

# *Chapter 10*

## *The Keys of the Kingdom*

And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 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. 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."<sup>1</sup>

### **The Roman Catholic View**

All scholars agree that the expression "keys of the kingdom of heaven" is metaphorical. At issue is what they represent. Based on the documents of Vatican II and the official catechism of the Roman Catholic Church quoted in chapter 1, the position of Roman Catholicism can be summarized as follows:

- The keys of the kingdom of heaven were given to Peter alone and thus to his successors, the Roman Pontiffs.
- The power of binding and loosing given to Peter in Matthew 16:19 was also granted to the college of apostles in Matthew 18:18 and thus to their successors, the order of bishops.
- The "power of the keys" designates the authority to govern the house of God, which is the Church.
- The power to "bind and loose" is the authority to absolve sins, to pronounce doctrinal judgments, and to make disciplinary decisions in the Church.

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1 Matt. 16:17-19.

Once again, for the proper interpretation of "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" in Matthew 16:19, the Old Testament background must be examined. This background is found in Isaiah 22:22, a text used even by Catholic theologians in discussing the keys of the kingdom of heaven. In turn, both this Old Testament text and Matthew 16:19 must be compared with another passage in the New Testament, Revelation 3:7. Note the verbal similarity of all three:

The words of Yahweh to Eliakim in the Old Testament:

Then I will set the key of the house of David on his  
shoulder,  
When he opens no one will shut,  
When he shuts no one will open.<sup>2</sup>

The words of Jesus to Peter:

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.<sup>3</sup>

The description of the risen Messiah in the Book of Revelation:

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia  
write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key  
of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who  
shuts and no one opens.<sup>4</sup>

## Shebna and Eliakim

A number of scholars see an analogy between Jesus giving "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" to Peter in Matthew 16:19 and the account of Shebna and Eliakim in Isaiah 22.<sup>5</sup> Certainly the language is similar.<sup>6</sup>

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2 Isa. 22:22.

3 Matt. 16:19.

4 Rev. 3:7.

5 Bruce, *The Hard Sayings of Jesus*, p. 144; Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 117; France, *Matthew: Evangelist & Teacher*, p. 247; Arthur Skevington Wood, "Key," *ISBE*, III:10; Geoffrey W. Bromiley, "Keys, Power of the," *ISBE*, III:11.

6 The summary to follow is based in large part on Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, II:104-118. Other sources are directly cited.

In the beginning verses of chapter 22, Isaiah describes the sinful condition of the people of Jerusalem and their total lack of concern in the face of coming judgment. Then, at Yahweh's command, he confronts Shebna and thus provides a specific example of this self-centeredness and luxury-loving attitude:

15 Thus says the Lord GOD of hosts,  
"Come, go to this steward,  
To Shebna, who is in charge of the *royal* household,  
16 'What right do you have here,  
And whom do you have here,  
That you have hewn a tomb for yourself here,  
You who hew a tomb on the height,  
You who carve a resting place for yourself in the  
rock?  
17 'Behold, the LORD is about to hurl you headlong,  
O man.  
And He is about to grasp you firmly  
18 *And* roll you tightly like a ball,  
*To be cast* into a vast country;  
There you will die  
And there your splendid chariots will be,  
You shame of your master's house.'  
19 "I will depose you from your office,  
And I will pull you down from your station."

### The Nature of the Office of Shebna and Eliakim

Shebna is described by two titles in verse 15. The first is "steward." The Hebrew word is סֹכֵן (*sōkēn*), a Qal participle of סָכַן, *to be of use or service*, thus meaning *servitor* or *steward*.<sup>7</sup> Shebna's second title is found in the phrase translated in the *NASB*, "To Shebna, who is in charge of the *royal* household." The Hebrew for this expression is עַל־שִׁבְנָא אֲשֶׁר עַל־הַבַּיִת, which more literally translates as "to Shebna, who is over the house," that is, the house of the king.

