

A CALL FOR RESTORATION



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Roger E. Dickson

RESTORATION!

The Greek word *ekklesia* was used in the Roman society and government to refer to a city assembly of local residents who were called together for a town meeting. It was a participatory meeting where the citizens joined together to make mutual decisions that affected the entire town. For this specific reason, this was the word that Jesus used when He said, “*Upon this rock I will build My *ekklesia* [church]...*” (Mt 16:18). The “town meeting,” or participatory assembly of Jesus’ disciples would be built upon the foundation of His fulfillment of prophecy as the Messiah and the fact that He was the Son of God. **His *ekklesia*, therefore, would be totally founded and focused on Him.** This is the fundamental foundation upon which we make our plea for restoration.

As we look around and see the tremendous assortment of religious groups of Christendom throughout the world, we would join with all Bible-loving, Christ-centered disciples of Jesus who are struck with awe concerning the amount of diversity that exists among all those who consider themselves “Christians.” So as other Bible-loving, Christ-centered believers, we join with the chorus of cries throughout the world that

something is definitely wrong. If what we see in Christendom is pleasing to God, then anything is pleasing to God as long as one cries out to Jesus, “Lord, Lord.” But we know that the worldwide division in Christendom is wrong, and thus, we make our plea to all believers to join with us in restoring the simplicity of Christianity.

When we read our Bibles, we see a vast difference between what is revealed concerning the *ekklesia* (church) of God in the New Testament and what exists in Christendom today. We say this not only as judgment on ourselves, but also for the sake of Muslims, Hindus and other non-Christian religions throughout the world. We would ask them to please not judge the true *ekklesia* that is revealed in the New Testament with the assortment of confused religiosity of Christendom that they witness in the world today (See Jn 17:20,21).

**True Christianity
is identified
by unity,
not division.**

Because of the tremendous confusion that prevails throughout Christendom, we call for a restoration of thinking and practice of what God would have us to be as His *ekklesia* in these times. And so, we affirm that our only source

upon which to base such a plea is the revelation of God through Jesus two thousand years ago. This center of reference for unity was written for the purpose of continuing and identifying the true beliefs and behavior by which God's people would be known throughout the centuries. We are thus calling for a return to the Bible in order to understand again what it means to have a Christ-centered life that is based on the word of Christ.

When we call for a restoration of the true church (ekklesia), everyone usually asks, "Which church?" Those who would plead for restoration of the simple church that was born out of the teachings of Jesus and the apostles in the 1st century are always faced with the accusation that they are calling others to "their church." And truly, there are those who call for a restoration, but are actually assuming that "their church" is the restored church of the 1st century. So what they are actually asking people to do is to "join their church" in order to become a part of the restored New Testament church. But we do not think that such a plea, that is actually a disguise for "church recruitment," honors a true call for restoration.

**True restoration
calls people
to Jesus through
His word.**

To assume that all that one believes and does is the restored ekklesia of the 1st century is somewhat misleading, if not arrogant. It is a deception because no one knows all the truth. It is misleading because everyone tends to drift away from his biblical roots in order to follow after the traditions of his fathers. If one calls for restoration, therefore, he must first consider his own life in reference to following Jesus. Restoration is a continuing process in the sense that we continue to learn as we study our Bibles. We continue to correct our course lest we circle around and become just another institutionalized religion of Christendom. Because we often drift away and circle around, one thing is axiomatically true. **If there is no call for restoration from any particular religious group, then we can be assured that that group has strayed from the word of God.** The first point in identifying the true ekklesia of God is if the members are doing their best to study the Bible in order to know and live the word of God.

**The call
for restoration
identifies
God's people.**

So when speaking of restoration, we are not talking about having the ideal established. Neither are we recruiting people to "our church." We are simply confessing up to the fact that we continually need correction. We are recog-

nizing that our lives are not as Christ-centered as we desire. And we might add that we are not seeking to restore the church of Corinth, a church with many divisions (1 Co 1:10). We are not seeking to restore the church of Laodicea which was known for her laziness (Rv 3:15,16). Nor are we seeking to restore the church in Sardis that was dead (Rv 3:1). We are seeking to call sincere believers to the word of God in order that we discover again the roots of our faith. And when our faith is rooted in the word of God, then we will be a part of the one universal church of Christ that functions as servants for Christ in communities throughout the world.

Because there are no perfect people, we conclude that there are no perfect churches, whether now or in the past. Our plea for restoration focuses on the individual believer, not a corporate body of believers. True restoration is always focused on people, not corporate bodies of people. If we would judge the success of restoration by the beliefs and behavior of a specific group of religious adherents, then there would never be a true restoration, for there are always imperfections in every group. In Revelation 2 & 3 Jesus called for repentance among the churches of Asia Minor. But the focus in His call was on the faithful

among the churches. Though the churches in the cities were judged as a whole, each church was judged because within the city fellowships there were those who were immoral. However, the faithful were not judged. They were not because they maintained their faithful-ness in the midst of the majority who had gone astray. Restoration, therefore, is about a restoration of one's personal relationship with Jesus among those who have submitted to a "common salvation" (Jd 3).

**Restoration
is a plea
to individuals.**

When we call for restoration, some would assume that the outcome and success of restoration depends on some authority on earth. But true restoration always comes forth from those who seek to submit to the exclusive authority that proceeds from King Jesus (Mt 28:18). In fact, our call for restoration would be frivolous if we assumed that there were some authority on earth to whom we all would submit, and thus, be cloned after the legal statues of some man or group of men. Restoration never involves enthroning the opinions of any man or council or synod who would seek to exercise authority over a body of believers. Such authorities are actually the problem. Since the thinking of men is imperfect, then restoration can never depend on the opinions of any man or

group of men. Our call for restoration, therefore, **is a call that is founded upon the fundamental principle of the final authority of Christ in all things that pertain to the Christians' faith.**

1 RESTORATION OF A CHRIST-CENTERED LIFE

When there is any call for a restoration to true Christianity, there is always the assumption that what presently exists is something that has gone astray from that which is true. When the call comes in the midst of those who are content with that which has gone into apostasy, then tension will ensue when a call is made. Thus those who would call for restoration are sometimes referred to as either “heretics” or “liberals” by the apostate church, for they call people to leave that which has gone astray in order to return to the true. They are referred to as such because they seek to be restored to a biblical foundation of faith rather than a faith that is built upon the foundation of either heritage, religious traditions, or emotionalism.

