

# SESSION 5

## PETER AND THE KEYS: THE PRIMACY OF THE CHURCH

### INTRODUCTION

In our fifth session, we continue our look at a pivotal point in the life of Peter and in the life of the Church. In our last session, Jesus changed Peter's name and stated that on the rock of Peter he would build his Church. Jesus' next words appoint Peter as *ha al bayyit*—Jesus' prime minister. With this appointment Peter is given "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" and the authority to "bind and loose."

The "keys of the kingdom" provide the key to understanding Peter's role in the Church founded upon him. The imagery of the keys goes back to the Old Testament and the office of the prime minister in the Davidic kingdom. Jesus is restoring and perfecting both the kingdom and its offices.



### CONNECT

First review the last session with your group. Can anyone recite the Memory Verse without assistance? Otherwiwe, look it up (Matthew 16:18) from last week (page 68) and recite it as a group. Then bring up any highlights the group may have regarding the COMMIT section from last session.

1. What items do you have on your key chain right now? What are the functions of keys in your daily life?  
*Keys allow us access to our homes and offices, allow us to drive our cars, etc. If we give a copy of our keys to someone else, it implies that we trust that person to care for the things to which we have given access. In addition to keys, many people have some personal identifier on their key chain that tells something about their job, hobby, or interests. Some examples might include: saint medal, decoration made by a child, etc. In this lesson, Jesus will give Peter a set of keys, and in doing so Jesus will entrust his authority to Peter and identify Peter's office.*
2. Have you ever felt overwhelmed by the expectations of others? What helped you move forward and fulfill your responsibilities?  
*Answers will vary; some examples are a new position at work, becoming a parent for the first time, being asked to teach a religious ed class, etc. Recalling previous success often helps us move forward in new situations. Additionally, help may come in the form of encouragement from a friend or coworker, prayers offered by someone, etc. With Jesus giving the keys of the kingdom to Peter, Peter goes from fisherman to prime minister. The weight of this new responsibility must have been somewhat overwhelming for Peter.*

3. If you had a private audience with the Pope, the successor to Peter, what would you say?

*Answers to this question will vary. We have studied Peter for the past four sessions, and in the Pope we have a successor of Peter teaching and guiding us as Peter taught and guided the early Church.*



*Play the video segment, which will last approximately 45 minutes. The Study Guide provides participants with a brief outline of the topics covered in the video teaching.*



## DISCUSS

*Following are suggested answers to the DISCUSS questions.*

1. According to Dr. Gray, what kind of authority is Jesus giving to Peter by handing him the keys of the kingdom in Matthew 16:19?  
*Many people read Matthew 16:19 as merely a gift of spiritual authority, but in his teaching Dr. Gray says that Jesus is giving Peter heavenly authority "on earth." Peter has kingdom authority to act on behalf of the King, to oversee the affairs of the kingdom, to govern in the King's absence, etc.*
2. What was the first-century understanding of the phrase "binding and loosing"? How does this apply to us today?  
*It meant complete royal authority to arrest or pardon. Today this applies to us as the Church's authority to forgive sins and to excommunicate or restore to communion.*
3. When Jesus gives Peter the keys to the kingdom, he is taking another step in reestablishing the Davidic kingdom. What kingdom office does Jesus give Peter? What light does this shed on the role of the Popes?  
*Jesus makes Peter the prime minister. This tells us that the Popes are administrators of the kingdom, not just spiritual leaders. They have real authority directly from Jesus. Their job is to point us to the King as they govern the kingdom on his behalf.*
4. Why does Jesus warn his disciples not to reveal that he is the long-awaited messiah?  
*Because it is not yet time for Jesus to die. Identifying Jesus as messiah also identifies him as king and would place him in direct competition with Caesar, and Rome's response would be fast and furious. We see this later when Jesus is publicly proclaimed as King during his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, within a week he ends up dead.*
5. When Jesus rebukes Peter in Matthew 16, he says, "Get behind me, Satan." What does the word **satan** mean in Hebrew? What is Jesus telling Peter? Are there times in your life when Jesus might have reproached you with the same words?  
*Satan means "adversary." Jesus is telling Peter to stop opposing God's plan for him. Peter needs to follow Jesus instead of trying to direct him. Peter needs to return to the proper relationship between King and prime minister. Answers to the second part will vary.*



# COMMIT

*Following are suggested answers to questions in the daily COMMIT reflections.*

## COMMIT DAY 1 – HA AL BAYYIT: OVER THE HOUSE

*Participants will learn more about ha al bayyit or “the one over the house.”*

Who is in charge in your household, or who is in charge over various areas of your household? What are some of the responsibilities of that person?

*Personal answers from each participant.*

Read David’s prayer at the coronation of his son Solomon in 1 Chronicles 29:10-13.

To whom does Israel belong? Based on this reading, how would a first-century Jew understand the phrase “the Kingdom of God”?

