

Worship & Word Sunday

Echo Church | Year 1 Week 3 | January 18, 2026 | Rich Saunders Jr. |
"Built to Prevail" | Matthew 16:17-19 NKJV

17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

19 And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

BIG IDEA (Anchor Truth): The Church does not write heaven's laws—the Church enforces heaven's rulings on earth.

INTRODUCTION

We need to contextualize the atmosphere in which Jesus is speaking. This isn't a comfortable conference room; this is Caesarea Philippi. It is a region saturated with pagan worship, a place known as the "gates of hell," filled with false gods, false power, and false authority.

In this hostile environment, Jesus does something radical. He doesn't hand his disciples weapons for a physical revolution; He hands them keys for a spiritual administration. This moment is the definitive blueprint for how authority works, how spiritual warfare functions, and how the Church is meant to operate.

We often confuse activity with authority, but Jesus is showing us that true power isn't about what we can invent, but what we can enforce.

Before authority is exercised, revelation must be received.

POINT 1: Revelation Unlocks Real Authority (v.17)

"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."

Notice the source of Peter's confession. It wasn't a product of his education, his cultural background, or a group consensus. He didn't poll the other disciples. This knowledge was downloaded directly from the Father.

This establishes a Kingdom precedent: true authority is always rooted in revelation, never just information. You can have a degree and lack dominion. You can have facts and lack faith. Why? Because authority starts when you see what God sees.

Supporting Scriptures:

- 1 Corinthians 2:9–10: The Spirit reveals the deep things of God.
- John 6:44: No one comes unless the Father draws them.
- Galatians 1:11–12: Paul's gospel came by revelation of Jesus Christ.

God does not entrust authority to opinion—He entrusts it to revelation.

The danger for the modern Church is that we often have the right language but no power. We have the jargon but not the jurisdiction. When we try to operate without revelation, authority devolves into control or passivity. We need fresh sight to have fresh strength.

Revelation establishes identity, and identity determines assignment.

POINT 2: We're Not a Club—We're a Kingdom Force (v.18)

"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

When Jesus says "Church," He uses the word ekklesia. He isn't talking about a social club, a weekly gathering, or a personality-driven movement. An ekklesia was a governing assembly called out to represent the authority of the King in a specific territory. We aren't here just to meet; we are here to manage.

Supporting Scriptures:

- Daniel 7:27: The kingdom and dominion given to the people of the saints of the Most High.
- Ephesians 1:22–23: Christ is head over all things to the church.
- 1 Peter 2:9: A royal priesthood, a holy nation.

Explanation of "Gates of Hades":

We often view this verse defensively, as if we are huddled in a bunker hoping hell doesn't get in. But gates are defensive structures. If the gates of Hades won't prevail, it means the Church is the one moving! Hell is reacting; the Church is advancing. We advance by assignment, not by aggression.

Stop interpreting resistance as a sign to retreat. In the Kingdom, opposition is often the confirmation of your correct positioning. If the enemy isn't worried about you, he wouldn't be blocking you.

If the Church is a Kingdom institution, it must operate with Kingdom authority.

POINT 3: Unlocking the Power: (v.19a)

"And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven..."

Keys are specific. They represent access, stewardship, and responsibility. But most importantly, keys do not belong to the servant—they belong to the King. The servant just holds them. The moment the servant tries to use the keys for personal gain, it becomes theft. We are stewards of authority, not owners of it.

Supporting Scriptures:

- Isaiah 22:22: The key of the house of David; opening what no one can shut.
- Matthew 28:18–20: All authority is given to Christ; therefore, go.
- John 20:21: As the Father sent Me, I send you.

Law Enforcement Analogy:

Think of a police officer. An officer doesn't write the laws; the legislature does. An officer doesn't decide the speed limit; the state does. The officer simply enforces what has already been established by a higher authority.

- God is the Lawgiver.
- Christ is the King with all authority.
- The Church is the authorized enforcement agency on earth.

We don't get to change the laws because we don't like them. We are authorized, not inventive.

Enforcement without submission becomes abuse. Submission without enforcement becomes impotence. We need the balance.

Keys are useless without understanding how they function.

POINT 4: Locked In and Lined Up: Syncing Earth with Heaven (v.19b)

"...and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

"Binding" and "loosing" aren't magical incantations. They are legal terms. To bind means to forbid; to loose means to permit. The grammar here implies that we are binding on earth what has already been bound in heaven. We are bringing earth into alignment with heaven's decisions.

Supporting Scriptures:

- Matthew 6:10: Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
- John 20:23: Remitting and retaining sins.
- 2 Corinthians 10:3–5: Bringing every thought into captivity.

Clarification:

- What this is NOT: It is not controlling people, commanding heaven to do our bidding, or shouting at demons without discernment.

- What this IS: Declaring truth, enforcing righteousness, and aligning our reality with God's legality.

"We don't command heaven—we come into agreement with it."

POINT 5: Fighting From the Verdict

Look closely at the text. Jesus didn't fight a physical battle with demons in this moment; He made a legal declaration. He established rights. Spiritual warfare is often a courtroom scene before it is a battlefield scene. You win in the courts of heaven before you see victory in the circumstances of earth.

Supporting Scriptures:

- Colossians 2:14–15: He wiped out the handwriting of requirements against us.
- Revelation 12:10–11: The accuser of the brethren is cast down.
- Luke 10:19: Authority to trample on serpents and scorpions.

Many battles persist in our lives because the Church is fighting emotionally instead of legislatively. We are crying out to God to do what He has already given us the authority to enforce. Victory is enforced, not earned.

WARNINGS AGAINST MISUSE OF AUTHORITY

We must steward this carefully.

1. Revelation without humility leads to pride. If you think you're special because you see it, you've missed the point.
2. Authority without love leads to damage. We are called to liberate people, not dominate them.
3. Keys without character lead to collapse. Your gift can take you where your character cannot keep you.

Supporting Scriptures: Romans 11:29, James 3:1.

CONCLUSION

The mission of the Church is not to create new legislation that fits our flesh or culture. Our mission is to speak what heaven is saying and do what heaven has already done. We are the enforcement agency of the Kingdom of God. When we operate in revelation, when we understand we are a governing body, and when we use the keys to align earth with heaven, hell cannot prevail.

Let's stop trying to invent a new way and start enforcing the Living Way. Seek revelation. Walk in authority. Align with heaven. And watch the gates of hell fall back.