A call for restoration, therefore, indicates that people are once again reading their Bibles. They seek to be Christ-centered in their lives by knowing and implementing the word of Christ in their

lives. If they have gone astray, they are discovering that many of their existing religious beliefs and practices are contrary to that which they are learning through their studies. No one is a liberal who seeks to give up that which is simply founded on heritage or tradition in order to believe and obey that which is within the pages of the Holy Writ. No one is a heretic who forsakes that which is contrary to the teachings of the New Testament. Heretics are too often defined by those who accuse others of leaving their heritage or traditional religion. The restorationist, therefore, is a “heretic” in the minds of the apostate in reference to that which has gone into apostasy. The restorationist seeks to leave that which is false according to the word of God.

But we must keep in mind that the biblical use of the word “heretic” is in reference to those who have gone astray from the truth, **not to those who are seeking to restore the true from which religious groups have strayed.** If one is labelled either “liberal” or “heretic” in reference to leaving that which is apostate, then so be it. We would wear the unjustified labels with honor, for the labels have come from those who have no love of the word of God, and thus

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are encrusted in their religiosity from which they would refuse to turn. We would consider it an honor to be counted with the great prophets of Israel who sought to call apostate Israel back from her wayward path in an idolatrous religiosity that she had created after her own desires. So we would be “heretic” or “liberal” in our efforts as restorationists who turn from false religiosity to the word of God and the simplicity of the ekklesia as she is revealed in the New Testament.

In our use of terminology in reference to God’s people, however, there are some subtle inconsistencies that often come forth in Christian writings. We sometimes use the phrase “New Testament Christianity.” But this phrase subtly denies the fact that there is only one true Christianity. There are no other Christianities than the one we read about in the New Testament. We would not say that there is an “Old Testament God” or a “New Testament God.” There is only one God. We would not say that we are “Tabernacle Christians” or “Pentecost Christians.”

There is only one Christianity and only Christians.

There are only Christians. When we speak of restoring Christianity, therefore, we are speaking of restoring the only Christianity there is. We are speaking of restoring Christ-

centered behavior that springs from our understanding of the revealed Christ. Everything else is fake and false. And according to the most simple New Testament definition of Christianity, James revealed in one passage the Christ-centered life: “*Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this, to take care of the orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world*” (Jas 1:27). This is the simplicity of Christianity. It does not revolve around humanly defined forms, functions, methodologies, or names of men. It evolves around manifesting in our lives a Christ-like love for others and a willingness to live after the moral principles of a Christ-centered faith (Jn 13:34,35). True restoration does not focus on restoring an institution, but restoring people’s lives to focus on Jesus. A restored Christ-centered life is manifested through personal ministry.

2 WHY THE NECESSITY FOR RESTORATION?

So why would so many throughout the world be calling for a restoration to the simplicity of the church that we read about in the Scriptures? The answer is simple. There are millions who are just fed up with the complexity of a man-centered religiosity of popes and pastors

who are more concerned with preserving their means for existence than ministry to others and relationships among people. There are millions who want to turn from the lording authorities and masters of men to the sole authority of Jesus through His word. “Church” leadership has made the church so complex and governed by so many committees and power structures that the simple disciple is simply looking for a breath of fresh biblical air by which he can breathe freely outside the bondage of organized (institutionalized) religion.

Restoration is a call for freedom from misguided religiosity.

There are millions throughout the world who call themselves under the name of “Christianity,” and subsequently cry out “Lord, Lord.” But at the same time, they have little or no regard for the word of God. However, there are millions who have discovered that their faith is empty of the word of God, and thus, they seek to go back to the Bible in order to discover a biblical foundation for their faith. Instead of basing their faith on the authority of men in institutional religious structures, they seek to turn again to the sole authority of Jesus in their lives.

Christianity throughout the world

was redefined and institutionalized over the centuries by the authorities of man-centered religions. It was defined by those who had a sprinkle of Bible knowledge, but sought to invent or continue a religiosity that was created after their own desires. As a result, “Christianity” became a conglomerate of organized religious groups that were denominated from one another. The function of these religious groups was often founded upon ignorance of the word of God, and then constructed after the emotional allegiance of the adherents to their favorite religious institution or some founding father. Many groups burdened their adherents with a multiplicity of religious traditions. As the Old Testament faith given to Israel became the “Jews’ religion” (Judaism) by the 1st century (Mk 7:1-9), so a pseudo “Christianity” has become the religion of misguided religionists of the present century (See Gl 1:13,14). Once the function of the individual religious groups became a habit, they became institutionalized. As a result, all that pertained to the religious institutions (denominations) was defined by the established heritage of the adherents of each particular denomination. With a sprinkle of biblical terminology and a few out-of-context scriptures legalistically mingled here and there on an out-

Christianity is not a union of organized denominations.

line of traditional doctrine, the institutions were defined as the denominations of “Christianity.” But people have become exhausted with such structured religiosity that is void of human relationship and personal involvement, and above all, Christ centeredness. They have grown weary with a religiosity that has no biblical foundation or focus on the authority of Jesus in one’s life. They have thus begun to seek freedom from the bondage of their own religious heritage in order to be simple Bible-loving, Christ-centered Christians who minister to others in their communities.

What often complicates restoration is that pseudo “Christian” groups are led by those who have little knowledge of the Bible, but are religiously zealous. These are as those about whom Paul warned Timothy. “... *men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, supposing that godliness is a means to gain*” (1 Tm 6:5). These are those who use the “church” as a means of support. They are those who are “*always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*” (2 Tm 3:7). When there are preachers who preach for gain, then the groups that they lead are maintained for the sake of their purse. Restoration leaders seldom come from those whose goal it is to maintain a religious group for the sake of gain. Such worldly clergymen

seek to please the people, for it is the people who sign their paychecks. When one is fearful of losing his salary, he is very apprehensive about preaching those things that do not tickle the ears of the audience (2 Tm 4:2). There are usually few pleas for restoration from those who use the church as a means for gain.

Compound the problem of “profiteering prophets” with the desire of the adherents of particular churches to validate their “Christianity” by anything other than the Holy Scriptures of God. When men turn from the authority of God’s revelation as the validation for their faith (See Rm 10:17), then it is difficult to turn them from the error of their way. It is for this reason that we cry out to a religious world to turn again to the ways of God. And in order to turn to the ways of God, we call on everyone to turn to the authority of His word. This means serious Bible study.

This is not an easy task. Sunday morning religious performances and experiences are too often used as authority to prove that one is a Christian. The more frenzied the Sunday morning performance and emotional the outburst, the more difficult it is for the power of the word of God to work in the lives of

**Our religiosity
must be judged
by the
word of God.**

those who are stricken with “assembliology,” the belief that one’s Sunday morning performance validates his Christianity. It is difficult to convince one that his Sunday-morning religious performances and emotional outburst must be validated by the word of God. **All that we do must be brought under the scrutiny of the word of God.** However, if the experiences of our assemblies are the validation for our identity and existence, then God’s word has little chance of guiding our way. We must always remember that the power of man’s emotions to control his direction in life is often more powerful than his study of the word of God to direct him in the right way.

