

The background of the book cover features a vertical gradient. The top portion is a deep navy blue, transitioning into a lighter blue and then a bright orange-yellow band that resembles a sunset or sunrise. The bottom portion is a solid black. A small, detailed image of the moon is visible in the upper right corner, partially obscured by the text.

The Keys of the Kingdom

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Chapter 1

Christ in His People

When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some [say that thou art] John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed [it] unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matt. 16:13-19)

This passage is certainly one of the most well-known in the Bible. But have most of us truly grasped the Truth that Jesus is revealing in this passage? Contained in this passage is the meaning of Christianity itself, the purpose of God in His people, and a clear indication of true ministry in the name of Jesus.

The Question

You will note that Jesus initiated this conversation with a question. He asked them what other people say about Him – who do other people say Jesus is? Jesus was obviously NOT looking for information. He was asking this question to make a point – which is fully brought out in His follow-up question: Who do YOU say that I am? The point Jesus was making is that it does not matter what other people say about Jesus. It matters only what I say about Him. In other words, EACH believer must have an inward, personal revelation of Jesus Christ for themselves.

This is central to the entire conversation. Jesus is showing them that even if others state the Truth about Him – and even if they adopt what is said as a theological precept -- that unless that Truth results in a personal revelation IN THEM of Christ Himself – well, they will not get far in His will and purpose.

In this we begin to see the necessary impact of true ministry. Those to whom we minister should not simply adopt and parrot our teaching – and neither should we adopt and parrot the teachings of others – no matter how biblically sound it might be. Yes, what is taught must be biblically sound, but Jesus is teaching in this passage, as does Paul, something that goes beyond theology. He is teaching what sound doctrine and theology instructs us to do: Come into an inward realization of the Person of Jesus Christ – personally and individually.

So, after the disciples answer the question, "Who do men say that I am?", Jesus sweeps that all aside, and asks, "Who do YOU say that I am?" That is THE question. And the answer is not born out of mere theology or information. It is born out of REVELATION.

A Revelation

Peter answered the question, "Who do YOU say that I am?," with the declaration, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." This was the pivotal moment in the ministry of Jesus, and in the experience of the disciples. For while it is true that Jesus was yet to be crucified, raised, and ascended, and it was also true that Pentecost had not yet come – which is when they received the indwelling of the ascended Christ by the means of the spirit of God – the disciples had received a revelation from the Father as to the identity of Jesus. It was the beginning of all that would follow.

Jesus answered Peter's confession:

...for flesh and blood hath not revealed [it] unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

Here we see that the confession of the disciples was not merely religious in nature. They were not drawing intellectual conclusions or having an emotional experience. They were not mustering up out of themselves some innate knowledge. The source of this revelation was not flesh and blood – not the flesh and blood of someone else, or the flesh and blood of themselves. No. Despite the background of the entire OT, and

their experiences with Jesus, this was an inward revelation received INTO them from the OUTSIDE – received from the Father.

Today we must likewise receive a revelation of Jesus Christ. Indeed, we must receive the Person of Christ Himself within. And the source is never of ourselves, our upbringing, our religion, or our own ability to understand theology. The source is God.

Christ in You

Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Col. 1:27)

As noted, what happened in Matthew 16 was a year or two before Acts 2 – when the disciples received the living Christ within. But the teaching of Jesus to them in Matthew 16 contains all of the principles of Truth that they would experience in Christ once He ascended and Acts 2 became possible.

In reading Matthew 16, we see the Truth that Christianity is, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Christ within – the revelation of Him and then the presence of Him – is THE ROCK upon which those who are the church are built. He is the Rock upon which ALL that God is doing is built.

The Ekklesia

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.

These words of Jesus about the church have been twisted, ignored, or misunderstood – and yet they are so clear. Forget the demand that it is upon Peter that the church was to be built – that is utter nonsense and complete error. But rather read exactly, in context, what Jesus is saying. He had just called the disciples BLESSED because they had received the revelation of Himself from the Father. But as noted -- He is saying that it is this same revelation of Himself that is THE ROCK upon which the church will be built.

What is, “the church?” The word in NT Greek is, “ekklesia,” which means, “called out ones.” Note the individuality of the term. The church – as a body – is comprised of called out ONES. How could it be otherwise. Unless there are ONES who are called out there can be no body.

Thus, Jesus is promising to build the called out ONES upon the Rock – the Rock of the revelation of Himself -- then and after Pentecost, the church will be built upon the Rock of the presence of Himself WITHIN His people.

This Truth is found all through scripture. Christianity is, “Christ in you.” (Col. 1:27) A Christian is one in whom Christ dwells. Thus, the church as a body is comprised of, and built up upon, the presence and revelation of Christ in His people. And it is likewise the purpose of God for His people that we grow in the grace and knowledge of this very same Jesus; that we grow up in Him. It all comes back to the Truth found in this passage.

***...and the gates of hell shall not prevail
against it.***

This statement of Jesus that the gates of hell shall not prevail against IT can be taken two ways – both of which amount to the same finished victory. We could say that the gates of hell cannot prevail against the church which Jesus builds upon the Rock of His life within His people – and that would be the Truth. But we could also say that the gates of hell cannot prevail against the Rock Himself – which dwells within His people. Either way, the gates of hell – which is the authority of the realm of Satan – cannot prevail against the One who said, “I AM the resurrection and the life.”

But we must be honest: The gates of hell have prevailed against what has been accepted as Christianity – against the visible church. In fact, there has been great compromise with the gates of hell – the authority of the enemy has broken down the walls of the church. But this does not mean the promises of Christ have failed. It means that wherever we see the gates of hell prevailing among people it is because those people have NOT been built upon the Rock. That is the inescapable conclusion. The gates of hell CANNOT prevail against the Rock. Therefore if the gates of hell are prevailing it is proof that what has been built, no matter how religious, traditional, or theologically sound – those people have not been built upon an inward realization and experiencing of the Person of Jesus Christ.

Are we prepared to accept this? There are lots of nice people in nice churches – churches which at

least hold to sound doctrine. But are the people in those churches ALIVE in Christ? Or are they are built upon merely an intellectual grasp of doctrine? Or perhaps built upon emotionalism? The gates of hell take many forms, and one of the most subtle forms are such substitutes FOR the living Christ in His people. Where these substitutes prevail the gates of hell have found an entry point.

Those who are being built in Christ are living in resurrection union with Christ, and being governed by an growing inward revelation of HIM. This is the ROCK upon which Jesus builds the people who constitute His church. The gates of hell cannot prevail against The Resurrection and The Life – and thus, to the extent that we abide in Him as our resurrection and our life the gates of hell cannot prevail. The victory IN HIM is finished.

