

# Matthew 18:18-20

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*Jesus reminds the disciples that they have been granted the keys of heaven to call upon God's power to work in them as they proclaim His kingdom on earth, and they have the capacity to redeem things on earth for the kingdom in heaven. Jesus promises that His Father will grant them whatever they ask if even two followers ask and agree.*

The parallel gospel account of this teaching is found in Matthew 16:19.

Jesus taught His disciples how to be great. He taught them to serve and highly regard little ones. He taught them how to restore fellow heirs of the kingdom who were stumbling into sin. And as He did these things Jesus had empowered His disciples with tremendous authority to serve within His kingdom. Now He was about to equip them with the keys to His kingdom and the blessings of heaven.

Jesus often promised and granted kingdom authority to His disciples as they worked to live out His kingdom principles on earth (Matthew 5:3; 13:11-12; 16:19; 21:21-22; 28:18-20).

Jesus began by appealing to none other than His personal divine and messianic authority to support what He was about to say. He said *Truly I say to you* to show the disciples that what He was about to say came from Him and was not based on what some earlier Rabbi or scribe had said.

Jesus equipped His disciples to carry out their kingdom work with parallel abilities, *Whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.*

This equipping given to all His disciples were exactly what Jesus told Peter after He told the fisherman that he would be given the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”  
(Matthew 16:19)

The promises were an explanation of what Peter, and now the disciples, could do with those keys. In essence, Jesus was giving the keys of the kingdom or kingdom authority to all of His disciples. All of Jesus's disciples had the same kind of God-granted authority as Peter was given. The authority Jesus gave to Peter in Matthew 16:9, was not limited only to Peter. Jesus empowered all of His disciples with similar kingdom authority. And He expected them to use their authority and abilities well (Matthew 28:18-20).

Keys lock and unlock things. Another way of saying this is keys *bind* and *loose*. Within this context to *bind* something means to lock it up for safe keeping; and to *loose* something means to unlock it from safe keeping in order to use it.

The first ability Jesus explained to His disciples was *whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven*.

The disciples could *bind*, lock, or invest things *on earth* and redeem them *in* the kingdom of *heaven*. In other words, the moments; the resources; the actions that the disciples *bind* and dedicate to God in this life *on earth shall have been bound* and saved *in* the kingdom of *heaven*. This may mean that *whatever* of the disciples do for the kingdom *on earth* will be a part of their reward in *heaven* as Jesus taught His disciples in His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:1-4; 6:5-7, 6:16-18).

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”  
(Matthew 6:19-21)

But at the same time *whatever* things the disciples *bind on earth* God will redeem as a blessing to everyone *in* the kingdom *heaven*, so that the disciples do not only sow and reap for the benefit of themselves (2 Corinthians 9:8-15). When we obey God and follow Christ’s example of serving others God uses our behavior and actions to enrich His kingdom. Jesus is reminding His disciples that they will be granted the authority of the kingdom. And with it, the awesome calling and responsibility to live *on earth* in such a way that it will bless others for all eternity.

The second ability Jesus explained to His disciples was *whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven*. Just as *keys* can bind and lock things away for safe keeping, they can also be used to unlock things for use now. *Jesus* was reminding the disciples that they could use the keys of the kingdom to access *heaven’s* abundant store houses. They could loosen *heaven’s* goods *on earth*. *Heaven* would equip and provide for *whatever* kingdom needs the disciples had *on earth*.

Consider what *Jesus* taught *His disciples* on *His* Sermon on the Mount.

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!”  
(Matthew 7:7-11)

In making the disciples these promises, Jesus was telling them they would have access to whatever they needed from *heaven* to accomplish God's will on earth. And that their acts of love and service *on earth* would have eternal significance *in heaven*.

Jesus *again* drew upon His messianic and divine authority to elaborate on what He had just told His disciples—*again I say to you*. He told them *if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven*.

This is a remarkable promise.

*If two disciples agree about anything*, that is, *if* they are united in the Spirit about what they need *on earth* to faithfully accomplish the kingdom task God has assigned them, *they may ask* God for what they *agree* about. And Jesus said *if they agree and ask* for these things, *it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven*. God in Heaven, Jesus's *Father* will see that they are given what *they agree and ask* for.

The Father is eager to give good gifts to His children (Matthew 7:7-11; James 1:17). He provides everything they need to accomplish what He expects (Matthew 25:14-30). As a good Father He equips them with the things they need to fulfill the mission (Matthew 10:19-20; John 14:16-17; Acts 1:8; 2 Timothy 2:15) and walk in the works He has prepared for them (Ephesians 2:10.)

Jesus continued to explain this promise. *For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst*. Though each individual has his own cross to bear, and is personally accountable for his faithfulness, kingdom life is rarely, if ever, intended to consist only of private affairs or solo missions. Every believer is expected to remain in constant fellowship with Jesus at all times (I John 1:5-9). But in addition to walking by faith in the Spirit, we are also to walk in fellowship with one another. We are to be united in Christ with fellow believers (Ephesians 4:1-3); to use our gifts to serve one another (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:11-13); and to encourage and stir one another to love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Jesus promises to be present and among His followers *where* and whenever *two or three* of them *have gathered together in His name*. *Gathering in His name* means to worship God, seek or accomplish His will *together* with other believers. Jesus does not make this promise to be with them if believers *have gathered together* for another purpose. He has to be the reason *they have gathered* for this promise to apply. Since these two or three are *gathered together in His name*, they would only be seeking things consistent with His kingdom. God will then work through His people, to accomplish His will. What is happening *on earth* will be fully in sync with all that is transpiring in *heaven*.

The word translated *gathered* has the Greek root "sunago," from which we get the word synagogue. And, in fact, when we see the English word "synagogue" in scripture, it is a translation of the Greek word "synagogue." Just like the word "church," it refers to an assembling of called-out-ones. In this sense, any gathering of two or more believers is "church" when they are *gathered* in unity.

Of course, God is always *there* with us *in* our *midst* even, when we are alone (Psalm 139:7). But this promise related to our gathering together is an extra blessing that followers of Jesus can take comfort in. God's presence is even more tangible when we are united with other believers in Jesus' *name*. Perhaps Jesus made this promise as a way of foreshadowing the coming and indwelling of the Holy Spirit inside every believer (John 16:5-13; Acts 1:8, 2:1-4; Acts 15:8; I Corinthians 6:19). Because each believer has God with them, they carry God's presence with them wherever they go.

As followers of Jesus the Messiah, His disciples are literally promised the presence and power of God wherever they go.

### **Biblical Text**

**Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.**