

A GLORIOUS CHURCH

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It has certainly been my pleasure and I've received a great many blessings by being able to attend this wonderful meeting. Those of us who remember its humble beginning are amazed at the status it has reached. It has exceeded our fondest expectations. I believe all of this is evidence of the fact that it pleases God and he has chosen to use this meeting and all of us in order that we might glorify the Church before the world and cause even ourselves to consider its greatness, its uniqueness and its dignity.

In the few moments that I share with you, I want to speak to you concerning the glory of the Church. I think that it is the most glorious institution that has ever graced the face of the earth. I hope that I can hold up the Church in such a fashion that each of you will feel its unique greatness and its unequal majesty. There is nothing in the world today that is greater than the Church of our Lord. This lesson is presented in the hope that each of us may feel more deeply the greatness of the Church and that we may so yield our lives in its direction that we may reflect among our fellowmen the Church's matchless glory.

All of us are aware of the fact that the Church is glorious, first of all, because her head is glorious. We are speaking of none other than our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. There is a fact about the glory of the Lord that we need to talk about before we get into some of the other things that we have to say relative to the glorious Church. It was those who knew Christ best, His disciples, who were ready and willing to testify of His glory. Those who criticized Christ knew very little about Him. Those who knew Him best, they who were intimate with Him, they who worked with Him daily and had intercourse with Him were the ones who testified of the glorious Christ. This is not true of other men. Other men have revealed their weaknesses to those who know them best. There are many people that we have thought to be great, but those who walked closest to them (Their wives or husbands, their children, those with whom they worked) knew assuredly that they were not as great as they appeared to be. This was not true with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. With Christ, those who were the closest to Him saw His glory more clearly. This is pointed out in several passages of scripture, for instance, John 1:14 and John 1:14. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men." (John 1:14) Then in verse fourteen John said, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." John was saying that he and the other apostles together with a large circle of disciples had seen the divine Son of God. They had seen Him as He lived in human form among man and John put it in very simple, easily understood terms and said, "... we beheld his glory..." At another time the Apostle John said something quite similar. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." (I John 1:1-3) We also find words concerning Christ's glory from the pen of the Apostle Peter, when he wrote concerning the transfiguration, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when he made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father Honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (II Peter 1:16-17) These passages of scripture certainly show that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is glorious and that the Church which He builded also should be as glorious and as evident to those who see her glory today.

Recently, I read a book concerning Charles Spurgeon, one of the great sectarian preachers of ages past. He had a great impact upon the people he taught. I was very impressed by a sermon outline concerning the glory of the Lord. First, he mentioned the glory of His words. There is

nothing more glorious than the words of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away." (Luke 21:33) His words were truly glorious and are glorious today.

Next, he spoke of the glory of His enlightenment. Jesus said, "... I am the light of the world ..." (John 8:12) If the world has any light today, it must reflect from the Church because the world is in darkness. Jesus is not present with us in the personal way that He was back then, so in order for the world to be lighted and to receive the enlightenment that Jesus shed forth it must be through the Church.

Thirdly, he spoke of the glory of His salvation. Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life." No one could make that claim with the validity that Jesus did and no one can make it with validity today either.

Fourth, he spoke of the glory of His relationship to God. No one sustains a closer relationship than did Jesus to the Father. God said, "... This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased ..." He spoke this way about no other one. Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Fifth, he spoke of the glory of Christ's sacrifice. Jesus gave His life as a ransom for the lives of us all.

Sixth, he spoke of the glory of our Lord's victory wherein he faced death in order that we might have life and that more abundantly. He arose triumphantly over death, hell and the grave as was prophesied and as was preached by himself. As a result we see the great victory over sin and death.

Seventh, he spoke of the glory of His gift. His gift is eternal life.

Eighth, he spoke of the glory of Christ's pre-earthly existence. The Lord was in the very beginning of time and nothing that was created was created without Him. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is a glorious individual.

Is the Church glorious? I certainly believe it is a glorious institution which the Lord blesses and which he uses to honor our Father which is in heaven through such efforts as this meeting.

Glorious, in one sense, means held in honor and full of splendor. This very aptly describes the Church of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Church needs to be held in honor by young people as well as those who are older. We need to realize that the Church is full of splendor. We can't equate the Church with other organizations in the world. Many people are trying to downgrade it and they are trying to put it on par with other organizations such as lodges but it can't be put there. Its splendor is much greater than is theirs if they have any at all and we must honor and revere the Church of our Lord.

Someone may ask, "Why is it glorious?" I believe it is glorious for several reasons. I want to mention four of these reasons that make the Church such a glorious institution.

It is glorious because it is a divine origin, its divine builder, its divine head and its mission are going to make it impossible for any man-made church to lay claim to divinity.

