What Is Restoration Theology?

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Imagine that within the next few generations, people stop drinking Coca-Cola. The “Coca-Cola” logo, currently the most recognizable logo in the world, is forgotten to obscurity, and the Coca-Cola Company goes bankrupt, sells its assets, and is completely dissolved. It’s as if Coca-Cola never existed.

But one day, decades later, someone is sifting through a box of ancient legal documents in an antique store and comes across the secret Coca-Cola recipe. Sitting down and blowing the dust off the documents, he looks over the formula, notes the ingredient ratios, and studies the production process. He is so fascinated with the soft drink that he decides to restore it.

Over the next few weeks, he clears out his garage and starts collecting the equipment and ingredients necessary for brewing the original Coca-Cola soft drink. After a few attempts, he finally masters the process and is the first person in several generations to enjoy Coke’s refreshing taste. He has successfully restored the Coca-Cola beverage.

But after a while, one of his buddies, a diabetic, asks for the sugar content to be lowered. Other changes are made, such as the level of carbonation. After a while, it’s no longer the original. It looks like Coke, tastes similar to Coke, and the two manufacturing processes are almost identical (In fact, there are vastly more similarities than there are differences). But it has been changed; it’s no longer the original. (Remember the public backlash when Coca-Cola tried to alter the original recipe in 1985?)

**Today, what our generation needs most is a return to simple, pure, New Testament Christianity.** Let’s not change it in any way; let’s keep it as original as we can. The basic premise of Restoration Theology is that Christendom has fallen away from God & His Pattern and must return to walking in His Way.

The concept of restoration is not foreign to the Bible. The history of Israel is a story of...
repeated departures from God’s Law (cf. Acts 7:51-53), appeals by God’s prophets for the
country to return to God’s Law (cf. Jer. 3:22; 6:16), and a subsequent return, though usually
just a remnant (cf. Rom. 9:27). And much like the days of King Josiah of Judah (2 Kings
22-23), we must rediscover God’s Word and reassess how to apply its principles to our lives.

The Ideal: Primitive Christianity

There is a difference between just reforming Christendom and actually restoring
New Testament Christianity. The world should deeply admire the courage of men like
Martin Luther, who highlighted the corruption and hypocrisy of the Roman Catholic church
and helped give the Bible back to the common man. We should bow in recognition of men
like John Calvin, who highlighted the supreme sovereignty of the Almighty God. We should
respect men like John Wesley, who stressed the need for a pure and personal faith. But
these men saw fit to merely reform that which was corrupted.

Restoration Theology, on the other hand, seeks to reach beyond Rome and go all
the way back to Jerusalem, to the 1st century church as Christ presented her on the
Day of Pentecost.

Let’s not be divided any longer. Let’s not wear the name of Calvin, or Luther, or Wesley.
Let’s not be Methodist, Baptist, Catholic, Presbyterian, or Pentecostal. Let’s just be
Christians - unified in the Cross and liberated from all doctrines and practices that
are without Scriptural authority.

The Approach: How can we do this?

Like Isaiah’s response to being in the fearful presence of God, we must declare, “Woe is
me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of
unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” (Isa. 6:5). Who are we to
add to, or modify, God’s perfect and holy pattern? Can we justify believing or
practicing that which God has not authorized?

The Lord gave us a perfect plan for His church and bound it for the rest of time (cf.
Col. 3:17; Jude 3; 2 John 9-10). The Spirit of the Lord guided the apostles into “all truth”
(John 16:13); the apostles taught it (Acts 20:26-27) and the church followed it (Acts 2:42).

The apostles taught the same thing in every church (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17). Paul called his
teaching the “pattern” or “standard” (Rom. 6:17) and encouraged Timothy to “follow the

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pattern of sound words that [he] had heard from [Paul]” (2 Tim. 1:13) and to teach those same words to faithful men (2 Tim. 2:2).

Contrary to the opinions of some, God did, in fact, give us a pattern for His Church. When men or churches deviated from that pattern they were reprimanded and told to repent (Rev. 2:4-5, 14-16; 3:2-3, 15-18).

If we genuinely believe the Bible is the complete revelation of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17) - able to “thoroughly equip man for every good work” - what makes us think that we, as imperfect beings, can improve God’s perfect plan?

The reformers thought everything was acceptable unless expressly forbidden in Scripture. Those who wish to restore New Testament Christianity, however, realize that everything must be done according to Scriptural authority. We can only accept what the Holy Scriptures teach and reject everything they do not sanction.

The Result

1. Salvation. Only by returning to God’s Way can we be in fellowship with God (Eze. 18:21-23). The Blood of Christ can only save through faithfulness to the God’s Law (2 Tim. 3:15). The Bible is the measure by which Christians must constantly compare themselves to see whether they are “in the faith” (2 Cor. 13:5).

2. Unity. Christians can never truly be ‘one’ with one another unless they are united in the apostle’s teaching (John 17:20-21). Genuine religious unity is only realized by a deep respect and adherence to the simple New Testament pattern.

3. God’s Glory. Why Restoration Theology? “That the world may believe that [God] has sent [Jesus]” (John 17:20-21). One of the greatest evils of the devil and one of the most effective weapons in the hands of sinners and atheists is the fact that most people who claim to be followers of Christ are divided into denominations and opposing beliefs absolutely foreign to God’s Word. God is more effectively glorified when His people are unified.

An Appeal

Just as Jesus told His disciples (in reference to God’s ideal for marriage), “Not everyone can receive this saying” (Matt. 19:11), not everyone can accept the radical nature of Restoration
Theology. Only the man who loves the Lord with all of his heart, soul, mind, and strength (cf. Luke 10:27) will be willing to submit himself entirely to the pattern of the New Testament.

In a generation that values independence and self-expression, why not be different from the crowd by being a Restorationist? Be part of the remnant that returns to the Lord. Simply be a New Testament Christian!