



What Do You Mean,

**RESTORATION
MOVEMENT?**

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“What Do You Mean Restoration Movement?”

Within the United States, as well as around the world, there is a growing number of people who have come to be known as “Christians” only. Their congregations are simply called Christian Churches or Churches of Christ.

The uniqueness of this group lies in its desire to restore the Church of the New Testament, not in its form of dress, mode of transportation, or in the language spoken or read, but in its doctrines, ordinances, and faith. Because of this position, this purpose to restore, we have come to look upon ourselves as the “RESTORATION MOVEMENT.”

This movement is not “just another denomination,” since we have not chosen a denominational or “man-made” name, creed, or book of doctrine. Our name, as individual members, is Christian and as congregation, Churches of Christ or Christian Churches. As these terms are scriptural and based upon the Word of God, we can honestly claim to be “Christians only.” We are not the only Christians; we are Christians only!”

As to our creed (from the Latin “credo,” meaning “I believe”) we believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God, as Lord and as Saviour. Our book of doctrine, or list of beliefs, is simply the Word of God. Thus as one man has expressed it, “We have no creed but Christ, no book but the Bible, no name but the name Christian.”

Not only are we non-denominational, but in reality we are not even Protestants. The word “Protestant” is derived from the protesting of the followers of Martin Luther against the decision of the Diet of Speier in 1529 which denied liberty of worship to the reformers. Later other groups in turn broke with the Lutheran, Presbyterian, or other denominations, protesting some part of their doctrine. As a result, these “protesters” went on to form still other denominations.

As a “Restoration Movement” we have not broken with any particular group in an attempt to protest or “reform”. The early participants in this movement consisted, instead, of those who broke from a variety of denominations and religious groups. They did this, not in an attempt to reform any particular denomination, but rather in an effort to restore the “original church of the New Testament”.

With the passing of time there have arisen those who would have us believe that such a restoration is no longer possible—that the New Testament Church and primitive Christianity cannot be restored. The facts reveal, however, that a restoration is not only possible but also practical and scriptural. Equally important, **it is being done!**

There Is a New Testament Church to Restore

In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said, “Upon this rock I will build my church.” This “rock” upon which the Lord promised to construct His church was His own deity, or the FACT that He (Jesus) was the Christ, the son of God. Upon this firm foundation Jesus promised to erect a spiritual Kingdom with Himself as the “chief cornerstone.”

Actually, however, it wasn’t until about a year later, on the Day of Pentecost in the year 30 A.D., that this “construction” was begun and the church brought into being. On this day the Apostle Peter stood up before several thousand of the Jews in Jerusalem and presented to them the fact that they had murdered their Messiah. In response to this accusation. The Scripture records:

“Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the Apostles, ‘Friends, what are we to do?’ ‘Repent,’ said Peter, ‘repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus the Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:37-38).

Later in this 2nd chapter of Acts, Luke records that “day by day the Lord added to their number those whom He was saving” (Acts 2:47). This was the Church.

As to the doctrines or beliefs of the early Church, they included such things as the deity of Christ, the necessity for living the Christian life, and the promise of eternal life for the faithful believer.

Its ordinances were two in number, immersion (baptism) of the penitent believer in water for the remission or forgiveness of sins, and the weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper.

According to the Scriptures, there were several names given to this body of believers both as individuals and collectively, but prominent among these were two. In the latter part of Acts 11:26, it is recorded that “It was in Antioch that the disciples first got the name of Christians.” And in Romans 16:15 we read, “All the churches of Christ greet you” (R.S.V.). The term “Christian Church” is also often used because it can readily apply as a collective name for the entire body of believers.

This, then, is the New Testament Church—pure and simple. It was organized at the command of Christ and under the direction of His Spirit-directed Apostles. Its teachings, doctrines, and ordinances, free from all pomp and ritual, were plainly revealed within the pages of God’s Word. After all of these years we still believe that it is important to follow the clear examples from Scripture as it relates to doctrine and practice.

How Can the New Testament Church Be Restored?

Webster defines the word “restore” as “to bring back to its original condition.”

Suppose you owned an old, run-down, dilapidated house. Say it was nearly 100 years old. Somehow you wanted to restore this old house to its original condition and beauty. Although you never saw it in its original state, from what is left you can visualize that it must have been very beautiful at one time.

If this were the case, how would you go about restoring this old house? Would you face it with limestone so that its weather-beaten wood shingles couldn’t be seen? Would you add several new rooms and possibly enlarge and redecorate the existing basement? If you did all this, you might possibly have a very beautiful house, but it would not be a RESTORATION of the original!

Suppose, however, you found in the attic of this old building the original blueprints, as well as some old photographs of the house as it was when it was first built; Then suppose you set about to rebuild that old house according to these plans and pictures of the original. If you followed the plans in every detail and then finished the house as shown in the photographs, what would you have as the result? You would have a RESTORATION of the house as it was 100 years before.

