

THE GREATNESS OF THE CHURCH

In Matthew 16:18 our Lord Jesus Christ promised to build His church and that the gates of hell would not prevail against it. There have been thousands of churches that have sprung up all over the world since the Church of Christ began in Jerusalem in AD 33. We are not concerned with any but the Lord's church. It is with this church that our lesson deals. In it we want to point out several things in the scriptures that indicate her greatness.

1. The church of our Lord was purchased with the precious blood of Christ which was shed on the cross of Calvary. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, **which he hath purchased with his own blood**" (Acts 20:28).

2. The church that Jesus built is the only institution with Him as the foundation. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, **which is Jesus Christ**" (1 Corinthians 3:11). "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, **Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone**" (Ephesians 2:20).

3. It is the only institution in the world over which the scriptures declare that Christ is the head. "And hath put all things under his feet, **and gave him to be the head over all things to the church**, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:22,23). "**And he is the head of the body, the church**: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18).

4. The church of Christ is the only one with everlasting laws. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, **but my words shall not pass away**" (Matthew 24:35). "**...the word of the Lord endureth forever.** And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter 1:25).

5. The church of our Lord has a universal field of labor. Jesus gave instructions to the apostles after His death on the cross and His resurrection "And he said unto them, **Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature**" (Mark 16:15). He said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost..." (Matthew 28:19). "**And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world** for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14).

6. The Lord's church is the only one in which salvation is promised. "...Christ is the head of the church: **and He is the savior of the body**" (Eph. 5:23). "**And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved**" (Acts 2:47).

7. It is the only institution that has been authorized by God to preach the gospel throughout the world. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places **might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God**, according to the eternal purpose which be purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:10,11).

8. In the church Christians glorify God. "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Ephesians 3:21).

9. The church of Christ wears the only name in which there is salvation. "The churches of Christ salute you" (Romans 16:16). "**Neither is there salvation in any other**: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

10. The members of the Lord's church wear the greatest name. "... the disciples were called **Christians** first in Antioch" (Acts 11:26). "Do not they blaspheme that **worthy name by the which ye are called**" (James 2:7). "Yet if any man **suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed**; but let him glorify God on this behalf." (1 Pet. 4:16).

11. The church of our Lord is the only institution in the world which will outlast time. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: **Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord**" (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17).

From the foregoing we can see how great the church is in the eyes of God. We dare not put any other institution on a par with it, for God does not. There is no manmade organization in the world that can compare with the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.