Chapter 2

The Keys

I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

All of the Truth found in Matthew 16 is necessary to grasp if we are to understand what Jesus said about, "the keys of the kingdom." First, some background regarding the words in His statement will help. The word, "kingdom," in the original Greek, means, "rule," or, "sovereignty." But not in the sense that the kingdom of God is a PLACE. No. "The kingdom of God," is the rule of God Himself over ANY place or person. In other words, the kingdom of God is the authority of God Himself.

With that in mind, what ARE these, "keys of the kingdom of heaven?" The keys OF the kingdom are keys that are representative of, indeed, they are keys that are an extension of the authority and Lordship of Jesus Christ. Sure. He has ALL authority. He is Lord of all; King of all. And as Lord of all He said that HE would be giving the keys of His authority to His ekklesia.

Why are these keys given? Jesus said these keys would bind and loosen. But it is here that there has been great error in some parts of the body of Christ. Only if we read His instructions in the

original Greek can we discover the real meaning. It reads:

I shall be giving unto you the keys of the kingdom of the heavenlies. If ever you should be binding on earth, the same shall be having been bound in the heavens. And if ever you should be loosing on earth, the same shall be having been loosed in the heavens.

That is a little awkward but the meaning is clear: The keys will bind and loose on earth ONLY that which is FIRST bound or loosed in heaven. In other words, the keys that belong to Lord Jesus can only open or close – bind or loose – according to HIS will and sovereignty. This means that these keys function only within the will of God.

The keys of the kingdom are extensions of the kingdom – that is – they are the means by which the Lordship of Jesus Christ is manifested in a way that has the impact of binding and loosing according to the will of God – in God's time, in His way, and unto His glory. And these keys are given to His people – He says, "If ever YOU should be binding....be loosing." In short, the will of God is settled. But He is not simply going to impose it or do it by bypassing His people. He wants to bring it to pass through His people.

But even that needs clarification. Jesus is NOT giving authority to His people to simply do what He would do – according to what we think is the will of God. Rather, He is giving authority to His people to do what HE IS DOING. That is why, in the original Greek, it reads, "I shall be giving."

This is an ongoing progressive matter – it is really a supply AS needed. Furthermore, in the context of this passage, in order for His ekklesia to extensions of Jesus Christ it is necessary for those people to be built upon the Rock. Unless a person knows Jesus Christ and is being built up in Him – unless a person is first themselves brought under the Lordship of Jesus -- there is no possible way for Jesus to use them as extensions of Himself to bring to pass His will for others.

“I shall be giving unto you the keys of the kingdom” – this is what Jesus promised in response to the confession of Himself as the Christ – based upon an inward revelation of Himself in His disciples. The promise of those keys – of that authority – is based solely upon those disciples knowing Him, and being built up upon Himself as the ROCK.

There are those who have taken these words to mean that we are able to walk around, “declaring victory,” and, “speaking victory,” into people’s lives and situations. Some read the Word of God and discover the will of God – and then launch forward believing that they have the authority to make it happen. But this simply does not work because it is NOT what is being given to believers.

Read the gospels. There was an occasion where Jesus gave His apostles authority to do miracles in His name. (Luke 10:17) They did those miracles and rejoiced in that fact. But there was another occasion where they tried to cast out a demon in His name but were not able. (Matt. 17:21) Why? It was the SAME name of Jesus.

What did they lack when they failed that they possessed when they succeeded? Jesus said the reason was FAITH – He said they could not cast out the demon because of UNBELIEF. He then stated that, “this kind comes out only by prayer.” (Fasting is not in the earliest manuscripts.) Prayer is communion with God. Thus, they were not functioning from out of communion with God in their failure.

This shows that authority is not a power that is given by God to people to use in His name. Rather, authority is a matter of acting as an extension of Jesus Christ – but which cannot function except that we are in living communion with Him; living under His Lordship. This is why Jesus used the picture of KEYS that can bind and loosen ONLY what is already the will of God to be opened and closed. The keys are extensions of Himself – given to people who themselves are already under His Lordship.

The gates of hell cannot stand against the presence and revelation of Christ in His people. Likewise, binding and loosing according to the will of God is only possible when the ekklesia operates according from out of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. So once again we are faced with the same sobering reality: The visible church has not prevailed against the gates of hell. Neither is the visible church acting as an expression or extension of Jesus Christ. There are, of course, many claims otherwise. But the fruits are undeniable, and the results are all around us.

Chapter 3

Binding and Loosing

There is not a single command by Jesus in this passage to bind or loosen. Have we noticed that? Rather, Jesus speaks of it as an outcome of being built upon Himself as the Rock. In other words, as we come into an inward revelation of Jesus Christ we are going to encounter situations wherein we must bind and loosen. It will be a, "normal," part of a walk with Jesus Christ: "If ever you should be binding....loosing."

So HOW do we bind and loosen – in the sense Jesus is describing? We saw earlier that PRAYER was an essential – for faith is born from out of such prayer. But here again we must be clear: The Bible never teaches that Christians are supposed to beg and cry to God for people to be set free. Do we think that we desire freedom for people more than God desires it? Does God need to be begged to help people be set free? No. Indeed, if we read this passage it tells us exactly what we are supposed to do: Through prayer and communion with God we are to JOIN HIM in His will for others. We are to be ONE WITH HIM for others. That is why Jesus said that whatever we bind or loose must have already – in God's will – be bound or loosed in heaven. We are simply joining HIM – and then acting as extension of Him to the extent God makes it possible.

We can be certain that God desires for all to be set free. And we can be just as sure that as we join God for His will that it is having an impact. We might not even need to say a word. We may

not see much or see anything happening at first – or even for a long period of time. This is because God always works from the INSIDE OUT. He must – or else freedom will not be real. But something IS happening.

The presence and power of Jesus Christ brought to bear in any situation – in any one of His people -- will NOT fall flat. There will be an impact – because when Christ is brought in there is always an impact. It may not be dramatic. But nothing remains passive where Christ is present.

The Interests of God

Whatever we bind or loose must already be the will of God settled in the heavenlies – the binding or loosing must be nothing more and nothing less than a working out of the will of God through His people. But there is another essential factor here that goes beyond some THING we might do. It is our motives for doing it. If we are to do something in, “the name of Jesus” – and surely we would bind or loose in His name – then whatever we do in Jesus’ name must be, yes, what Jesus would do, but it must also be for His glory and His interests.

One of the greatest hindrances to being used of God is a personal gain IN ministry. People have a personal interest involved – and not necessarily a financial one. For example, people minister to feel good about themselves – they feel good because they believe they have gained a validation from God. There can be a gain of spiritual and religious pride. There can be the gain of a following. There can be a gain of favor

from others. In our ignorance, immaturity, and even from out of unbelief, we take what God might have done and associate it with ourselves. OUR ministry, OUR faithfulness to God – all that God has done through US. But where this is the inward attitude and motive God cannot, and will not, do much. This is His mercy because He knows that if He would use us it would be our undoing and the undoing of others.

