

# Restoration: God's Purpose

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*'whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.'*  
(Acts 3:21 NASB)

At the conclusion of the convention people gathered in small, animated groups, immersed in conversation. The general consensus was that the speaker had done an outstanding job of highlighting the main issues relevant to the times in the light of the impending return of Jesus Christ. As I discussed what we had heard with a young Baptist pastor, he grew increasingly agitated with my responses to his very pessimistic dispensationalist view of the end times. Finally, he looked at me in frustration and sharply said, 'Your problem is you have a one-string fiddle. Every time we get into a serious conversation you bring everything round to restoration being the answer to the whole thing. I don't understand how you can be so naive.' You might have heard others say similar things. But let's face it, without apology, the message Jesus brought to our world is simple, in the sense that it is straightforward, plain to the everyday man/woman in the street. The fact that it is simple does not weaken its demands, make it less profound, detract from its radical nature, or diminish its power.

Jesus chose his disciples from a broad spectrum of life and revealed God and his kingdom to them in a way that made them prisoners of the divine purpose. He cut through the web of legalistic religious traditions that had obscured the simplicity of truth. The ordinary people loved his message of the kingdom; they heard him gladly, flocking en masse to where they could be with him. They were warmly embraced by his compassionate heart, lifted from their misery, healed of their sicknesses, set free from demonic powers and introduced to a new way of life.

Moving from the gospel records of Jesus' ministry to the historical accounts of the church in Acts, the story is one of continuing liberty and power in the life of the early church. Emerging within the larger community of the world was a new kind of community, not based on racial, ethnic or cultural similarities, but on the love of God permeating the whole. It is not surprising that this Christian community found the same favour with the mass of disenfranchised, distressed, and dispersed peoples that Jesus did. Its residents proclaimed a new life, a new power, a new rule of God in the earth. Before long it was being said these early Christians had 'turned the world upside down' (Acts 17:6 AV).

Sadly, the simplicity of early Christianity has long since disappeared. Today we are faced with highly organised and complex religious denominations - some 250,000 of them - and possibly as many independent groups. Their traditions are often more permanent than their testimony, their legalism stifles their liberty, their competitive attitudes negate their compassion, their wealth obscures their

worship, and position is more sought than purpose. Where is the church of the Acts of the Apostles? Was it inevitable that the passage of time would defeat God's purpose in his people? Have cultural forces, bureaucracy, and technological realities become stronger than the Spirit in God's church? Has the church abandoned its message of hope for a better tomorrow?

Some people would answer 'yes' to these last three questions. Influenced by dispensationalist thinking there is no place in their eschatology for the concept of restoration or triumph for the church in this age. They are persuaded that these end times will be an extended period of global catastrophe, social and moral disintegration, international upheaval, and individual trauma.

In contrast, today's apostles and prophets believe this generation could be the one to see the fulfillment of Peter's declaration within days of Pentecost, that God will bring about a restoration 'of all things spoken of by the prophets' - thus paving the way for the return of Jesus Christ from heaven where he 'must remain in heaven UNTIL' this restoration is fully achieved'. [Acts 3:21]

## Restoration Defined

In the general mind, the term 'restoration' is most commonly associated with antique furniture or the renovation of old buildings to their original state. Unfortunately, the biblical concept of restoration has no such readily understood meaning. Henry Warner Bowden, past president of the American Society of Church History, said: 'the meaning of the term restoration is relative to different people who appropriate it, to what they say it means, and to what activities they pursue under its aegis. Based on historical usage of institutional, doctrinal and biblical categories, there is no meaning intrinsic to the title, and we can find no common agreement on any set of organisational forms or ideas.'[1]

But there are others who dispute Bowden's claim. For example, Theodore Dwight Bozeman, professor in the School of Religion and the Department of History at the University of Iowa, contends that the Puritan period was characterised by restorationist thinking, arguing that the defining element of this thinking was a 'reversion...to the first, or primitive, order of things narrated in the Protestant Scriptures.'[2]

Bozeman's emphasis on the Puritan's restorationist ideal was a defining element with respect to current restorationist ideals. Restorers continue to seek (as they always have) to recover truth from the biblical record. But they believe that to stop there would be far too limiting, for restoration is much more than recovering a primitive order or practice associated with the early church.

