

## A Glorious Church

When you hear the word “church,” what immediately comes to mind? If popular culture is any indication of what people think, it would seem that opinions run from “fundamentalist fanatics” to senseless, silly social organizations. “Church,” and Christianity by implication, is made the subject of jokes, but should be the last thing people would joke about (Eph. 5:4). Those who reject personal accountability and responsibility make it the scapegoat for society’s problems, when in reality the true church is a sinful world’s only city of refuge and is the sole promoter of the only influence that makes this world a place worth living in (Mat. 5:13-16). What would this world be like without the church and gospel of Christ which it proclaims? Can you even imagine living in a world where Christianity has had absolutely no influence? The very thought makes one shudder.

The New Testament presents a picture of a glorious church (Eph. 5:27) that is in stark contrast to popular opinion. Peter speaks of the church as “...a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people (1 Pet. 2:9).” Jesus compares the church and its worth with a “...treasure hidden in a field,” and “...a pearl of great price (Mat. 13:44-46)” worth more than all the riches of the world combined. Several things account for the worth of the church of Christ: (1) Its worth is based on what God was willing to give and Jesus was willing to pay for it, the life and blood of Jesus (Eph. 5:25; Acts 2:28). (2) The church is the dwelling place of the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 3:16-17) and He who dwells in the church dwells in the Christians who constitute the church (1 Cor. 6:19-20). (3) The church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). (4) The church is the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15). (5) The church has in trust and is commissioned to teach God’s power to save (2 Cor. 4:7; Rom. 10:13-18; Rom. 1:16). (6) The church, by its existence and mission, has the singular responsibility of making known to the world the manifold wisdom of God according to His eternal purpose in Christ (Eph. 3:10-11). (7) The church is composed of the saved (Acts 2:47), who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1:18-19). (8) Members of the church of Christ are members of His body (1 Cor. 6:15; 12:27; Eph. 5:30). (9) The church is the bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2). (10) The divine destiny of the church is to occupy eternity in heaven with the Father and the Son (1 Cor. 15:24; Rev. 21:22-27; 22:1-5, 14). All of these verses present a glorious church beyond value, to which any truly grateful person would be honored to be added to by the Lord (Acts 2:47).

Paul reflected a true appreciation for the worth of the church and the Lord who bought it when he said, “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ (Phil. 3:7; also vv. 8-11),” and “...besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches (2 Cor. 11:28),” and “I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls... (2 Cor. 12:15a).” When you hear the word “church,” what immediately comes to mind?

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