

## SESSION THREE

# The Keys of the House

*Isaiah 22:15-25; Matthew 16:19*

## PART ONE · LEADER PREPARATION GUIDE

### SESSION OVERVIEW

**Discovery Aim:** Participants discover with their own hands the Old Testament job posting behind the keys: the office of royal steward over the house of David, invested with robe, authority, fatherhood, and the key that opens and none shall shut. They find that the office had succession built into it, and that Jesus, the Davidic King, installed Peter in it.

**Catholic Touchstone:** The papacy as an office in the kingdom, not a personal honor. Christ, who holds the key of David forever (Revelation 3:7), delegates without abdicating: the pope is the steward and vicar of a living King, never his replacement (CCC 553; 881).

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Tonight is the summit of the study's first half, and its power depends entirely on discovery. The group opens the second sealed blank, then hunts Isaiah 22 live. Do not lecture this passage; deal it out and let them find "the key of the house of David" themselves. If you narrate it in advance you will have traded a thunderclap for a footnote.

The office in question: in the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, one officer stood next to the king, called the one "over the household," in Hebrew *'al ha-bayit*. He appears across the historical books: Ahishar over the household under Solomon (1 Kings 4:6), Obadiah under Ahab (1 Kings 18:3), and Eliakim under Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:18). He was the royal steward, the vizier: chief officer of the palace, administrator of the kingdom in the king's name, second only to the throne. Egypt ran on the same office; Joseph held it under Pharaoh: "you shall be over my house... only as regards the throne will I be greater than you" (Genesis 41:40), complete with the signet ring that let Joseph act with Pharaoh's authority.

Isaiah 22:15-25 is the only place in Scripture where we watch the office change hands, and it reads like an investiture rite. Shebna, the sitting steward, is deposed for pride (he carved himself a grand tomb). God announces his replacement: "I will call my servant Eliakim... I will clothe him with your robe, and will bind your girdle on him, and will commit your authority to his hand; and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem... And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open" (22:20-22).

Inventory the parallels to Matthew 16:19 with the group: a Davidic kingdom; a single officer under the king; a key as the emblem of the office; opening and shutting that none can reverse, exactly the register of binding and loosing that heaven ratifies. And the New Testament itself certifies half the connection: Revelation 3:7 quotes Isaiah 22:22 of the risen Christ, "who has the key of David, who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens," placing Isaiah's key squarely in Jesus' hands; the step from there to Peter's keys in Matthew 16 is an inference, but one the texts together powerfully invite. Christ owns the key eternally; at Caesarea Philippi he does what Davidic kings do with keys: he entrusts them to a steward. The pope is therefore the vicar of Christ, never his successor. Christ is alive; the steward serves a reigning King.

Succession is native to the passage, not imported by Catholics. The scene exists because the office is passing from one man to another: Shebna out, Eliakim in, the robe and key transferred. An office with insignia is precisely the kind of thing that outlives its holders; that is what makes it an office rather than a friendship. If Jesus hands Peter the steward's key, he is creating something meant to be handed on. (The full succession argument is Session Ten; tonight it only needs to be seen in the furniture of the text.)

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Two honest notes to keep the session from overreaching. First, the fatherhood line: the steward "shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (22:21). The title pope simply means papa, father, and it delights groups to find the steward already wearing it; but be accurate, the title's actual history runs through early Christian usage for bishops generally. The point is the office's paternal character, not an etymology. Second, verse 25: the oracle ends with the peg giving way, on the usual reading even Eliakim's. Stewards are judged too; the office never deifies the officeholder. That sober note is a feature, not a bug, and this study will lean on it at Session Nine.

## OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS AND FULFILLMENT

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**Genesis 41:40-44.** Joseph made vizier of Egypt: over Pharaoh's house, signet ring on his hand, all commands obeyed, greater than all but the throne. The steward pattern is older than Israel, and God's providence had already used it once to save his people through a suffering, exalted servant.

**1 Kings 4:6; 1 Kings 18:3; 2 Kings 18:18.** The office "over the household" as standing furniture of the Hebrew monarchies across centuries: Ahishar under Solomon and Eliakim under Hezekiah in the Davidic line of Judah, and Obadiah under Ahab in the northern kingdom of Israel. One king at a time, and one steward at a time.