Richard Hughes, professor in the Religion Division at Pepperdine University, says, 'if scholars are to use this concept (restoration) with creative dexterity, they must be less concerned with abstractions and generalisations and more concerned with

hearing how insiders - true believers in the restoration ideal - define the concept for themselves.'[3]

In explaining this book's use of the term 'restoration', it is important to focus attention on Peter's great proclamation found in Acts 3:21:

*'He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.'*

Peter clearly declares that restoration:

- Will precede the return of Christ
- Will see the fulfilling of all things prophesied by the prophets
- Will be the consummation of a process that has been going on over an extended period.
- Involves an element of recovery, but is in itself forward looking, focused on the consummation of the age and the return of Christ.

It is a mistake to charge true 'restorers' with being historical primitivists. We do not seek to return to an original condition; rather, we seek to advance to the fullness of God's original intention. Ours is not the backward look of nostalgia, hoping to find a dubious mythological perfection in the early church. The Acts of the Apostles and the epistles reveal that the primitive church was hampered by schism, legalism, and licentious living, and was infiltrated by the empty philosophies of the day. We have no desire for the future to be a repeat of such a past. Nevertheless, implicit in the letters of the Apostles to the churches were strong moral and spiritual principles that are the life foundations of every authentic Christian community. It is these elements that modern day restorers seek to recover as part of the process of advancing the church to its fullness and maturity. As Paul wrote to the Ephesian church, a full restoration of all the ministries – apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher must occur so that we can 'reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.'(Eph. 4:13) God intends a post-denominational united church filling the world with his glory, that is why restoration must include all the ministry gifts.

## **Why Do Things Need Restoring?**

When Jesus was confronted by the Pharisees on the question of divorce, he pointed out that Moses had introduced the bill of divorcement as a concession to them because of the hardness of their hearts. But he went on to say, 'it was not this way from the beginning'. [Mt 19:8] Jesus highlighted a divine principle that holds true in every issue of life. To discover the norm of God we must first ask, 'how was it "in the beginning"?' If we are to understand the consummation of the ages we must first look at their commencement - not the post-fall condition of man and our world, but God's fully expressed pre-fall intention for man and this world.

The original progression of creation provides us with a clear understanding of the ultimate intentions of the Creator - intentions which figure strongly in the thinking of restorers today. They are as follows:

God is the source of all creation. 'In the beginning, God'. This self-introduction provides no apologetic for the atheist, nor evidential argument for the agnostic. God simply asserts the fact he is the ultimate source, the first cause of all that has come into existence. There was nothing before or beyond him. To the restorer, anything that cannot root itself in God as its source has no place in the life of the Christian or the practices of the community of God. Restoration therefore necessarily seeks to free the church from all additions of human ritual, tradition, philosophy, and anything else that binds people with religious fetters, or blinds them with religious darkness. Restoration demands a return to God as the source, centre and Sustainer of all things.

Heaven and earth were originally in essential harmony with each other. God created the heavens and earth. Although separate distinct spheres, they were not mutually exclusive. God's will in heaven was to find its expression in man's will on earth, which is why Jesus taught us to pray, 'Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' [Mt 6:10] Therefore, any culturally accepted practice that is not aligned with the righteousness and justice of God such as homosexual practices, abortion, sexual relations outside of marriage, racism, cruelty, domestic violence or unjust exploitation of the labour force, is both unacceptable and destined to pass away under God's judgement.

Creation was an ordered process. It was not a muddled jumble of everything brought into existence at once, but was an ordered creation, with God carrying out his plan to a timetable: 'on the first day of the week', 'on the second day' of the week, and so on. This is a continuing hallmark of authenticity in all God's working in our lives and in the corporate life of the church. God is not the God of disjointed, random movement, but of orderly progress. Restoration is not a last minute interventionist act that will conclude this age; it is a progressive process throughout time.

Every act of creation was judged. God's judgement is constructive in its intent, not destructive. God stood back from each act of his creation, surveyed it and judged it 'good'. It is interesting to note that although God is perfect, he still judged what proceeded from his perfection. In this way he affirmed that his creation was in keeping with his intention.

In all its rich diversity, creation was in perfect harmony. Restorers do not think that the church of God or the world around it should assume a bland and boring sameness. Restoration produces unity and harmony in the body without destroying its rich diversity. As the 'restoration of all things' reaches its consummation, so Christ will manifest himself more fully in the unified diversity of human culture. The kingdom of God is rich enough and wide enough to accommodate cultural diversity, as long as that diversity is not in itself an expression of unrighteousness or injustice.