First of all, it is of divine origin. In the book of Ephesians it says it was in the eternal purposes of God to establish the Church. God used the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to establish that eternal purpose and it was effective when Jesus Christ builded the Church as He promised He would in Matt. 16:18. It is of divine origin and there is no other organization in the world that can claim divinity concerning their origin. Look in your encyclopedia at all of the churches listed there and find out about their origins and you will find that they did not originate from divinity. They have their origin from men in the ages of men and not under the auspices and authority of God, as was planned from eternity.

The Church as a divine institution has a divine builder. Jesus said, "I will build the church of me ..." Our Lord was the divine builder. The Son of God, He who had the glory in the beginning, desired to reflect that glory through the Church which He was to establish and so he said, "I will build my church." According to the book of Acts, chapter two, this Church came into existence upon the day of Pentecost.

The Church has a divine head according to Ephesians 5:23, Ephesians 1:21-22 and Colossians 1:18. All of these passages of scripture tell us that He is the head of the Body, the Church.

The Church has a divine mission. That mission is one of evangelization-, ministry and benevolence.

For all of these reasons the Church is glorious. All of us need to study in depth more about the origin of the Church and it would make us appreciate Her a lot more. We should also study about the origin of all the other religious organizations in the world. It would make us even more aware of the fact that they can lay no claim to divinity because their origin was not divine in any sense of the word.

Secondly, I believe the Church is a glorious institution because of its universality. The Church is open to all, not open in the sense that a lot of our denominational friends preach concerning their churches, but it is open to all who are willing to accept and obey the Lord on His terms. That is a wonderful thing in itself. Everybody in every part of the world can become a member of this glorious institution. No one is excluded. In some of the manmade institutions they limit their membership. I don't know where they get the idea and I don't know why they do it but it is done. The Church of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, prophesied of by Isaiah, was to be open to all people of every race excluding none. This is a wonderful thing about the Church. Jesus came to break down the middle wall of partition that existed between the Jew and the Gentile. He did not want any separating walls between the two. He wanted them all to come together in one spiritual body in order that they might glorify and magnify His great name. Nothing points out the fact that the Church of our Lord is a glorious institution more than the fact that my Lord would accept me and you, the great, the small, the rich, the poor, everybody who will comply with His terms, into this wonderful institution.

The Church is glorious in its salvation. It is the only institution in the world today that can save you from your sins. I'm not claiming that the Church saves by itself but that salvation is in the Church. The very reason Jesus came to this earth is pointed out in Matthew 1:21 where it says that Jesus came to seek and to save those that were lost. This is to be done in the Church. In I Timothy 3:15, we are told how to behave in the Church of the Lord. "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." In other words it is the responsibility of the Church to uphold the truth to all. No one else has that responsibility save the Church of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We further learn in Acts 2:47, that those who comply with the teaching of the Church relative to the truth are added to the Lord's Church. In Ephesians 5:23, it is taught that salvation is in the Body or the Church. We can't accept that people are saved personally and individually apart from being in the Church because we believe that to be in Christ is to be in His Church.

The Church of Christ is a glorious institution because of its lasting qualities. That it is standing is evidenced by the fact that all of our great brotherhood, both in this country and in lands across the sea, exists today. It is standing and will continue to stand because it has lasting qualities that no other institution in the world has. We are living in a time when everything that we look at, everything that we touch, everything that we have anything to do with is fleeting and passing, even our very lives. We are talking about something that is not of that nature. The Church of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ will last forever. Jesus said, ". . . upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:18) Death did not stop it. Jesus arose from the grave just as He promised He would and when He did He forever confirmed these words. The establishment of His Church could not be stopped. Many of His friends and many of His foes thought that it would but it didn't and it is evident today. In Hebrews 12:28, we read that we have a Kingdom that cannot be moved. Nothing can move the Kingdom of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It will never be destroyed. "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." (Dan. 2:44) We need to emphasize the fact that the Church is a lasting institution. It has lasting qualities. It is going to stand forever throughout all of the- ceaseless ages of eternity.

Certainly, the Church of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is a glorious institution. If our lives are to have any lasting significance or glory, it is going to be because Jesus Christ dwells in our hearts. It is going to be because Jesus Christ rules our lives and we reflect the glory of the divine Son of God in His glorious Church.

In closing, we should note Jude verses 24-25. These verses of scripture certainly portray what we have been saying about reflecting the glory of the Lord in the Church today. "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

Let us ever hold high the blood stained banner of Christianity. Let us ever reflect the glory of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ L. the Church. Let us always manifest the great glory of our Lord to the world so that they might be constrained to glorify our Father which is in Heaven.