It is in the preceding context of religious confusion, therefore, that men seek to establish their own conditions for salvation. Bits and pieces of Scripture are extracted from the Bible in order to give our religiosity some reference to the Bible. Unfortunately, the bits and pieces are often a twisted formula of conditions by which we would manufacture our own legal entrance into the kingdom. For example, the “sinner’s prayer” is found nowhere in the Bible. But such has become a common “system of salvation” that is proclaimed by many religious groups throughout the world. It is claimed that the “sinner’s prayer” is

based on the statement of Paul in Romans 10:9. “... *if you will confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and will believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*” **But if this is all that is required for salvation, then one need not repent, for repentance is nowhere mentioned in the context of Romans 10. One need not obey the gospel of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, for obedience to the gospel by immersion is nowhere mentioned in the context** (See Rm 6:3-6). But **A study method of “pick and choose” will never lead us to the true ekklesia.** Paul said that unless one obeys the gospel, Jesus will be coming to him with vengeance in flaming fire (2 Th 1:6-9). **A consistent plea for restoration will never come from those who seek to dissect the Scriptures in order to construct their own “systematic theology.”** If we are going to restore the word of God as our authority in all religious matters, then we must restore **all** the word of God.

It is thus an insurmountable challenge for all those who would call for a restoration of primitive Christianity to succeed in their task. We are often challenged by where we are ourselves in reference to the true ekklesia. We are challenged by the fact that we who call for a

restoration are often far removed from the true. Therefore, we would guard ourselves from seeking to restore others to what we believe the true church to be. We say this because we too are sometimes crippled by our lack of understanding of the true ekklesia as she is revealed in the Scriptures. It is for this reason that **there must be a mutual desire on the part of many to go back to the Bible,** back

Restoration is a united effort of the many who seek Jesus through His word.

to the initial revelation of the ekklesia as God would have her to be. In this way, the restoration is not centered around the interpretations and opinions of any one man or church of adherents. We would not be so presumptuous as to claim to have the final interpretative authority in matters of faith. The Bible alone must stand as our standard to call us together as the true ekklesia of Christ. **Restoration is always a mutual movement of many Bible-students who seek to move together in the same direction in order to restore the true.** Movements that are led by individuals usually die with the passing of the admired leader. And they must die, for any religious movement that is not totally Christ-centered must cease to exist. We must keep in mind that the ekklesia is not about man, but about Jesus Christ. It is **all** about Jesus Christ, not “my

church” or “your church,” or some religious heritage that we consider sacred.

3 THE RESTORATION HAS BEGUN

Anyone who is familiar with the present state of global change in Christendom knows that there is a restorational paradigm shift from the old and traditional function of “church” to a more relational fellowship of disciples in the communities in which they live. We have seen pockets of restoration movements springing up throughout the world. We have experienced so many over the past four decades that it is now true that no particular group can lay claim to the call of being a unique restoration movement. **Restoration movements spring out of a desire of people to return to the word of God. And wherever there are people who love the truth, there will always be those who call all people back to the Bible.**

What we are seeing in many churches throughout the world is a frustration with the churchianity of the past. We see a concerted effort by many to move toward a more realistic relational partnership among believers that is based on a common love of Jesus and submission to Him through obedience to His

word. Those who are of this restoration are willing to make all necessary sacrifices in order to move toward a more New Testament defined fellowship. It has sometimes been necessary for those of these movements to scrap most of their religious past, and just start over again. In order to do this, millions have just gone back home as the early Christians, and started simple. Some would call this a radical restoration. But it is radical only in the sense that the present churchianity has drifted so far away from the genuine.

As a result of people being a part of some “church” that has failed the people, this massive movement throughout the world seeks a rediscovery of one another in small fellowships. It is true that these groups are often more relational based than word based. Those who come from wayward religious groups who had little respect for the word of God resort to their relationships with one another as the foundation for the existence of their new faith. However, relationships may be a bond that will hold people together, but we must keep in mind that this was not the primary foundation upon which the ekklesia of the 1st century was based. **The early church existed because of the truth of the gos-**

The church exists upon the foundation of our obedience to the gospel.

pel every member had believed and obeyed (Gl 3:26,27). The members’ relationship with one another was the serendipity of their obedience to the gospel (Jd 3). Relationships with one another was not their prime objective. They became the relational ekklesia of Christ because of their obedience to the gospel of Christ that was revealed to them through the apostles (See At 2:41-47). They stood upon the foundation of this gospel as their reason for existence and continuation (1 Co 15:1-4).

But we would not criticize the existing restoration to small fellowships throughout communities, for such was the means by which the early disciples began anew their relationship with God. We would only seek to bring teaching of the word to those who have seen the apostasy of the past in a religiosity that tore people away from one another. It was an apostasy that sought to maintain an ecclesiastical institution that was dominated by a leadership who often perpetuated the system for the sake of their own existence. It was an institutionalized religiosity that existed upon the foundation of estranged adherents who gave their tithes to continue something that was based more on tradition than an obedient response to the grace of God (See 2 Co 4:15; Ep 2:10).

However, we would caution those who “establish” churches. First, those who establish independent churches are often those who have fled from some religious authority on earth in order to gain freedom from institutional bondage. Those who have made the flight recognized the error of councils, synods and church governments. They fled such in order to seek Jesus only as their king. But if their flight from authority was not to the sole authority of King Jesus, then they have fled in the wrong direction. They have simply become institutionalized denominations meeting as small groups.

Second, **we must never separate the authority of Jesus from the authority of His word.** When we understand that the authority of Jesus on earth is expressed through His word, then the restoration through small fellowships will begin to take root. When people start studying their Bibles again, then the word of God will bring forth fruit. But until then, fellowships that are founded upon relationships only, will be as frail as those who are members of the fellowships. (More later.)

4 RESTORATIONAL ATTITUDES

Restoration movements often begin as a result of people’s reaction to distorted religiosity. Unfortunately, when one reacts to something about which he disagrees, he often develops reactionary theologies, or at least, an attitude of a crusader who brandishes the sword of the Spirit in order to inflict injury. But true restoration comes forth from sincere men who are studious of the word of God, and thus seek to call people back to the Bible from the bondage of misguided religiosity. In seeking to set aside their own religious prejudices, restorationists seek with open minds to lead honest people to the teachings of the Bible. They reach out to other studious thinkers in order to allow their thinking to be challenged, and then, to stimulate a fellowship that is based on a renewed and objective study of the word of God. A true restorationist, therefore, can always be determined by whether he is calling people to his own charismatic personality, or to turn people again to study the word of God.

