

resurrection, which the Lord went on to predict in verse 21. It is composed of the people who are using these great truths in order to open the gates of the kingdom of heaven to all who will accept them by faith, and therefore will be saved through Jesus Christ. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, if this church keeps its emphasis upon the great central truths of the Scripture, and makes its primary activity one of showing individuals how they may be saved through Christ and born again into His kingdom.

Thus our passage also clearly shows the power and responsibility of the church. In verses 18 and 19 Jesus said:

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 now prevail against it. 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.

What a tremendous power and responsibility God has given to His church. Exerting His infinite creative power, God could simply have said, "Let these particular thousands of people be saved," and it would have been done. However, He did not choose to follow this procedure. It was His decision that those whom He has chosen should be saved by means of the Gospel, and that Christians should be His instruments in bringing to them the message that would loose them from the bonds that held them in captivity to sin.

The meaning of the phrase, "the gates of hell," is not obvious at first sight. Do we think of the gates of hell as an army that is fighting against the church? It would be a very strange figure for that. Do we think of the gates of hell as something that is threatening to overrun and destroy the church? Certainly it is true that Satan is constantly doing all he can to interfere with and wreck