God's purpose remains unchanged. When God created man, he delegated his authority to him to rule the earth on his behalf. Man was created to be God's regent on earth. His mandate was to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and rule [Ge 1:28]. Had Adam and Eve never sinned and instead given themselves to fulfilling the will of God, then the earth would be filled with men and women in God's full image and likeness. There wouldn't be anything on earth out of harmony with heaven. Disease, sickness, poverty, pain, war, violence, greed and all other consequences of sin would never have entered the human experience. Restorers assert that although Adam fell, God's purpose did not change. He still intends a world totally compatible with himself - free of all that has come upon it as a consequence of the fall.

God made the family the first unit of society. When God made Adam, he was the only thing God did not affirm as good. Adam was not flawed; rather, he was incomplete. God knew that essential to Adam's fulfilment was a partner with whom to share life. The creation of Eve was the completion of humanity, and the procreation of the first couple was the fulfilment of their union together and the beginning of family. In these latter days God's intention is to restore family relationships - including order and authority - so that the family is itself fulfilling and becomes the means through which society is fulfilled. This means we can expect the recovery of family to exceed its original condition, which is in keeping with God's original intention for it.

God will banish war and violence. The world's increasing population was meant to become a regulated society of families, peoples, tribes and nations covering the face of the earth. While maintaining family relationships, people in general would be held together by a common root in their father Adam. The thought of nations being formed by one people conquering another was never part of God's original intent. Therefore in the restoration of all things war will cease (Is. 2:4)  
People find their fulfillment through accomplishing mission. The mandate given to Adam provided him with a means of self-expression and fulfillment in doing the will of God, procreation and productive work were given to man pre fall. God's purpose in providing work for people to do is to bestow on them the means by which they can express their creativity and enjoy the dignity of labour. Leisure is a pleasurable thing, but human beings find their fulfilment in work completed.  
When Did God's Programme Of Restoration Begin?

Restoration was already in progress when man was created. Besides the visible worlds of our universe, God had also created a world of invisible spirit beings, consisting of the angels, archangels, cherubim and seraphim mentioned throughout the scriptures. They were accorded rank and responsibility in the universal government of God.[Is 6:2; Ez 10:7; Mt 18:10; 1Ti 5:21; Jude 9]  
The most magnificent of these angelic beings was named Lucifer (the morning star), described as 'the sum of all perfection, beauty, power, wisdom and gift' [Ez 28:12-15] It appears that Lucifer served to mediate the worship of the universe before God's throne. God himself ordained Lucifer to this position of responsibility:

*"You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you."*

Ezekiel 28:14

Through his God-given priestly role, Lucifer gained great influence and respect. However, he abused his position and power to sway some angels to join him in rebellion against the throne. He manipulatively used his position of honour and trust to seek independent authority and the personal worship of all creation. Lucifer's plan to gain God's throne contained five different steps, each intended to increase his power and prominence. These steps are identified by the prophet Isaiah in the following passage:

*'How you have fallen from heaven,  
O morning star, son of the dawn!  
You have been cast down to the earth,  
you who once laid low the nations!  
You said in your heart,  
"I will ascend to heaven;  
I will raise my throne  
above the stars of God;  
I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly,  
on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain.  
I will ascend above the tops of the clouds;  
I will make myself like the Most High."*

*Isaiah 14:12-14*

1) **I will ascend** - Lucifer's rebellion started from his place of God-given governmental authority in the earth. The earth became the stage upon which the whole drama of rebellion, judgement and restoration was enacted before the eyes of a watching universe. We can therefore understand the joy Jesus experienced in praying, 'I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do'. [Jn 17:4] God willed the scene of rebellion to witness the obedience of Christ, which paved the way for the restoration of all things to himself, the utter banishment of evil from the universe and the total destruction of Lucifer.

2) **I will raise my throne above the stars of God** - The stars of God are symbolic of angelic beings. Lucifer despised his priestly office of mediating angelic worship. He was not satisfied with his place as 'first amongst equals'. He wanted sovereign control over all other creatures.

3) **I will sit enthroned on the mount of the assembly** - This phrase shows Lucifer's aspiration for cosmic supremacy. He coveted throne rule from which he could determine universally the course of events and have the right to issue decrees and laws.

4) **I will ascend above the clouds** - In Scripture, the cloud frequently symbolises the glory and presence of God. (ref. Cloud in wilderness on Sinai ascension) Lucifer wanted to be worshipped for every manifestation of his own nature and glory above God's glory.

5) **I will** make myself like the Most High - The Most High is the possessor of heaven and earth. [Gen 14:22] Thus Lucifer exposed his heart. Determined to possess all things, he desired ultimate ownership. Although a creature, he wanted to be the Creator.