Surely the application here can be readily seen. If we take the Church as we find it today, after nearly 1000 years of wear and tear, abuse and disuse, and try to reform it, we will never bring it back to its original simplicity and purity. Our efforts might result in a beautiful ritual and ceremony - that which the average individual thinks he wants in a church-but you would not have the original New Testament church!

On the other hand we can take this plan-book or "blueprint," this verbal picture of the early church, and "restore" it to its original doctrines, ordinances, and faith. The desires and doctrines of men would be unnecessary details. If this were done, what would be the result? We would find ourselves face to face with the 1st century Church alive and functioning withing a 21st century society!

Restoring the New Testament Church, in Practice

Admittedly, all of this sounds very fine, but can it be done? In actual practice is it possible to take this "blueprint" (the Bible) and restore the original New Testament church? Yes, it is! To prove this, let us examine several historical instances of where it has happened.

"Restoration Movement" in America

During the period from 1794 through 1835, six separate groups were organized without any knowledge whatsoever of the other's existence. In all six cases, the purpose for organization by the groups was that they might restore the New Testament Church as it is found in the pages of God's Word, the Bible. In every case they settled upon the name "Christian" for their members and "Christian Church" or "Church of Christ" for their congregations. Their baptism was by immersion for the remission of sins, and the Lord's Supper was observed the first day of every week. All of this, let us reemphasize, came about without their knowledge of one another's existence.

How was this possible? They had one factor in common-they all took the Bible as God's divinely inspired Word and attempted to live and worship thereby! The result was they all restored Christ's Church in the same way for they all had the same set of "blueprints," the Bible. Just as six building contractors could build six identical houses if the all had the same identical blueprints, likewise these six groups were able to restore the original Church in its faith and practice because they all had the same guidebook.

A. James O'Kelly Movement

The first effort toward a Restoration of Christ's Church began in 1794 under the leadership of James O'Kelly, a Methodist minister from Virginia. Under his direction, several Methodist churches in that state took upon themselves the name of "Christian" only.

B. Abner Jones Movement

In 1801 Abner Jones, a Baptist from Vermont and New Hampshire, broke with the Baptist church and began an independent movement for the purpose of returning to the "old paths."

C. Elias Smith Movement

In Connecticut in 1807, Elias Smith, another Baptist, led his congregation into the New Testament position.

Later, in 1812, he and Abner Jones joined their efforts and went on to establish congregations each calling themselves simply, “Christians.”

D. Barton W. Stone Movement

While these events were taking place in the East, out in the hills of Kentucky a Presbyterian minister named Barton W. Stone was leaving the Cumberland Presbytery with his entire congregation. In doing so, this group formed what became the Cane Ridge Christian Church. In the book *Attitudes and Consequences*, Homer Hailey writes: “These people were calling themselves ‘Christians,’ rejecting human creeds and party names, appealing only to the Bible for their guidance in faith and conduct.”

E. Alexander and Thomas Campbell Movement

About this time, Alexander and Thomas Campbell - a father and son - both Presbyterian ministers from Pennsylvania, broke from their denominational background and began organizing Christian Churches throughout the state. By 1832 the Campbell group, which by that time far outnumbered that of Stone, united with Stone’s Kentucky churches to form the largest and fastest growing religious organization of that time. Again, let it be noted that their union was based upon their identical belief in the need and possibility of restoring the New Testament Church.

F. Scotch Baptist Movement

The sixth group to enter this growing stream was that of the Scotch Baptist of New York. Although not as large as the others, this group also left denominational ties and sought out others holding the same New Testament position.

Here then are groups from Virginia, Vermont, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and New York. Their leaders came from Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, and Scotch Baptist backgrounds. Yet all of them could unite, though completely independent of each other in their origin and development, because they agreed upon the need for a restoration of the New Testament Church.

“Restoration Movement” in Russia

About 1860, a sizeable group of Russian Orthodox from the area of Northern Russia broke with that church and set out to restore the primitive New Testament Church. They called themselves “Evangelical Christians.” For over 60 years they grew until they numbered over two million believers in Russia, Poland, and other Slavic nations.

In the year 1918 they chanced upon a copy of the *Christian Standard*. Surprised to find it advocating the same position as theirs, they subscribed to the publication for over a year. By that time they were convinced that the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ in America were identical to them. Thus, in 1920, they sent a delegation to America and after a series of discussions were happy to join forces for a common goal.

Here then were more than two million New Testament Christians arriving at an identical position, though separated by thousands of miles from anyone else believing the same things in common - a desire to restore the New Testament Church using the Bible alone as their source of faith and practice.

