

## BINDING AND LOOSING FIRST CENTURY STYLE

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In Matthew's Gospel Jesus said to his disciple Peter "I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt 16:19). A couple of chapters later he said very similar words to his other disciples (Mat 18:18).

What are the most common explanations and teachings about these binding and loosing verses that one hears today? Most people assume that they have something to do with spiritual warfare and binding the devil. Indeed, the surrounding context is about disciple's authority, only **the devil is not involved here**.

In reality, binding and loosing are known **technical legal expressions in the ancient Jewish world**. "To bind" is to restrict, to confine, to limit and in legal sense "to forbid something". On the opposite side "to loose" is to unbind, to untie, to free, to release which in a legal sense means "to permit something".

Here is an example from the first-century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus. He writes that under queen Alexandra of Jerusalem, the Pharisees "became the administrators of all public affairs, empowered to banish and readmit whom they pleased, as well as to loose and to bind". (Jewish War 1:110). Josephus said that **the Pharisees had the authority "to loose and to bind"** and no, not demons or Satan.

When Jesus used this terminology in the Gospels, he did not speak about prayer or spiritual warfare either. The context is legal and the terms should be interpreted through first-century Jewish context. Just like the Pharisees in Josephus's quote, the disciples were given a right to legislate, a right to make rules and norms, allowing and forbidding things in their own community. And that is binding and loosing first century's style.