

The Keys to the Kingdom are in Your Hands

Matthew 16:13-28 (especially verse 19)

When Jesus left he established a tradition that all Christians should follow.

Peter was given the keys but he failed to really establish a church of Jesus, because he clung to the Old testament ways with James, the brother of Christ. They insisted that salvation was only for those who were circumcised and they practiced the Hebraic tradition.

Paul's religion was about Jesus because he never knew the man Jesus, and therefore Jesus to him seemed not human but supernatural. Jesus was the holy Godhead who could appear out of nowhere and do miracles. Christ never married; so women were separated from men. Since the mainstream of Christianity came from Paul, the human character, the sweet qualities of a God-centered man, were not taught so much as the supernatural, spiritual aspects of Christ. Christ the man was de-emphasized and therefore Christianity began to look to the after-life for solutions and salvation.

If Peter had been successful and had united with Paul's zeal, Christianity would have evolved into more of a religion of Jesus, practicing the daily life patterns of a heavenly man.

"I have many things to tell you..." But Jesus couldn't, because the people were not ready and there was no basis for understanding.

There is a history of struggle, war, factionalism, corruption, indulgences, and denominationalism due to the original split between Peter and Paul.

What are the keys?

The words of Jesus, and also his lifestyle. This is what is lacking in Christianity today. Our failure to live as Jesus did. Why was he human? So we could believe and have faith in ourselves. Matthew 5:28 – "Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect." Be perfect means to be perfect in loving and serving our fellow man.

BELIEVE: Stories of healing from belief. Just by touching the hem...

FOLLOW: Be fishers of men. Matthew was a tax collector. Mary Magdalene. Jesus collected those who would follow. We must follow, do as he did, go where he goes, speak as he speaks, be the shadow of Christ.

OBEY: We must be as a child and trust him, do whatever he asks. We can discover so many Christ's "opinions" through prayer.

LOVE: Love all those that Christ loved. Don't harbor resentment, don't exploit, misuse or hurt; be kind and patient, be a teacher to others and an example of Christ's lifestyle. This is love.

1. Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, to show how we should be to one another, to come down under others, care for them humbly, serve them, not thinking "I am about others"; no matter my position, my greatness, I can come down to the lowest point, the dirtiest point, and serve my brothers and sisters, God's precious children.
2. Jesus got angry and threw out the money changers from the temple. We should never hesitate to speak out for righteousness, even if we become unpopular. Never hesitate to defend God, God's side. "The truth shall set you free," but there must be someone who is brave enough to speak out, no matter the odds, the result, the criticism, the opposition. A person of principle, who is sustained by his faith rather than by the support of his friends, is a Christ-like person.
3. Jesus preached openly. Neither rocks nor stones deterred him. His life was in danger (John 7:1, 10-39, etc.). Many disciples lost their lives; Christians throughout history were tortured, crucified, but they gave the word openly. Today, we must sacrifice our comfort, our own self, to go out of our way to witness and move the hearts of others to God.

"Deny yourselves, take up the cross and follow me. Whoever would save his life will lose it. Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." Matthew 1:24.

Live a public, Christ-like life without restraint and the keys to the Kingdom will be in your hands and in your heart.

"The kingdom is within you."