingdom. These in turn make it possible for us to do the work we have to do and to live our lives in the strength, joy and peace of Christ.

Having the keys is not a matter of controlling access to the kingdom, as is often thought. Keys do not first mean the right to control access, but the enjoyment of access. Imagine a man who carefully kept his doors locked and his keys in hand, but never went into his house! Having access to the kingdom, living in it, is what matters.

The meaning of Matt 16:19 is, therefore, not fundamentally different from Matt. 6:33: "Seek more than anything else to act with the kingdom of God and to have His kind of goodness, and all else you need will be added." (paraphrase) Or Romans 8:32: "He who did not spare his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things." (NAS) Or the well-known Philipians 4:19: "And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (NAS)

B. Parallel Translations

King James Bible

Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

New International Version

I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

New Living Translation

I tell you the truth, whatever you forbid on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven.

English Standard Version

Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

New American Standard Bible

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.

International Standard Version

I tell you with certainty, whatever you prohibit on earth will have been prohibited in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will have been permitted in heaven.

God's Word Translation

I can guarantee this truth: Whatever you imprison, God will imprison. And whatever you set free, God will set free.

American King James Version

Truly I say to you, Whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

American Standard Version

Verily I say unto you, what things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Bible in Basic English

Truly I say to you, Whatever things are fixed by you on earth will be fixed in heaven: and whatever you make free on earth will be made free in heaven.

Douay-Rheims Bible

Amen I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven.

Darby Bible Translation

Verily I say to you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on the earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on the earth shall be loosed in heaven.

English Revised Version

Verily I say unto you, What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Webster's Bible Translation

Verily I say to you, Whatever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven: and whatever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.

Weymouth New Testament

I solemnly tell you that whatever you as a Church bind on earth will in Heaven be held as bound, and whatever you loose on earth will in Heaven be held to be loosed.

World English Bible

Most certainly I tell you, whatever things you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever things you release on earth will have been released in heaven.

Young's Literal Translation

Verily I say to you, Whatever things ye may bind upon the earth shall be having been bound in the heavens, and whatever things ye may loose on the earth shall be having been loosed in the heavens.

Following is from: <http://www.jstor.org/pss/3260751>

BINDING AND LOOSING (Matt 16:19; 18:18; John 29:23)

The purpose of this note is to attempt to explain the phrase “bind and loose” which has not been understood and is tossed about between the defenders and rejecters of the status of Peter.¹ Does the power include a positive duty to teach?² If the community, rather than the Twelve, is the repository of the power, does it create norms, or does it only interpret them? Is binding or loosing a solemn and potentially negative act confined to the community or its representatives in plenary session? If individuals may forgive, how does the community “loose”? How far can the Jewish background to Matthew help us?³ Searching for Jewish roots for early Christian phenomena, scholars have noticed verbal similarities, yet certain ideas which on the surface look like Christian ideas have been taken as similar, whereas they may be no more than partial parallels.⁴ One of the major difficulties of Matt 18:15–20 is the suspicion that texts of various origins have been pressed into service to present a collective impression. The degree to which each must be construed in the light of its neighbors is at large.

The power given first to Peter and later to disciples is expressed not as the gift of some novel power of binding and loosing (which seems taken for granted in itself), but as the confirmation of a power which is already understood and requires no explanation. A linguistic point arises from Matt 16:19 *estai dedemenon/lelymenon*, 18:18 *estai dedemena/lelymena*. Periphrastic future perfects were common in the *koinē*⁵ but it is open to question whether what is meant is “shall be (already) bound, etc.,” or simply “shall be bound, etc.” Isa 8:17 LXX, 2 Sam 22:3 LXX (quoted at Heb 2:13) and Luke 12:52 illustrate the form meaning a simple future passive (as proved, in the last case, by 12:53). Therefore, grammarians understand our passages as

¹ G. Bornkamm, “Die Binde- und Lösegewalt in der Kirche des Matthäus,” *Geschichte und Glaube*, 2 (Gesammelte Aufsätze 4; Munich: Kaiser, 1971) 39–40. G. Lambert, “Lier-déliér, l’expression de la totalité par l’opposition de deux contraires” *Vivre et penser [RB]* (1943–44) 91–103 held the verse was about remission of sins; a totality of power was conveyed. A great advance linguistically was made by W. G. Thompson (*Matthew’s Advice to a Divided Community: Matt. 17:22–18:35* [AnBib 44; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1970]), rejecting the idea of Billerbeck at Str-B 1.738–39, who thought excommunication was the point. He, like Billerbeck, refers to *b. Mo’ed Qat.* 16a, where “bind” (*‘āsar*) is contrasted with “release” (*šēra’*) in the sense of “free from a ban.” At p. 192 Thompson refers to the *Pal. Tg.* on Num 30: 6, 9, 13 (*Tg. Ps.-J.*): a married woman’s vow shall be “released and remitted to her” (*šēri ūšēbag*) before the Lord. Thus *bind* is *‘āsar* and *loose* is *šera’*. The first three verses of Num 30 *Tg. Ps.-J.* are in fact very illuminating. For the various views of Jeremiah see below.

² P. Gaechter, *Das Matthäus Evangelium* (Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 1964) 602.

³ On all this see E. Schweizer, *The Good News according to Matthew* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975) 373–74 (legalism can hardly be avoided when one speaks of “binding” a person).

⁴ Vows and bans are only fractionally significant as examples of the use of this very wide power. Further manifestations are the pronouncements “liable” (*hayyāb*) and “free” (*pāṭūr*); and “valid” (*kāšēr*) and “invalid” (*pāsūl*).

⁵ BDF §352.