

Heidelberg Catechism-83-84- Preaching is the Key to God's House

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: I had huge bunch of keys when I was running a school in Suriname and those keys became quite useful. Twice I opened doors for 2 women who locked themselves out of their cars...and one was an overheating car. Those ladies were happy, very happy, to get into their cars!

But there are somethings I could not open with those keys: God's kingdom for one.

Today you will hear again about keys that open and close the kingdom of Jesus – entrance into which brings man his greatest comfort and joy.

Our headings are:

What are the Keys of the Kingdom

Preaching Opens the Kingdom

Preaching Closes the Kingdom

Our goals are: That you will promote the use of 1st key, and use it to open the door of Christ's kingdom so those who are out in the cold might find comfort and joy inside.

What are the Keys of the Kingdom?

Q83. What are the keys of the kingdom?

A. The preaching of the holy gospel and Christian discipline toward repentance. Both preaching and discipline open the kingdom of heaven to believers and close it to unbelievers.

1. What are the keys of the kingdom?

The preaching of the Gospel and Christian discipline are the keys of the kingdom.

2. Are these keys really necessary?

It is impossible to enter into the kingdom without these keys. The walls are too high to climb over and too thick to break in. You need keys for the door. Every other religion tells you that your salvation is in your hands – by what you do- but the Bible vehemently disagrees. You need keys only Jesus Christ possesses to enter into his kingdom.

On the other hand, these keys lock out the rebellious from the kingdom. These doors are keyed from both sides – when you enter and when you leave.

3. Jesus gave the right to the elders to administer the keys (preaching and discipline) to the kingdom.

At creation, God gave Adam the command to rule the earth. When more men were born, they shared that authority.

Genesis 1:28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; **fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion** over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

So it is not surprising, God, once he had recreated mankind in Jesus, **specifically called man again to guard** his kingdom.

So elders rule under God's authority, just as Adam ruled under God. God is always King.

Mathew 16:19 "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."

As elders we include and exclude from the church, not at our whims, **but on the basis of God's direction.**

4. Jesus never gave this authority to one man (Peter) as Rome asserts.

Peter had no such authority and one man does not have the authority to rule the church of Jesus.

In fact, for a church to be a church it must have a plurality of elders.

Moreover, Jesus even gave his **disciples** (not Peter) the authority to declare that sins were forgiven by him.

John 20:22 And when He had said this, **He breathed on them**, and said **to them**, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 **"If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them;** if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

5. God warns elders to be diligent about their duties to teach and discipline because of how important the church was to Jesus.

Acts 20:28 "Therefore take **heed to yourselves** and **to all the flock**, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God **which He purchased with His own blood.**

This is why elders must rule wisely and carefully under Jesus Christ.

So don't jump headfirst to be an elder. It is a weighty job. Punishment for failing to fulfill the work properly is very severe. If you lead someone astray, it would be better for you if a millstone were tied around your neck and you were drowned in the depths of the sea.

And yet, don't be afraid if God calls you!

Preaching Opens the Kingdom

Q84. How does preaching the gospel open and close the kingdom of heaven?

A. According to the command of Christ: The kingdom of heaven is opened by **proclaiming and publicly** declaring to each and every believer that, as often as **he accepts the gospel** promise in true faith, God, because of what Christ has done, truly forgives all his sins. The kingdom of heaven is closed, however, by proclaiming and publicly declaring to **unbelievers and hypocrites** that, as long as they **do not repent**, the anger of God and eternal condemnation rest on them. God's judgment, both in this life and in the life to come, is based on this gospel testimony.

1. God's kingdom is opened by the public calling of men to repentance and faith through Jesus (preaching).

In preaching the holy Gospel, the Shepherd calls and the chosen **hear His voice-salvation** and **follow him.**

Others who hear that voice and do nothing, die in their sins.

Romans 10:14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And **how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?** And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And **how shall they preach unless they are sent?** As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!" ¹⁷ **So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**

2. This is why preaching that is consistent with the Word of God is the key to the kingdom.

If the church fails to faithfully preach, untold millions will march right into hell – blind and deaf!

2Corinthians 5:18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and **has given us the ministry of reconciliation**, 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the **word of reconciliation**. 20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were **pleading through us**: we **implore you** on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

Preaching God's truth is the only means of reconciliation.