This is not to say that people cannot build large ministries with large followings, “in the name of Christ.” Sure they can, and have. But Jesus said, “I will build MY church.” He never promised that that He would bless what we build FOR Him, and HE never promised that we have the right to do things in His name, hand it to Him, and obligate Him to bless it. Yet the practice of doing for Christ and saying He has blessed it is so normal that the Truth that Christ must do it through us is foreign to us.

What is the difference? What is the difference between us doing something like binding and loosing FOR Christ and Christ doing it through us? The difference is found WITHIN. To be used of Jesus Christ we must ask Him to do whatever it takes to set us free from our personal interests in His use of us. We must want God’s will and only God’s will – for His glory and interests.

Can we see that if God would use us to bind or loose others that we must FIRST be set free?

There have always been people who have achieved HUGE followings, “in the name of

Jesus.” This proves NOTHING. Heresy has always attracted more people than Truth.

The proof of whose interests we are after is often found in the aftermath of what we are supposedly doing for God. Do we turn the results of our ministry into a personal kingdom we must protect? Do we demand that people look to us? Do we become filled with self-importance in the lives of others? What do we teach about money?

God knows the heart. He wants to use only those in whom He has done a deep work of the Cross. He knows He can trust such ones because they are not in ministry for any other reason than HIS interests and HIS glory. He wants those who have completely set aside all personal interests and are abandoned to Him for no matter what it takes. Indeed, He wants those who are willing, if it be the Lord’s will, to never be used of Him in a way that anyone else notices. That is faithfulness to Christ.

Ministry that is of Christ can emerge only from a life that is utterly abandoned to Christ. Only if we lose our lives to Jesus for whatever it takes can any ministry emerge that is built upon the Rock – and which can be used of Him in the lives of others.

Chapter 4

Freed Unto Christ

It is here that we must be perfectly clear about this matter of binding and loosing. This is not a matter of God simply setting people free FROM problems. Rather, the goal is to set people free UNTO Jesus Christ. In other words, free FROM bondage -- but free UNTO Christ. The former without the latter can actually be dangerous.

Jesus illustrated this danger to His disciples:

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth [it] empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last [state] of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation. (Matt. 12:43-45)

Does God want to deliver people from sin and bondage by, "acting upon them" – without any conversion to Christ? What good would that do anyone? None. In fact, if God did this it would open up people to greater spiritual danger.

Jesus is illustrating a principle. The most immediate application He was making was that of Israel. But the principle itself holds – He talks about an individual. And this principle tells us

that it is not sufficient to simply set people free FROM bondage – but they must be set free TO Jesus Christ. Otherwise, they might be set free from one bondage -- only to end up in another – perhaps even worse.

For a person to be truly delivered FROM sin they must be delivered UNTO faith in Christ. They must be brought face to face with their sin and unbelief – they must be brought to the reality of the Cross. Otherwise, their house might be presently swept and garnished, but unfilled – and in a very dangerous position.

We must not miss the point here: Freedom is found ONLY in Christ. Jesus said, “You will know the Truth and the Truth shall set you free.” He also said, “I AM the Truth.” In short, to simply set someone free from a sin or addiction – from religious blindness -- or to deliver them from demonic influence – this is NOT real freedom. For they have not been filled with Christ – they are without His life or His Truth. In fact, they have tasted something of Christ because they are delivered – and are therefore all the more accountable.

If the Truth sets us free then simply NOT knowing the Truth is bondage. So again – it is not sufficient to simply set people free from bondage. If they are not set free into a knowledge of Jesus – at least some elementary faith in Him – then they are NOT free. They are merely in between bondages. And because they have been touched by Christ they are in great danger of a worse bondage.

This was the case with Israel – it is part of the principle of Truth being given by Jesus. Once a person SEES – once they experience something of Christ – they cannot go back. They are no longer fully blind. This means that if they do not go on they will indeed be all the more vulnerable to the enemy.

God knows what we cannot presently know. He knows what makes people tick – what keeps them in bondage. But the above passage does give us a possible reason why, despite much prayer and joining the Lord for the freedom of a person, there does not seem to be anything happening. They are not yet ready to be delivered. He must penetrate the darkness. He must convict them of their need. God must build a bridge in them that will enable them to hope and believe Christ as they are set free from bondage.

The notion that all we have to do is lay hands on people, or pray over them, and deliverance will immediately happen every time is not taught in scripture. There are a few instances after Pentecost in Acts 2 where this did happen – but we don't know the background or the sequel to the lives of those people. Generally, however, you do not find this taught in the epistles as a normal practice. You do not find deliverance sessions. You do not find Christians being exhorted to find deliverance from nonsense like, "generational curses." You don't find exhortations to beg God for forgiveness, or any room for depression because people cannot get free from sin. Rather, you find grace and Truth being preached – and an exhortation to repent and believe.

Everything needed for freedom in Christ is already finished IN CHRIST. But you see, that phrase, "in Christ," is easily passed over. We try to bring freedom alongside of Christ, or by invoking His name. No. People must encounter Christ – freedom is in HIS PERSON. Thus, ministry is a matter of bringing people into contact with Jesus Christ – which means He must be living in us. Then binding and loosing can happen – not necessarily through some dramatic deliverance session – but through a spiritual dynamic that God does through His people.

God can deliver people to Christ without any outward signs or wonders. That is the norm. Christ is ministered through those who have been built upon the Rock and it is Christ who does the binding and loosing through people who are extensions of Himself. Sometimes without a word. Sometimes through fellowship. Sometimes through teaching. But it is by His spirit – NOT by our religious flesh.

God does not need any of us. But in this age He has chosen to use the ekklesia as expressions and extensions of Himself. This is ministry. It may be spoken or unspoken. It may be dramatic or seemingly casual. Yet if the ekklesia are built upon Christ Himself the gates of hell cannot prevail.

It is not our responsibility to figure out why a person is not being set free. Rather, it is our responsibility to give ourselves to Jesus Christ and let Him build us up in Himself so that binding and loosing might be in the normal course of our

Christian walk. It is simply not possible for us to be in resurrection union with Jesus Christ – in the way God desires – except it have an impact upon the spiritual realm.

This will happen even if we are not given to see that impact. And very often we won't see the impact. That is not our concern. Our concern is to become expressions and extensions of Jesus Christ.

