

THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR



1990 Edition

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**PROVE ALL THINGS
HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD**

That everyone who searcheth for “the key of knowledge” may find it herein in the Hand of Truth, and may thus with “the keys of the Kingdom” secure an abundant entrance into the oncoming Kingdom of God, this urgent publication is made available without obligation, save the soul’s solemn obligation to itself to “prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” 1 Thess. 5:21.

Thus the only strings attached to this proffer are the golden strands of Eden and the crimson cords of Calvary—the ties that bind.

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Printed in the United States of America

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**“Bind up the testimony,
seal the law among My disciples.”
Isaiah 8:16**

**THE UNIVERSAL PUBLISHING ASSN.
BASHAN HILL
EXETER, MISSOURI 65647
U.S.A.**

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THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

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Four Consequential Questions

At its outset, this study—What are the keys? Why did Christ give them to Peter? Why not to another? Or to all?—bespeaks suspension of judgment until its final page is assimilated. For in the very nature of its subject, it must inevitably provoke the temptation progressively to express preconceptions. Therefore, until its final period is turned, wisdom dictates the disciplined exercise of suspended judgment implicit in the Bible injunction, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” 1 Thess. 5:21. That is, amplified in implicit paraphrase, Be a wise, a just judge: hold to no preconceived idea, reach no biased conclusion; reserve judgment until all evidence is in. Then “hold fast” to substantive proof—that which is “good.”

Truth’s answers to the consequential questions aforestated are to be found only in the following inspired account:

Another Vital Question

Matt. 16:13, 14: *“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples,*

saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.”

Here Jesus asks a vital question: Who do men think I am? The answer given Him reveals the peoples’ ignorance, for it seems that they should have known that Christ could not have been John the Baptist; they surely should have known that John had baptized Him at the beginning of His ministry. Moreover, Jesus was preaching even before John was beheaded.

Matt. 16:15, 16: *“He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*

The disciples themselves seemed to have been uncertain as to who Jesus was. Peter alone without a moment’s hesitation replied, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Inspiration

Matt. 16:17: *“And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh*

and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven."

When God makes man to understand something which is beyond finite knowledge, the Bible terms the act Inspiration. Hence Jesus' pronouncing Peter inspired. This Inspiration and Jesus' testimony, therefore, were the keys to the central theme of man's salvation—experiential knowledge of the Son of God. This was the truth, the Gospel, that had to be proclaimed. It was the present truth—an inspired message direct from God.

Peter received the blessing because he was the one to whom the Father had revealed His Son, and because he had been impressed by the Spirit of the sacred Truth, also because he freely voiced the truth. Having been endowed with this gift to his credit, Peter was told:

Upon This Rock

Matt. 16:18: "*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*"

The words "thou" and "this" comprehend two objects—Peter and the truth he uttered. The name "Peter" in Greek means "stone." It "is derived from the Greek *petros*, a 'stone,' generally a small slab of stone. The word

'rock' is the Greek *petra*, the large mass of rock itself, a 'ledge' or 'shelf of rock,' a 'rocky peak.' A *petra* is a large, fixed, immovable 'rock,' whereas a *petros* is a small 'stone.' However, to what extent Christ may have had this distinction in mind, or may have explained it as He spoke, is a matter that cannot be determined from these words themselves, because Christ certainly spoke Aramaic—the common language of Palestine at that time. The Greek *petros* undoubtedly represents the word '*kepha*' (cephas) in Aramaic. And, very likely, *petra* also represents the Aramaic word '*kepha*', though there is a possibility that Christ used some other synonym or expression in Aramaic which would agree with the distinction between *petros* and *petra* that is made by the gospel writers in Greek. It is probable that Christ must have intended to make such a distinction however, or Matthew, writing in Greek and guided by the Holy Spirit, would not have made one.

"Obviously a *petros*, or small stone, would make an impossible foundation for any edifice, and Jesus here affirms that nothing less than a *petra*, or 'rock,' could suffice. This fact is made even more sure by the words of Christ in Matthew 7:24: 'Whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them' is like 'a wise

man, which built his house upon a rock [Greek "*petra*"].' Any edifice built upon Peter, *petros*, a weak, erring human being, as the Gospel record makes plain, has a foundation little better than shifting sand.

"...Strange indeed it is, that if this is really what Christ meant, neither Peter nor any other of the disciples, nor other Christians for four centuries thereafter, discovered the fact! How extraordinary that no Roman bishop discovered this meaning in Christ's words, until a fifth-century bishop considered it necessary to find some Biblical support for papal primacy. The significance attributed to Christ's words, by which they are made to confer primacy upon the so-called successors of Peter, the bishops of Rome, is completely at variance with all the teachings Christ gave His followers. (See Matthew 23:8, 10.)