The church continues upon the authority of Jesus through His word.

Restorationists must be sincere and honest students of the word.

Insecure students of the word of God, on the other hand, will always instigate a Spanish Inquisition to defend their oral religious traditions and heritages. Their cry that others are “liberals” or “heretics” only reaffirms that they are defensive concerning their lack of a biblical foundation upon which they have based their own faith. They would assert that we study our Bibles, but caution us about coming up with any new answers. Bible study is thus shackled by an unwillingness to change in the face of new discoveries they would make in honest Bible study.

We have discovered also that religions that are based on emotionalism with a sprinkle of Bible are not likely to heed the call to restoration. Since such religions focus more on the adherents’ emotional experience rather than **Assembly is an expression of faith, not a validation of the authority of the word of God, not a validation for faith.** their hysterical assemblies become the validation for their identity and existence. Such religions focus on the adherents, not the authority of Jesus through His word. Colorful assemblies, therefore, become a weekly opportunity when the adherents emotionally validate themselves again in their religion rather than being an opportunity to worship God and study His word.

In the last century there has been a renewal in recognizing the work of the Holy Spirit. This has been a welcome renewal in recognizing that the Spirit of God is alive and working today among the people of God. But we must always keep in mind the words of Jesus in John 16:14 in reference to the work of the Holy Spirit. **“He will glorify Me.” The purpose of the coming of the Spirit was to glorify Jesus, not Himself. A true restoration, therefore, always seeks to bring glory to Jesus, not the Holy Spirit.**

Sincere Bible students understand that if the church went into apostasy in the past—and it did in the 2nd century—it can do it again within any generation. For this reason, every disciple of Jesus must be diligent in searching the Scriptures, always assuming that we have never discovered all the truth, but also that we can go astray in one generation. In being aware of apostasy, therefore, **it is not our task in our quest to quote our predecessors as authorities.** We appreciate the thinking of those who have gone on before us, **but our quest is not to restore their thinking or their heritage.** If our predecessors have led us astray, then they are part of the problem. We are not seek-

The word of God, not our predecessors, is our authority for matters of faith.

ing to restore a previous structure of the ekklesia to that which was promoted by our predecessors. **We are seeking to delve into the word of God in order to capture the true nature of the ekklesia as God would have her to be in a modern world.** And in doing this, the Bible alone, specifically the New Testament, must be our only authority. It must be the only library of books to which we should go in order to discover the old paths from which we may have strayed.

What we learn from the Bible today may rectify previous misunderstandings. We are thus not ashamed to challenge our own beliefs as we study the Scriptures. We would not be so arrogant as to assume that we have arrived at all truth in our search for truth. An honest student of the word should never be embarrassed about changing his views because of further study. If we canker in our beliefs, then our Bible will only become another monument shelved with a religious library of dissertations on theology that have been produced by our predecessors.

We give respect to our fathers who were great students of the Bible. Their heritage of Bible study is greatly appreciated, for they have given us an inheritance to remain with the word of God as the foundation for all that we believe and

do. We say this because in areas throughout the world where there is little scholarship of the word of God, it is quite difficult to stimulate a restoration to Bible study, and subsequently, a restoration to the true church of the Scriptures. When there is no spirit of freedom that would be the culture to drive freethinkers, the people are trapped in the bondage of their own religious heritage and traditions. Cultures of bondage institutionalize religiosity, and thus, rarely give rise to restorations. It is almost impossible for the institutionalized mind to break free to study the Bible anew, and then give birth to a restoration of the church about which we read in the New Testament. **One must always keep in mind that it is the purpose of institutionalized religions to perpetuate their own existence.**

5 RESTORATION OR REFORMATION

What has often hijacked noble efforts for restoration is that some have unfortunately turned down the road of reformation. Reformation results from the efforts of leaders to reform various theologies or the practices of a particular religious group. It is an effort to make a religious institution better by improving on its structure or spirit or doctrine. Men

as John Wyclif, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox and others were reformers of the Roman Catholic Church some five hundred years ago. They sought to reform certain beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church that they believed—and they were right—were contrary to the Bible. However, the result of their struggles to reform was that they gave us a Christendom of denominationalism, much of which was patterned after the religious structures of Roman Catholicism. As a result, they failed to take us all the way back to primitive Christianity.

Reformation movements promote division because the reformers can never agree upon a standard by which they would bring unity among themselves. It is for this reason that the work of reformers is often based on a particular reformer’s beliefs, and subsequently, the beginning of a new denomination that is based on the unique beliefs of each reformer. Reformations, therefore, never lead to unity. They never lead us to the word of God as the sole authority in matters of faith because the succeeding leaders of the reformed churches spend years in their established universities in order to study the teachings of the reformers, not

Reformations leave us with denominationalism.

the teachings of the Bible. The reformed churches, therefore, are subsequently perpetuated throughout history by a trained and paid clergy. The Bible historian must never settle for a reformation when there is the necessity of a restoration. Our call for restoration, therefore, must not be confused with efforts to reform existing apostate churches.

Once a reformed church is institutionalized (denominationalized), its purpose is to perpetuate itself by a structured organization or systematic theology that keeps its leaders and adherents faithful to the traditional teachings of the institution. Many such reformed churches have written creed books in order to guarantee that all adherents maintain the code of identity of the denominated religious group. If no creed book is written, then the denominated group will establish “oral traditions” to which all adherents must conform in order to maintain the traditions of the fathers. Some even establish legal systems of worship and assemblies by which they might identify themselves as different from others, but at the same time be known for being identified as a unique denomination. **Once an institutional religion is defined, its purpose is to perpetuate its unique definition.**

Reformations are inherently divisive.

In the existing Christendom of denominationalism today, there are those who are preaching a “restoration” that is often disguised as reformation. What such preaching has done has given us another era of denominationalism, which is now referred to as the “independent church movement.” Instead of being attached to the traditional churches that originated out of the Reformation Movement of Wyclif, Luther, Calvin, Knox and others five hundred years ago, these misguided restorations are giving us an even more splintered Christendom where every “pastor” does that which is right in his own eyes. Many today have fled from the “traditional” religions that came forth from the Reformation Movement centuries ago. Unfortunately, what has happened is that the traditional churches have simply been splintered again into thousands of small independent groups that are scattered throughout the world. As members move from one of these groups to another, they become greatly confused. As one such member recently told us, “We don’t know what to believe anymore because each pastor is preaching his own beliefs.”