The keys of the kingdom are ALWAYS being given. They are not given as a onetime appointment unto authority. But they are present for a person to the extent that a person is under Christ as their personal Lord, and living from out of Him. In short, the keys are present wherever Jesus is present. Thus, as we walk, binding and loosing will happen – according to what is already the will of God.

Is this not ministry? To have Christ within and to be living out from Him to the extent that you bring Him into situations – even without needing to say a word? That you can – despite all of your deficiencies – be a manifestation and extension of Christ? Ministry that is of God is a matter of a person being in Christ – and then acting from out of Christ as an extension of Christ. This is ministry of LIFE – of His life.

Chapter 5

The Example of Paul

Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? [it is] hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and [from] the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, [and] to turn [them] from darkness to light, and [from] the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. (Acts 26:15-18)

The purpose for which Paul was apprehended by Jesus is representative for all who are in Christ. Not all have the same gifts or calling by God. But all have some gifts and some calling. What Jesus said to Paul therefore applies to all. And in these words we find the same Truth that Jesus stated to his disciples in Matthew 16.

There are several important points given in this passage. First of all, Jesus said: "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make you a minister."

Notice this essential Truth: Paul's journey as a minister BEGAN with Paul seeing Jesus Christ. Sure. And later, having Christ revealed TO him,

God would reveal Christ IN him. Paul would write:

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called [me] by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him... (Gal. 1:15-16)

There can be no real ministry otherwise. A person must at least be in the process of having Christ revealed WITHIN – be in the process of coming into an inward realization of Jesus Christ. And then as the outcome of seeing Christ, a person must be under the work of the Cross which makes it possible to live out from the life of Christ – which, in turn, makes true ministry possible.

Anyone can study theology and convey that to others – and call that ministry. But the best that an intellectual, theological knowledge can produce in others is the same theological knowledge. There is value in that if what we convey is true Biblical doctrine. But it is not yet LIFE. It is not the same as God revealing the Living Christ IN US. Indeed, the letter kills, but the spirit gives life. Biblical theology itself tells us exactly that – see II Corinthians 3:6 -- and teaches us that Christ must be revealed in us.

True theology can set us free only from false theology. That has value to be sure. But theology is not resurrection life. It teaches us ABOUT IT. We must be brought into contact with the living Christ to be truly set free.

Now, if a person has Christ revealed in them, and allows the work of the Cross in their life -- which

will release the life of Christ through them -- then ministry can happen unto the freedom of others.

But without seeing Jesus and living in Him, how can we bring the presence of Jesus into the lives of others? We cannot. Preaching and teaching the Word is absolutely necessary in the body of Christ – Paul did that all of the time. But again -- note exactly what Paul said, "To reveal His Son in me, that I might PREACH HIM." The inward revelation of Christ was so that Paul could outwardly preach Christ. That means that even though Paul used the necessary words, and Bible verses, for preaching – those words were spirit and life. They were out from Christ. Those words were merely vehicles wherein LIFE was carried.

It is essential that the church have teachers who can tell believers the Truth about Jesus Christ, and give instruction as to how God works, and how we can work with Him. There needs to be teaching as to the eternal purpose of God that Christ has accomplished through the Redemption. But mere FACTS will not get us far. The presence of Jesus Christ through the spirit of God must be both the source and the goal. And that cannot happen unless Christ freely lives in the preacher. Otherwise, Christians will be nothing more than theologians.

This brings us back to Matthew 16. The promise of the keys of the kingdom – the promise that binding and loosing would take place – all of it is based upon the necessity of being built upon the Rock. If that is not happening then there is no ministry; there is no binding and loosing. There is only religion ABOUT Christ.

Take time to read Acts 2. Peter preached the first sermon after he and the others received Christ through the giving of the Spirit of God. Three thousand were converted. But there was nothing in that sermon that you cannot hear today in any number of places. Peter's WORDS were not what converted those people. No. Those people turned to Christ that day because through the words of Peter the presence of Christ was brought to them. In a way that they, themselves, could probably not explain, they saw Jesus – not a vision – but they realized Him at least in an elementary way that made them realize that they were lost and that He was the answer.

So there MUST be teaching in the Body of Christ. But even the Bible itself will be a dead, theological book, unless we are brought into contact with Christ Himself. So again, ministry is a matter of having Christ brought in. That is God's ministry to anyone who would preach, and it is the ministry of anyone who would preach to others. Christ within ministered to others through preaching, teaching, fellowship, prayer, or simply suffering for Jesus' sake unto the edification of the Body.

Back to Paul on the Damascus road -- Jesus then elaborated on His assignment to Paul by saying, "to make you a minister and a witness both of these things which you have seen, and of those things in which I will appear to you." Thus, before Paul could be a WITNESS unto others he needed to see Jesus for himself – otherwise how could he be a witness unto Christ to others?

Can we see the necessity of having an inward revelation of Jesus Christ? It is the absence of this that is the reason why so much preaching and teaching today, even if it is true as to words, carries very little life. It is not out from Christ. Rather, it is out from natural, religious humanity. But as sincere and well-intended as that might be – it carries no life, and no power.

As difficult as it might be to accept, most of the body of Christ is blind to the reality of the Living and ever-present Christ. We don't even know that God wants to reveal Christ in us. It is not talked about or preached about, let alone known as God's goal, and God's means. That is why the ministry of HIS LIFE is not at work in the body.

Jesus told Paul what would be the outcome of his ministry:

To open their eyes, [and] to turn [them] from darkness to light, and [from] the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

It is here that we must ask the same question we asked about the promise of Jesus that the gates of hell would not prevail against His presence and revelation in His people: Is this happening today in the body of Christ? Forget about the world for a moment. Is this happening among professing believers? Are professing believers turning from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God? Are professing believers walking in the forgiveness of God – the grace of God – and partaking of their inheritance by faith in Christ?

Or, are these just words? Surely some believers are walking in these Truths, but most are not. The proof is that the church, generally speaking, remains blind to the living Christ. Indeed, many are blind to the reality of CHRIST IN US.

The Travail of God

Paul's heart cry for the body of Christ is found in his epistle to the Galatians:

***My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.
(Gal 4:19)***

We must ask: Is it OUR heart cry? Or perhaps an even more searching question is: Do we even know what this means? Do we know that it is supposed to be the goal of all ministry?

God inspired these words of Paul. Therefore, we can be sure that Paul's travail is a reflection of God's travail. It needs to become the travail and goal of ministry in the body of Christ.

Jesus Christ has apprehended us into a finished redemption. But He has also given us a great responsibility. We are to be expressions and extensions of Himself unto others – so that they might be set free to know and experience Him. This is why He is giving the keys to the kingdom.

Chapter 6

The Ministry of Intercession

Believers do not usually think of INTERCESSION as ministry. We tend to think of ministry in terms of preaching, teaching, and edification. But intercession IS ministry. It is a hidden ministry that carries as much, if not more, spiritual impact for the purpose and glory of Jesus Christ.

