

A SUPERIOR BASIS FOR RESTORATION AND RENEWAL

1. The events recorded in Nehemiah 8 provide a marvelous example of what we could call “the restoration principle.” We are struck by the people’s response to the reading of the word of God in their hearing—reverence, diligence, and joy (vv. 1-12). But the thing that especially should impress us is what they did with the words they read (vv. 13-18). The Feast of Tabernacles was discovered as it was written in Lev. 23:39f. It had not been faithfully observed for generations. Yet they were able to restore it based on the Book!
2. This incident from the OT brings to our minds the on-going need for restoration and renewal in our time. True restoration means to bring something back to its original state or position by repairing or rebuilding. Just as Ezra and the children of God restored the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles by reading the Law and then following what it said, so it is only in this sense that we can restore NT Christianity in faith, practice, and daily living.
3. There are certain principles or assumptions that form the basis of any real, meaningful effort at restoration and renewal.

I. Apostolic Authority

- A. The restoration principle assumes that the apostles were given authority to teach truth and order the churches.
- B. They were appointed by Jesus to complete the work of revealing God’s plan. So he promised them the Holy Spirit, the Helper, would teach them all things, guiding them into all truth (John 14-16).
- C. Their credentials consisted of having been associated with Jesus and having witnessed his resurrection (Acts 1:21-22). “Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen the Lord?” (1 Cor. 9:1). Miracles also served as the “signs of an apostle” (2 Cor. 12:11-12).
- D. The doctrine of the early church is consistently identified with the apostles. The mystery of Christ was revealed to them (Eph. 3:3-5); the commandment of the Lord was spoken by them (2 Pet. 3:2). The standard steadfastly followed by the early disciples was called the apostolic doctrine (Acts 2:42). Four times in 1 Corinthians, the apostle Paul says “so I direct in all the churches” (1 Cor. 4:16-17; 7:17; 11:34; 16:1).
- E. Apostolic authority was so vitally important to the church it was said to be built on that apostolic authority as an edifice is built upon a solid foundation (Eph. 2:19-22).

II. Common Sense

- A. The restoration principle assumes that human beings have the ability to read the Bible (or any other text) and through common sense reasoning reach right conclusions about what it means. Common sense reasoning tells us that we establish authority in matters of faith through commands, examples, and necessary implications. These are simply descriptions of how people communicate, how people get information in any context.
- B. This way of thinking is not limited to religion. It is not only a valid way to think, it is the *only* valid way to think. These three methods of teaching are part of how we communicate and how we think. They are part of the common sense God gave us. So if you want to communicate your will to someone else, you will *tell* the other person what

you want, you will *show* them what you want, or you will *imply* what you want and expect the other person to draw some conclusions.

- C. The Scriptures consistently assume that the teachings and directions of God, and the examples of how people responded to those directions, are accessible to human beings through their common sense.
- D. The example of the conversation between Jesus and a lawyer in Luke 10:25f illustrates the principle.

III. The Pattern of NT Christianity

- A. The restoration principle is based on a commitment to the NT as our standard, and the churches of the NT as our models. Christ promised to build his church, and promised to give the keys of the kingdom to the apostles (Matt. 16:18-19).
- B. Whenever disciples of Christ study that pattern and discover areas where we need to follow it more closely, the only answer is a firm commitment to the plan and a determination to follow it. It is the only way true restoration can be realized. The word of God is like seed (Luke 8:11).

IV. An On-Going Commitment

- A. We must never assume the work of restoration is over, that it's an accomplished fact. We must never settle into a mindset of simply maintaining or defending where we are. This attitude may be sectarian. We must always be searching the Scriptures (Acts 17:11).
- B. The attitude is essential to the restoration plea (Phil. 1:16; 2 Tim. 2:2, 15; 1 Pet. 3:15; 4:11; Ezra 7:10).