

Lord's Day 31

Heidelberg Catechism

The Second Part – Of Man's Deliverance

Question 83

What are the keys of the kingdom of heaven?¹

Answer

The preaching of the holy gospel, and Christian discipline,² or excommunication out of the Christian church;³ by these two, the kingdom of heaven is opened to believers, and shut against unbelievers.

Question 84

How is the kingdom of heaven opened and shut by the preaching of the holy gospel?

Answer

Thus: when according to the command of Christ⁴ it is declared and publicly testified to all and every believer, that, whenever they receive the promise of the gospel by a true faith, all their sins are really forgiven them of God, for the sake of Christ's merits;⁵ and on the contrary, when it is declared and testified to all unbelievers, and such as do not sincerely repent, that they stand exposed to the wrath of God and eternal condemnation, so long as they are unconverted;⁶ according to which testimony of the gospel God will judge them, both in this and in the life to come.

(Continued...)

Rom. 2:13–17

(For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel. Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,

1 Matt. 16:19

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.

2 John 20:23

Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

3 Matt. 18:15–18

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

4 Matt. 28:19

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

5 John 3:18

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

John 3:36

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

Mark 16:16

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

6 2 Thes. 1:7–9

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

John 20:21–23

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

Matt. 16:19

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.

Rom. 2:2

But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

Question 85

How is the kingdom of heaven shut and opened by Christian discipline?

Answer

Thus: when according to the command of Christ,⁷ those who under the name of Christians maintain doctrines, or practices inconsistent therewith,⁸ and will not, after having been often brotherly admonished, renounce their errors and wicked course of life, are complained of to the church,⁹ or to those who are thereunto appointed by the church;¹⁰ and if they despise their admonition, are by them forbidden the use of the sacraments;¹¹ whereby they are excluded from the Christian church, and by God Himself from the kingdom of Christ; and when they promise and show real amendment, are again received as members of Christ and His church.¹²

7 Matt. 18:15

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

8 1 Cor. 5:11, 12

But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?

9 Matt. 18:15–18

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

10 Rom. 12:7–9

Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

1 Cor. 12:28

And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

1 Tim. 5:17

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

2 Thes. 3:14

And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

11 Matt. 18:17

And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

1 Cor. 5:3–5

For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

12 2 Cor. 2:6–8

Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.

2 Cor. 2:10, 11

To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ; Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

Luke 15:18

I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,