True ministry is LIFE – it is the life of Christ in one member of His body being ministered to another member of His Body. This is how the Body of Christ is edified – built up in Christ. This ministry of the life of Christ can take many forms. We have our teaching and preaching, etc. But intercession – if it is real – is just as much the life of Christ in one member of the Body being ministered to another.

The reason this is possible is because EACH member of the Body of Christ is ONE with Christ Himself. A believer is a person who is, “joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him.” (I Cor. 6:17) And because EACH member is joined to the Lord in spirit, then each of the members of His Body are joined in spirit to each other. We are, “by one spirit we are baptized into one body.” (I Cor. 12:13-26)

The NT – certainly in this passage from I Cor. 12 -- lays great emphasis upon this great Truth that believers are all spiritually one in Christ. We are told that if one member suffers then all suffer. We are told that we are all connected to each other – through our oneness in Christ. Thus,

ministry is out from Christ in the individual unto the other members of the Body.

The NT makes it clear that the spiritual gifts are for the edification of the body. (Eph. 4:12:16) Do we think that this means that if a person has a spiritual gift that the gift they have from God is merely for their own edification? No. It is likewise for the edification of the rest of the body.

There is, however, a general misunderstanding on this matter of spiritual gifts and ministry. Many feel that unless they are out preaching and teaching; an active part of a church; involved in some movement – many feel that unless they are in ministry in that way that they are falling short of God's purpose for them. But that is not necessarily so. Ministry begins by each member giving themselves to Jesus Christ – by each member losing their life to Jesus. If each member would do that then each would experience the fullness of His life in themselves personally. And that fullness of Christ – before any preaching and teaching was ever done – would be a tremendous contribution to the life of the Body of Christ.

To the degree that Christ is manifested in us there is benefit to the Body. We may not see it. But it will be there. HIS LIFE forms the basis of the life of the Body. Without that basis all the preaching and teaching in the world will be DEAD. Thus, in one sense of the word, behind all who preach and teach there needs to be those who may never preach or teach – but whose life in Christ builds up and forms a foundation of life

that upholds all who do preach and teach. Thus, the preaching and teaching is NOT more important in God's eyes.

There are many in the Body of Christ who are called to simply allow Christ to live in them – in everyday ways that do not seem to be dramatic. Their lives may seem no different than the lives of anyone else. But there is a great INWARD purpose of God being accomplished IN THEM. They are being brought into an inward realization of Jesus Christ – the life of Jesus is being manifested TO them and IN them – and then THROUGH them. And one of the primary ways in which the life of Jesus is manifested THROUGH a member of His Body is through INTERCESSION.

Scripture says that Jesus Christ, "ever lives to make intercession for the saints." (Heb. 7:25) But don't think of this as Jesus pleading with the Father on our behalf. That is nonsense. Rather, Christ in us – Christ living in us – is a living intercession. His very presence in us is a living intercession on our behalf. It is Christ in us who makes us one with the Father – it is Christ in us who brings all of the value that makes it possible for us to walk with God. Jesus Christ is the one and only Mediator between God and humanity.

Now, if Jesus Christ ever lives to BE our intercession, and ever lives to MAKE intercession for the saints -- then if believers are ONE with Him, with HIS mind, and with HIS heart – does that not indicate that an eventual outcome of walking with Christ in spiritual fellowship is going to be that WE will join Him in His intercession?

Sure. If we are HIS BODY we are going to do what HE is doing in concert with Him.

The Christian experience is a continual discovery of the Person of Jesus Christ – a growing realization of the Christ who dwells in each of us. But as we discover Him we will more and more be brought into oneness with Him in purpose and function. Thus, we will learn to join Him in intercession. It is what He is BEING and DOING.

You will note – and this is important to see – that we do NOT, “do for Christ.” No. Rather, we are to JOIN Him in what He is doing. For example, Christ through His spirit is always seeking to bring people into the Truth. He is always seeking to set people free. We can do nothing to bring that to pass. But we can join Him by standing by faith unto that end for another. We may never preach or teach. But we can pray and intercede for others unto that end.

Is prayer and intercession LESS of a ministry than preaching or teaching? How could it be? If it is real, prayer and intercession is out from Jesus Christ by the spirit. Indeed, if preaching and teaching is not backed by prayer and intercession by the one preaching, and by many who don’t preach, then it may be nothing but the words of religious man.

So what we see is that intercession isn’t merely a prayer that WE SAY. Rather, it is a position WITH CHRIST that we TAKE. By faith, we stand with Christ FOR His will, and AGAINST all that would oppose it. Indeed, to stand with Christ by faith in

intercession is going to be the eventual outcome of fellowship with Christ.

Chapter 7

Standing in Christ

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. (Eph. 6:10-18)

Note the phrase: Stand by faith. That Truth is all through this passage from Ephesians. That sounds passive. It sounds as if we do nothing because Christ has done it all.

Well, Christ HAS done it all. Christ has won ALL victory. That is the basis for everything, not only in this passage, but for life in Christ. But does

that mean we do nothing? Does it mean that we sit back and assume that, "whatever will be, will be?"

No. For if Christ HAS done it all – and again, He HAS; it is finished – then if Christ has done it all then believers must live upon the basis that He has done it all! At the core, this means that we must STAND BY FAITH upon that very Truth – that in Christ it is finished. That in Christ the enemy is defeated. We must stand upon that basis for ourselves, and for the purpose of God in His church.

Practically speaking, this means that we stand by faith in Christ for the will and purpose of God – no matter what it takes and no matter the cost. Often this simply requires a spiritual stand in intercession. But in every sense of the word, that is a warfare.

Each day you and I encounter, first, in ourselves, and then, in the Body of Christ, and then, in the world, opportunities to live in, and out from, the reality that in Christ there is all victory. We encounter contradictions to Jesus Christ. What are we supposed to do? Are we to say, "Well, God will get around to these things. I need not involve myself."? Is that what CHRIST who is in us would do?

I am not suggesting that we take it upon ourselves to try to fix the world. No. But what I am saying is that if Christ is our very life then at some point when we come up against that which is contrary to Him that there is going to be a reaction in us – simply by virtue of Christ in us.

That does not necessarily mean that we will DO something in the outward. No. But it does mean that we will pray and intercede – indeed, by the very presence of Christ in us and our fellowship with Him we will be motivated to do so. The more we know Christ the more we will be caught up into His interests.