No mention of the office of *sōkēn* is made under David's

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7 *BDB*, p. 698.

rule. However, it is attested during the time of Solomon<sup>8</sup> and was therefore likely created by him. Shebna served under Hezekiah, and by this time the office had grown to become one of the highest offices of government, likely second only to the king himself. Nevertheless, Isaiah was instructed to go to Shebna and rebuke him for his selfish desires during a time of great trouble for Judah. The word of the Lord that Isaiah brought must have been devastating--God would remove Shebna from his office:

19 I will depose you from your office,  
And I will pull you down from your station.<sup>9</sup>

While still addressing Shebna, Isaiah continues to proclaim the word of Yahweh that he, Shebna, will be replaced by Eliakim:

20 "Then it will come about in that day,  
That I will summon My servant Eliakim the son of  
Hilkiah,

21 And I will clothe him with your tunic  
And tie your sash securely about him.  
I will entrust him with your authority,  
And he will become a father to the inhabitants of  
Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.

22 "Then I will set the key of the house of David on  
his shoulder,  
When he opens no one will shut,  
When he shuts no one will open.

23 "I will drive him like a peg in a firm place,  
And he will become a throne of glory to his father's  
house.

24 So they will hang on him all the glory of his  
father's house, offspring and issue, all the least  
of vessels, from bowls to all the jars. 25 In that  
day," declares the LORD of hosts, "the peg driven in  
a firm place will give way; it will even break off  
and fall, and the load hanging on it will be cut

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8 1 Kings 4:6. The Hebrew for "over the household" in the NASB is again this same expression found in Isa. 22:15.

9 Before Shebna is actually killed, he is apparently demoted to a mere scribe ("secretary," NIV; 2 Kings 18:18, 26, 37, 19:2; Isa. 37:2). Alexander, *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, I:391, offers the following explanation: "It seems improbable no doubt that Shebna, after such a threatening [by Isaiah], should be transferred to another office. But the threatening may not have been public, and the transfer may have been merely the beginning of his degradation."

off, for the LORD has spoken."

### "The Key of the House of David" and Its Function

It is primarily verse 22 which is germane to the subject at hand. The first question to address is whether this key to be given to Eliakim is physical or metaphorical. Most likely it is not a physical key to a physical palace. According to Alexander, "the phrase *house of David* seems to imply a metaphorical, rather than a literal palace."<sup>10</sup> Rather, the key implies that "he shall have unlimited control over the royal house and household, which, according to oriental usages, implies a high political authority."<sup>11</sup> Young concurs: "A man in such exalted position would yield an influence of great power over the king."<sup>12</sup>

The reference to Eliakim's shoulder underscores his control over "the house of David." Placing "the key of the house of David" on Eliakim's shoulder, according to Young, "means that the responsibility of the Davidic government is to rest as a burden upon Eliakim's shoulder."<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, the key was metaphorical, and Yahweh's intent, as announced by Isaiah, was carried out by Hezekiah in placing Eliakim "over the house" of David in place of Shebna.

The next question to consider is what specific power is symbolized by this "key of the house of David." Verse 22 continues, "When he opens no one will shut, when he shuts no one will open." Delitzsch suggests that it represents the power to make "the decision who was and who was not to be received into the king's service";<sup>14</sup> Oswalt takes the expression to mean control over who is granted or denied an audience before the king.<sup>15</sup>

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10 Ibid., I:389. Bruce, *The Hard Sayings of Jesus*, pp. 143-144, points out that a chief steward was given physical keys to the household and in earlier times carried them on his shoulder "as a badge of the authority entrusted to him." However, in this passage, it seems best to take Yahweh's use of the word "key" as metaphorical.

11 Ibid.

12 Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, II:114.

13 Ibid.

14 Franz Delitzsch, *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, I:402.

15 John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), p. 422.

The phrase "over the house [of David]" (verse 15), as Alexander and Young suggested, is probably a general description of the position held by Shebna and to be held by Eliakim, indicating administrative control over the affairs of state under the authority of the king. However, in using the phrase "key of the house of David" (verse 22), as Delitzsch and Oswalt suggested, Isaiah is probably drawing attention to perhaps the most important aspect of the position: admitting or prohibiting entrance into the king's service or into the presence of the king himself.