"Perhaps the best evidence that Christ did not appoint Peter as the 'rock' on which He would build His church is the fact that none of those who heard Christ upon this occasion—not even Peter—so construed His words, either during the time that Christ was on earth or later. Had Christ made Peter chief among the disciples, they would not thereafter have been involved in repeated arguments about which of them 'should be accounted the greatest'

(Luke 22:24; see Matthew 18:1; Mark 9:33-35; etc.; DA 817:1; see on Matthew 16:19)."—5BC 431, 432.

"...The word 'Peter' signifies a loose stone. Christ did not refer to Peter as being the rock upon which He would build His church. His expression, 'this rock,' applied to Himself as the foundation of the Christian church."—ST, Oct. 28, 1913.

So what Jesus was actually saying was not to name the man but, rather, to tell him that he was selected to be one of the stones in the spiritual structure—the Church. Thus "on this *rock [not on a stone]* I will build My church," Jesus declared. On which rock? Obviously on the solid Rock of Truth, the truth which Peter uttered—the truth that Jesus Christ is the "Son of God."

The Gates of Hell Unprevailing

Then Jesus made known that the gates of hell could not prevail against the Truth; that the gates could not keep in hell (in the grave) even the dead in Christ; that they, too, are to be a part of the everliving Church, the Church that stands on the solid Rock of Truth.

Keys of Kingdom

Matt. 16:19: "*And I will give*

unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Jesus here declares that Peter is become the figure, the type, of all those who declare divinely revealed truths. To them, as to Peter, are given the keys of the Kingdom.

To Bind and To Loose

Plainly, therefore, the promulgators of inspired truth are authorized to bind and to loose by the power of the Truth: "that is, to require or to prohibit whatever Inspiration clearly reveals."—5BC 433:1:3. Accordingly, that which they bind—"require or prohibit"—on earth is so recognized in Heaven.

So it was that Elijah bound—required—that there should be a famine for three and one half years, and so it was when he said "unto Ahab...there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to *my word*." 1 Kings 17:1.

And thus it was that Peter and his associates, possessed of a revelation by which every man was to be judged either for salvation or for condemnation, became responsible either to lock or to unlock salvation to every living

soul under heaven in their day.

Consequently, when Christ gave the keys to Peter, He gave him the Gospel in *present truth* and a Divine commission to preach it. And so long as Peter and his co-workers were true to this charge, just so long did they possess the keys to lock or to unlock to men the Kingdom of God and to have sanctioned in Heaven whatever they bound or loosed on earth. Accordingly, with Inspiration and progressive revelation go the keys.

Present Truth

Obviously, therefore, a message from Heaven—the present truth—proclaimed by God's chosen servant, is all-powerful, and by it man's eternal destiny is bound—decided.

Plainly, then, the keys are not the Church herself but are in the message of present truth which she proclaims. So no man or set of men have power to loose or to bind with Heaven's approval save at the instance of a message of present truth vouchsafed directly from Heaven for them to bear for the time then present. For this reason, "different periods in the history of the church have each been marked by the development of some special [present] truth, adapted to the necessities of God's people at that time."—

GC 609:1.

So it has been from time immemorial. So it is today.

Taste and Tact and Time

Matt. 16:20: *"Then charged He His disciples that they should tell no man that He was Jesus the Christ."*

Since the people knew not that He was the Son of the living God, Jesus realized that flatly to tell them so would only make them the more prejudiced. He therefore charged the apostles to do as we today are charged to do—not to say flatly, "We have 'the truth,' the message of the hour" (of the third hour for the Church then; the ninth hour for the Church since 1844; the eleventh hour for us now). Instead we are to teach the divinely revealed Bible truths, thus giving our hearers the opportunity to make up their own minds, to draw their own conclusions. If they are honest searchers for truth, the Father Himself will reveal in their hearts that this is the eleventh-hour message of present truth, and hence salvation, to the Church and the world now, "upon whom the ends of the world are come." 1 Cor. 10:11.

So we must seek carefully to sow the seed in well-prepared soil if we expect God's blessings, if we expect His rain and sunshine to cause it to spring forth and bear

fruit. If the seed is sown too deep it will be buried and wasted; if it is not sown deep enough, the plant will wither away with the rising of the sun; if it is merely dropped on the top of the ground, the birds will pick it up.

"It requires," indeed, "a vast amount of time and labor to convince one soul in regard to the special truths for this time."—7T 265:6.

We must not, therefore, bluntly speak forth the all-important truth of God. We must use good judgment and tact. "Taste and tact do much to attract."—6T 34:3. But there is a lamentable lack of either.

The Key of Knowledge— Only Hope for Ruined Race At Eleventh Hour

Only "the key of knowledge" (Luke 11:52), the inspired message and the inspired life, will open the door of the heart and in turn the door of the Kingdom for a ruined race.

To us Seventh-day Adventists in particular, the meaning of what we see around us should be window-clear, making manifest that the time has now come for every church member to engage in proclaiming the Three Angels' Messages.