Frankly, the entire discussion as to whether we should be caught up into the interests of Christ is moot – if we are walking with Christ we WILL BE; we ALREADY are. Read the above passage from Ephesians again. There is no MAYBE – Paul is describing, “business as usual,” for the believer. The enemy is going to be allowed access to us. We are going to encounter the enemy in many situations that may not directly involve us, but in which we will get involved because Jesus is involved. And the call of God upon us is to STAND by faith. We are to stand by faith against all contradiction – against all spiritual opposition – unto the end that God will have His will and glory.

The Victory of Jesus

The victory of Jesus Christ over all of the forces of evil is finished. But how much of this victory do we presently see? We don't see much of it at all in the church. We really do not. Instead, we see that the enemy is occupying more territory than ever before. Instead of the life of Jesus being manifested, what we more often see is the disease of heresy and spiritual corruption is spreading like a cancer.

Why is this the case? Isn't the victory of Jesus finished? So should this not automatically translate into a church that lives in that victory?

Well, it WOULD automatically translate into a church that lives in victory if all we needed to do was sit back, be passive, and suppose that, "God is going to do it all." But it is precisely because God has called us in Christ to be those who join Him in His will – and precisely because the church has failed to do so – it is precisely because of the church's failure to be those through whom Christ can minister that the spiritual conditions today are so corrupt.

Can we see that because -- to a certain degree -- that Jesus Christ has limited Himself – has bound Himself up to His people – can we see that this means that where the church refuses to join Christ in His purpose that this purpose of God will be suspended? Sure. Otherwise, we must blame God for the terrible condition of His church for the last two-thousand years. No. The church is in the condition it is in because the church has refused to be the vessel through which Jesus Christ wants to be manifested. The end result is that Jesus Christ is NOT manifested.

If people refuse the purpose of God then the purpose of God will not come to pass for those people. If people refuse the finished work of Jesus Christ then the finished work of Jesus Christ remains finished – but those people will not experience Him. If people will not stand by faith upon Jesus Christ and His finished work, then those people will not only personally FALL, but there will be an overall impact of their failure to

stand by faith – an overall impact in the body of Christ and the world.

Does this mean God is defeated – by the failure of His own people? No. For even though Jesus Christ has indeed limited Himself in this age to His people – even that is unto the end that it may be proven that the ways of religious flesh end in corruption. The church has failed – and there has been great consequence – yet all allowed by God to prove our own folly; to prove that Christ is all. God will have the fullness of His will in Christ in the end.

And in addition, if God does not get His will through one people He will get it through another. God does have those who stand with Him. They are not seen. But they are there. The victory and manifestation of Jesus Christ is never going to happen in this age through great movements, organizations, or ministries. Rather, God will have His testimony through many who are scattered and unknown. He will have it through people whose name will never be up in lights. The life of Christ in people is the testimony of God. God will always have some in whom Christ is manifested.

Chapter 8

The Promised Land

The OT account of God's gift to Israel of the Promised Land is a type and shadow of His gift to us of His Son – and all that is in Christ. It is a picture of the Christian life – a life of standing in His victory, and as a result, of taking possession of the free gift that God has given in Jesus.

To begin with, we have to see that entering and taking possession of the Promised Land was not possible until Israel had one thing settled: The land was theirs by grace and victory over the tribes living in that land was certain. This was by God's promise.

It is the same for us. We have to get it settled that our position in Christ is eternal, settled, and never again in question. Unless we get that settled we will be defeated. Examine why Israel would not at first enter the land: They thought that THEY could not overcome the enemies in the land. Thus, to the extent that we think that victory depends upon ourselves we will NOT enter into HIS VICTORY.

The only answer here is that the believer MUST enter into relationship with Jesus Christ solely upon the basis of Christ – meaning that there must be NOTHING about themselves considered. We cannot enter into the promises of God based upon our merits, and we cannot be kept from entering based on our failures. If we allow anything about ourselves to form the basis of our faith then we are walking in darkness and we do

NOT believe. Our faith must be based solely upon Jesus Christ.

Here we see that our POSITION in Christ is primary. I'm not talking merely about some LEGAL position. I'm talking about the fact that the believer is ALIVE in Christ – solely by the grace of God; and because Christ is forever in us. We must be certain of that Truth – it is the gospel, and if we are not certain, we must ask God to do whatever it takes to make us to see and embrace this Truth.

Only if we see the Truth about our position in Christ do we have something upon which to STAND. "To stand," requires a position in which TO stand. And Christ is the One in Whom we stand by faith.

Now, to come to the place where we actually do stand by faith solely in Christ – this is not possible merely by intellectual asset to doctrine. No. We will only stand by faith in Christ if we are brought to the end of all other ground upon which we might stand. In other words, the Lord has to bring us to the end of faith in ourselves – to the end of all self-righteousness; to the end of basing life in Christ upon ourselves to any degree. Only then will we truly realize Christ and only then will our faith be in Him.

God accomplished this in Israel through the wilderness. Israel would not, at first, enter the land. Forty years later they did enter by faith. What happened during those forty years? The wilderness.

You will note that in both cases the Promised Land was the same. In both cases, the enemies were the same. In both cases, the Lord was the same, as was His purpose. What had changed? Israel had changed. Instead of unbelief, they now had faith in God – the wilderness accomplished this in Israel. Thus, they were able to enter the Promised Land and take possession.

It was solely by faith in God that victory over the enemies in the Promised Land was possible. But this was not a victory that Israel won. Rather, it was a victory that they now realized – that they now possessed and experienced.

Those victories over the tribes in the Promised Land were certain before any of the Israelites were born. God made the promise to Abraham of that land hundreds of years before. But even though God did make that promise, and the outcome of victory was certain, did God tell Israel to simply sit back and wait for the Lord to drive out the enemies for them? Did Israel wait outside the land, “for God to do it all,” because, well, God HAD done it all? Did the promise of victory mean passivity?

No. In fact, God specifically told Israel that He would NOT drive out the tribes of the land. And He specifically commanded them to enter the land and drive out the enemies – this was NOT an option, but was part of His purpose for them.

What happened when Israel did NOT drive out the enemies? Well, the enemies remained. And they did damage to Israel. Can we see that even though the victory for Israel was finished that

God had bound up His own purpose – had limited whether it came to pass – to their faith and obedience? In other words, despite the assurance of victory, Israel did have to enter the land and take possession – they had to stand in and live out from the victory of God.

Herein is an important question: Why, if Israel was already given the land, and given the victory, did actually possessing the victory depend upon THEM driving out the enemies?

The answer is that before we can take possession of all that God has given, God must have possession of US. For it is only through God's victory over us personally that any enemy can be driven out.

I want to state that again because it is key. Despite the fact that all victory over the enemy is full and complete in Christ, God has purposed that this defeated enemy be allowed to remain and do damage. He will NOT drive out the enemy apart from our involvement. Rather, He wants to first see the enemy driven out of our lives – and then driven out THROUGH us.