### Eliakim's Downfall and Removal

It is important to note that according to verse 25, Eliakim is eventually removed from office.<sup>16</sup>

Whether Eliakim actually was guilty of nepotism or not, we are expressly told that at the time ("in that day") when they hang all the glory of his father's house upon him he will be removed. Apparently the usefulness of the office itself will have been exhausted....

Strange is the language that relates to the removal of Eliakim. The man is not referred to by name; Isaiah merely says that the peg which has been driven into a sure place will be removed...The burden which is upon the peg, hanging upon it, will be cut off, and so will fall to the ground. By means of this graphic figure the prophet points out the completed downfall of Eliakim....The usefulness of

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16 The Targum, Jerome, Young, and Delitzsch all take the view that v. 25 refers to Eliakim, not Shebna. Delitzsch, *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, I:404: "The prophet could not express in clearer terms the identity of the peg threatened here with Eliakim himself; for how is it conceivable that the prophet could turn all that he has predicted of Eliakim in vers. 23, 24 into predicates of Shebna?" Alexander, *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, I:390-391, argues that v. 25 refers to Shebna but without success. However, even he admits that "the most natural and obvious application of these words is to Eliakim." The chief objection to applying v. 25 to Eliakim is this: predicting his fall, without giving any reason for it, just after such a favorable promise in vv. 20-23 is untenable. But again Alexander himself offers one possible solution: Isaiah may be saying "that Eliakim should die in peace, to the irreparable loss to Judah, and of his own dependents in particular." However, the view taken by Young quoted above seems more to the point.

Eliakim's exalted position is at an end; were it to continue as it was under Eliakim it would not be for the welfare of the kingdom; its end therefore must come.<sup>17</sup>

So not only was Eliakim to be eventually removed from this office, but the office itself would diminish in importance.

We may note that the office is not made hereditary. God promises the key to Eliakim but not to his descendants. The office continues, but soon loses its exalted character. It was Eliakim the son of Hilkiah who was exalted, and not the office itself.<sup>18</sup>

These observations are significant in drawing the parallel between Isaiah 22:22 and Matthew 16:19. Thus it is of interest to note the way Roman Catholic apologists appeal to Isaiah 22:22:

When Jesus speaks of the "keys of the Kingdom", he is referring to an important Old Testament passage, Isaiah 22:20-22, where Hezekiah, the royal heir to David's throne and King of Israel in Isaiah's day, replaced his old Prime Minister, Shebna, with a new one named Eliakim. Everyone could tell which one of the royal cabinet members was the new Prime Minister since he was given the "keys of the Kingdom". By entrusting to Peter the "keys of the Kingdom", Jesus established the office of Prime Minister for administering the Church as his Kingdom on earth. The "keys" are a symbol, then, of Peter's office and primacy to be handed on to his successor; thus it has been handed down throughout the ages.<sup>19</sup>

This argument makes use of points in the analogy between Isaiah 22:22 and Matthew 16:19 that bolster the Catholic claim, but completely ignores the points that argue against it. As noted above, it is not the office of "Prime Minister" that is emphasized or exalted here but Eliakim

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17 Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, II:117-118.

18 Ibid., II:116; see also II:105-106.

19 Scott Hahn and Kimberly Hahn, *Rome Sweet Home: Our Journey to Catholicism* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), p. 71. This book does not have the usual Imprimi Potest, Imprimatur, or Nihil Obstat approvals, but it was published by a Catholic publishing house. Scott Hahn is a graduate of the Protestant Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary but converted to Roman Catholicism.

personally. Moreover, there is no evidence that the "key to the house of David" is passed on to Eliakim's "successors." Instead, Isaiah 22:25 presents considerable evidence to the contrary. Eliakim is removed from the position, and the office itself eventually dies out.

