

The Church of Christ

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If the church Jesus built (Mat. 16:18) is to exist in any age, there are certain principles to which men must be committed. As surely as men abandon any of these commitments, so surely will the New Testament church cease to exist. These principles necessarily include respect for the following entities:

- **The absolute authority of Christ:** The Bible emphasizes His authority each time it calls Him “Lord.” He performed His miracles primarily for the purpose of establishing His Divine authority and identity (John 20:30–31). This commitment includes the recognition that He owns the church (Acts 20:28), and He alone has the right to determine every feature of it. Until all men who claim to follow Christ so honor Him, confusion in religion must reign.
- **The New Testament as the final authority in religion:** Christ expresses His authority only through the New Testament. No alleged latter-day revelations (e.g., *The Book of Mormon*, *The Koran*) or prophets (e.g., Joseph Smith, Mohammed) can be accepted by people who are serious about the New Testament church. This principle also relates to the Old Testament because it is inspired history and is necessary for our understanding of God and His plan of redemption through His Son (Rom. 15:4). However, God did not any more give the law of Moses to govern men **since** the cross than He gave the law of Christ (the Gospel) to govern men **before** the cross (Col. 2:14).
- **The New Testament plan of salvation:** The only plan of salvation in the world is the one made possible by the cross and revealed in the New Testament. It is a plan of grace and faith, but not grace alone and/or faith only. It requires the believer’s response of repentance, confession, immersion in water, and living a faithful Christian life (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:37; 22:16; et al.). Baptism either is or is not necessary for salvation – it cannot be both. The New Testament consistently and plainly declares its necessity (Mark 16:16; John 3:5; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3–4; Gal. 3:27; Tit. 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:21).
- **The identity of the New Testament church:** Jesus built the church according to His own wise plan. He prescribed its terms of entrance, its designations, its worship, its work, and how it is to be organized and financed. If the identity of the church is unimportant, why is the church important at all?
- **The foremost task of the church – preaching the Gospel:** Jesus had one great work and purpose – to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). Such is likewise the compelling ambition of His faithful church (Mat. 28:18–20; Mark 16:15–16; 1 The. 1:8; 1 Tim. 3:15; 2 Tim. 2:2; et al.).

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