Now, the only way in which the enemy can be driven out of our lives is if we lose our entire selves under the work of the Cross. We have to lose the life to which the enemy has access. God has to have possession of us in Christ. I am not talking merely about outward issues. I am talking about the inward issues of unbelief. That is the ground of the enemy. If we will give ourselves to Christ unbelief and darkness will be broken. And then God will be able to use us as those who can

be used to stand against the enemy in intercession.

If we will not give ourselves to Christ, then we will continue to belong to ourselves – which is the essence of unbelief. And the enemy will have access. We will be of little use to God as an intercessor or as one through whom He can minister – for our religious flesh will continue to motivate us. Thus, despite that Jesus Christ has already done it all, and it is freely given to us, this will do us little good. We will be like those who have been given the Promised Land, but who have chosen to settle down on the other side of the Jordan, or as those who have made a treaty with the enemies we were commanded to drive out. And if that is the case, there are going to be consequences. God may, 'have done it all," but we will have remained outside of what He has done.

You cannot have victory OVER the enemy if you won't drive out the enemy. Indeed, it is only as God has victory over us personally that we can drive out what is contrary to Christ.

Examine each time Israel was defeated by the enemies of the land. The reason was always some compromise – some place where they broke faith with God. So it is with us. Victory may already be assured. But it is only assured IN CHRIST. It is only as we stand by faith for God's interests that He has victory FIRST over us – and then over all else we encounter.

Can we see that all of this is nothing more than God's way of bringing us into the fullness of His

Son? That God has limited Himself to the faith of His people so that His people might LEARN CHRIST? That God has limited Himself to His people so that His people might learn to function as the Body of Christ – doing the will of the Head?

Jesus Christ does not need our help. But He does have a purpose for His people. And that purpose will never be accomplished unless His purpose is first accomplished IN His people – and it will never be accomplished unless those people are drawn into His interests.

This is God's purpose in His people – that each might come into an inward realization of Christ – but then out from Christ that He might minister Christ through the members of His Body. This purpose begins NOW, but will find full release in the eternal ages.

The body of Christ is going to spend the eternal ages being extensions of Christ for His will and glory – from out of our spiritual union with Him. Picture a physical body. Believers are His spiritual body – we are as a body directed by the Head. That begins NOW because our union with Him has already begun now. Thus, as part of learning Christ and having His mind, we NOW have the privilege of living from out of Him. We join Him in what He is doing – it is inevitable that we be drawn into that – because we are one with Him in spirit.

Chapter 9

Position and Power in Christ

Intercession for other believers is a matter of Jesus Christ drawing us into His mind, His heart, and His moving, on behalf of another. We respond by joining Christ – we stand by faith with Christ – on behalf of the one for whom we are interceding. We stand solely on the basis of Christ for only His will, His glory, and His outworking. We desire that God would do whatever it takes to get His will in the life of another. This is what Jesus Christ is doing today – it is the reason for His presence. And thus, it is unto this end that His Body will be drawn.

We have seen the essential of realizing our position in Christ. That must be settled. We must also see that there is no doubt as to the Lord's victory over the enemy. Herein we find an essential basis for intercession. To intercede by joining the Lord in His purpose for another, we have to be absolutely certain of our personal position in Christ. For unless we are certain of our position, how can we stand for another? We must know the enemy is defeated. Only then will we realize we are fighting a WINNING battle.

Note that I am NOT talking about some sort of doctrinal position. Neither am I saying that unless we are certain of our position in Christ that God will not ALLOW us to intercede. No. Rather, I am saying that we CANNOT intercede. For in order to join the Lord in what He is doing we must be certain that we are already joined to Him – and that it is a position that is finished,

settled, and beyond dispute. For how can we stand by faith for another if we cannot stand by faith for ourselves?

So this is an essential. We must realize that our position – that our relationship in Christ – is based solely upon HIM; solely upon HIS finished work FOR US. It is not based upon anything whatsoever about US. Neither our sin nor our obedience has anything to do with the free gift of God's grace in Jesus Christ. We must get this settled. He must be the ground upon which we stand by faith.

Now, if our relationship position in Christ is settled, then we will begin to realize that Christ wants to use us as an extension of Himself; as a member of His Body. And we will realize that this is NOT maybe. If we are a member of His body then His use of us is a certain outcome. Intercession is always included – if we are used by God in no other way we can be sure that we are to pray and intercede for others according to the will of God.

But once we are sure of our relationship position in Christ, there is also the necessity of seeing that in Christ we have authority and power to intercede. We have the authority and power of Christ as those who are seated IN Christ in heavenly places.

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set Him at his own right hand

in the heavenlies, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all. (Eph. 1:19-23)

Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: (Eph. 2:5)

The big question here is whether these great Truths MEAN something or not. Does it MEAN something to be seated in Christ? To be seated in Him far above all evil powers? Not only that, but does it MEAN something when Paul says that the body of Christ is, "the fullness of Him that fills all in all."? Or are these dead words; merely doctrines to state and teach?

We can be certain that what Paul is stating does mean something – something that is living, true, and real. These are Truths that God wants believers to live in and experience.

If we are seated IN CHRIST far above all wicked and evil powers, then IN CHRIST we have authority over those powers. That is inescapable. And if all of that is the Truth, then within the Christian life, that authority and power ought to be used and manifested – from out of Christ in us.

This ought not to be in question. The NT brings us back again and again to the fact that the enemy is going to continually oppose Christ – both in our personal lives and in the life of the Body of Christ. Do we think that we are supposed to just sit back and assume that God is going to do it all – and that we need never stand against the enemy by faith – either regarding ourselves or for others?

Paul clearly indicated otherwise. He states that spiritual warfare is going to be continual – and that it will increase as we grow in Christ. Here we repeat his words in this same epistle of Ephesians:

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in

the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. (Eph. 6:10-18)

Here is see that, yes, Jesus Christ HAS done it all. Jesus Christ has already won ALL victory. But we do not see a picture of the enemy having been driven out with no access to believers. No. Rather, we see that the enemy is allowed access – but that we must, by faith, stand in our position and in the power of CHRIST.

Why must we do this if the victory is finished for us? We must do it so that the victory might be realized and experienced IN US. And then, along side of that, we must do it as those who are extensions of Christ – as those who are seated in Him.

Everything that is true in Christ must be lived out and experienced by the believer. This is how we learn and grow. It is how we decrease that He might increase. The more than we stand by faith in Christ as the power of God, the more we will realize how empty we are in ourselves. And the more we will grow in faith in Him.