**2 Samuel 7:12-16.** The Davidic covenant promises an everlasting house and throne. Gabriel tells Mary her Son receives exactly that throne (Luke 1:32-33). The kingdom Jesus proclaims is the restored kingdom of David, which is why its architecture, steward included, is Davidic architecture.

## VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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**St. Jerome** *Commentary on Isaiah, on chapter 22*

Jerome reads the key of the house of David laid on Eliakim's shoulder as a figure fulfilled in Christ, who declares in the Apocalypse that he himself holds the key of David, opening what none can shut. What the steward carried in figure and for a time, Jerome teaches, the King owns in fullness and forever.

#### VOICES OF THE CHURCH

**St. Ephrem the Syrian** *Homily 4.1, as long handed down under his name*

In this homily Christ addresses Simon directly: I have made you the foundation of the holy Church, and I have given you the keys of my kingdom. Ephrem's Syriac tradition, praying in a tongue next door to Jesus' own Aramaic, heard in Kepha's keys the full weight of a royal appointment: the treasures of the King entrusted to his chosen servant.

#### VOICES OF THE CHURCH

**St. Cyril of Jerusalem** *Catechetical Lectures*

Instructing catechumens in the mid-fourth century, Cyril calls Peter the chief and foremost of the apostles, the bearer of the keys of the kingdom of heaven. For Cyril this is simply the Church's plain memory, taught to beginners without argument: among the Twelve there is an order, and at its head stands the keybearer.

### CATECHISM CONNECTION

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**CCC 553** reads Matthew 16:19 through tonight's lens: the power of the keys designates authority to govern the house of God, and Jesus, the Good Shepherd, confirmed this mandate after his Resurrection.

**CCC 881** states the office plainly: the Lord made Simon alone, whom he named Peter, the rock of his Church, gave him the keys, and instituted him shepherd of the whole flock.

**CCC 552** completes last week's verse: Peter's mission is to keep the confessed faith from eclipse and to strengthen his brothers, the steward's service to the household in doctrinal form.

### THREAD WATCH

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**The Job Posting thread resolves tonight.** Open the second sealed blank before the hunt begins: who wrote Isaiah? Celebrate the hits, enjoy the misses (expect Daniel and Ezekiel votes), and make the moment ceremonial. The first blank, the fisherman's new job, stays sealed; three sessions remain before Session Six opens it.

**The Office thread plants tonight.** Succession is visible in the furniture of Isaiah 22: the office passes from Shebna to Eliakim. Name what the group sees, then park it; the full argument arrives at Session Ten with Acts 1:20 and the earliest Fathers. Do not spend Session Ten's ammunition tonight.

**The Failing Steward thread plants quietly.** Verse 25, Eliakim's peg giving way, is tonight's sober footnote. It matures at Session Nine, when Peter himself fails publicly after receiving the keys. If someone raises bad popes tonight, thank them sincerely and promise them Session Nine and Twelve by name.

## SESSION GOALS

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1.

Resolve the second sealed guess and let the group find Isaiah 22:22 with their own hands, unprompted.

2.

Reconstruct the royal steward's office from Scripture: over the household, second to the king, father to the city, keeper of the key.

3.

Certify the Matthew 16 connection from the New Testament itself via Revelation 3:7, and land the vicar-not-successor distinction.

4.

See succession and accountability already present in the office: Shebna out, Eliakim in, and even Eliakim's peg not eternal.

## TIME NOTE

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75 to 90 minutes. The hunt at Build 1 and 2 deserves unhurried time; budget fifteen minutes for it. If time runs short, cut Build 8 and compress the Joseph question (Build 6) to a leader mention. Never rush the discovery itself.

## PART TWO · DISCUSSION GUIDE

### Opening Prayer:

*Father, your Word hides treasures in plain sight and rewards those who search. Tonight, open what no one can shut. Show us the design you wrote centuries before Caesarea Philippi, and teach us to trust the King who plans his house so carefully. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## WIN · OPENING QUESTIONS

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1.

Who holds the keys where you work, or where you grew up? Not the owner: the person whose ring of keys meant real, daily authority. What did everyone understand about that person?

## 2.

Have you ever discovered something yourself, in a text, in nature, in math, that someone could have just told you? Why was finding it different?

### BUILD · INTO THE TEXT

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## 1.

