

Doctrine of the Key

1. A literal key is an instrument for fastening a lock.
2. The word “key” is used in both a literal and a figurative way in Scripture.
 - Literal. *Judges 3:24 When he was gone out, his servants came; and when they saw that, behold, the doors of the parlour were locked, they said, Surely he covereth his feet in his summer chamber. 25 And they tarried till they were ashamed: and, behold, he opened not the doors of the parlour; therefore they took a key, and opened them: and, behold, their lord was fallen down dead on the earth.*
 - Figurative. *Matthew 16:18 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. 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.*
3. Because a key has the power to open, or to exclude from, all the treasures of a city or house, the key is often used in Scripture as a symbol of power and authority, whether in church or state.
4. Isaiah speaks of the key of David being given to Eliakim as the most influential adviser of the king. The power of the keys consisted not only in the supervision of the royal chambers, but also in deciding who was, and who was, not to be received into the king's service.
 - *Isaiah 22:22 And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.*
5. With reference to the administration of the house of David in a spiritual sense, our Lord is represented as having the key of David.
 - *Revelation 3:7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;*
6. Because Christ has the authority to receive, and exclude whom He pleases, He has the power to commit to His church, in general, and to Peter in particular, the keys of the kingdom.
 - *Matthew 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.*
 - *Matthew 18:18 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.*

7. "The key of knowledge" of spiritual things is the Scriptures, which the scribes reserved exclusively for themselves.

- *Luke 11:52 Woe unto you, lawyers! For ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.*

“The figure used by our Lord is that of knowledge being a temple into which the scribes should have led the people, but whose gate they closed, and holding the key with jealous care, even their commentaries hiding rather than revealing knowledge” (Unger’s Bible Dictionary).