Thus, if we are seated in Christ in the heavenlies, we need to operate from there if God draws us into intercession. But you will note that this is not a matter of the believer, “taking authority,” or, “declaring victory,” or, “speaking victory,” or of attacking the enemy. No. ALL of this is from out of Jesus Christ in us. Unless there has been a work of the Cross within and unless we are living from out of Christ as our life,

none of this is going to work. It will just be words and a bunch of theatrics.

In the book of Acts, we have an example of some people who tried to use the name of Jesus to cast out demons – even though they personally did not have Christ within.

Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon themselves to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches." And these were seven sons of Sceva, a Jew, chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. (Acts 19:13-15)

Here we see the seven sons of Sceva attempting to cast out demons, "in the name of Jesus." Was that enough? No. First of all, it says that they, "took upon themselves," to do this. They were not in Christ, and they were not doing this by the will of God. But their own words betrayed the Truth. They said, "We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches." Can we see that they had NO personal knowledge of Jesus Christ? No. To them, Jesus was a name Paul preached, and not a Person they knew. And lastly, the evil spirit itself mocked their attempt by saying that it knew both Jesus and Paul, but not them – in other words, these seven sons had

NO authority over this evil spirit. The end result certainly verified that.

Even in the gospels, were we find Jesus giving his disciples delegated authority over evil spirits, there was that instance where they could not cast out a demon. Jesus said they could not cast it out because to do so required, "prayer and fasting." In other words, even for those disciples there came a point where simply using the name of Jesus did not get them far. This required something beyond that – wrought through prayer and fasting – fasting from one's own flesh; fasting from one's own personal goals in the matter. That is the true fasting they needed – for Jesus later rebuked them for bragging about their power over evil spirits. These disciples needed a personal inward work in Christ – for it was only through Christ living and working through them that this victory could be realized. How much more this was the case with these seven sons of Sceva.

So even though believers who are in Christ are seated in Christ in the heavenlies – equipped with His power that is above all other power – even though that is our position – His power is only possible from out of that very same spiritual union. His power only works where HE is working. His power only works according to His mind. In short, yes, the Body of Christ will be doing what Christ is doing as extension of Him. But the Body of Christ cannot do anything He is not doing.

How many see that before Christ can live and move through us that He must live and move in us? Before we can bring anyone or anything

under the authority of Jesus as Lord we must ourselves be under the authority of Jesus as Lord. This is a certain principle. And ignorance of it stands behind why the body of Christ has been so weak for the last two thousand years.

We saw in Matthew 16 the absolute necessity of a personal, inward revelation of Jesus Christ – given by the Father to the individual. He is THE ROCK upon which all who constitute the church will be built. Unless He is being revealed as the foundation nothing else stated by Jesus Christ can happen. But if people are being built upon Christ as their Rock then Jesus says that the gates of hell cannot prevail against that revelation of Himself in people. Binding and loosing can only happen through God's people from out of the One who is the personification of all power and Truth.

Believers have no authority over the enemy except the power of Christ. And the power of Christ must first be over THEM. Our certainty of our position in Christ is only possible if Jesus Christ is our personal Lord – and we stand solely by faith in Him. And it is out from that position – out from His authority over us personally – that His authority can work through us.

I say again – this is why there is little power in the church today. It is why there has been little for the last two thousand years. Instead, there is heresy and soul power.

If believers are supposed to sit back and assume that Christ is going to do it all – and that we have no participation – then why would Jesus promise to give US the keys to the kingdom? If we have

no participation as extensions of Christ then why is there the possibility of warfare? Indeed, if Jesus even intended to do it all apart from us, instead of through us, then why has the church been in such terrible shape almost from the beginning? For if Christ is doing it all then is not that terrible result HIS DOING? No. Christ always intended to do a work IN HIS PEOPLE so that He might work through His people. But people have not allowed Him. THAT is why the church has fallen short of God's purpose for this age.

Don't misunderstand. God is GOING to get His purpose. But He is also going to allow many in the church to miss that purpose, indeed, to corrupt His purpose. Allowing that will prove to all that without Christ as the power of God corruption is the only outcome.

Chapter 10

Intercession

Back to intercession from out of union with Christ -- what form ought intercession to take? Is intercession a continual pleading to the Father than He should help those for whom we pray? Does that sound like how Jesus intercedes?

Can we see a problem with that kind of understanding of intercession? If intercession is a continual pleading with the Father that He should help someone then this suggests that He isn't willing to do so in the first place – we have to beg Him to do so. That cannot be the Truth. So intercession is not a matter of trying to get God to act.

Intercession is a joining with Jesus Christ for what is already the will of God. It is a standing by faith with Christ that Jesus Christ might be personal Lord of those for whom we pray. It is a stand against the powers of darkness FOR and WITH Christ in this world.

There are many people, including professing believers, who don't know to pray for themselves, cannot pray for themselves, or maybe even will not pray for themselves. Does God just leave them to themselves until they get things figured out? No. He is always seeking to bring us to know Christ. But as part of our training as members of the Body of Christ God will draw us into a specific communion with Christ regarding them. We will be drawn into intercession and will join Christ in His stand FOR THEM.

As stated earlier, Christ does not need our help. We have nothing in ourselves by which we can bring to pass the will of God. But Christ does want us to be those through whom His power and Lordship can be executed. This is a fundamental function of the Body of Christ starting in this age, and extending into the ages to come.

The Enemy

The enemy is a defeated foe – defeated fully by Jesus Christ. But despite this fact, God allows this defeated enemy to try to bring corruption to believers and to the church. But since the enemy cannot simply attack believers at random, the real power of the enemy – as a defeated foe – is found in DECEPTION.

Deception is the only condition possible where Christ is not known. There are many people who are blind and ignorant to the Truth. There are others who have refused the Truth. Either way, both blindness and deception are the tools of the enemy.

The enemy can only blind or deceive a person if he has the ground upon which to work.

Ministry

As mentioned, we do not normally think of intercession as ministry. But we are seeing that it is as much ministry as is preaching or teaching. And if a person is a member of the Body of Christ they will certainly be drawn into the ministry of intercession by virtue of the fact that they are

already one with Christ. Intercession is what Christ is doing. Thus, it is what we will all do to one degree or another.

Each member of the Body of Christ encounters people and situations that call for prayer and intercession. As ambassador of Christ in this world – as those who have Christ within – we ought to seek God’s mind on these matters. And if we are walking with Christ that will happen more and more – and we may be drawn into the intercession of Christ regarding those situations. That is ministry.

Intercession is how we may contribute to the life of the Body of Christ. Not that we have life in ourselves to contribute, but to the extent that we are giving ourselves to the Lord for His will, we are becoming a channel to the rest of the Body through whom the Lord can minister. It is good to know that a person does not need to be significant in ministry, or have a position of ministry, to be a living extension of Jesus Christ.