Restoration means going back to the former or original foundation two thousand years ago that will produce what God intended for His people to be throughout history. Restoration means

struggling to throw off creeds, traditions, synods, traditional religiosity, and independent church confusion in order to restore the original foundation of the New Testament to its rightful place of authority among the people of God. It is the willingness of those who desire such to sacrifice religious behavior or beliefs, even unique fellowships, in order to objectively establish one’s life on the revelation of God concerning the existence of His community of believers. **Restoration must never be sidetracked by reformation.** Neither should it be disguised by break away independent churches. In order not to be sidetracked, the restorationist must be relentless in his efforts to be absorbed with the word of Christ in order that his life be totally Christ-centered. He must be so overwhelmed with the word of God that he will not be detoured from his objective regardless of the great onslaught of persecution that Satan may bring his way.

**Restorations
penetrate
through the
false in order
to find the pure.**

The true restorationist in no way supports a reformation of existing denominations. He does not shroud his efforts by forming a break away independent church whose members are cloned after his own beliefs or personality. The true outcome of restoration does

not fall under the umbrella of Protestantism, or by plagiarizing the term “Christian.” The restorationist does not seek to revise creeds, or restructure councils, synods or ecclesiastical organizations. In fact, his efforts will lead to the end of denominationalism, and the banishing of creeds and councils and those who would be authorities over the disciples of Jesus. We have

There are few who would be restorationists.

found that there are few who are courageous enough to make

this journey. There are few who are willing to be labelled “liberal” or “heretic” by their wayward contemporaries. There are few who are willing to be ostracized by their fellow theologians, and banned from the fellowship of those churches that have denominated themselves through obedience to either creeds, councils or charismatic personalities. There are few who are willing to end up as Paul who said, “*I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus*” (Gl 6:17). Those marks came from misguided religious people, the same people he sought to bring in restoration from the distorted religiosity of Judaism back to the simplicity of God’s word.

6

A BIBLICAL RESTORATION PRINCIPLE

When we call for restoration, we are fundamentally calling for all those who believe in Jesus as the Son of God to return to His word as the final authority in all matters of faith and godly behavior. Fundamentally, we are asking people to start studying their Bibles again in order to make Jesus the center of reference for living. When such happens, there will be an explosion in restoration simply because there is power in the word of Christ to direct one’s life (Hb 4:12).

Those who would herald the call for restoration would be those who are captives of the word of God, and thus, they esteem the word highly in their hearts. As captives of the word of God in their hearts, restorationists call on all those who accept Jesus as the Son of God to return to the authority of His word in their lives. In the apostate environment of Israel, who had strayed from the word of God at the time God called Isaiah, so we would stand up and cry out to Christendom, “*To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them*” (Is 8:20). **Let’s go back to the Bible and Jesus.**

“*Seek out the scroll of the Lord and read*” (Is 34:16). If we seek out the word of God, we can restore the right paths of

God (Is 58:12). Unfortunately, most in Israel had no desire to restore themselves to the paths of God since they had created a religion after their own desires (Is 42:22). We find the same true today among religious groups who use the name “Christian,” but refuse to turn to the word of Christ as their source of faith.

During Jeremiah’s day he too sought to restore the people of God who had strayed from and forgotten the commandments of God (See Hs 4:6). He called for Israel to restore themselves to the old paths (Jr 6:16). He exhorted the people to turn again to the law of God (Jr 31:21,22). He proclaimed to the people that they had turned to walk down the “bypaths” of apostasy (Jr 18:15). It was a time in the history of Israel, therefore, when the people should have remembered and done the old ways, which ways were the ways of God (Ml 4:4). It is such a time today. We call on people to return to the “scroll” (book) of God in order to learn and walk in the paths of God.

Such was the plea of Jesus when He came into the world to restore Israel to submission to the word of God. “*What is written in the law? How does it read to you?*” (Lk 10:26). This sentiment was continued by the apostles. “*If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of*

God” (1 Pt 4:11). The plea of the apostles was “*what does the Scripture say ...*” (Gl 4:30). We are exhorted to “*hold fast to that word*” that the apostles preached (1 Co 15:2). And if anyone would presume to be “Christian” among us, we would answer with Paul’s affirmation in the context of those who sought to be the authorities of their own religiosity. “*For I determined not to know anything among you, except Jesus Christ and Him crucified*” (1 Co 2:2).

Since it is always the tendency of man to leave the authority of God, then it is a constant plea of sincere Bible-loving people to call for a continued focus on the right ways of God. If there is no one out there who is making the plea, then the misguided religiosity of men will take them further into a churchianity that is bankrupt of the word of God. And for such people, there is only one future, and that future is portrayed in the words of Jesus: “*Not every one who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven*” (Mt 7:21).

7 FOUNDATION OF RESTORATION

Our call for restoration is not without solid principles upon which we take

our stand. In fact, the validity of any call for restoration must be based on the following beliefs:

A. Belief in a final authority: We must believe that God intended to reveal a final authority to man in all religious matters. If God did not reveal a final authority in religious matters, then He left men to their own inventions. We see the result of such in the world today. There is confusion of religious beliefs that fall under the umbrella of Protestantism. It is confusion because religious leaders are not persistent and faithful to the common foundation of God's revelation that would bring unity among all believers.

B. Belief that God's revelation is understandable: We must believe that God's absolute and authoritative revelation is understandable to the common individual without the necessity of any "official" interpreters. Division results when the average member terminates his study of the Scriptures, and subsequently gives his brains over to "official" students of the Bible, the clergy. Preachers with advanced degrees in theology have intimidated the average member into believing that he has no chance of coming to a knowledge of

Fundamental truths need no interpretations.

the truth through simple Bible study. But we must never be deceived into thinking that it takes years of university study of the Bible to understand the fundamentals that are necessary for salvation. We must continually believe what Paul wrote to the average member of the church in Ephesus. *"Therefore, when you read you can understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ ..."* (Ep 3:4). It takes no Bible scholar to read the Bible and understand the mystery of Jesus Christ. We must never accuse God of shrouding in a maze of obscurity that which is necessary to believe and obey in order to be saved.

C. Belief that God's word has been preserved for all men: We must believe that God's revelation is preserved today in the form that God intended it to be preserved. It has been preserved in a manner by which it can be studied, and by such study, one can learn the way of salvation. *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God ... so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work"* (2 Tm 3:16,17). Restorationists believe that the word of God is sufficient in its present written form to equip every person for every good work.

D. Belief that God's word is all-sufficient: We must believe that God in-

tended for all those who would come to Him must come to Him on the basis of what is taught in His revelation. Through the revelation of Jesus, who is the way, truth and life (Jn 14:6), all men can learn what is necessary for salvation through Jesus (At 4:12). God's word, therefore, is entirely sufficient to educate one concerning what he must do to be saved, as well as, what he must do to live a Christ-centered life.

E. Belief that man's religious laws and traditions are not binding: We must understand that men do not have the right to bind on themselves mandates for salvation that are not bound by God. Such religious traditions and laws lead one away from the commandments of God (See Mk 7:1-9). It is not wrong to do something traditionally. But to make that which is traditional the law of one's religiosity, is to bring one into the bondage of men, and subsequently, divide one believer from another (See Gl 5:1). Restorations must affirm that any tradition that would lead us away from God must be sacrificed for both unity among believers, as well as a caution against exalting tradition over the word of God.

F. Belief that the word of God will produce unity among believers: Restorationists believe that when people focus on Jesus, their direction by the

word of God will always produce unity, not division. Jesus is the one who brings people together. Legal interpretations of the word of God will divide people from one another. The word of God is simply our telescope to discover the Son of God. Our focus is on Jesus, not on the parts of the telescope. It is for this reason that there can never be any "I am of Paul," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Apollos" among the disciples of Christ (1 Co 1:12,13). It is all, "I am of Christ."

8 THE TASK OF RESTORATION

We have found that there are some common goals among all those who seek to restore the foundation upon which to rediscover the church of the New Testament. These goals bring together a unified focus of all those who would seek to implement the teachings of the word of God in their lives in order to be Christians only in a world of religious complexity and confusion.

A. To restore Jesus as our sole authority in matters of faith: When Jesus ascended from this world He reminded the apostles that He had been given **all authority** (Mt 28:18). He is now at the right hand of God reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm

6:15). He rules through His word on earth, and thus, all must live according to the standard of His word (Jn 12:48). Restorationists seek to restore people's thinking to the fact that Jesus now reigns over all things (See Ph 2:9-11).

B. To restore the authority of the words of Jesus: Restorationists seek to restore the New Testament to its place of absolute authority among all those who would seek to be well-pleasing to God. They seek to restore the words of Jesus as the only authority in matters pertaining to faith, and thus maintain the word of God as the source of faith. *"So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ"* (Rm 10:17). (More later.)

Jesus reigns through the authority of His word.

C. To restore oneness in Christ: Restorationists are frustrated with the magnitude of division that prevails throughout Christendom. Knowing that people seek to follow Jesus and His word, they seek to be the one universal church of Christ. They seek to answer the prayer of Jesus in John 17:20,21. *"I do not pray for these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they*

Jesus prayed for a unity that can be attained.

also may be one in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me."

D. To restore true worship: Restorationists lament over the misguided worship of those who have created worship after their own desires. They thus seek to call all people back to true worship that is in spirit and truth according to the word of God. It is not that they call for the restoration of some legal formula of worship, but the simplicity of worshipping God from the heart and according to His directions. *"God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth"* (Jn 4:24). Jesus reassured the faithful, *"...for the Father seeks such to worship Him"* (Jn 4:23).

E. To restore obedience to the gospel: Restorationists seek to call all men to obedience of the gospel, as opposed to man-made conditions or systems for salvation. They seek to renew people's focus on the good news (gospel) of Jesus' death for our sins and His resurrection for our hope (1 Co 15:1-4). In obedience to this gospel event in history, they seek to restore obedience to the gospel by burial with Jesus in baptism, and resurrection with Him in coming forth from a tomb of water. *"Therefore, we are buried with*

GOSPEL: Death Burial Resurrection

Him through immersion into death, that just as Christ was raised up from the dead through the glory of the Father, even so we also might walk in newness of life” (Rm 6:4).

F. To restore the individual priesthood of believers: Restorationists seek to restore the responsibility of the individual priesthood of believers and one’s direct relationship with Jesus apart from

**All Christians
are priests.**

synods, councils, or the officials of religious organizations.

“You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pt 2:5).

G. To restore speaking as the oracles of God: Restorationists seek to rid Christendom of all those unbiblical names and traditions that present opportunities for division among believers. They seek to return to being simple disciples of Jesus who have a common bond with one another because of their common obedience to the gospel (Jd 3). They do not want to be identified by any other name than the name Christian (1 Pt 4:16). If they speak, they seek to speak according to the oracles of God. *“If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pt 4:11).*

H. To restore Jesus as the center of our lives: Paul wrote that He had been crucified **with** Christ (Gl 2:20). He reminded the Roman Christians that they had been buried **with** Christ (Rm 6:4l Cl 2:12). Since we have died with Christ, we live **with** Him (Rm 6:8). We are workers together **with** Him (2 Co 6:1). And when we die, we will be **with** Him forever (Ph 1:23). All that the Christian is and does is with Christ. He is the totality of the Christian’s life. The center of the Christian is not assemblies, bands

**JESUS
CHRIST
The focus
of our lives.**

and buildings. Christianity is all about Jesus Christ. It is about doing and being Christ. It is about the individual believer living a 24-7 life-style that reflects the aroma of Christ (2 Co 2:14-16). When we speak of restoration, therefore, we are speaking of restoring one’s life to a totally Christ-centered life that is a light unto the world (Mt 5:16).

These common goals among those who seek to restore simple Christianity will identify them as different, if not radical in the eyes of those who have strayed. Restorationists will be different from those who have set themselves to promote or sustain any traditional religion that has been created after the traditions of men. They will be different from those who have given themselves over

to emotionalism as a validation for faith. In fact, the true restorationist will not be identified with any particular denomination or religious group that maintains separation from all those who would seek to restore the simplicity of discipleship in one's life. It is for this reason that in the midst of religious confusion and ignorance of the word of God, restoration to primitive Christianity can be a daunting task. Nevertheless, if we would be true to God, we have no option in reference to our course of action than to stand firm on the word of God.

9 RESTORING THE AUTHORITY OF KING JESUS

A plea for restoration in Christendom is basically a paradigm shift in religious authority. It is a shift from the authority of the religious creeds of men, the authoritative decisions of church councils, experiential religiosity, emotionalism, papal legislation, and any other similar man-focused foundations upon which men have based their faith. The plea for restoration is a paradigm shift from these "authorities" of men to the sole authority of Jesus Christ.

As long as people seek to function religiously with man as the center of authority in reference to their faith, the

longer they are barred from Jesus Christ as the total focus of their lives. The more a religion focuses on the authority of men, the less focus there is on Jesus as the sole authority of one's life. One will never become totally focused on Jesus as the Lord of his life as long as there are other authorities competing for one's loyalty. Restoration will occur when people move away from earthly religious authorities to the sole authority of King Jesus from heaven (Mt 28:18). And in order to turn one's attention from earthly lords to the Lord of heaven, he must seek out the word of our heavenly Lord (At 2:36).

**Any authority
of our faith
more than
Jesus
is too much.**

Restoration assumes that all that is necessary in order to be pleasing to God on earth is discovered in the word of God. We firmly believe that "*all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work*" (2 Tm 3:16,17). We firmly believe that God "*has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who has called us to glory and virtue*" (2 Pt 1:3). And we firmly believe that the faith "*was once for all delivered to the*

saints” (Jd 3). Since God has finalized His revelation to man for all time, then we believe that the word of God is totally sufficient to take one to heavenly glory.

The word of God must be our final authority in all matters of faith. By authority in all matters of faith we mean that our spiritual behavior must be compared with the “spiritual words” that have come to us through the inspiration of the word of God by the Holy Spirit. Paul’s admonition to those who claimed to be spiritual in 1 Corinthians 2 reaffirms the foundation upon which the restorationist stands. Those things that we should believe and behave that are pleasing to God are discovered only in the word of God. We would not know such things unless they were revealed to us from God. *“Even so the things of God no one knows except the Spirit of God”* (1 Co 2:11). With the other apostles, Paul affirmed, *“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God”* (1 Co 2:12). One cannot know the mind of God except through that which has been revealed by God through the Holy Spirit. And one cannot know the things that have been revealed by the

**The Spirit
has revealed
the mind of God
through the word.**

Holy Spirit, except through the inspired word of God. *“Which things we [the apostles] also speak, not in the words that man’s wisdom teaches, but what the Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual words”* (1 Co 2:13). Those who would contend that they are believing and behaving spiritually, therefore, must base their beliefs and behavior on the authority of the Spirit-inspired word of God. If one would assume to be “Christian,” therefore, then his assumption must be founded upon a “Thus saith the Lord.” In this way one establishes the authority of Jesus in his life.

In a world of Christendom where there is little respect for the authority of the word of God, and subsequently little knowledge of the Bible, there are many people who seek to carry the name “Christian,” but cannot validate their beliefs and behavior by the word of God. It is a frequent deception that some assume that they are Christians simply because of their good works in the name of Christ. We appreciate their good works in the name of Christ, but we would caution ourselves concerning thinking that legal good works validate one to be a Christian. This is true because one cannot be justified by works of law (Gl 2:16). We are justified by works of obedience (Js 2:24). However,

any attempt for legal atonement for our sins through good works will never justify us before God (See Rm 11:6).

One’s good works will not atone for erroneous beliefs or behavior. One may do good works in the name of the Lord, but not be saved because of those good works. Simply claiming that Jesus is one’s Lord does not identify one as a Christian. We must always abound “*in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord*” (1 Co 15:58). The problem comes when people assume that they are “in the Lord,” when actually they have never started their spiritual journey in the Lord by immersion into Christ. “*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ*” (Gl 3:27; see Rm 6:1-6). These words of Paul present a warning signal to all those who would claim to have submitted to the will of God, but believe to the contrary. Jesus said, “*Not every one who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven*” (Mt 7:21). It is necessary to do the will of God if we claim to be a Christian. And the only way one can be assured that he is doing the will of God is to stand on the word of God as the foundation for his faith.

We must keep in mind that it is im-

portant what we believe. The book of Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians who were changing their beliefs. They were in the process of returning to the Old Testament law. The writer of Hebrews rebuked his audience by saying, “*Therefore, we must give more earnest attention to the things that we have heard so that we do not drift away*” (Hb 2:1). If the Christian gives up his belief that is based on the word of God, then he draws back into destruction (Hb 10:39). He is no longer faithful, for he no longer submits to the commandments of King Jesus. Jesus can only be the lord of those who have submitted to His word. And in order to submit to the words of Jesus, one must listen to and obey His words. Ignorance of the Bible hinders people from restoring their allegiance to King Jesus.

10 RESTORING THE APOSTLES TO THEIR “THRONES”

Jesus made a very unique promise to the apostles in Luke 22:29,30. “*And I grant to you a kingdom just as My Father has granted to Me, so that you may eat and drink at My table, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*” Now if one misses the metaphor of “thrones” in this statement, then he will misunderstand the message of the

promise that Jesus here made to the Twelve. No interpreter would understand the word “thrones” to be literal thrones on earth. We do not have the apostles sitting on literal thrones and judging among the spiritual Israel of God. However, the standard by which they are now judging interprets the “thrones” and “judging” statements of Jesus’ promise.

Before He made the promise of Luke 22:29,30, Jesus had promised the Twelve that the Holy Spirit “*will teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance that I have said to you*” (Jn 14:26). He promised the apostles that “*when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all the truth*” (Jn 16:13). In the context of John 14–16, these were exclusive promises that were made to the apostles. Through them, therefore, the Holy Spirit would reveal all things that would be necessary for godliness in order that the people of God be complete and thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tm 3:16,17).

That which was initially revealed by the Holy Spirit through the apostles— all that Jesus had personally taught them and all truth—is **the standard of judg-**

ment by which judging is now done among the people of God. The apostles are now on their “thrones,” judging through the word of Jesus that was revealed through them by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. If anyone would reject this word, therefore, it would be this word that would be the standard by which he would eventually be judged. Jesus spoke, “*He who rejects Me and does not receive My words, has one who judges him. The word that I have spoken, the same will judge him in the last day*” (Jn 12:48).

A plea for restoration, therefore, is a plea that all men who would call themselves after the name of Jesus Christ must submit to the authority of the word of truth that was revealed through the apostles. In this way, the apostles are restored to their “thrones” of judgment. If one would refuse to submit to the written words of Jesus, therefore, he dethrones the apostles, and subsequently, he brings himself under the judgment of the words of Jesus. We could rightly bring Revelation 20:12 into this picture of final judgment. “*Then I saw the dead, small and great, stand before the throne. And the books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged from the things that were written in the books, according to their works.*”

11 JESUS' WORDS PRODUCE UNITY

When we speak of restoration to the authority of the words of Jesus, we are not talking about someone's authority as an official interpreter of the Bible. That which is necessary to be restored takes no scholars to discover, no method of Bible study to engineer, and no councils to mandate. If our method of Bible study that we use to discover the truth upon which we stand causes us to splinter into sects or denominations, then we know that we have invented the wrong method of study. Or, it may be that our motives in teaching are questionable. God never revealed His word to His people in a manner that would divide His people from one another. The true restorationist will realize this, and thus, he will never seek to bind where God has not bound, nor loose where God has bound. Neither will he invent a system of Bible study by which an outline of "doctrine" is defined, and then seek to clone disciples after his outlined deductions or inferences.

The Corinthians needed milk instead of meat because they were carnal in their thinking (1 Co 3:1-3). The Hebrew Christians had become dull of hear-

ing, and thus needed to be taught again the milk of the word and not solid food (Hb 5:11,12). The ignorant and unbelieving about whom Peter wrote twisted the Scriptures to their own destruction (2 Pt 3:15,16). Spiritual things are difficult to understand when we are living according to the flesh. They are difficult to understand when we have grown tired of listening. Therefore, to accuse the Bible of being difficult to understand, and thus cause division, is to make a pronouncement against one's own spiritual inadequacies and lack of Bible study. Making such an accusation is also making an indictment against God by saying that He was not able to give man His revealed word in a manner that would create unity among all those who seek to please Him.

A true call for restoration, therefore, can never be a call to division after the opinions and traditions of men. When sincere and honest Bible students come to the word of God, they come with a desire to be united in Christ. They come with a desire not to allow their opinions and deductions to become occasions for division among believers. They do not come to bring men into bondage, but to set men free. Any true restorationist, therefore, will guard the freedom of those with whom he seeks to be in fellowship. He will guard their freedom,

not at the expense of compromising the truth of God's word, but at the expense of binding on others his personal opinions and interpretations.

One of the sure evidences of religious leaders who are not students of the Bible is their proclamation, "God told me!" God is not a respecter of persons, and thus, He does not choose specific people today through whom He would speak. All that is necessary for teaching and edification has been revealed through the written Scriptures (2 Tm 3:16,17; 2 Pt 1:3; Jd 3). If anyone would be taught by God, he must study the word of God. The writers of the Bible received and wrote the word of God by inspiration. But we must learn the truth by perspiration in diligent study. There is no easy way to learn the will of God. There is no cheap "God-told-me" way by which we can learn the truth. We must read and study (Ep 3:3-5). God tells us through the Bible to study the Bible (2 Tm 2:15). In order to listen to God we must study what He has written through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Only in this way will we restore the word of God to our faith and living. But as long as people who are unwilling to study, stand up and proclaim that "God told me," there will never be a restoration of unity that is produced by the word of God.

12 THE URGENCY OF RESTORATION

It is not without a sincere desire for the souls of men that there are times when sincere men stand up and call for a restoration to true Christianity. There are souls at stake. Apostasy from the word of God will lead one away from an opportunity to be in the eternal presence of God. The call for restoration, therefore, comes from the heart of those who believe the following:

1. Belief that there are those who have departed from the faith (1 Tm 4:1-3).
2. Belief that there are those who are eager to twist the Scriptures to their own destruction (2 Pt 3:15,16).
3. Belief that there are those who willingly deceive others, and thus do not have Christ because they have gone beyond the teachings of Christ (2 Jn 7-10).
4. Belief that there are those who go forth with teachings that lead people away from the foundation of the word of God (1 Jn 4:1).
5. Belief in the authority of Christ as opposed to the authority of man in matters of faith (Mt 28:18; Cl 1:18).
6. Belief that there are those who do not believe in the final authority of the New Testament as God's revelation of

- truth to man (2 Tm 2:15-18).
7. Belief that all our emotions, experiences and behavior must come under the scrutiny of God's word (Rm 6:16,17; Cl 3:17).
 8. Belief that there are those who seek a religious following by promoting legalistic practices that draw disciples after themselves (At 20:30; Rm 16:17).
 9. Belief that all believers should be united as the one body of Christ (1 Co 1:10; Ep 2:16).
 10. Belief that there is a pattern of sound words to which we must hold fast (2 Tm 1:13).
 11. Belief that we cannot separate the lordship of Jesus from the authority of what He says through His word (Lk 6:46; Jn 12:48).
 12. Belief that the faith has once and for all time been delivered to the saints (Jd 3).
 13. Belief that there is a difference between clearly defined truth and opinions, and that truth must prevail over opinions (Rm 14).
 14. Belief that matters of faith are bound and loosed only by God (Mt 16:19).
 15. Belief in the individual priesthood of the believer to study the word of God in order to arrive at one's own conclusions (Jn 8:32; 17:17; 2 Tm 2:15).
 16. Belief that our salvation is by grace that manifests thanksgiving to God in our lives through good works (2 Co 4:15; Gl 5:6; Ep 2:8-10).
 17. Belief in the one gospel, and obedience thereof, as the only means by which one can come into a covenant relationship with God (Rm 6:1-6; 1 Co 15:1-4).
 18. Belief that it is not possible for people to direct their own paths religiously, and thus, all men must be instructed by the word of God (Jr 10:23).
 19. Belief that we can spiritually grow only in the truth of God's word (2 Pt 3:18).
 20. Belief that in the final judgment, all will be judged by the authority of the word of Christ, and not by the religious traditions of men (Jn 12:48).
- Restoration invariably calls on people to make a very serious decision. It is the same call that the Holy Spirit made through Paul in reference to the religions from which the Corinthian disciples had to make a decision to leave. In quoting Isaiah 52:11 he wrote, "*Therefore, **come out from among them and be separate,***' says the Lord. *'And do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you'*" (2 Co 6:17; see Cl 2:20-23). It is emotionally difficult to restore ourselves to the simplicity of the faith that is revealed in the New Testament. When one has believed and behaved for years what he or she thought to be correct, it is emotionally difficult to give up one's heritage in order to re-

store the heritage of God. But if one does so, he is often banned from friends and disfellowshipped from religious groups that have long left the old paths of God. Nevertheless, Paul called on the Corinthians to make the sacrifice. And if we are willing to make the sacrifice, then we will join with the Corinthians who willingly gave themselves to follow the will of God. If we make the sacrifice, we must believe what God promised to all those who would make the journey to follow Him. “**And I will be a Father to you, and you will be My sons and daughters,**’ says the Lord Almighty” (2 Co 6:18).

Epilogue

We look forward to the finality of the restoration of all things when Jesus comes again. Until that time, however, we cry out for repentance and conversion. In Acts 3 Peter cried out to the people, “*Therefore, repent and be converted so that your sins be blotted out, in order that the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord*” (At 3:19). Not only did repentance and conversion identify the “times of refreshing,” but such on the part of

man also laid the foundation that God “*send Christ Jesus, who was before appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things that God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began*” (At 3:20,21).

Since Jesus had already come in the flesh at the time Peter made the preceding statement, reference was to the time when Jesus would come again. The heavens had already received Jesus when He ascended in a cloud some time before Peter made the statements of Acts 3 (At 1:9,10; see Dn 7:13,14). Jesus is now in heaven reigning at the right hand of God (Hb 8:1). He will remain there until He comes again in a cloud. The present “times of restoration,” therefore, will continue until Jesus comes with His mighty angels at the end of these times (1 Co 15:26-28; 2 Th 1:6-9). These are the times in which all things must be restored to God’s original plan for all men. It is a time to call all men back to God, back to His will. And in order for men to be restored to the will of God, they must repent and be converted to the will of God.