LIVE DISCOVERY. Sealed sheets out. Open the second blank only: the prophet with the job posting. Go around and read your guesses aloud before anyone opens a Bible. Then: everyone turn to Isaiah 22:15-22 and read it silently. Raise your hand when you find the verse that connects to last week. Do not shout it out; let everyone get there.

#### ANSWER · share after the discussion

Verse 22: "And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open." A key, in David's kingdom, with opening and shutting that no one can reverse. The room should be buzzing; give the moment its space and honor the correct guesses ceremonially.

Now the group has earned the right to ask the real questions: who are these men, what is this job, and did Jesus mean this? The rest of the night answers them in order.

## 2.

Read 22:15-19 again, out loud this time. Who is Shebna, what is his title, and why is he being fired?

#### ANSWER · share after the discussion

Shebna is "over the household," *'al ha-bayit* in Hebrew: the royal steward of the house of David under King Hezekiah. His title is the office; his crime is pride, memorialized in stone: he has carved himself a magnificent tomb, "you who have hewn here a tomb for yourself." He treated the office as personal glory.

So God announces his removal in some of the most vivid firing language in Scripture: whirled away like a ball into a wide land. First lesson of the night, and it costs Catholics nothing to say it loudly: the steward serves the house. When he serves himself, God himself intervenes. Remember that; this study will need it later.

## 3.

Read 22:20-22, the investiture of Eliakim. Inventory it: list every single thing Eliakim receives, item by item, and what each one signifies.

#### ANSWER · share after the discussion

The robe and the girdle: vestments of office, transferred from his predecessor. "Your authority... committed to his hand": real governing power, delegated. "He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah": the steward's rule is paternal, not managerial. And the key of the

house of David on his shoulder, with the irreversible open-and-shut.

Notice the little delight hiding in the fatherhood line: the office is paternal by design, and the Christian name for Peter's successor, pope, simply means papa. The historical title grew up in early Christian usage, so hold the point lightly, but the resonance is real: the steward of the house was always meant to be a father in it, and verse 23 adds that he will be "a throne of honor to his father's house," a seat, which is what a see is.

#### 4.

Now the question the whole night turns on: line up Isaiah 22 next to Matthew 16:17-19 and count the parallels yourselves. How many can the group find?

##### **ANSWER · share after the discussion**

The setting: the kingdom of David, then and now, since Peter has just confessed Jesus as the Davidic Messiah, "the Christ." The structure: one officer under one king, singled out by name. The emblem: the key, and in Matthew, keys of the kingdom. The power: open and none shall shut, next to bind and loose ratified in heaven, the same register of irreversible official acts. Even the fatherhood note finds its echo in the office's later history.

This is why the scene at Caesarea Philippi would have rung Old Testament bells for Matthew's Jewish readers: a Davidic King, newly confessed, doing the one thing Davidic kings do with keys, appointing his steward over the house. Jesus did not reach for a random metaphor. He filled a standing office.

#### 5.

LIVE DISCOVERY. Does Scripture itself connect Isaiah's key to Jesus? Someone find and read Revelation 3:7, written by John near the end of the first century. What is the risen Jesus holding, and where does the language come from?

##### **ANSWER · share after the discussion**

"The holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens." It is Isaiah 22:22, quoted nearly verbatim, applied to the risen Christ. The New Testament itself certifies that this verse's key belongs to Jesus' kingdom. Revelation does not mention Peter; the link to Matthew 16 is our inference, but it is an inference standing on Scripture's own identification of whose key this is.

Put the two texts together and the geometry appears: Christ holds the key of David eternally (Revelation 3:7), and Christ gives the keys of the kingdom to Peter (Matthew 16:19). He delegates without abdicating, exactly the pattern of the royal steward's office in David's kingdom: the king owns, the steward carries. Which yields the most clarifying sentence of the night: the pope is not Christ's successor, because Christ is not dead. He is Peter's successor, and Christ's steward. The Church's own word is vicar: one who acts in the name of a living, reigning King.

#### 6.

LIVE DISCOVERY. The steward's office is even older than David. Someone find and read Genesis 41:40-44, Joseph before Pharaoh. What does Joseph receive, and what are the limits of it?

**ANSWER · share after the discussion**

"You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command; only as regards the throne will I be greater than you." Plus the signet ring, the power to act with Pharaoh's own authority, and all Egypt obeying. A steward with full delegated power and one absolute limit: the throne is not his.

