

# Biblical Topics

## Office of the Keys

What is the Office of the Keys

The Office of the Keys is that special authority which Christ has given to His Church on earth to forgive the sins of repentant sinners, but to withhold forgiveness from the unrepentant as long as they do not repent.

Where is this written?

This is what St. John the Evangelist writes in chapter twenty: The Lord Jesus breathed on His disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." John 20:22-23

What do you believe according to these words?

I believe that when the called minister of Christ deal with us by His divine command, in particular when they exclude openly unrepentant sinners from the Christian congregation and absolve those who repent of their sins and want to do better, this is just and valid and certain, even in heaven, as if Christ our dear Lord dealt with us Himself.

The business of the Church is to make all nations disciples of Christ and get them to observe all Christ has commanded. This is done by preaching the Gospel, administering the Sacraments, and by forgiving or retaining sins. The power is called the Office of the Keys because it opens heaven by forgiving sins, or closes heaven by retaining sins.

- 1 Peter 2:9: But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.
- Mark 16:15: He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.
- Matthew 28:18-20: <sup>18</sup> Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."
- Matthew 18:18: "I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Christ has given the Office of the Keys to His Church on earth; especially, to every local congregation.

- Matthew 16:19: I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."
- Matthew 18:17, 18, 29: <sup>17</sup> If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax

collector. <sup>18</sup> “I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. <sup>19</sup> “Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup> For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”

The sins of the penitent sinners are to be forgiven. Penitent sinners are sinners who feel sorry for their sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior. Penitent sinners are then to lead a truly Christian life.

- Acts 3:19: Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,
- Psalm 51:17: The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.
- Acts 16:31: They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”
- Matthew 3:8: Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

Much of the above information is taken from: “Luther’s Small Catechism” annotated by Edward W. A. Koehler.