1 Chronicles 29:10-12 – “Therefore David blessed the LORD in the presence of all the assembly; and David said: ‘Blessed art thou, O LORD, **the God of Israel our father**, for ever and ever. Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; **for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom**, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from thee, and thou rulest over all. In thy hand are power and might; and in thy hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.’” (emphasis added)

*A first-century Jew would understand that the kingdom had a familial identity, with God as the Father of the family.*

To get a picture of the office of *ha al bayyit* in the ancient world, look up the following passages. Who is named in each of these verses? What authority is given to them? (Emphasis added to help answer questions.)

Genesis 41:41 – “And Pharaoh said to **Joseph**, ‘Behold, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.’ Joseph is given authority over Egypt.

Numbers 12:7 – “Not so, with my servant **Moses**; he is entrusted with all my house.”

*Moses is given authority over the family of God, the people of Israel.*

Luke 12:42 – “And the Lord said, ‘Who then is the **faithful and wise steward**, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time?’ The steward is given authority over the household of the Master.

Now read the story of Joseph in Genesis 39–41. Joseph was *ha al bayyit* first over Potiphar’s house and, later, over Pharaoh’s entire kingdom. Make note of his duties and authority as they are described in the text.

*Some of the duties and authority are noted in the verses below:*

Genesis 39:4 – “He made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had.”

Genesis 39:5 – “...all that he had, in house and field.”

Genesis 39:6 – “So he left all that he had in Joseph’s charge; and having him he had no concern for anything but the food which he ate.”

Genesis 39:22 – “...committed to Joseph’s care all the prisoners who were in the prison; and whatever was done there, he was the doer of it.”

Genesis 41:40 – *“You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command; only as regards the throne will I be greater than you.”*

Genesis 41:44 – *“...without your consent no man shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.”*

Genesis 41:48 – *“...he gathered up all the food...”*

Genesis 41:49 – *“And Joseph stored up grain in great abundance, like the sand of the sea...”*

Genesis 41:56 – *“...Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold to the Egyptians...”*

In light of the ancient office of *ha al bayyit*, what kind of authority does Jesus give to Peter in Matthew 16? *Jesus gives Peter authority over the whole household/family of God, authority to take care of the people and make sure their needs are met, authority to act on behalf of the King, etc.*

What parallels do you see between the story of Joseph and the office of Peter and his successors, the Popes? *Both have authority to make laws, both are expected to meet the needs of the people, both are faithful servants, both speak God’s words to others, etc.*



## COMMIT DAY 2 – HA AL BAYYIT IN THE DAVIDIC KINGDOM

*Participants will explore the specifics of the office of ha al bayyit in the Davidic kingdom and how that sheds light on Peter’s office.*

Read 2 Kings 15:1-7. What happens to Azariah? What does Jotham do while he is “over the household”? *Azariah gets leprosy and has to live in a separate house because he is unclean. While Azariah is absent, his son Jotham “governs the people” as the prime minister.*

Based on this passage, what is the ultimate duty of the prime minister? *The prime minister’s duty is to govern and act on the king’s behalf when the king is absent, or incapable to rule.*

Read Isaiah 22:15-23. What are the symbols of the authority of *ha al bayyit*? *Robe, belt (girdle), key, throne*

What kind of relationship does the prime minister have with the citizens of the kingdom? *He will be a father to them.*

How is his authority summarized? *He will open and shut, and no one can change what he does.*

Read John 13:33–14:4. For what is Jesus preparing his disciples? *For his absence when he goes to the Father.*

Remember Azariah and Jotham? Why will Peter’s office be so important after Jesus’ ascension? *Because the prime minister needs to govern in the king’s absence.*

According to Acts 1:20, how does Peter refer to the place of Judas?

Acts 1:20 – “...His **office** let another take.” (*emphasis added*)

How do the Apostles replace Judas’ position according to Acts 1:26?

Acts 1:26 – “And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and **he was enrolled with the eleven apostles.**” (*emphasis added*)

How does Isaiah 22:19 refer to the place of the prime minister?

Isaiah 22:19 – “I will thrust you from your **office**, and you will be cast down from your station.” (*emphasis added*).

Review the symbols and description of the prime minister’s authority that you listed above. Nearly two millennia after Peter, and close to 2,700 years after Shebna and Eliakim, which parts of Isaiah 22 still apply to the successors of St. Peter?

*Robe and belt (special vestments to identify him), keys, throne (chair/cathedral)*

What authority has God given you? If you had to design your own coat of arms with symbols of your authority and the role God is calling you to fulfill, what would it look like? Create your coat of arms in the space provided.

*Answers will vary—maybe children, students, family, coworkers, a garden, a business or department, etc. Symbols for the coat of arms will vary by participant.*



## COMMIT DAY 3 – BINDING, LOOSING, AND THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

*Participants will take a closer look at binding, loosing, and the forgiveness of sins.*

Who is in need of healing?

*A paralytic*

In Matthew 9:2, what words does Jesus say to the man?

*“Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven.”*

Why were the scribes and Pharisees bothered by Jesus’ words (see Matthew 9:3)?