### Is Eliakim a Type of the Messiah?

Young raises the issue of whether Eliakim should be taken as a type of the Messiah:

In that the prophet says, *house of David*, and not merely *house of the king* or *house of Hezekiah*, he is referring not alone to the actual incumbent of the throne, but to its Messianic aspect.<sup>20</sup>

Continuing, Young points out several questions that this raises:

Why does God give to Eliakim such tremendous power? Is there not involved the danger that Eliakim's office may constitute a threat to the king and so to the well-being of the theocracy? Has Eliakim entered into the place of Messianic type rather than the [Davidic] king himself?<sup>21</sup>

As to Young's third question, Eliakim is probably not a type of the Messiah.<sup>22</sup> The Davidic kings were and remained the true Messianic types. There are a number of ways in which Eliakim provides no analogy to the Messiah whatsoever.

- *First:* Eliakim was chief steward of Hezekiah, the Davidic king; Jesus was the Messiah, the climactic and eschatological Davidic king.<sup>23</sup>
- *Second:* the key to the house of David belonged inherently to the Davidic king and to him alone. It

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20 Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, II:114, n. 47.

21 Ibid., II:114-115.

22 Wood, "Key," *ISBE*, III:10, states somewhat dogmatically that "in Isa. 22:22 Eliakim prefigures Christ," but he offers no arguments.

23 This, of course, suggests an analogy between Eliakim and Peter: they both received the key to the house of David from a Davidic king. It is this analogy that is used as an argument by Catholic theologians, but as pointed out in the previous section, the analogy is not sufficient to support their interpretation of Matt. 16:19.

did not belong inherently to Eliakim but was delegated to him to exercise on behalf of the Davidic king. As the final Davidic king, the key to the house of David would, commencing with his first advent, belong inherently to Jesus the Messiah.

- *Third:* it is important to note that Eliakim himself, even as the one "over the house" of David, was nevertheless strictly subject to Hezekiah, the Davidic king.<sup>24</sup>
- *Fourth:* unlike the Davidic line that led eventually to the Messiah, the office held by Shebna and Eliakim was not hereditary and would decline in power and eventually pass away.
- *Fifth:* not only was the office itself to lose much of its power in future generations, but Eliakim himself was to be removed from the office.

## The Letter to the Church in Philadelphia

There would seem to be little doubt that Revelation 3:7 alludes to and must be interpreted in view of Isaiah 22:22.<sup>25</sup>

7 "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this:

8 'I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name. 9 Behold, I will cause *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and

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24 Note Eliakim's exchange with Rabshakeh in 2 Kings 18:17-35 and his subsequent report to Hezekiah in verse 37. The response to the arrogant Assyrian was entirely in the hands of Hezekiah (2 Kings 19).

25 John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), p. 84; George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), pp. 58-59; Alford, *The Greek Testament*, IV:583.

are not, but lie--I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and *make them* know that I have loved you.'"

Before investigating the analogy between the two passages, it should be noted that there is no substantive distinction between the phrases "key of David" in Revelation 3:7 and "key of the house of David" in Isaiah 22:22.<sup>26</sup> The main interpretive issue is whether there is an analogous meaning to the "key" and its power in the two passages.

### "The Key of David" and the Messiah

"Kingdom" implies both *rule* exercised by the king and *realm* over which the king rules.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, note carefully the following three points.

- During the time of Isaiah, the Davidic *rule* was exercised by Hezekiah, the current Davidic king; the Davidic *realm* was the kingdom of Judah.

The "key of David," or the "key of the house of David," was a symbol for complete administrative authority or control over the Davidic government, and it belonged inherently to Hezekiah as the reigning Davidic king. This key was delegated by Yahweh to Eliakim as chief steward under Hezekiah. As already concluded, the key was metaphorical, and Yahweh's intent was carried out by Hezekiah in placing Eliakim "over the house" of David.

The northern kingdom of Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians in 722 B.C., and the southern kingdom of Judah was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 B.C. Therefore, from the fall of Judah until the first advent of the Messiah, there was no Davidic *rule* because there was no Davidic king on the throne of David; there was no Davidic *realm* because there was no kingdom of Israel.

