

THE RESTORATION

By

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When people talk about the “restoration” of the church, they generally refer to running the church according to the directions the apostles gave in solving problems in the early churches. Often it includes restoring the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper to their rightful places.

Nothing wrong with that! But after that’s done, the church may still be a long way from “restored.”

The land is full of people who are happy to “go to church,” be part of the crowd, listen to the sermon and return home to a self-centered life. Through the week the truth of Christ is choked out by the cares of life and the deceitfulness (and pursuit) of riches (Matt. 13:22).

The message of Jesus — “Blessed are the poor in spirit...” “Woe to you that are rich” — has been turned around, so that the ideal of a successful Christian is one who is comfortably well-off, secure, a member of a suburban church where no one comes in contact with the poor, where most members hunger and thirst for recreation instead of righteousness and the pure in heart are considered fanatics.

In Christ’s Sermon on the Mount no longer applicable? When did He rescind it? Who gave Falwell and his Moral Majority the power to delete “Blessed are the peacemakers?” Is it really true that the popularity of a church shows that it is accomplishing Christ’s work? Then why did Jesus say, “Blessed are you when men shall reproach you, and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake?”

We still tend to see the “church” as the Sunday morning crowd attending to the carefully orchestrated worship directed by professionals. Some even argue over the *order* of the program, when there is no program outlined anywhere in Scripture! But *there is* an outline for the individual lives of all the members. What difference whether singing is done a cappella or to the accompaniment of a million-dollar pipe organ, if the worshipper has not come, contritely and humbly, to receive the mercy of God?

Restoration begins by restoring Christ’s life in individuals. One may change certain patterns in the congregation to more nearly coincide with the patterns given in the new Testament, and many claim that they are operating the “church” exactly “according to pattern,” although we find no completely uniform pattern among New Testament churches, but even so, this is only the function of the group. The life of each individual is quite another thing. Reformers and restorationists have a burning ambition to change the policies of the church, but how often is that ambition matched with the desire to restore their own lives to the image of God as seen in the teachings of Jesus?

Christ was a “restorationist.” He would restore man to the image of God, right back to the original pattern. Therefore His teaching was revolutionary. He by-passed the institutions, where the purpose of God had been totally hidden under matted layers of lies, and began with the individual. “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” He gave a completely new concept of happiness and joy, based upon a totally different value system.