*They feel that Jesus is blaspheming.*

Look up St. Luke’s version of this story. What extra detail is given to explain why the scribes and Pharisees don’t like Jesus words in Luke 5:21?

*St. Luke states specifically the reason they think Jesus is blaspheming: “Who can forgive sins but God only?”*

On what day does this take place? (Review the earlier part of the chapter if necessary.)

*“On the evening of that day, the first day of the week,” the evening of the Resurrection*

What are Jesus’ first words to the Apostles? Why?

*“Peace be with you.” According to John 20:19, the Apostles are afraid, so he wants to still their hearts. But additionally, Christ’s peace is also the fruit of the forgiveness of sins.*

Jesus then shows them his hands and feet. Why?

*The last time the Apostles saw Jesus, he was dead. The Apostles are incredulous to see Jesus now alive, so showing them his hands and feet is a way of proving that he is truly Jesus.*

What does Jesus give the Apostles before giving them the gift of the forgiveness of sins?

*"He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"*

What stops you from going to Confession (pride, fear, embarrassment)?

*Personal responses from participants.*



## COMMIT DAY 4 – PETER'S UNDERSTANDING OF JESUS AS SUFFERING MESSIAH

*Participants will reflect on the necessity of Jesus' suffering and the way Peter's understanding changes over time.*

Go back to Matthew 16:21-23. What does Jesus say that Peter finds so shocking?

*That Jesus must suffer and be killed in Jerusalem.*

Why do you think Peter reacts the way he does?

*Answers may include: his expectations were for a glorious revolution, he doesn't want his friend and teacher to suffer, etc.*

Look up Ezra 4:1-5 to shed some light on this conversation. Who are the adversaries of the people of Judah and Benjamin?

*The adversaries were descendants of the five nations brought into the Northern Kingdom of Israel by the king of Assyria when Israel was conquered.*

How do they react when the Jews refuse to let them help rebuild the Temple?

*They threaten the Jews and try to turn the kings of Babylon against them. They do everything they can to stop the rebuilding of the Temple.*

What similarities are there between the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin in Ezra 4 and Peter's rebuke of Jesus in Matthew 16?

*In both passages someone is opposing God's plan because of his or her own views of how things should go.*

Spend some time reading and reflecting on how each of the following chapters apply to Jesus, the suffering Messiah.

Isaiah 42:1-7—God's servant who brings justice to the nations

Isaiah 49:1-6—For the Lord formed me as his servant from the womb

Isaiah 50:4-9—Salvation through the suffering of God's servant

Isaiah 52:13-53:12—The suffering of God's servant will be the salvation of many

*Answers will vary based on personal reflections.*



## COMMIT DAY 5 – TRUTH AND BEAUTY

*Participants will reflect on "Delivering the Keys to Saint Peter," Pietro Perugino, AD 1481-1483, Sistine Chapel.*

What is Peter's posture in receiving the keys?

*Peter, with his hand over his heart, kneels before Jesus showing both his recognition of Jesus as Lord, but also showing Peter's humility.*

What gifts has God given you? How are you called to use these gifts?

*Personal answers from each participant.*

How is Peter's posture a model for receiving the gifts God bestows in each of our lives?

*Peter's humility is a reminder of how we should receive God's gifts. Our talents and strengths are gifts from God to be used in humility for the building up of the Church and our brothers and sisters (see 1 Corinthians 14:3, 12). Peter's hand over his heart seems to indicate the love by which he accepts the responsibility to care for and direct Christ's Church, and recalls St. Paul's words, "Let all that you do be done in love" (1 Corinthians 16:14).*

Take a close look at the keys. What color are they?

*There are two keys: one gold and one silver.*

Take a closer look. How are the Apostles distinguished from the other individuals?

*The Apostles are each draped in flowing robes like Jesus, but of various colors. In addition, Jesus and the Apostles have a faint circular halo of stars resting over each of their heads. The individuals from the time of the Renaissance are portrayed in dress of the time with stockings and jerkins (short fitted jackets), or more fitted robes. These individuals also have hats and shoes (as compared to the Apostles who have halos and are barefooted or wearing sandals). Perugino is thought to be on the right side of the picture along with the architect of the Sistine Chapel.*

Among the other Apostles, Judas alone can be clearly identified. How?

*Judas is the fifth Apostle to the left of Jesus, and is pictured with his right hand reaching into the money purse (John 12:6, 13:29).*

Why do you think Solomon's Temple stands as the backdrop for Jesus giving the keys to Peter?

*Because Jesus is the new Solomon, a new wise man building a house on a foundation of rock. Peter is the foundation stone of the new Temple.*

What did Jesus predict regarding the Temple in Matthew 24:1-2? And what did he intend to build instead (see Matthew 16:18)?

*Matthew 24:1-2 – "Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. But he answered them, 'You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down.'"*

*Matthew 16:18 – "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it."*

*Jesus predicted the destruction of the Temple, and said he would build the Church on the rock of Peter.*

## NOTES

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.