With the first advent of the Messiah, who is the final, climactic Davidic king, the kingdom of heaven (the Messianic kingdom) broke into history with several of its aspects becoming a present reality; with the second advent

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26 "David" is used for "house of David" or "dynasty of David" in 1 Kings 12:16.

27 Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, p. 64.

of the Messiah, the kingdom will be restored to Israel as the full and complete eschatological manifestation of the Messianic kingdom under the Messianic King.<sup>28</sup> Thus:

- When the Messiah returns, the Davidic *rule* will be exercised by King Messiah on the throne of David in Jerusalem as the final Davidic king; the Davidic *realm* will again be the (reestablished) kingdom of Israel, which will then be equivalent to the Messianic kingdom.<sup>29</sup>

The "key of David," still symbolizing the administrative control over the Davidic government, will be wielded by the Messiah himself, to whom it inherently belongs.

However, the vision of the Messiah during this interadvent period given in Revelation 3:7 shows that even now the key of David is held by Jesus, King Messiah. For the Messiah himself, therefore, the "key of David" is nothing less than the rule of the Messiah over the Messianic kingdom, both in its present and eschatological forms.<sup>30</sup>

- Today the Davidic *rule* is exercised by King Messiah from heaven;<sup>31</sup> the Davidic *realm* is the present manifestation of the Messianic kingdom into which believers are brought to receive as a present reality the eschatological blessings of salvation and forgiveness.<sup>32</sup>

### What "The Key of David" Opens and Shuts

In the hands of King Hezekiah, "the key of the house of David" symbolized the administration of the Davidic government. In the hands of Eliakim, it symbolized the administrative control over the Davidic government that had been delegated to him by Yahweh through the king. The

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28 See, e.g., Jer. 31:31-40; 33:14-26; Ezek. 37:11-28 and cf. Acts 1:6-8.

29 Of course, the Messianic rule will encompass both the restored kingdom of Israel and the nations/kingdoms of the world (e.g., Ps. 72:8; Isa. 2:1-5; Zech. 14:16-19).

30 The "key of David" in Rev. 3:7 is quite distinct from "the keys of death and Hades" in Rev. 1:18. Alford, *The Greek Testament*, IV:583-584: "The same Lord of all has the keys both of the prison and of the palace; but these words [in 3:7] refer to the latter alone."

31 Cf. Ps. 110:1-2.

32 Cf. Acts 8:12; 20:25; Col. 1:12, 13; 1 Thess. 1:5.

import may be quite general, but in particular it includes the power to decide who was and who was not to be received into the king's service and into the king's presence.

In the hands of King Messiah during this interadvent period, the symbolism might also be a general reference to administrative control over the Davidic government of the Messianic kingdom. However, like Isaiah 22:22, Revelation 3:7 seems to focus on one specific aspect of that control: the power to grant or deny, not so much an audience before the king, but entrance into the Messianic kingdom (the kingdom of heaven) itself.<sup>33</sup> This interpretation would seem to be implied by comparing the wording of verse 7 with verse 8:

He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens...

I have put before you an open door which no one can shut...

The symbolism of an "open door" for preaching the gospel is common in the New Testament.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, it certainly seems that Jesus in this instance is using "the key of David," which opens and shuts, to open an opportunity for preaching and service for the Philadelphian church.<sup>35</sup>

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33 Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, p. 59: "To Christ has been given absolute and exclusive power to give entrance and to exclude admission into the Kingdom of God." Also Alford, *The Greek Testament*, IV:584: "Christ only has power to admit into and exclude from His kingdom; to enlarge the work and opportunities of His church, or to contract them."

34 Acts 14:27; 1 Cor. 16:8,9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3. Although not using the symbolism of a door, God's sovereignty in where the gospel is to be preached is clearly seen in Acts 16:6.

