

***Seeking Biblical Authority, Lesson 3:  
A Case Study: The Restoration Movement, Part 1***

Theme: Authority

Aim: To show that it is reasonable to seek Bible authority in modern times.

1. Someone once said "Those ignorant of the mistakes of history are doomed to repeat them."
2. There are great lessons to learn from the past, Paul wrote: "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Romans 13:4
3. In our last lesson we examined a case study of seeking authority from the Old Testament. In this lesson we want to look at another case study known as the Restoration Movement.

I. The American Restoration Movement. What was/is that?

A. It is a part of religious heritage.

1. Yes, it helped shape who you and I are as members of the church of Christ.
2. But it is not the determining factor.
3. Yes, they led the way back to the Bible, but they are not our authority in religion.
4. We, as Paul urged, follow them as they follow Christ. 1 Corinthians 11:1 "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ."

B. A study of The Restoration Movement involves the study of the lives of some interesting men.

1. Men like Barton Stone, John T. Johnson, Raccoon John Smith, Thomas Campbell and his son Alexander Campbell, Walter Scott, James Garfield, Isaac Erret.
2. Tolbert Fanning, James A. Harding, David Lipscomb, A. G. Freed, N. B. Hardeman, and many others.
3. Important note: These men began their respective works independently. Only after some time did they work in concert, to accomplish a common goal

C. But more important than the details of their lives is what these men accomplished.

1. They sought to unify the believers.
2. How could that be done?
  - a. It was determined from study of the Bible and history that the early church was one.
  - b. That in time, the way had been lost.
  - c. The result was the division of Protestant Denominationalism.
  - d. If we could be what the early church was, we would be united.
3. How could that be done?
  - a. All agreed none would give up one creed to accept another's creed.
  - b. Surely folks can unite on the Bible.
  - c. They sought to restore the primitive pattern in the Bible.
  - d. They sought the "*ancient order of things.*"
4. That gave rise to the "Restoration Plea."

II. What was the Restoration Plea? How can it be implemented?

A. The plea to go back to the Bible. Here is how the restorationists said it:

1. Thomas Campbell: "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak, where the scriptures are silent, we are silent."
2. Alexander Campbell: The ... New Testament (is) the only standard of the religion of Jesus Christ, (I) will. "oppose nothing which it contains, and recommend nothing which it does not enjoin." To this he later added, "either by express statement or approved precedent."
3. Barton W. Stone: "The Bible alone, as the only rule of our faith and practice."

B. This commitment caused them to examine everything they believed to see if it was consistent with the revealed will (remember Good King Josiah?). Four examples:

1. Barton Stone was a trained and ordained Presbyterian preacher. As he taught more and more of the Bible and less of Presbyterian doctrine, he saw the need to break with the Presbyterian Church. He and some others formed the Springfield Presbytery. Within a year, they saw that they had simply added another division to "Christianity." They had become a part of the problem by adding another division. They decided to disband the Springfield Presbytery. Stone wrote the "*Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery.*"
2. Now Stone and the others faced a problem. If we aren't Presbyterians, what are we? Rice Haggard, who had made a detailed study of such from the New Testament and had written a tract on *The Import of the Sacred Name Christian*, influenced Stone to discard all sectarian names and take the name Christian.
3. When Alexander Campbell's first child was born in 1812, he was faced with a serious question. Campbell, and generations before him, had been sprinkled as an infant. Should we sprinkle this child? Campbell turned to the Bible for the answer. After a lengthy study of baptism in the Bible, he determined that only believers were baptized. They did not sprinkle the baby. Note: Stone had come to the same conclusion some five years earlier from his discussions with a fellow preacher over who is the subject of baptism.
4. Several years later, in 1822, Campbell debated William McCalla. The subject was baptism. From his study in preparation for the debate, Campbell learned from the scriptures that the purpose of baptism, among other things was remission of sins. The practice of baptism for remission of sins was adopted.

III. What did these men accomplish? What debt do we owe them?

A. They led the way back to the Bible.

1. Did they restore the church? They felt they did. Walter Scott even gave the date when the gospel was restored. November 18, 1827 - the five finger exercise.
2. It has been the consensus in our brotherhood for many years that, yes they did restore the church, but that the work is ongoing and is never fully complete.
3. Remember that the reforms of both Hezekiah and Josiah were undone in one generation.

B. What debt do we owe them?

1. "If we can see a long way, it is because we are standing on the shoulders of some pretty big men."
2. They are not the standard, we, as Paul urged, follow them as they follow Christ. 1 Cor. 11:1.

III. What do we learn from their search for the ancient order of things.

A. We learn that, as with Josiah, restoration of a religion, based upon a written revelation is possible.

1. Even if the revelation is several hundred years old.
2. Is God pleased? He was then.
3. Would have been pleased if the church at Corinth repented and restore the Lord's Supper to its original state?
4. Would God be pleased with us today if we go back to the Bible and simply be what they were without admixture of any kind?

B. We also learn it is a never ending challenge.

1. Let us be challenged by the examples of these faithful men, and Josiah hundreds of years before to seek the "old paths" and walk therein.
2. In the next lesson we will talk about the Restoration Plea.

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