

## **‘Binding and Loosing’, (Matthew 16:19)**

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*“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” (Matthew 16:19, NKJV)*

This verse is set in the context of the institution of Christ’s church. It has been a verse often misinterpreted throughout the church age, both by traditional churches such as Roman Catholic, and also by certain Pentecostal churches. First, we will quickly dispatch the incorrect interpretations. The traditional churches use this as a basis for unfettered ecclesiastical authority based on apostolic succession. However, there is nothing said about apostolic succession here or elsewhere in the New Testament. Further, the church is based on “**Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone**”, and the “**apostles and prophets**” played a foundational role in the founding of the church as an institution, as is clearly taught in Ephesians 2:20. The Pentecostal churches apply this to the authority of believers over demons, but this is completely foreign to the context, since there is nothing about demons anywhere in the context of the whole chapter.

In the rabbinic theology of the day, there was the concept of the permitting and forbidding of certain things. The binding (Hebrew: Asur) would forbid a certain action and the loosing (Hebrew: Mutar) would permit a certain action. These were legislative actions that would have judicial consequences. Peter was given this authority by Jesus, and this authority was later extended to the other apostles. The binding and loosing is seen in the Book of Acts. In **Acts 2:14-39**, Peter clearly defines the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In **Acts 5:1-11**, we have an example of the judicial outworking of binding and loosing. In Acts **15:22-29**, we have a legislative example of binding and loosing, and this time, other church apostles and elders are involved. The binding and loosing finds its fulfillment in the completion of the New Testament Scriptures, which were not the words of Peter or any other man, “**but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit**” (2 Peter 1:21). So the binding and loosing is, in effect, specifically prescribed by God alone through His inspired Word. When we come to **Matthew 18:15-20**, the passage about dealing with a sinning brother, we find that the church has authority to exercise discipline, but only within its own ranks, and only in strict accordance to the precepts of Scripture.

So, our applications are five. **First**, let us make sure we carefully study the context of a Bible passage before drawing far-reaching conclusions. Consider how bad hermeneutics led to the unscriptural doctrine of apostolic succession. **Second**, let us learn to find our directions from directly within the pages of the Bible, and not creeds of men. When these creeds agree with the Bible, they are helpful in our understanding, but they are not a substitute for Scripture itself. **Third**, let the church take heed to exercise discipline according to the Bible truth alone, and never based upon decrees apart from it. The sense in which the church today may bind and loose is the sense in which it judicially applies what is legislatively prescribed in the Law of Christ (the New Testament). Do not join yourself to, nor participate with, any church in which there are judicial decrees which bind and loose that are not biblically based, having been created by men. The church does not have authority to add to the Word of God in this way through its traditions and catechisms. According to **1 John 1:9** coupled with **1 Timothy 2:5**, we can confess our sins directly to God through Christ Jesus, without a human mediator, so the idea that confession to a man is what is required to have one's sins loosed is an unbiblical and gross overreach by any institutional church that teaches this. **Fourth**, ministers and Christian workers, know the Word of God and submit to those things which it binds, and allow Christian liberty in those areas in which the gospel has loosed. **Fifth**, may the skeptic begin with the truths of salvation. **John 3:16, 5:24, 10:28-30**, and **1 Corinthians 15:3-4** are good verses to start with, to see what is bound and loosed with relation to the gospel.