35 Alford, *The Greek Testament*, IV:584: "...**behold I have given before thee a door opened** (i.e. have granted, in my possession and administration of the key of David, that a door should stand opened...The door is variously understood...most expositors take it to mean, as in reff. 1 Cor.; 2 Cor.; Col...an opportunity for the mission work of the church. And this appears to be the true sense here, by what follows in ver. 9, promising conversion of those who were now foes" (emphasis original). Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, p. 59, takes a different but highly improbable view.

## What Was Delegated by Jesus to Peter?

Now that the relationship between Isaiah 22:22 and Revelation 3:7 has been established, it is possible to investigate the relationship, if any, between this "key of the house of David" and the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" given to Peter by Jesus in Matthew 16:19.<sup>36</sup>

*First:* it is granted that there is not only a connection between these two phrases but an identity of meaning.<sup>37</sup> If the "key of the house of David," which has belonged to the Messiah since his first advent, symbolizes administrative control over the Messianic kingdom, and if the kingdom of heaven preached by Jesus is the Messianic kingdom, then the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" and the "key of the house of David" must be two metaphors that have the same referent.

*Second:* although the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" were given to Peter by Jesus in Matthew 16:19, John reports, some years after Peter's death, a vision of the risen Messiah in which the "key of David" is in his (Messiah's) possession, the one to whom it inherently belongs as the Davidic king. There is therefore no possibility of the power of the "keys" being passed to "Peter's successors." They returned to Jesus who gave them.

*Third:* since the "key of David," also called the "keys of the kingdom of heaven," and the power it symbolizes belong inherently to the Messiah and to him alone, he can delegate it to a "chief steward" for an explicit purpose and then when that purpose is accomplished retake personal possession of the key. This point is the "key" (pun intended!) to interpreting Matthew 16:19 and Rev. 3:7.

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36 I assume that the "keys" were given to Peter alone. The personal pronoun used, σοι, is singular. On this particular point, then, the view taken here agrees with the Roman Catholic position. However, Bromiley, "Keys, Power of the," *ISBE*, III:11, argues that if the two statements about the "keys" and the "binding and loosing" in Matt. 16:19 are related, then if the later encompasses all the disciples (cf. Matt. 18:18), the former might also. I grant both statements are likely addressed to Peter alone. However, Matt. 18:15-20 seems to expand the power of binding and loosing at least to all the apostles. See also the section, "Does the Power of Binding and Loosing Represent One Use of the 'Keys'?" in chapter 11.

37 France, *Matthew: Evangelist & Teacher*, p. 247, states that Isa. 22:22 is "generally regarded as the Old Testament background to the metaphor of keys here [in Matt. 16:19]." See also footnote 5 in this chapter.

"The keys of the kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. 16. 19) were alone committed to Peter to signify delegated authority, **which necessarily ceased when his work was done**. Peter by his preaching opened the door of the kingdom for Jews in Acts 2, and for the admission of Gentiles in Acts 10. The keys having been used, and the doors opened, a successional and vested right in "St. Peter's keys" is absurd.<sup>38</sup>

Jesus preached that the kingdom of heaven was "at hand,"<sup>39</sup> and he presented himself as Messiah and King.<sup>40</sup> But this presentation was limited, and on several occasions he gave instructions not to mention his Messiahship.<sup>41</sup> Once Jesus even had to head into the mountains because some of the people were about to take him by force and make him king.<sup>42</sup> The reason for such a limited presentation of his Messiahship is that the cross and resurrection had to occur before any full and formal presentation to Israel could take place. There were two good reasons for this.

*First:* this is what the prophets had foretold must take place:

And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?"<sup>43</sup>

*Second:* his death and resurrection were necessary to make the atonement that secured salvation. Once these events had taken place, then the Messiah's full and formal presentation to Israel could occur:

Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again

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38 Walter Scott, *Exposition of the Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., n.d.), p. 99; emphasis added.

39 Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; Mark 1:15.