“Restoration Movement” in Ghana

A third incident of an indigenous Restoration Movement occurred in more recent years in the form of the “Universal Christian Church” of Ghana, on the continent of Africa.

Early in December of 1961 some Christians in Wichita, Kansas, received a letter from a young man in Shama, Ghana, asking for a copy of the Bible. The Bible was sent and soon they were flooded with such requests. Learning of this, the Ark Valley Christian Church of Wichita took it upon itself to furnish these Bibles as a missionary project.

In May of 1963 one of those who had received a Bible wrote the Ark Valley congregation to inform them that he had begun preaching the simple New Testament gospel and that many were ready to be baptized. In August of that year Max Ward Randall, missionary to Zambia, and Cyril Simkins, professor at Johnson Bible College (Knoxville, Tennessee) went to Ghana and to their surprise were met by hundreds of Christians. While in Ghana, these two men held a number of preaching services and baptized several.

In February of 1964 Max Ward Randall, with his wife Gladys, preached in seven cities of Ghana. Thousands heard them. Over one hundred more were obedient to the faith.

How did all of this come about? How were these people taught? They had available the Word of God and they were prayerfully searching and studying its pages. They read, believed, and so far as they could understand, did as they were commanded of the Lord.

“Restoration Movement” in Chile

The “Bible only” makes “Christians only.” This is true not only in the formation of large groups but also as related to isolated individuals or separate congregations. Several such instances have been found in the South American country of Chile.

In 1962 a congregation calling itself the Christian Church was found in the northern desert of Vallenar. Without fanfare or publicity it had been quietly practicing the local autonomy of New Testament Christianity for several years under the leadership of a retired employee of the National Airlines of Chile.

In 1963 a group of three churches and several preaching points in southern Chile were providentially brought into contact with Bertrand Smith, a missionary who had labored for fourteen years in Chile. This group of congregations, calling themselves the Evangelical Church of Christ, had withdrawn from a Chilean Pentecostal denomination in an effort to return to the practices and precepts found in the New Testament. Though retaining much of the heartfelt emotional expression of their Pentecostal background, they had turned back toward the New Testament ideal in ordinances and congregational practice well before contact with any missionaries from the United States.

In 1966 another group of three churches was found in the islands off the southern coast of Chile. This area of few roads is nearly inaccessible, and most of the people are illiterate. These congregations had been established by a farmer of German ancestry, Ivar Fohman. They simply considered themselves “the church” and had never seen a need to take an identifying name. They practiced the ordinances as described in the New Testament and were very conscious of their local self-government. After functioning many years under Brother Fohman’s leadership, and because of his failing health, they set out to contact someone who shared their beliefs to assist them. They rejected several denominational offers either because of differences in doctrines or for fear of losing their self-government. Finally they were providentially guided to Bertrand Smith, and other missionaries in the country, who shared their essential concepts of New Testament doctrine and practice.

These isolated examples further serve to illustrate that wherever men accept only the teachings of the Bible, it can only make them Christians! God alone knows how many more individuals and congregations will someday be found following the same, simple, New Testament pattern.

Yes, Christ's Church, as it is found in the New Testament, *can* and *is* being restored even in our own day!

Why?

Because there is a New Testament Church to be restored

How?

Through a return to the Bible as the only source of faith and practice

Our goal is to return to the historic position: "WHERE THE BIBLE SPEAKS, WE SPEAK; WHERE THE BIBLE IS SILENT, WE ARE SILENT."

What about you?

What You Must Do to Become a Christian

1. *You must believe.*

Not just a "head faith" but a "heart faith" that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Read: Romans 5:1, Hebrews 11:6, Ephesians 2:8, Romans 10:13, John 3:16.

2. *You must repent.*

Repentance is a "turning from sin" and involves both a sorrow for sin and a true desire to live nearer to Christ in the future. Read: Acts 17:30-31,

3. *You must confess Jesus as Lord!*

This is a public witnessing to the fact that you do believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Read: Matthew 10:32-33, Romans 10:10, Matthew 16:13-17.

4. *You must be baptized (immersed in water for the forgiveness of sin).*

Baptism is not just a religious ceremony, but it is an act of saving faith whereby the believing, repentant, confessing sinner comes into contact with the blood of Christ. **Read:** Acts 2:38, 1 Peter 3:21, Galatians 3:27, Mark 16:16, Romans 6:3-5

What You Must Do to Remain *in Christ*

The Christian life involves many things.

Prayer:

Matthew 26:41, Luke 18:1.

Bible Study:

John 5:39, 20:30-31, Acts 17:11, Romans 15:4, II Timothy 2:15.

Worship:

Matthew 18:20, 26:26-29, Acts 20:6,7, I Corinthians 16:2, Hebrews 10: 25-27.

Faithfulness:

Matthew 28:10-20, I Corinthians 15:58, Revelation 2:10.