



The Captain of Our Salvation

by Jason Hilburn

The writer of Hebrews referred to Jesus as “the captain of our salvation.” If we picture Jesus as the Captain of a ship, there are many lessons which we can be applied:

Christ is the Captain of the only ship that will go to Heaven - There are many ships in the “harbor” of religion, but only one ship was built by Jesus Christ, and that is His church: “...upon this rock I will build my church...” (Matthew 16:18). There are many ships with “captains” who promise to take people to Heaven, but Christ’s church is the only ship that is going to Heaven: “...Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body” (Ephesians 5:23; cf. Acts 2:47). Any other ships are man-made, and they will not make it to Heaven. That is why it is so important for us to make sure we board the right ship!

Christ’s ship is distinguishable from all man-made ships by the means of entrance - How can we know if we are on the right ship? There are many differences between the Lord’s church and man-made religious groups. One critical distinction is the means of entrance. Some man-made ships will allow anyone on board, no matter if they have done what the Bible says to do be saved or not. Some man-made ships take a vote to determine whether a person may come aboard. However, in order for one to enter Christ’s ship, he must obey what the Captain said we must do to be saved. Only then will the Captain add that person to His “crew” (Acts 2:37, 38, 41, 47). Those who refuse to obey the Captain will not enter the ship which goes to Heaven: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). To become a member of the church of Christ, one must: hear the Word (Romans 10:17); believe in Christ (John 8:24); repent of sins (Acts 17:30); confess Christ (Matthew 10:32); and be immersed in the name of Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

Christ's ship is distinguishable from man-made ships by the flag that is flown - Christ's ship always displays the flag that glorifies Him. Christ's church wears the name of Christ, such as when we call ourselves "*Christians*," members of the church of Christ (Acts 11:26; Romans 16:16). Man-made ships usually wear unscriptural names, glorifying men like John the Baptist, Martin Luther, and John Wesley. Paul explicitly condemned such in 1 Corinthians 1:10-13 (cf. 4:6). Our Captain has commanded us to speak as the Scriptures speak to glorify God: "*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen*" (1 Peter 4:11); "*but if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name*" (1 Peter 4:16 ASV).

Christ's ship is distinguishable from man-made ships by what happens on board - For example, Christ our Captain has commanded His "crew" to worship in a certain way - the true way: "*But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:23, 24). We must worship God with the right frame of mind, and make sure we have authority in the New Testament Scriptures for what we are doing: "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him*" (Colossians 3:16-17). According to the Bible, proper acts of worship include: praying to the Father (Ephesians 5:20); singing (Ephesians 5:19); preaching of the Word (Acts 20:7); giving (1 Corinthians 16:2); and partaking of communion every Lord's Day (Acts 20:7).

Some of the crew members may behave as if they were on a leisure cruise - Many do not take Christianity seriously enough, and many are not willing to do the work required. Whether we like it or not, there is work to be done after we become Christians: "*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord*" (1 Corinthians 15:58). There is the work of evangelism, which means we should always be teaching others how to go with us to Heaven (Matthew 28:19, 20). We also have the responsibility of doing good to others (Galatians 6:10), and building one another up (Ephesians 4:12, 16, 29). Unfortunately, there are many who merely consider themselves "along for the ride," and they are not putting forth any effort to contribute to the work which needs to be done on the journey.

The crew must be loyal to the Captain - Every member of the crew must be present when the Captain says, "All hands on deck!" God has commanded us not to forsake the assembling together of the saints (Hebrews 10:25). We must be present, loyal members of the church to receive the treasure at the end of the voyage! "*...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*" (Revelation 2:10).

Crew members on Christ's ship will be taken care of and kept safe - Each member of the crew will have everything he needs if he will be loyal to the Captain (Matthew 6:33). Loyal crew members are also under the protection of the Captain - No matter what enemies may attack us on this voyage to Heaven, we will be able to defeat them (Romans 8:31; Philippians 4:13). Christ's ship will withstand any storm, and it will never sink! (Daniel 2:44).

Some foolishly choose to jump ship - One may wonder why anyone would willfully choose to leave the greatest ship with the greatest Captain on its way to the greatest destination ever known, but sadly many make this choice. A brother may choose to get on board one of those man-made ships which claims to be on the way to Heaven, or they may just decide they are not concerned about Heaven at all. The Bible teaches that those who become Christians and then "jump ship" will be in a worse condition than those who never "got on board" in the first place (2 Peter 2:20-22). We must stay on Christ's ship with our Captain if we want to receive the treasures of Heaven.

Some choose to stay on the ship, but commit mutiny - It is sad that many "church members" who are present on a regular basis seek to stir up trouble and cause divisions among brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul warned the Ephesians about this: *"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them"* (Acts 20:29-30; cf. Proverbs 6:19). Paul also told the Romans to *"mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them"* (Romans 16:17).

Rebellious crew members must be separated from the rest of the crew - Those who choose to live in sin and refuse to repent after proper restoration efforts have taken place must be withdrawn from (Matthew 18:15-17; 2 Thessalonians 3:6). Not only is this brother or sister lost for rebelling against the Captain, this person's sinful example is a danger to the spiritual safety of the other members. He may incite other crew members to rebel against the Captain as well (1 Corinthians 5:6-7). The purpose of this discipline of separation is to protect the other members and to cause the erring brother or sister to repent and be restored: *"...deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus"* (1 Corinthians 5:5).

If we are loyal crew members on Christ's ship, we have nothing about which to worry. Remember that our Captain will protect us and take us all the way to Heaven if we will serve Him faithfully. Sometimes it may be difficult for sailors to believe that they are going to reach land after seeing only water for long spans of time, but when they finally hear "Land, ho!" they know they have been successful in their journey. Let us remember that life may seem like a long voyage with Heaven far out of sight, but when we finally reach Heaven, we will rejoice and receive the treasures therein!