The best type of human relationships might bring a temporary peace, but it will not allow you to enter heaven.

One pastor wrote: *“There is no gift, no act, no deed, no human character or quality that is good enough to merit entrance into the Kingdom of God. **This bars Jew and Gentile from the Kingdom**. The wall is too high, the moat too long and the Kingdom impregnable for the human outside of Jesus.”*

Look how important faithful preaching is!

1Corinthians 2:1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom **declaring to you the testimony of God**. 2 For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. **4** And my **speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom**, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

3. And what awesome comforts come when you enter into the kingdom of God through preaching.

What wonderful gifts God gives to his children!

One preacher summarized it well: “The **Canadian world** is obese, gross and addicted **and they are unhappy**. The **African world** is sick, starving **and they are unhappy!** The **citizens of the Kingdom** of God are in Canada and **Africa comforted and joyful**, worshipping God because **they have heard and they embrace the preaching!**”

Isaiah 52:7 How **beautiful upon the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news**, Who proclaims peace, Who brings glad tidings of good things, Who proclaims salvation...

4. So ministers and elders must make diligent efforts to present the full Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The law cannot effect any change in any man's life, but the Gospel can! Man needs the full Gospel: God's holiness, man's horribleness, and Christ's salvation.

Even if he is tired, the preacher must not short-circuit the presentation of the Gospel.

He must be ready. A doctor on an airplane might want to rest before he gets to his destination, but if someone falls sick on a plane, the doctor knows he had a sworn duty! So too elders!

The people must hear of Christ's life, death (active and passive obedience), and his resurrection as foundation of all sermons.

5. Preaching must be pure.

It is not a matter of whether there is preaching (there is preaching everywhere), but whether there is pure preaching – with **no adding or subtracting from the Word** of God and rightly dividing it to the hearers.

2Timothy 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth.**

6. Furthermore, you may not think much of us as preachers – as we are men of sin, but you must have an absolutely heavenly view of the message we preach.

The message is the key to life. **The public preaching of the Gospel is the officially designated way of presenting the Gospel of Jesus.**

This is why you need to **invite people to come to worship!**

Preaching Closes the Kingdom

1. God's kingdom is closed to the wicked and hypocrites if they hear the Gospel of Jesus and do not repent of their sins through Christ.

They would face eternal condemnation in the fires of hell.

John 3:31 "He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. 32 "And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. 34 "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure. 36 "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; **and he who does not**

believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

The truth is, even before the time of the Lord, the Jews were stubborn, refusing to look to the coming Savior. Then they directly rejected Jesus.

They could **not accept the substitutionary atonement** or the idea **that Jesus would be a suffering servant.**

They **killed the messengers before, they killed Jesus, and then killed his disciples after.**

They **lost their only hope** that could have been theirs.

2. Even children will be judged by God and the gates of heaven closed them if they reject the Gospel, the key to heaven.

More, **God will judge your neighbors and co-workers and lock them out if they refuse the Gospel.**

Have you given them the key? How awful it would be if you don't open up the kingdom, knowing the dangers your children, your friends, and your co-workers are in!

Are people in hell wondering why you didn't give them the key to heaven?

Conclusion:

There are 2 keys to the kingdom: **Preaching of the holy Gospel** and **Christian discipline.** These keys open the kingdom to those seeking God and close the kingdom to those who refused to submit to the Lord. With the 1st key elders of the church call men to repentance and to come into the kingdom. Those who reject the key are left out.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Praise God for the preaching of the Gospel. You were saved by receiving it.

2. Continue to use it! Study God's words so you can learn to live in the kingdom. The Word is the key!

2. Share the key! Outsiders are in mortal danger and the Devil is roaring and ready to destroy them. If they come in, they will receive the joy of knowing Jesus and bring praise to the Savior. If they reject it, they damn themselves by it, but the responsibility is off of your shoulders.

Finally, God's Word is not merely a system of belief you may receive or reject at no peril. If you reject the truth of God's Word, you die in your sins. But if you want to be saved, confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that Jesus died on the cross for your sins. This is what I am proclaiming to you today! You will know joy! You will have heaven as your home.