40 Matt. 21:1-11; 26:63-68; 27:11; John 1:41; 4:42; 11:23-27.

41 Matt. 16:20; Luke 4:41.

42 John 6:15.

43 Luke 24:25-26; Cf. 1 Pet. 1:11.

from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem."<sup>44</sup>

The following points are to be clearly noted:

- The "key of the house of David," called in Matthew 16:19 the "keys of the kingdom of heaven," belongs inherently to the Davidic king: to Hezekiah in Isaiah's time and to Jesus upon his first advent as King Messiah.
- This key in the Old Testament likely represented in particular the authority to admit or prohibit entrance into the king's service.
- This key was delegated to Eliakim, but the delegation was only temporary. Eliakim was eventually removed from office.
- The "key of the house of David" is never said to be given to a successor of Eliakim, and the office itself loses its exalted character. Therefore, by implication the "key"--and the powers symbolized thereby--returned to the Davidic king, to whom it inherently belonged.
- With the first advent of the Messiah, the "key of the house of David" became his by right as the Davidic king. It inherently belongs to him and to no other. As Isaiah elsewhere said, the Davidic government of the Messianic kingdom is upon his shoulders.<sup>45</sup>
- During the present precursive manifestation of the Messianic kingdom during this interadvent period, Peter makes his divinely revealed confession that Jesus is "the Messiah, the Son of the living God."
- Jesus effected the inauguration of the Messianic kingdom in its precursive form at his first advent. In view of the fact that it was Peter who enunciated the foundational truth behind this inauguration, the

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44 Luke 24:44-47.

45 Isa. 9:6.

Messiah--who was both God and the Davidic king in one person--delegates the "key of the house of David," called by him in this context "the keys of the kingdom of heaven," to Peter.

- The purpose of this delegation was to enable Peter to do *two significant acts*, both related to the growth of this kingdom. Peter was to be the instrument by which the two groups comprising the subjects of this kingdom--Israel (Acts 2-3) and the Gentiles (Acts 10)--were to be formally brought into it.<sup>46</sup> This formal "door-opening ceremony" could now take place, since the death and resurrection of the Messiah, upon which the spiritual blessings of salvation and forgiveness in the Messianic kingdom are based, had occurred. These acts of formally admitting two groups of people into the Messianic kingdom are analogous to the function of the "key to the house of David" in Eliakim's time, namely, admitting entrance to the king's service.
- After this task was completed, Jesus takes the "key of the house of David" back. This is also quite analogous with what happened in the case of Eliakim. Revelation 3:7 presents a vision of Jesus now personally using those keys by directing the details of the continued growth of the Messianic kingdom through the mission he assigns to the church at Philadelphia.

These two acts of formally opening the doors of the Messianic kingdom to Israel and then to the Gentiles, entrusted personally to Peter, are clearly emphasized in the Book of Acts.

*First*, here is the record of Peter formally opening the door of the Messianic kingdom *to Israel* in Acts 2 and 3. This constituted the full and formal presentation of Jesus to Israel as her Messiah. Note how Peter emphasized the necessity of his death and resurrection occurring first.

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46 Concerning the Samaritans in Acts 8, there are definite physical and religious links to the Jews of Judea and the Diaspora. For details, see Robert T. Anderson, "Samaritans," *ISBE*, IV:303-08. For the purpose of this book, it is sufficient to notice that Paul in Romans 11 clearly portrays among the saved only the remnant and the Gentiles.

Acts 2:

14 But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words...

36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified."

37 Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" 38 Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."<sup>47</sup>

Acts 3:

11 While he [the beggar] was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the so-called portico of Solomon, full of amazement. 12 But when Peter saw *this*, he replied to the people, "Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk? 13 The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus...

17 "And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also. 18 But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. 19 Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; 20 and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, 21 whom heaven must receive until *the* period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time. 22 Moses said, 'THE

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47 Acts 2:14-39.

