

Lord's Day 31

83. Q. What are the keys of the kingdom of heaven?

- A. The preaching of the holy gospel
and church discipline.
By these two the kingdom of heaven
is opened to believers
and closed to unbelievers.

1. Mt 16:19; Jn 20:21-23.

84. Q. How is the kingdom of heaven
opened and closed
by the preaching of the gospel?

- A. According to the command of Christ,
the kingdom of heaven is opened
when it is proclaimed and publicly testified
to each and every believer
that God has really forgiven
all their sins
for the sake of Christ's merits,
as often as they by true faith
accept the promise of the gospel.
The kingdom of heaven is closed
when it is proclaimed and testified
to all unbelievers and hypocrites
that the wrath of God
and eternal condemnation
rest on them
as long as they do not repent.
According to this testimony of the gospel,
God will judge
both in this life
and in the life to come.

1. Mt 16:19; Jn 3:31-36; 20:21-23.

85. Q. How is the kingdom of heaven
closed and opened
by church discipline?

- A. According to the command of Christ,
people who call themselves Christians
but show themselves to be un-christian
in doctrine or life
are first repeatedly admonished
in a brotherly manner.
If they do not give up
their errors or wickedness,
they are reported to the church,
that is, to the elders.
If they do not heed
also their admonitions,
they are forbidden the use of the sacraments,
and they are excluded by the elders
from the Christian congregation,
and by God himself
from the kingdom of Christ.
They are again received
as members of Christ
and of the church
when they promise and show
real amendment.

1. Mt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5:3-5; 11-13; 2 Thess 3:14, 15.

2. Lk 15:20-24; 2 Cor 2:6-11.

