

“Restore Not Reform!”

Acts 1:1-8

Intro. – You will recall from Church history that Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Hus, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Wycliffe were a part of what was called the Protestant Reformation. You will remember that this was an attempt by these and others to break away from Roman Catholicism and REFORM the Church. The Church at this time had gone through a great falling away from *the Faith*. These men wanted to reform the Church and in many ways they did...

But then in the early part of the 19th century there were men raised up by God that saw things were not right, as far as, the Bible was concerned. These men began another movement that became known as The Restoration Movement. Their intent was not to just reform, but to RESTORE New Testament Christianity in both faith and practice.

Let me now illustrate the difference between *reform* and *restore*. In the Spring of 1985, Tom Ellsworth (preacher friend of mine from Bloomington, IN) and I purchased two cars together. One was a 1955 Nash Metropolitan, the other was a 1956 Hudson Metropolitan. Tom and I enjoyed working together on these cars..., but, we made a move and that brought things to a halt. Here’s my point: in working on these cars our purpose was clear... (let’s modify, customize and really make this baby run...). Now there was a time in my life that may have been the case... but with a lot of maturity, rather than modify, customize and turn one of these cars into a “rod,” our intent was to RESTORE the car to its original condition...

This helps illustrate what was and remains the purpose/plea of the Restoration Movement – not reforming, modifying or customizing the Lord’s Church BUT *restoring* the Lord’s Church as revealed in the Bible.

By “looking back” at this our heritage, such will enable us to “look ahead” to the coming of Christ. What a thrill this is, to be a part of restoring New Testament Christianity. This is what this old world needs!

Zoo visitors were amazed to see in a cage labeled “Co-Existence” a lion and some lambs asked to explain how this could be, the zoo’s director was reported to have said, “It’s nothing. Just add a few fresh lambs ever now and then and everyone is happy.”

Doesn’t this illustrate the fact that appearances mean very little if anything the grand scheme of things. What matters is God’s plan for unity/harmony works! And because it works, our intent must be to *restore* it!

Purpose: to instill a greater appreciation for our heritage in the Restoration Movement

I It is a RETURN TO Movement

- Illus. – Warren Wiersbe tells of a rather pious church member who thought himself quite the Christian. A Bible School teacher asked this individual to speak to a class of primary girls and boys. He stood pompously before them and asked, “Why do you think people call me a Christian?” After an embarrassingly long silence, a small voice in the back said, “Because they don’t know you?”
- people may doubt what you say, but most of the time they will believe what you do!
- so true with the local church and why *restoring* must take precedence over *reforming* in Lord’s Church

A. A Return to the Past

1. Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Wesley and others set out to *reform* Church.
2. Other *reform* movements were launched by Otterbein, George Fox, Roger Williams and others.
3. But when Barton W. Stone, Walter Scott, the Campbells and others came along, they sought NOT to *reform* but to *restore*...
4. Their intent and purpose was clear – Unity on the basis of God’s Word alone to evangelize the lost

B. A Return to the Beginning

1. Those of the Restoration Movement seek to go back beyond Wesley, Zwingli, Calvin, Luther etc.
2. Thus, we of the Restoration Movement seek to go beyond Rome and her traditions... beyond Constantinople and Greek Orthodoxy... we seek to go all the way back to Jerusalem and the beginning of the Lord’s Church there on the day of Pentecost.
3. Nothing short of this will achieve the ideal of the Restoration Movement.

Returning the church to its original condition... The Restoration Movement is a RETURN movement!

II It is an UNDENOMINATIONAL Movement

- what do we mean “undenominational”
- three words often used interchangeably along these lines:
 - A. “Interdenominational”
 1. Dictionary: “cooperation occurring between or among denominations...”
 2. Most frequently demonstrated when a community has an “interdenominational revival/concert or youth rally etc.
 3. More times than not, doctrinal differences are *compromised* until afterwards. Then each “group” competes for the “converts” or “prospects” at these gatherings...
 - B. “Nondenominational”
 1. Simply means a person or group is not restricted to one denomination.
 2. Many bill themselves this way. In turn they jump from group to group adjusting their message so as not to offend.
 3. Illus. – publishers often produce literature that is “nondenominational” trying to print only that which will offend no one...
 - Illus. – good luck in trying not to offend anyone. In 8/9/96 a disabled individual in Texas objected to the name “Cripple Creek” for a nearby stream. He objected because he took it as a putdown to handicap people. The US Board of Geographic Names (responsible for all federal government maps) says, the latest figure on “objectionable” names is in the 80,000 figure!
 - C. “Undenominational”
 1. One not belonging to a denomination e.g. = not an “evangelical,” nor a “protestant,” etc.
 2. Simply means we are “Christians only” (note: not the only Christians, but Christians only!)
 3. God’s plan is not for various groups to merge to make larger organizations with greater political clout...
 4. The Bible reveals nothing of the Lord’s church being involved with headquarters, organizations, and conventions determining policy...
 5. Those who worshipped and served Christ were known by their God given name, *Christians*... not manmade names or identities...

In summary, what then is the difference in these three terms? One identifies the plan of God as revealed in Scripture, while the others go contrary to the prayer of our Lord in John 17 and to the preaching of the apostles. Are we about reforming or restoring? Restoration Movement is an *undenominational movement*!

III It is a DOCTRINAL Movement

- our text says, Jesus appeared for 40 days after His resurrection and spoke of *things concerning the Kingdom of God* i.e. doctrinal matters.
 - A. Doctrine is Teaching (visa versa)
 1. Restoration Movement was/is all about teaching/doctrine
 2. Its past success and present circumstances are wholly dependent upon the faithful presentation of Scripture... The extent to which this movement avoids/neglects the Doctrine of Christ... is the extent to which this movement will accomplish or fail its plea...
 3. Restoration Movement is not about questioning anyone’s sincerity nor determining anyone’s eternity... It’s all about appealing to people on the basis of God’s Word alone!
 4. Do believe evangelicalism/denominationalism is at variance with Scripture; thus, our plea is UNITY on the basis of God’s Word alone!
 - B. Doctrine is Most Practical
 1. Hearing the desire for “practical” sermons/lessons... Everything is about practical...
 2. Illus. – “The Lite Church”... my point in this is the most practical thing is doctrine!...
 3. Restoration Movement depends on solid, doctrinal preaching and teaching...

4. Substitute little 15 minute sermonettes on philosophical, sociological, ethical themes spells failure!
Restore not just reform – doctrinal preaching and teaching essential!

Conclusion: Exodus 25:9 “*According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it.*”

Moses received the plans and specifications for the tabernacle during the 40 days/nights he spent with God “in the mount.” Note, God instructed the building of the tabernacle according to His divine plan. In like manner the apostles received the plans and specifications for the Church of our Lord during the 40 day period the spent in session with the bodily risen Christ. During this period, Christ spoke to them of *things concerning the Kingdom of God*. Thus, when Moses came down from the mountain, the tabernacle was built according to divine plan. When Jesus returned to the Father, the church was established according to the divine plan. We now have the privilege to RESTORE the church back to the divine plan as revealed through Scripture!

Brethren, the time is ripe. Hungry and thirsty people are searching for the ancient paths, the paths that lead to life. The RESTORED CHURCH of our Lord is that path!!!