

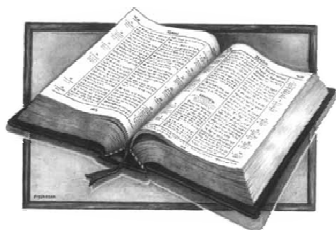
Diligently Seeking God (Hebrews 11:6)

PRAIRIE VILLAGE CHURCH OF CHRIST
4616 VALLEY STATION ROAD

Church Bulletin Articles from November 27, 2011

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Scripture of the Week



"He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' 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.'"

This is the first place that the word "church" is used in the Bible. Much confusion exists in the world about this one little five-letter word, but what Christ spoke here can clear up many of our misunderstandings if we're only willing to pay attention and believe. We learn that at the time Christ spoke these words, the church was not yet in existence. Jesus said "I will build My church," indicating that He hadn't done so yet. Many people believe that John the Baptizer was a part of the church, but he died before Christ established it. We even learn from these words that Jesus Himself died before His church was established. Notice that He said the gates of Hades would not overpower His building the church. Hades is the realm of the de-

parted spirits of dead people. After Jesus was killed for the sins of the world, He went to the Hadean realm as all people do. But when He arose, He broke down the gates of Hades and departed death's domain in order to establish His church. Yet another thing we learn is that Christ built His church only. Jesus said "I will build My church". Jesus didn't die for even one denomination, but only for the church belonging to Him. The church that belongs to Jesus is the one that wears His name and follows His teaching. Are you a part of the one, true church of Christ that Jesus built nearly 2000 years ago? If you belong to a church that you can't read about in the Bible, it's not the one Jesus died for and purchased with His own blood.

The Keys of the Kingdom

After Jesus told His Apostles He would build His church and the gates of Hades wouldn't prevail against it, He made an interesting statement to Peter in Matthew 16:19. He said, "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." Keys have long been used as a symbol of authority. When you give someone the keys to your house, you authorize them to lock and unlock the door, and to enter into and go out of it. Jesus said He would give Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven, empowering Him to lock and unlock the gates of Christ's regal domain.

Notice how Jesus used the terms "church" in verse 18, and "kingdom of heaven" in verse 19 interchangeably. This tells us that Christ's church and His kingdom are one in the same entity. When the Lord issued the keys of the kingdom to Peter, they gave him the authority to "bind" and "loose" within Christ's church, or in other words, to make commands and allow freedoms. What Jesus promised Peter was the authority to tell people what they needed to do and abstain from doing in order to enter His church kingdom and abide lawfully therein. If you look in Matthew 18:18 you'll see that Jesus issued this same "binding and loosing" authority to all twelve of His Apostles, so this power wasn't

exclusively intended for or given to Peter. This promise of power was delivered to the Apostles when Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to inspire them and guide them into all the truth (John 16:13; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4). When the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles (Acts 1:26), they began speaking with Christ's authority (binding and loosening what had already been bound and loosed in heaven), and they opened the kingdom to all who would believe and obey (Acts 2:37-38, 41). Apostolic inspiration is just as binding today as it was 2000 years ago. We must do exactly what Peter told the people in Acts 2:38 to do in order to enter the kingdom of heaven—"Repent & be baptized for the forgiveness of sins."