

"BINDING AND LOOSING"

By Dr. Hoyt W. Allen, Jr."

Matt 16:13-20; 18:18

"Whatsoever you bind ..." (v.19) - The phrase "to bind" and "to loose" was often used by the Jews. It meant to prohibit and to permit. To bind a thing was to forbid it and to loose it, was to allow it to be done. Thus, they said about gathering wood on the Sabbath day, "The school of Shammei binds it", or forbids it; "the school of Hillel looses it", that is allows it. When Jesus gave this power to the apostles, he meant that whatsoever they forbade in the church should have divine authority; whatever they permitted, or commanded, should also have divine authority-that is, should be bound or loosed in heaven, or meet the endorsement of God. They were to be guided infallibly in the organization of the church by the teachings of Christ, and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

This does not refer to persons, but to things, "whatsoever," not "whosoever". It refers to rites and ceremonies in the church. Such of the Jewish customs as they should forbid were to be forbidden, and such as they thought proper to permit were to be allowed. Such rites as they should appoint in the church were to have the force of divine authority.

Accordingly, they commanded the Gentile converts to "abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood" (Acts 15:20); and, in general, they organized the church, and directed what was to be observed and what was to be avoided.

The rules laid down by them in the Book of Acts and in the letters, in connection with the teachings of the Savior as recorded in the gospels, constitute the only law binding on Christians in regard to the order of the church, and the rites and ceremonies to be observed in it. When the apostles proclaimed the "Great Commission", which Jesus gave as is recorded in Matthew 28:18-20 they were making something that was to be binding on the ears and hearts of those who would hear their preaching.

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