

Ezekiel 33; Lord's Day 31

THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

- I. The concept.
 - A. The idea of the a key is that it pictures the church to be as a kingdom or fortress with walls and gates.
 - B. Ezekiel 33:1-11 portrays the church as a city with watchmen who are to warn the inhabitants of dangers without and within.
 1. The church is in the midst of a world which hates her (John 17:14) and the devil seeks always to attack or to infiltrate her.
 2. Danger is also within: they are in constant need of admonition, lest they leave off the pure doctrines and a holy walk.
 - C. In the history of the church in the New Dispensation there have been four forms of church government or polity.
- II. Who exercises the keys? Who are the guardians of the Church?
 - A. Centrally and essentially this authority and ability belongs only to Christ (Rev. 1:18; 3:7,8).
 - B. Christ exercises the keys through the instrumentality of the apostles (Matt. 18:18; John 20:23; Heb. 13:17).
 1. The apostles transferred this authority to the elders whom they ordained in every city.
 2. The authority of elders is implied in the following:
 - C. The power of the keys is spiritual (not physical): the Spirit accompanies the proclamation of what the Bible teaches.
 1. Elders have Christ's promise that He will work through them, when they teach, maintain and enforce the Bible.
 2. God alone forgives and condemns, but the church has the duty and the right to make declaration of what the Scripture teach concerning those who are forgiven and those who are not forgiven.
- III. There are three purposes for the exercise of the keys of the kingdom of heaven?
 - A. The glory of God.
 - B. The well-being of the church.
 - C. The salvation and spiritual well-being of the believer.
 - D. Conclusion.