At this very hour millions without hope are wasting and

withering away, perishing in the fields of sin and on the fields of battle, because no one has won them to Christ with the everlasting Gospel. Who will go for them? Who has the vision, the heart, and the will to go all out in the rescue of humanity for Christ? Inspiration's appeal, "Arise, shine," is to every soul. Will you not respond, Brethren? Will you not earnestly pray for yourselves and for other laborers to help gather in the precious golden grain? Or will you fail in this unforgiving responsibility and forfeit this most lofty privilege?

The issue is of greatest gravity. Christ foreknew it would be, and in supreme concern He projected it in the crowning lesson of His parable of the vineyard—the truth of the Kingdom.

Light at Eventide

Now that time has come to the last parabolical hour, the eleventh, He has set the parable ablaze with light. So, to be progressive as Truth Itself is, let us look deeper into the parable now at eventide while the light of God is shining upon it.

"For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an Householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into His vineyard. And when He had agreed with the labourers for a

penny a day, He sent them into His vineyard. And He went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again He went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour He went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto Him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive." Matt. 20:1-7.

Significant Points

How can we know for certain in which hour we find ourselves and if our own call to service has come? We can know only by establishing the time in which the last, the eleventh, parabolical hour expires. And to do this we must first establish the time of the first or early-morning call for servants, then in turn the time of each successive call, culminating with the last. Pursuant to this end, let us here bring into focus the parable's significant points:

(1) The "Householder," as every Bible student knows, is the Lord Himself. (2) The laborers are His servants. (3) The penny is

their reward. (4) His vineyard is the place where they are to labor. (5) The day is parabolical—representing a period of time which is illuminated by some great light. (6) The period of labor is both preceded and succeeded by a night—else there could be no “early” and no “late” part of the day. (7) The Householder hires laborers at five different times. (8) There are four three-hour periods. (9) In each of the first three periods, only one group is hired. (10) In the fourth and last period of three hours two groups are hired. (11) The agreement for a penny a day is made only with the first group. (12) The other groups are to receive “whatsoever is right.” (13) At the day’s end, all are given the same pay—a penny, even though the last worked only an hour. (14) The first were paid last and the last first.

Time Parable Begins

To find in which hour we are told, “Go ye also,” we must here at the outset of this go-to-work study determine where in time the parable begins and where it ends. To gain this vital knowledge is simply to reckon with the sequentially amplifying facts that the parabolical night which preceded the parabolical day must necessarily be the period before the spiritual Light of the world, the

Bible, came up—before the light of the Scriptures, the written Word of God, began, in Its first present-truth message, to shine forth into the hearts of men. For back there, it must be remembered, the will of God was transmitted not by the Bible but orally from father to son, just as the light of the sun is at night transmitted to the earth by the moon rather than directly by the sun itself. For this reason it has come to be regarded as the time of oral tradition.

Day Period

But the day of labor obviously represents the period in which the Light of the world, the Bible Itself, lightens man’s path. Thus it is that in His parable, the Master, the Lord of the vineyard, regards the Old and New Testament dispensations as the only day-period of all probationary time in which He goes to the marketplace at five consecutive times to hire servants to work in His vineyard.

Night Period

Finally, the night following the day can only represent the period after the gospel work is finished, after probation for man’s salvation is closed. Then, as the “Light of the world,” the Word of God in Its last present-truth message,

sinks beyond the horizon of the day, darkness covers "the earth, and gross darkness the people." Isa. 60:2. It is the time which finds the destiny of every being fixed forever. Then follows the Lord's irrevocable finality:

"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: . . . and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." Rev. 22:11.

It is the time when men "shall run to and fro to seek the Word of the Lord, and shall not find It" (Amos 8:12); the time when the unmindful of the Master's call and the impenitent of sin realize and cry out in frenzied, agonized despair: "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved"! Jer. 8:20.

Tragedy of tragedies!

Because they had caused themselves to be loosed on earth and in Heaven, "the keys of the Kingdom" had forever locked to them the Gates of Glory.

The truth is now become clear that the parable divides the time of salvation into two equal parts of twelve symbolical hours each—the period before the Bible (the night), and the period during the Bible (the day).

Lending additional force to the fact that the parable thus divides time, Jesus declares: "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day he

stumbleth not, because he seeth the Light of this world." John 11:9.

Master Pattern and Exception

We come now to another point of special significance: the first four groups are hired at consecutive intervals, three parabolical hours apart; whereas the fifth, the last group, the one hired at the eleventh hour, comes only two, instead of three, hours later than the fourth group, and thus only *one parabolical hour* before the day's end—shortly before probation closes.

The two-hour period, from the ninth hour to the eleventh hour, is a singularity which comes as a climactic exception to the master pattern of sequential and regular three-hour intervals between calls. It obviously reveals that the last call, that at the eleventh hour, comes *unexpectedly and surprisingly* within the period of the ninth-hour group.

Call-Time, Work-Period, and Servants of Early-Hour Call

To determine the identity of the laborers participating in each of the five different calls, we must necessarily begin our quest with the call-time and work-period of THE SERVANTS OF THE FIRST OR "EARLY-HOUR" CALL: