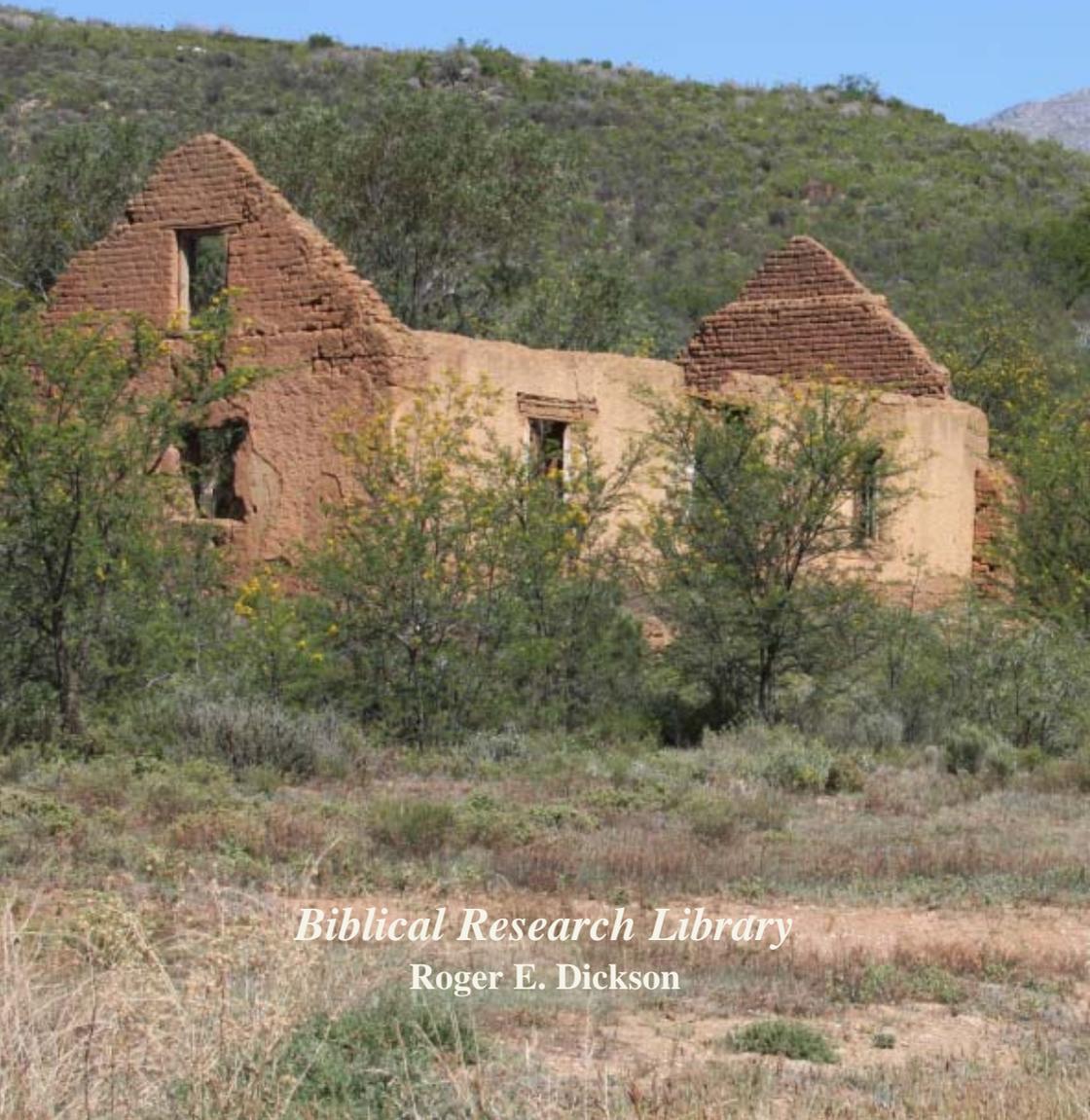


A CALL FOR RESTORATION



Biblical Research Library
Roger E. Dickson

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21st CENTURY RESTORATION

One thing is most obvious concerning what the world refers to as “Christendom” or “Protestant Christianity.” It is divided. It is so divided that the non-Christian world has a hard time figuring out the nature of true Christianity. While many in Christendom are satisfied with the tremendous diversity and division that prevails throughout Christendom, there are those who have fled to the word of God as the only authority and hope for uniting those who accept Jesus as the Savior of the world. They thus seek for a restoration of Christianity in a world of religious confusion. This plea for restoration makes these people different. We can be sure of one thing. We can identify the people of God today by their desire to restore simple Christianity in a confused world of religiosity. Those who are not crying out for restoration are those who have little regard for the word of God. They cannot seek a restoration of simple Christianity, because in doing so, they would have to give up either their religion, their positions, and often, their purse. But those who humbly seek to submit to the word of Jesus will be relentless in this quest simply because they know that there are no other options to eternal life than Jesus. And in order to discover the “road map” to eternal life through Jesus, they must come to Him on the foundation of His word. Their obsession with Jesus and His word is the foundation of their mission. They thus call all men out of religion in order to be Christians only.

INTRODUCTION

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. The meeting was conducted on the foundation of Roman law and directed by the magistrates of the city. Both Gentiles and Jews in any city throughout the Roman Empire of the first century knew the function of the city *ekklesia*. We seek an *ekklesia* for the restoration of the *ekklesia*.

It is interesting that Jesus used the word *ekklesia* when He, for the first time in His ministry, spoke of those who would, after His death, be His disciples: “*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 (See Mt 16:13-18). **His *ekklesia*, therefore, would be totally founded and focused on Him and His word.** This is the fundamental foundation upon which we make our plea for

restoration. We seek to call all God-fearing, Bible students to stand up and cry out for restoration among all religious groups. We cry out for a restoration to Jesus and the authority of His word in our lives.

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 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. Something is wrong with a Christendom that is divided over pastoral pomp, power thirsty popes, and money-loving Balaamites. 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 Bible-searching believers to join with us in restoring the simplicity of Christianity. We are taking a bold stand because our faith has driven us to conclude that God still hates division among His people (See Proverbs 6:16-19).

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 of Jesus that is revealed in the New Testament by the assortment of confused religiosity of Christendom that they witness in the world today (See Jn 17:20,21). The true church of Christ is not an assortment of confused religionists who have forsaken the authority of the word of God and followed after their own emotions or their own traditions. The church that Jesus built follows His will, and thus, the members are known for faith and behavior that is directed by the word of Christ.

**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 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 as the New Testament 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 faith that is based on the word of Christ.

When we call for a restoration of the true church (ekkklesia), 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 first 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 first century. So what they are really asking people to do is to “join

True restoration calls people to Jesus through His word.

their church” in order to become a part of the restored New Testament church. But we think that such a plea, that is actually a disguise for “church recruitment,” does not truly honor a call for restoration. So do not misunderstand our plea. We are not calling people to a specific religious group. We are not calling people to simply produce union by accepting one another’s man-made religious teachings or fellowships. **We are calling people to Jesus and the authority of His word in our lives.** We are calling people to turn again to the word of God as the final authority in **all** matters of faith.

To assume that all that one believes and does is the restored ekklesia of the first 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 organized religious group of Christendom. Because we often drift away and circle around, one thing is always 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.** That group does not represent Christ. 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. We know we have strayed from the Bible when we are no longer studying it.

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 recognizing that our lives are not as Christ-centered as we desire. And we might add that we are not seeking to restore the behavior of 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 on a corporate

**Restoration
is a plea
to individuals.**

body of believers. True restoration is always focused on individuals, 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 as a whole, 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 faithfulness 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).

When we call for restoration, some

would assume that the outcome and success of restoration depends on some authority of man on earth. But true restoration always comes forth from those who seek to submit to the authority that proceeds from King Jesus who is in heaven (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 rules of some man or group of men. Restoration never involves enthroning the opinions of any man or council or synod. Such man-centered organizations are the problem, not the solution. Such authorities are actually the cause for division among believers. 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.** And since we can be restored to unity only upon the foundation of the word of Christ, then it is imperative that our faith be validated by the Spirit-inspired word of God. It is God who must validate us as His sons, not man. And the only way we can know that we are his sons is if we are validated as sons according to His word.

Chapter 1

Restoring 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 restorationists call people to leave that which has gone astray in order to return to that which is 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 misguided 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 revealed the pages of the Holy Bible. 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 reference to the church that has gone into apostasy. The restorationist seeks to leave that which is false according to the word of God in order to bind on himself

the will 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 gone astray.** 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 little concern for the authority of God’s word, and thus are steeped in their own religiosity from which they 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 of 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 actually 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 “Pen-

tecost 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 forth from our understanding of the revealed Christ. Everything else is fake and false.

Christianity does not revolve around humanly defined forms, functions, methodologies, emotions, or names of men.

It revolves around manifesting in our lives a Christ-like love for others and a desire 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 our focus on Jesus. A restored Christ-centered life is manifested through personal ministry, and one’s faith that is validated by the word of God.

Chapter 2

The Need 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? There are different reasons. There are those who feel burdened with the complexity of the 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. Many people have been exhausted with the **c u m b e r s o m e** organizationalism of institutional religiosity. People 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

**Restoration
is a call
for freedom
from misguided
religiosity.**

outside the bondage of organized (institutionalized) religion. Most important of all, many people are calling for a restoration today because they have discovered that many of the churches they see are not as the church they read about in the Bible.

There are many people 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. For this reason, many people have discovered that their faith is void 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 organized religious structures, they seek to turn again to the sole authority of Jesus in their lives. They seek a direct relationship with Jesus through His word, and not through membership of some religious group that is not Bible based.

Christianity throughout the world was redefined and institutionalized over the centuries by the authority of men on earth. It was defined by those who had a sprinkle of Bible knowledge, but sought to invent or continue a religiosity that was created after the desires of men. As a result, "Christianity" became a conglomerate of independently organized religious groups that were divided 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. Subsequently, many groups burdened their adherents with a multiplicity of religious traditions in order to identify and perpetuate their unique church. Because of added traditions, the Old Testament faith given to Israel became the "Jews' religion" (Judaism) by the first century (Mk 7:1-9). For the same reason, many churches today have become the religion of misguided religionists (See Gl 1:13,14). Once the function of the individual religious groups became a habit, they then 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, the institutions were defined as the denominations of "Christianity." But

Christianity is not a union of organized denominations.

people have become exhausted with such structured religiosity that is void of human relationships and personal involvement, and above all, Christ centeredness. They have grown weary of 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. This is an era where sincere believers are struggling to free themselves from the shackles of man-made religiosity and man-dominated religious hierarchies.

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 financial 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 those 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 perpetuate a church for the sake of gain.** Such money-oriented church leaders seek to please the people, for it is the people who sign their paychecks. When a preacher is fearful of losing his salary, he is very apprehensive about teaching 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 some 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 to a biblical foundation. 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.

Turning from self-validation to the word of God is not an easy task. Sunday morning religious performances and experiences are too often used as personal validation 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 minds and hearts of 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 always be validated by the word of God. **All that we do must be brought under the scrutiny of the word of God** (See

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

Hb 4:12). However, if the experiences of our assemblies are the validation for our identity and existence as Christians, 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 a simple confession 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 gos-**

**A study method of
“pick and choose”
will never
lead us to
the true ekklesia.**

pel by immersion is nowhere mentioned in the statements of Romans 10. But 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 into parts and pieces in order to construct their own “systematic theology” for salvation.** 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 that God intended that we in these times must obey. This means that we must restore all that God requires of us to be saved.

It is thus a great 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 removed from the true ekklesia of Christ. 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 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 only 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 such movements 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. It is about being the ekklesia of Christ because we have mutually obeyed the will of Christ.

Chapter 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

Bible based and relational fellowship of disciples in the communities in which Christians live. We have seen pockets of restoration movements springing up throughout the world. We have experi-

enced 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 that is void of the word of God. We see a concerted effort by many to move toward a more realistic and 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 sacrifice much 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 to discover one another in small fellowships. It is true that these

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

groups are sometimes more relational based than word based. Those who come from wayward religious groups who had little respect for the word of God often resort to their relationships with one another alone as the foundation for the existence of their new fellowship. However, relationships may be a bond that will hold people together, but we must keep in mind that this

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

was not the primary foundation upon which the ekklesia of the New Testament is based. **The early church existed because of the truth of the gospel 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). Their relationships with one another was not their prime objective. They became the relational ekklesia of Christ because of their common 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 restored 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 apart from one another. It was an apostasy that sought to maintain an eccle-

siastical religious institution that was dominated by a leadership who often perpetuated the system for the sake of their own existence. It was an organized 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 authoritative councils, synods and church gov-

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

ernments of men. They fled such in order to seek Jesus only as their king. But if their flight from the authority of man was not to the sole authority of King Jesus, then they have fled from one authority of man to another. They have simply become independent denominations meeting as small groups under the authority of a man.

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 will begin to take root. When people start studying their Bibles again, then the word of God will bring forth fruit by becoming the sole authority in our lives in reference to faith. But until then, fellowships that are founded upon relationships only, will be as frail as those who are members of such fellowships.

Chapter 4

Restorational Attitudes

Restoration movements sometimes have a false beginning when people react 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. They seek to call people back to the Bible from the bondage of misguided religiosity. In seeking to set

aside their own religious prejudices, we must seek with open minds to lead honest people to the teachings of the Bible. We must reach out to other studious thinkers in order to allow their thinking to be challenged. We must, then, stimulate a fellowship that is based on a renewed and objective study of the word of God. A true restorationist, therefore, can always

Restorationists must be sincere and honest students of the word.

be determined by whether one is calling people to his own charismatic personality, or to turn people again to Jesus and His word.

It is easy to identify churches that are restoration oriented. **The members have Bible studies as a group where everyone participates as a result of their own personal studies.** They are not afraid to challenge traditions, beliefs or heritages in a group Bible class because everyone has been studying their Bibles in order to discover more truth. Apostate churches do not have participatory Bible classes because they are either dominated by the thinking of one man, founded on the traditions of their fathers, or simply afraid to discover that they are wrong in certain areas of either belief or behavior. But when we see a group of people who open their Bibles in a participatory Bible discussion, then we have discovered a group of people who are seeking to establish the Bible as their foundation for faith (Rm 10:17).

Biblically insecure churches, on the other hand, will always instigate an 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 to any new conclusions. 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 reli-

gions 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 the authority of the word of God, 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. Their religion is humanistic in the sense that the proof of their faith is based on the experiences of the individual. 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.

Assembly is an expression of faith, not a validation for faith.

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 second 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 as authority in matters of faith.** If our religious predecessors have led us astray, then they are part of the problem.

We are not seeking to restore a previous apostate structure of the church 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 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 honest Bible study will 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 he has learned more from his personal study of the Scriptures.

If we solidify our beliefs with a limited knowledge of the Bible, then our Bible will only become another document that is shelved with a religious library of books on theology that have been produced by our predecessors. **We have found that religionists who have little knowledge of the Bible will always go somewhere else than the Bible in order to validate their religion.**

We give respect to our fathers who were great students of the Bible. Their heritage of Bible study is greatly appreciated, for they gave 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 bring people into captivity, and thus, rarely give rise to restorations. It is almost impossible for those in bondage 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 organized religions to perpetuate their own existence.** Such religions are traditional and bondage oriented because of their ability to intimidate the adherents into perpetuating a false religion.

Chapter 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. Reformation is an effort to make a religious institution better by improving on its existing 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 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. Though their efforts were noble, 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 **denominationalism.** the work of reformers is often based on a particular reformer's unique beliefs. The unique

beliefs are thus the beginning of a new denomination that is based on the 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 and perpetuate the teachings of the reformers. The reformed churches, therefore, are subsequently perpetuated throughout history by a trained and paid clergy. **Bible students 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 religions.

Reformations are inherently divisive.

Once a reformed church is institutionalized, that is, identified by a unique doctrine or organization, its purpose is to perpetuate itself by a structured 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.**

In the existing Christendom of denominationalism today, there are those who are preaching a “restoration” that is actually a disguised 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, independent religionists are giving us an even more splintered Christendom where every “pastor” or “apostle” 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 a desire of brave men and women to be willing to sacrifice religious behavior or beliefs, even unique fellowships, in order to objectively establish their lives 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 opposition that Satan will bring his way. And the opposition will come. It will come through those who have created a religiosity after their own traditions. The greatest restoration leader of all time said, *“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me [Jesus] before it hated you”* (Jn 15:18).

**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 form more independent denominations. 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 found that there are few who are courageous enough to make this journey. There are few who are willing to be labelled “lib-

eral” 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 man-made 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 leaders. The marks were the result of beatings by religionists who stood against a restoration from Judaism to the simplicity of Jesus and His word.

Chapter 6

A Biblical Restoration Principle

When we call for restoration, **we are 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 by living according to His word. When such happens, there will be an explosion of men and women returning to Christ simply because there is power in the word of Christ to draw all men to Him (See 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 (Psalm 119:11). 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 the Israelites 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”*** (Isaiah 8:20). We are challenging religious leaders that if they do not speak where the Bible speaks, then there is no light in them. ***“Seek out the scroll of the Lord and read”*** (Isaiah 34:16). We are challenging every preacher that is not seeking out the “scroll of the Lord,” that he has no right to lead God’s people. He is a blind guide for those who seek to walk according to the word of God. If we seek out

the word of God, then we can restore the right paths of God (Isaiah 58:12). If we do not, then we will lead the people into error. 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, which religion was perpetuated by their hired false preachers (Isaiah 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 and authority in religious matters. It is for this reason that we call on all sincere and God-fearing people to take a stand for Christ and His word.

The two prophets, Jeremiah and Hosea, sought to restore the people of God who had forgotten the commandments of God. Hosea spoke for God by saying, **“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you so that you will be no priest to Me. Seeing you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your children”** (Hosea 4:6). Jeremiah called for Israel to restore themselves to the old paths (Jeremiah 6:16). He exhorted the people to turn again to the law of God (Jeremiah 31:21,22). He proclaimed to the people that they had turned to walk down the “bypaths” of apostasy (Jeremiah 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 (Malachi 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. It is as one Bible starved believer said, “We need more teachers of the Bible.”

Jesus came into the world to restore Israel to submission to the word of God. He appealed to the religious leaders, **“What is written in the law? How does it read to you?”** (Lk 10:26). We need teachers who will teach us what is written in the law of God. Jesus’ sentiment was continued by the apostles. **“If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God”** (1 Pt 4:11). Where are all those teachers who will “speak as the oracles of God”? The plea of the apostles was, **“... what does the Scripture say ...”** (Gl 4:30). We have for too long been listening to those who have no idea what the Scriptures say because they have trusted in their own ability to speak and not in their study of the Scriptures. We have been cursed long enough with biblically ignorant orators whose speech is sterile of the word of God. We are also burdened by those about whom Paul wrote in Romans 16:18. **“For they who are such serve not our Lord Christ but their own belly, and by appealing words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the innocent.”**

We are exhorted to **“hold fast to that word”** that the apostles taught (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 cruci-**

fied” (1 Co 2:2). This we would demand of anyone who would stand before us and assume to be a spokesman for God.

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 everyone 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). The people want to do the will of God. But in order for the will of the Lord to be done, we must know His will. And this takes Bible study. “Lord, Lord” religionists will never call for a restoration if they do not get into the will (word) of God.

Chapter 7

Foundation For 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 matters of faith. If God did not reveal a final authority in religious matters, then He left men to their own inventions. If there is no final authority, then every man is his own authority. And if every man is his own authority, then God cannot condemn us for inventing our own religious nonsense. This brings to mind the frightening statement of 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12.

“The presence of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan with all deceiv-

ing power and signs and wonders, and with all deception of wickedness among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion so that they should believe a lie, that they all might be condemned who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.”

We see the result today of religionists who have established their own authority in matters of faith. There is confusion in Christendom because men have no love of the truth. It is confusion because religious leaders are not faithful to the common foundation of God’s revelation that would bring unity among all believers. Since many religious leaders have rejected the final authority of the word of God, they have established their own authority, and subsequently, their own religions. The confusion we see in

Christendom today is proof that men can never be their own final authority in matters of faith.

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 disciples terminate their personal study of the Scriptures, and subsequently give their 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 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

Fundamental truths need no interpretations.

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. The mystery of the gospel has been revealed **because it can be understood by everyone**. 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. The Holy Spirit in-

spired the Bible to be written to common people, not scholars.

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. Restorationists believe that the Bible alone is able to spiritually equip one for every good work. The Holy Spirit put about 1,500 years into the inspiration and writing of the Bible (See 2 Pt 1:20,21). One would be foolish to think that He would now lead us to ignore the Scriptures which He took so long to have written. Since the Spirit put about 1,500 years into writing the Bible, we can put a lifetime in studying it.

D. Belief that God’s word is all-sufficient:

We must believe that God intended for all those who would come to Him must come to Him on the basis of what is taught in His revelation. This is why Peter wrote that the disciples of Jesus have *“been born again, not by perish-*

able seed, but imperishable, by the word of God that lives and abides" (1 Pt 1:23). If one would be born again, he must be born from the instruction of the word of God that he obey the gospel (See 1 Pt 1:25). 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, and thus be born of the word of God (At 4:12; see Jn 6:45). 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. The Holy Spirit will not lead us contrary to His written word. Neither will He lead us to salvation apart from what is revealed in the Bible. David still says, "*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path*" (Psalm 119:105).

E. Belief that man's religious laws and traditions are not binding as standards by which we will be judged:

We must understand that men do not have the right to bind on themselves mandates for salvation that are not bound by God. Binding religious traditions and laws lead us away from the commandments of God as they led the Jews away from God by the time of the ministry of Jesus (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 the sake of staying close to the word of God. They must be sacrificed for the sake of unity among believers. We are free to follow our traditions, but we are not free to bind our traditions in a manner that brings others into the bondage of our traditions.

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.

Confused interpretations of the word of God will divide people from one another. The

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

word of God is simply our telescope by which we discover the Son of God. Our focus is always on Jesus. But we cannot have a clear focus on Jesus unless we look through the word of God. 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."

Calling for the restoration of simple Christianity is not easy. Those who will defend the traditions of their fathers will always stand in the way (See Mk 7:1-9). Those who are intimidated by the religious establishment will not have the courage to take a stand for Jesus alone. Those who validate their religiosity by their own emotional experiences will al-

ways subject the word of God to their own feelings. Those who trust more in either pastor, priest or pope, instead of the word of God, will always follow personalities over the Prince of Peace. Restoration is a struggle. It is accomplished

only by the brave who consecrate Jesus in their hearts. It is accomplished by those who take a stand on the principle the apostle Peter stated to the religious leaders of Jerusalem, “*We must obey God rather than men*” (At 5:29).

Chapter 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. 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 with all authority as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15). Jesus “*has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him*” (1 Pt 3:22). On earth, He rules through His word, 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). If one would allow Jesus to reign in his heart, then he must submit to the words of Jesus (See Jn 8:31; Lk 17:20,21).

B. 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 word 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).

C. 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 concerning His disciples, “*that they all may be one*” (Jn 17:20,21).

D. 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 the truth of the word of God. It is not that they call for the restoration of some legal formula of worship, but the simplicity of worshiping 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). Our question is whether the Father is seeking us because of our worship? If we are worshiping according to His truth, then we know that He seeks our worship.

E. 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 (Rm 6:4; more later).

F. 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 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). Our access to God is through Jesus Christ, not man-made organizations. Our road map to understand Jesus Christ are the inspired records of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

G. Restore speaking as the oracles of God:

Restorationists seek to rid Christendom of all those unbiblical names and traditions that promote 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 of Christ (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. Restore a direct relationship as a disciple of Jesus:

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 6:4; 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**. Christ is the totality of the Christian's life. The fact that He is our center of reference in life is not something of this world. Christianity is all about Jesus Christ. It is about doing and being Christ. It is about the individual believer living a daily 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 from the authority of the word of Christ.

Restorationists will be different from those who have set themselves to promote or sustain any traditional religion that has been created after the desires 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 and ourselves, we have no option in reference to our course of action than to stand firm on the word of God. We must cry out for a restoration to a relationship that is direct with Jesus as our King.

Chapter 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, papal legislation, and any other similar man-focused foundation 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, who is now head over all things (Ep 1:22).

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 particular religion focuses on the authority of men, the less focus there is on Jesus as the sole authority of one's life. We will never become totally focused on Jesus as the Lord of our lives as long as there are other

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

authorities competing for our 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 our attention from earthly lords to the Lord of heaven, we must seek out the word of our heavenly Lord (At 2:36).

Restoration assumes that all that is necessary in order to be pleasing to God on earth is discovered in the word of God. We must firmly believe that *“all Scripture is given by inspiration of God”* in order *“that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work”* (2 Tm 3:16,17). We must 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 must firmly believe that the faith *“was once for all delivered to the saints”* (Jd 3; see Rv 22:18,19). Since God has finalized His revelation to man for all time, then we must 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 Corinth reaffirms the biblical 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). In reference to 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**

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

that have been revealed by the 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.” **However, they 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 about using good works to validate ourselves as Christians. A person is not a Christian because he or she does good works in the name of Christ (Read Mt 7:21-23). This is true because **one cannot be justified by works of law**, for no one can keep law perfectly in order to save himself (See Gl 2:16). We are justified by works of obedience, not meritorious works of law and good deeds (Js 2:24). Any attempt for legal atonement for our sins by good works will never justify us before God (See Rm 11:6). Good works, or attempts at perfect obedience of law, cannot atone for our sins simply because we would be putting God in debt to save us.

One's good works will not atone for erroneous beliefs or sinful 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 baptism into Christ. "*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have*

put on Christ" (Gl 3:27; see Rm 6:1-6). In order for our good works not to be in vain, we must be baptized into Christ. 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 in order to be a Christian. And the only way one can be assured that he is doing the will of God is to do what the Lord says in reference to being baptized into Christ.

We must keep in mind that **it is important 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 readers 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 Christ, 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 the words of his Lord. Ignorance of the Bible hinders people from restoring their allegiance to King Jesus. Please keep these words of Jesus in mind: "*If you continue in My word, then you are truly My disciples*" (Jn 8:31).

Chapter 10

Restoring The Apostles To Their “Thrones”

Jesus made a very unique promise to His 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 apostles. 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.

**The apostles
now judge
through their
inspired word.**

Before He made the promise of Luke 22:29,30, Jesus had personally promised the Twelve in John 14:26 that the Holy Spirit *“will teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance that I have said to you.”* He promised the apostles that *“when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you [the apostles] into all the truth”* (Jn 16:13). In the context of John 14–16, these were exclusive promises that Jesus made to the twelve apostles. In fulfillment of these promises, therefore, the Holy Spirit would reveal to the apostles 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). Because of the promises, therefore, we would assume that the Holy Spirit delivered “all truth” to the apostles. We would assume that these truths would be delivered to all the disciples of Jesus through the apostles. And this is exactly what happened (Read 1 Co 2:13-16).

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 judgment by which the apostles are now judging 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 (2 Tm 3:16,17). If anyone would reject this word, therefore, it will be this word that will be the standard by which he will eventually be judged. Jesus said, *“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 refuses 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. In view of this, every disciple must consider Revelation 20:12. *“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.”

When we stand in final judgment before God, no creed books of man will be opened as the standard of our judgment. No catechism, no orders of worship, or no manuals of methods will play any part in our final judgment. We will stand only before King Jesus and His word alone (Jn 12:48). And for this reason, every believer should be stirred to plead with every soul to restore people to Jesus and the authority of His word.

Chapter 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.**

God's word produces unity, not division.

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. And we might add that no true restorationist will arrogantly use himself as the center of reference for understanding the Bible. True restorationists stand behind the word of God because they are terrified to stand between the people and the word of Jesus.

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 hearing, 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 carnal lives. 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 against the Bible 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. Therefore, when we witness division among those who claim to be Christians, we must always conclude that the division is the problem of those who claim to be Christians, not the Bible.

A true call for restoration, therefore, can never be a call to division after the opinions, traditions and personalities 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 personal opinions and deductions to become occasions for division among believers. They do not come to bring men into the bondage of their own opinions, 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. He will, if necessary, sacrifice his traditions and personal opinions for the sake of unity.

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, then 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 there are people who are unwilling to study, but stand up and proclaim that "God told me," there will never be a restoration of unity that is produced by the word of God. The great division that we have witnessed in the religious world often comes from those who have claimed to have had some personal "dream" or "message" from God. The dreams and messages often conflict and contradict another, and thus, division is created among churches. However, the fact that division exists because of the personal dreams and messages of the leaders is evidence that the dreams and messages **did not** come from the one Holy Spirit. The Spirit would never lead the people of God into contradictory beliefs or behavior (See 1 Co 12:4-11).

We must always keep in mind that true nobility in the eyes of God is that we continually search the Scriptures.

Listen to what the Holy Spirit said of those in the city of Berea:

These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so (At 17:11).

Noble-minded Bible study will produce unity, not division, among sincere Bible students. Unfortunately, many have deceived themselves into thinking that **union** among churches, not unity, is the answer to the division that exists in Christendom. But the plea for union is based on a misunderstanding of the difference that exists between union and unity. Union is the result of leaders accepting one another regardless of differences in belief. Specifically, union among churches can happen regardless of the authority of the Scriptures in matters of faith. Two opposing groups can simply agree to accept one another's existence, regardless of what each group believes. In other words, two churches that are based on error can still accept one another in union by accepting one another's error. Unfortunately, their union is based on error, not truth.

Unity is the result of believers who have been granted unity by God because they have a common salvation that is based on the truth of God's word. This is the context of Paul's discussion in Ephesians 4. Ministries of teaching the truth were given to the early church *"until we all come to the unity of*

the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God ..." (vs 13). The "unity of the faith" refers to establishing ourselves on the "knowledge of Christ," that is, knowing the word of God so we *"no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of teaching, by the trickery of men in cleverness to the deceitfulness of error"* (vs 14). **Unity is based on accepting the authority of the word of God in all matters of our common salvation.** And this common salvation we can know only in the word of God. Union, however, is based on those who preach "every wind of doctrine," but have agreed to accept one another's erroneous teaching. Restorations, therefore, call for unity, not union. In matters of faith, the restorationist cannot agree to disagree. In matters of opinion we will agree to disagree, but in matters of faith, it must always be "speaking as the oracles of God" (1 Pt 4:11).

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

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 final 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 always 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 (Jeremiah 10:23).
 19. Belief that we can spiritually grow, but only as we are instructed by 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 creeds and traditions of men (Jn 12:48).

Restoration invariably calls on people to make some very serious decisions. 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 thought to be correct, it is emotionally difficult to give up one's heritage in order to restore the heritage of God. It is difficult to give up religious heritages because we are 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. The Corinthians had to come out

from among the religious idolaters of their community in order to be the temple of God (1 Co 3:16,17). Thousands of Jews in the first century left their religious heritage of 1,500 years in order to follow Jesus (See At 2:41; 6:7). And if we are willing to make the sacrifice, then we will join with millions who have willingly left erroneous religious heritages in order 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).

Chapter 13

What Is The First Step?

If you have made it this far in reading our plea for restoration, then you are probably wondering where do we go from here to initiate and continue the restoration of Christianity. The answer to what step to take now is simple. **We must begin with the gospel!** Mark began his book by saying, “*The beginning of the gospel [good news] of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*” (Mk 1:1). After His baptism by John, Mark stated in reference to the beginning of the ministry of Jesus, “*Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God*” (Mk 1:14). And with the gospel, we must begin.

When Paul went into the city of Corinth, notice what he said he did when he first visited to the city:

*Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast to that word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. **FOR I DELIVERED TO YOU FIRST OF ALL** that which I also received, that **Christ died for our sins** according to the Scriptures, and that **He was buried**, and that **He rose again on the third day** according to the Scriptures ...” (1 Co 15:1-4).*

The first thing Paul preached when he went to Corinth was the gospel. This is the first thing by which we must begin any restoration. Therefore, we

must begin by asking, “What is the gospel?” Most people will reply, “The good news!” Correct! But it is good news about what?

To answer this question, here are some things we all know. All “*have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (Rm 3:23). And “*the wages of sin is death*” (Rm 6:23). The problem is that our sins separate us from God (See Isaiah 59:1,2). **Our greatest problem is sin, separation and death.** We are spiritually dead because of our sins. We need GOOD NEWS about our spiritual death problem.

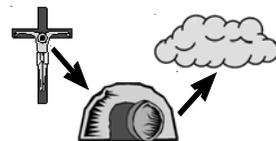
But there is more. When Adam sinned in the garden of Eden, he was **separated from the tree of life**, lest he “*put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever*” (Genesis 3:22-24). When Adam was separated from the tree of life, all humanity after him was also separated from the source of eternal life. “*For since by man [Adam] came death, by man [Christ] came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all will be made alive*” (1 Co 15:21,22). Because we are physically born from the seed of Adam, and thus separated from the tree of life, we will all physically die. **Our second greatest problem is physical death.** We need GOOD NEWS for this problem, for we all want to be made alive in Christ.

So here we are, spiritually dead because of our sin. We are destined to physical death because we have been driven from the source of eternal life. **We need good news!** And the gospel is good

news. But what people usually do not understand is that the gospel is an event of history.

If we held up a copy of the Bible and asked, “Is this the gospel?,” most people would answer, “Yes.” But they would be wrong. The Bible is not the gospel! Now before you throw this book down, we are sure we will convince you before you complete your reading of this book that the Bible is not the gospel. Remember what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:3,4? In a few words he explained the heart of the gospel. “*For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received, that **Christ died for our sins** according to the Scriptures, and that **He was buried**, and that **He rose again** on the third day according to the Scriptures.*” Herein is explained the gospel event.

Since we are separated from God because of our sins, then **it is good news that Jesus died for our sins.** Since we are destined to die physically, **then we can have hope of eternal life in Christ because Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection was an event of history.** It is recorded by inspiration of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 15:3,4 as an event of history. **The good news (the gospel) is the historical event of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.** The Bible is the Holy Spirit inspired **report** of this event.



We can believe the historical event of the gospel because we believe the inspired report, the Bible. The gospel was an event of history. The Bible is the inspired written report.

Most “Christians” believe the historical event of the gospel of Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection. This event was **declared** to the Corinthians. Paul **preached** the event to them and they **received** his message as true. They thus based their faith on the truth of the gospel event, that it actually happened in history. They were **saved** by the gospel because they obeyed the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Now this brings us to wonder how they obeyed an historical event. Paul explained this to those in Rome, who, as the Corinthians, received and also obeyed the gospel event.

*Or do you not know that as many of us as were **baptized into Christ Jesus** were baptized into His death? Therefore, we **are buried with Him through baptism 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. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, we **will also be in the likeness of His resurrection** ...” (Rm 6:3-5).*

In order to connect with the historical event of the gospel, **one must experience another historical event in his or her life**. This is the event of baptism. Romans 6:6 states that we must be **cruc-**

ified with Christ. There is a cross in the gospel event. Jesus died for our sins. And what do we do with dead bodies? We bury them. Jesus was buried. We must be buried also after crucifying ourselves on the cross of repentance (Lk 13:3). If we crucify ourselves in repentance, but are not buried, then we are as a walking dead man. There is no life until we are buried and resurrected. Now we understand why Peter said to the mournful Jews on Pentecost who were responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus. **“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins”** (At 2:38). After one joins with Christ on the cross, he must go with Christ to the tomb. For us it is a tomb of water (See Jn 3:23). One must go to the tomb before being resurrected to life with Jesus. We are thus **“buried with Him in baptism”** (Cl 2:12). But we are also **“raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead”** (Cl 2:12). In baptism, **we have obeyed the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus**. We have obeyed the gospel.

Is obedience to the gospel important? Absolutely! 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9 states that every person must obey the gospel. In the future, Jesus **“will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels.”** He is coming again in **“flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.”** Paul wrote that those who do not obey the gospel **“will be punished with everlasting destruction.”** So is it important to **obey the gospel** of Jesus’

death, burial and resurrection? Peter asked a question that every person must answer. *“For the time has come that judgment begin at the house of God. And if it first begins with us, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?”* (1 Pt 4:17). You know the answer.

In pleading with people to restore Christianity, nothing could be more clear than a plea to preach the gospel and call on all men to obey the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. This is why there is so much in the New Testament about baptism, for in baptism one obeys the gospel (See At 2:31-47; 8:5-13; 8:26-40;

9:10-19; 10:24-48; 16:13-15,25-35; 18:8; 19:1-5).

If we cannot restore the preaching of and obedience to the gospel, then any efforts for unity in restoration are useless. Any struggle to be the one church of the New Testament is futile. Any church that is built on any other foundation than obedience to the gospel is the result of men who have preached other gospels and other means of salvation (See Gl 1:6-9). It is for this reason that we *“stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel”* (Ph 1:27).

Begin A Restoration Of Christianity In Your Community

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 obedience to the gospel. 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 through obedience to the gospel 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 preced-

ing 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 Daniel 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 to take vengeance on those who know not God, and do not obey the gospel. 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 obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.