

THE GLORIOUS CHURCH

3 - What Is The Relationship Of Christ To The Glorious Church?

A church with no connection to Christ is not only worthless, but dangerous. It is the relationship of Christ to the church that elevates the church high above any and all creations of men. The existence of the church rests on Christ.

He is the builder. "Upon this rock I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). The church Christ built is a totally new creation in the world. There was no such body or institution as the church in the Old Testament. Neither was the church established in the days of John the Baptist. Jesus promised to build His church, and He never made a promise He did not keep. The importance of His promise in Matthew 16:18 can never be overemphasized. Jesus promised a personally possessed church. "I will build my church." The church He built is His and His alone. Men must not usurp any of the prerogatives of Christ in the church. Many men have started churches, but they are not Christ's. Men have sought to change Christ's church, but they have only polluted it.

Christ promised to build His church through Spirit-guided human agents. To Peter He said, "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" (Mt. 16:19). The "keys" of opening the church to sinners were the words spoken by Peter and the rest of the apostles. These men had been in a period of training for more than three years. The preparation they received was all directed toward the greatest of all events. The church was established on Pentecost in Acts 2 as our earlier lesson showed.

Christ is the foundation of the church. "Upon this rock I will build my church" (Mt. 16: 18). What is the rock on which Christ proposed to build His church? It is the supreme fact of faith just confessed by Peter; namely, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. To say that the church is built upon the foundation of His divine Sonship and Messiahship is equivalent to saying it is built on Christ Himself. "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 3:11). Paul said that Christ is the only foundation that can be laid. No man can begin anywhere else. This is still worthy of emphasis as many are trying to build their spiritual life on a foundation of good works, humanism, or science.

Christ maintains the church. He purchased the church with His blood (Acts 20:28). The thought from the word "purchased" is to acquire or obtain. Christ acquired the church for Himself, and the price was His blood. The American Standard Version has "church of the Lord" to indicate its ownership. If the term "church of God" is used, the reference still is to Christ for He alone shed blood for the church. Every member of the body of Christ, the church, has been bought with the price "for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body" (I Cor. 6:20).

This helps us to see that the church is made up of redeemed individuals. Another way of saying this is that Christ gave Himself for the church (Ephesians 5:25). The church is people. What a thought to be so blessed as to be a part of Christ's church and to know His love.

The church is Christ's spiritual body (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22,23). There is one body (Eph. 4:4). A body is many members working together for a purpose (I Corinthians 12: 20). The body's purpose is to carry out the work of Christ. As a corollary to the church being a body is that Christ is the sole head of the church. It is the office of the head to govern and control the body, and every body functions as the head directs. The church must look to Christ for directions in all matters of work and worshiping.

The church is thus subject to Christ's rule. "But as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be to their husbands in everything" (Eph. 5:24). The church is not a democratic institution; neither is it an aristocracy. The members do not have the right to govern the body. Since Christians are dead to the law and subject to Christ, it should be clear that the church is not subject to Old Testament legislation. The New Testament is our complete guide (II Timothy 3:16,17; Jude 3).

Christ is the Savior of the body. "Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body" (Eph. 5:23). If the church is the saved, and Christ is the Savior, then obviously He is the Savior of the body for the body is the church. In the process of saving the body, those *who* make up the body are sanctified and cleansed (Eph. 5: 25-27). The members were sanctified, or set apart, when they were converted to Christ by obedience to the gospel. The washing of water can scarcely be anything other than baptism (Mark 16:16). Why so many refuse to accept the place baptism occupies in God's scheme is based only on prejudice against God's appointed way. God's purpose in such

cleansing from sins is to have a glorious church. When Christ presents the body to God after His return to earth, it will be perfect. Now, while we wait, let us strive for spiritual purity.

One of the most glorious things about the church is its relationship in Christ. He is the basis of its existence, the Rock on which it stands. The church is His spiritual body purchased with His blood. He is its Savior. Let us always live for Him.

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