

CHRIST, CHURCH AND SALVATION ARE INSEPARABLE

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Matthew 19:3-9 records Jesus being engaged by the Pharisees with questions pertaining to divorce and remarriage. Jesus, in answering these pitiable men applies a timeless principle of truth, "*what therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*" — let not man *chorizo*, "separate." While Jesus applied this principle to marriage, we must understand that it is also applicable to anything God has joined together. However, this principle is not always honored by men because they are continually trying to separate what God has joined.

James, by inspiration, declared that God has joined "faith" and "works" — "*faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone*" (James 2:17). Yet, we find men continually teaching that man is saved by faith apart from works. In fact, the *Baptist Member Handbook*, under the heading of Salvation, states on page 20: "Salvation is given by God in grace; apart from human works ... it is received by man through faith." Though God has joined faith and works, man has sought their separation.

Jesus, in explaining the rule of marriage said, "The two are one," and can only be separated "for fornication" (Matt. 19:5, 9). Despite this fact, man is continually removing husband and wife for any cause, thus, again, that which God has joined; man has sought to separate. And now, perhaps more than at any other time, man is attempting to separate Christ, salvation and the church, notwithstanding the fact that God has forever joined them together. Thus it has become necessary for us to prove, from Holy Writ, the inseparability of these three. We can accomplish this by showing: 1) the point at which a person receives salvation, and 2) the point at which one is added to the church. This is so because, as we will show, they merge at the same position.

At what point does a person "receive" the hope of eternal life? The Bible is a book that must be learned, studied and applied properly, or else it becomes useless. That is not to say that the Bible is a useless book, but that it has become useless to him who does not use it properly. Consider a math teacher. Should he set aside the laws that govern math and conclude, falsely, that 2 plus 2 equals 5? Has not math become useless to him? Indeed, we must so concede. Math, in general, is not useless, but only to the teacher who has not applied the rules which govern math. And, such is the case with the Bible.

One rule that governs biblical interpretation is that of considering all the available facts, as revealed by God, on a particular subject. So, then, as pertaining to the subject of salvation, we must consider all that the Bible has revealed on the matter, and from this anthology of facts, draw only the conclusions that are warranted.

By collecting the revealed facts of salvation (under New Testament Law), we find there are a great number of things involved, none of which stand alone. This immense list can be narrowed, however, when viewed from the standpoint of that which man is required to do (acts of obedience; cf. Heb 5:8, 9) in order to receive the hope of eternal life. We find that man must *hear* the word of God in order to develop faith (Rom. 10:17ff).

We further understand it is required of man to *believe* that which has been revealed in God's word, particularly that Jesus is the Son of God (Mark 16:16). This faith, however, if left alone, is a dead faith which cannot save. Thus, faith must be made an active faith by man *repenting* or turning from his past sins (Acts 17:11). Yet, the facts do not stop here, for, as we continue to study God's revelation, we read that man must associate himself with the Christ by *confessing* faith in Jesus as the Son of God (Rom. 10:9-10). The Bible further reveals that man must be *baptized* (immersed) in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). After all these things are done, the Bible says that the person who so complies has the hope of eternal life. Not only do we have these facts revealed, but we also have examples of this system being followed in the book of Acts.

In Acts 2:37 the question is asked, "What shall we do?" What shall they do for what? They were asking, in reality, what must be done to "call on the name of the Lord." You see, Peter, in his historic sermon, quoted Joel in saying, "*And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved*" (v.21). Thus the question asked is: "What shall we do to call on the name of the Lord to be saved?" This question came from them having *heard* the word of God, and having faith in "Jesus" (v.32). By asking the question, their confession is implied. They were answered, "*repent and be baptized*" (v.38). Verse 41 records, "*Then they that gladly received his word were baptized.*" Thus they "called on the name of the Lord" (cf. Acts 22:16, "arise and be baptized, calling on the name of the Lord"). If by calling on the name of the Lord one is saved (v.21), and one calls on His name by being baptized (v.41), then it must follow that this is the point at which a person receives the hope of eternal life (cf. Titus 1:2).

The Bible also reveals an institution known as "the church." In fact, the Bible explains the church as being the "*manifold wisdom of God, which He purposed in Christ Jesus*" (Eph. 3:10-11). Christ said, of Himself, that He would, on the foundation that He is the Son of God (cf. I Cor. 3:11), build His church (Matt. 16:18), which He explains as being synonymous with His Kingdom (cf. Matt. 16:18-19; Eph. 1:13; Rev. 1:9). He then taught His disciples that the church/kingdom would come with power in their generation (Mark 9:1). Before ascending to the right hand of the Father, Jesus reminded His apostles of this fact when He said, "*ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come on you*" (Acts 1:8). So it is, then, that in Acts 2 when the power came, the kingdom came, which must logically follow since the power was to accompany the kingdom, and since the church and the kingdom are synonymous terms, the church was established then and there. But, at what point was/is a person added to the church? Acts 2:47 states, "*And the Lord added to the church day by day, those that were saved*" (ASV).

Now, let's draw some conclusions. We have shown: 1) the point at which a person is saved — water baptism; 2) the point at which a person is added to the church — upon their salvation. Thus, it can only be concluded that salvation and the church are inseparable for they merge at the same point, baptism (cf. I Peter 3:21). And, further, since the church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23), having Christ as its head, wherein salvation is found (Eph. 5:23), then it must also be concluded that Christ and His church are inseparable. Thus we have shown, in brief, the inseparability of Christ, the church and salvation.

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