God has used this office before: a beloved son, presumed lost, exalted to the right hand of the king, dispensing bread to a starving world. The typology runs deep, and it sets the permanent boundary of tonight's doctrine. The steward never becomes the king. Every Catholic claim about the papacy lives inside Joseph's sentence: only as regards the throne is the King greater.

**7.**

Now watch what the passage does that nobody told the prophecy to do: how did Eliakim get the office in the first place? What does the mere existence of this scene tell us about the *kind* of thing the office is?

**ANSWER · share after the discussion**

He got it by succession. The scene exists because the office is changing hands: Shebna out, Eliakim in, the same robe, the same authority, the same key transferred to new shoulders. Offices with insignia are, by nature, the kind of thing that outlives officeholders; that is exactly what distinguishes an office from a friendship or a personal charisma.

So when Jesus reaches for this office to define Peter's role, the succession question is not a Catholic afterthought smuggled in later; it is standing in the furniture of the source text. Whether and how the keys actually passed to successors is a claim we will test properly, from Acts and from the earliest Christian writers, at Session Ten. Tonight, simply notice: Jesus chose the one office in the Old Testament that we watch being handed on.

**DIG DEEPER · The peg that gave way**

The oracle ends darkly: "the peg that was fastened in a sure place will give way" (Isaiah 22:25). On the most common reading, following verse 24, where the whole weight of his father's house hangs on him, even Eliakim's peg gives way, though some interpreters refer the verse back to Shebna. Either way the lesson stands: stewards are mortal and judged. Scripture refuses to let the office deify the officeholder, and so does the Church: the steward carries the King's key with the King watching. Hold this verse in reserve. In a few weeks this study will stare straight at the failures of Peter himself, and at his successors' worst chapters, and tonight's sober footnote will turn out to be load-bearing.

**8.**

Step back and assemble the whole picture. In kingdom terms, using everything found tonight, what exactly did Jesus establish at Caesarea Philippi?

**ANSWER · share after the discussion**

The confessed Davidic King, standing before the rock of dead gods, announced the rebuilt assembly of God, named its foundation stone, and installed the steward of his house, keys and all, per the standing constitution of David's kingdom. Not a metaphor invented on the spot: an office filled, with a documented job description seven centuries old.

And because the King lives forever and holds the key of David eternally, his steward governs only in his name, a father to the household, second to the throne, judged by the King he serves. That is the Catholic doctrine of the papacy in one Old Testament passage, found tonight by this group with its own hands.

## SEND · TAKING IT WITH US

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### 1.

God wrote Peter's job description seven hundred years early. Where in your own life do you need to trust that God's designs run longer and deeper than what you can currently see?

### 2.

The steward is "a father to the inhabitants" of the house. Who has been a father to you in the household of God, and have you ever told them?

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## LIVE IT THIS WEEK

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### 1.

Read Isaiah 22:15-25 once more this week, then Revelation 3:7-8, and write in your own words, one sentence each: what the King keeps, and what the steward carries.

### 2.

Send a message this week to a spiritual father in your life, a priest, a grandfather, a mentor, thanking him specifically.

### 3.

Keep the daily Our Father for the pope, and this week add: "Lord, make your steward faithful, and your household one."

### Closing Prayer:

*Lord Jesus, Son of David, you hold the key of David: you open and none can shut. Thank you for ordering your house with such care, for stewards and fathers, and for writing your designs centuries ahead of our finding them. Keep your steward faithful, keep your household one, and keep us hunting your Word for treasure. Amen.*

**Scripture Memory Verse:** "And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open." (Isaiah 22:22, RSV2CE)

## PART THREE · LEADER REFERENCE CARD

Every passage used in Session Three, in order of use. All references RSV2CE.

### PASSAGE WHERE IT IS USED

Main text, discovered live at Build 1, then read in sections

#### Matthew 16:17-19

Build 4: the parallel inventory

#### Revelation 3:7

Live discovery, Build 5: Scripture certifies the link

#### Genesis 41:40-44

Live discovery, Build 6: Joseph the vizier

#### 1 Kings 4:6; 1 Kings 18:3; 2 Kings 18:18

Leader background: the office across the centuries

#### 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Luke 1:32-33

Leader background: the Davidic kingdom restored

#### Isaiah 22:25

Dig Deeper: even the steward is judged

#### CCC 552; 553; 881

Catechism Connection