

**Belgic Confession, Article 28, "The True Visible Church"**

Scripture Lesson: Matthew 16:13-19

<b>Lesson Aim</b>	To understand three things: First, that salvation, according to the Scriptures has always found some visible expression. Second, that true churches mediate salvation. Third, that assurance of salvation is found in true visible churches.
<b>Steps to Learning</b>	Read <a href="#">Belgic Confession, Article 28</a> and <a href="#">Matthew 16:13-19</a> . Discuss the sermon and the particulars of the lesson below. It may be best to work through the material over several days or sessions.
<b>Discuss</b>	<p><b>How do you define salvation?</b> Salvation is applied to a person who has been saved from eternal death as he confesses his sin and puts his faith in Jesus Christ and his work of crucifixion and resurrection.</p> <p><b>What are the marks of a true church?</b> The proper preaching of the Gospel (Word), the proper administration of the Sacraments and the proper administration of church discipline.</p> <p><b>Were the marks of the church present when the church began in the Garden of Eden?</b> Yes. God preached the Word to Adam and Eve as he confronted them about their sin and promised the Messiah to them (Gospel). Sacraments were present in the form of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the Tree of Life and the animal skins that covered the nakedness and shame of Adam and Eve. Discipline was applied when Adam and Eve were excommunicated from the Garden.</p> <p><b>What do we learn primarily in Matthew 16:13-19?</b> We learn that salvation is mediated through the true visible church on earth.</p> <p><b>What does it mean that salvation is mediate by the true visible church?</b> It means that the church is given the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. The use of these keys, preaching and discipline, open and close heaven to people. Heaven is opened when people receive the preaching of Christ by faith and heaven is closed as people deny that word by their false belief and/or actions of unrepentant sin.</p> <p><b>What does the Belgic confession mean when it states that there is no salvation outside of the church?</b> It means that saved people are ordinarily found in true churches; salvation is rightly identified in the true visible church. God works, ordinarily through the ministry of the Word in true visible churches. There are extraordinary situations, however, where people are saved outside the true visible church.</p>
<b>Bible Reading</b>	<a href="#">1 Kings chapters 6, 10-12</a> (covering the great Bible stories)