LORD GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN; TO HIM YOU SHALL GIVE HEED to everything He says to you. 23 And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' 24 And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and *his* successors onward, also announced these days. 25 It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'AND IN YOUR SEED ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH SHALL BE BLESSED.' 26 For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one *of you* from your wicked ways."<sup>48</sup>

Peter here explicitly gives all Israel the invitation to accept Jesus as her Messiah.<sup>49</sup>

*Second*, here is the record of Peter formally opening the door of the Messianic kingdom **to the Gentiles** in Acts 10:

39 We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. 40 God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, 41 not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, *that is*, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. 42 And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. 43 Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins."<sup>50</sup>

At the Jerusalem council Peter describes this incident, and then James draws the following conclusion:

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48 Acts 3:11-26.

49 McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, p. 405: "Reflecting now upon the total content of Acts 3, it is hard to imagine how words could have made any plainer the historical reality of this reoffer of the King and His Kingdom to the nation of Israel." I fully agree with McClain's precise and powerful assessment of what takes place here with Peter in Acts 3. However, I do not consider it a "reoffer" but the full and formal offer, which was not possible in the gospels before the death and resurrection of Jesus.

50 Acts 10:39-43.

13 After they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me. 14 Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. 15 With this the words of the Prophets agree...<sup>51</sup>

A number of scholars agree with Scott<sup>52</sup> that the power of the keys delegated to Peter resided in his instrumentality in formally opening the door of the Messianic kingdom, first to Israel and then to the Gentiles.<sup>53</sup> Once this task was completed, Jesus repossessed the "keys of the kingdom of heaven."

## Conclusion

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*,

Jesus entrusted a specific authority to Peter: "I

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51 Acts 15:13-15.

52 For the citation from Walter Scott, see footnote 38 in this chapter.

53 For example, Alford, *The Greek Testament*, I:173-174: "Another personal promise to Peter ["the keys of the kingdom of heaven"], remarkably fulfilled in his being the first to admit both Jews and Gentiles into the Church; thus using the power of the keys to open the door of salvation" (emphasis original). Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, II:84: "Even as he [Peter] had been the first to utter the confession of the Church, so was he also privileged to be the first to open its hitherto closed gates to the Gentiles..." Also Bromiley, "Keys, Power of the," *ISBE*, III:12: "The NT gives no direct examples of the use of the keys or the exercise of binding and loosing. Nevertheless the opening of doors in Acts seems to correspond to the use of the keys, for with the preaching of the gospel and its offer of forgiveness the door is opened to the kingdom." Note, however, that Bromiley does not believe the keys are delegated solely to Peter and cites for their use not only Peter in Acts 2, but also Philip in Acts 8, men of Cyprus and Cyrene in Acts 11, Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13, and Paul and Silas in Acts 16. The view suggested here is preferred. There are at least two other possible interpretations of the keys. Some scholars take an entirely different view. (1) Wood, "Key," *ISBE*, III:11, and Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, p. 117-118, both cite R. N. Flew, *Jesus and His Kingdom*, who suggests on the basis of Matt. 23:13 and Luke 11:52 that the keys represent knowledge or spiritual, revelational insight that "enable Peter to lead others in through the door of revelation through which he has passed himself." Carson, *Matthew*, p. 373, also falls in this camp. (2) Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, p. 422, presents a view based on a much weaker connection between Isa. 22:22 and Matt. 16:19: "Obviously, this authority constituted tremendous power and required great character if it was not to be abused...By the same token, the one to whom such power was given could know the depth of the king's trust in him. This was what Jesus was showing to his disciples in Matt. 16:19."

will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" [Matt. 16:19]. The "power of the keys" designates the authority to govern the house of God, which is the Church.<sup>54</sup>

Though the keys are given solely to Peter, the evidence does not support remaining aspects of the Catholic position. This study of the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" concludes with the following statement by Bromiley:

From the NT data one may conclude that the power of the keys is not a special privilege or extraordinary authority reserved for one person or group of people. It has no magical, mystical, or arbitrary features, nor is it ecclesiastical or official in a purely institutional sense.<sup>55</sup>

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54 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraphs 551-553, p. 142.

55 Bromiley, "Keys, Power of the," *ISBE*, III:12.