When God spoke the word of judgement against Lucifer's rebellion, Michael and the heavenly hosts moved swiftly against him and the angels that had joined him. The rebellious horde was driven from the mountain of God in disgrace. Expelled from God's presence, Lucifer forever lost his office as priest before the throne of God. His place in the government of God was finished. He was thrown down to earth where God would make a spectacle of him to all nations before his final dreadful end. [Ez 28:18-19]

## The Earth Experiences Restoration

But all was not lost. The beginnings of restoration in the earth are found in the words, '...the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.' [Gen 1:2] These words brought hope for continued purpose in the earth. When God spoke and said, 'Let there be light' [Gen 1:3], a three-fold interaction took place which began the process of restoration:

- God's prophetic word announced his intent to restore and called it into being;
- God's Spirit - personally attendant in readiness for something to happen - initiated the work of restoration;
- God's divine power was released, providing all that was needed to fully set in motion the restoration of all things.

This three-fold interaction of Spirit, Word and power is characteristic of every revival in history and is ever present in the process of restoration.

At the end of the first week of restoration, God crowned his action by creating man in his 'own image and likeness', and proclaimed his intention for man to have the 'rule' over all the rest of creation, restoring his government throughout the earth.[Ge 1:26] Lucifer must have shaken with rage at hearing these words of God.

This other creature, this 'Adam' - created 'in the image of God' - was viewed by Lucifer as his rival. Seething with fury and frustration, he took counsel with his allies and plotted the fall of man. A further affront to Lucifer was his knowledge that this man was made 'a little lower than heavenly beings (angels)' [Ps 8:5]. To his distorted mind God was demoting the status of his angelic rule and principdom. Not knowing the mind and ways of God, he could not conceive of the Most High planning to re-institute universal harmony and order through a man made 'lower than the angels'. Far less could he conceive of man rising through obedience to occupy a position higher than that ever occupied by himself in his pre-fallen state. Man was destined for more than ministry before the throne; he was designed to ultimately share that throne. [Heb 12:2; Acts 7:56; Rev 3:21] Man is created to co-

reign with Christ. Yet only because of his being in Christ, so that the supremacy of Christ is never at issue.

God's intent for man incensed Lucifer, whose own aspiration and attempted usurpation of this position had incurred God's judgement upon himself. Now - observing man created from dust, being given a place alongside God in his throne - Lucifer fumed with jealousy.

Meanwhile, the eyes of the universe were riveted on Adam. Creation was asking: will this man be the means of universal restoration? Will he be able to subdue the rebellion at work in the cosmos? Will he bring Lucifer to his final horrible end? Will he fill the earth with a people submitted to the government of God? Will he be the one to bring the whole structure of the universe back into alignment with the purpose of God?

The knowledge of such questions hardened Lucifer's resolve to destroy man, for his fallen mind had awakened to a new and awful prospect: man in the image of God was the key to God restoring all things to their intended purpose.

As the crown of God's creation, man, did not evolve from some amoebic distortion in a primordial swamp; nor was he the random selection of a chance microscopic life form released by a great bang in the universe. It is inconceivable that the God of infinite intelligence and wisdom, should - at the dawn of a creation sustained by incredibly complex and intricate systems of life support - take some infantile, malformed, randomly selected still-evolving creature to rule on his behalf!! On the contrary, God created human beings with a central uniqueness; unlike any other creature, they are the ones created in the image and likeness of God. God chose man to rule everything else, in order to supervise the bringing of everything to the fullness of its creation intention. Man is, therefore, the key to the restoration purpose of God in all creative spheres, including the angelic orders, the cleansing of the heavens, the overthrow of Satanic powers, and the establishment of righteousness and justice throughout the earth. [1Co 6:3; Ps 8:4-6] The fact that Christ has assumed the highest place in the universe is indicative that - despite Adam's failure - it is still God's purpose that a God-man be universally supreme in all things. [Col 1:18]

*In putting everything under [man], God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

*Hebrews 2:8-9*

## **Man's Role In Restoration**

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and

increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”  
Gen.1:27-28

The mandate given to Adam and Eve is a concise summation of the process of restoration - the process that God is using to bring everything into order. Within that order, everything advances toward its full creation intention. Adam and Eve's commission to rule was never meant to express dictatorship or authoritarianism. Rather, it was meant to be the continued outworking of the father-heart of God - leading by example, governing by love - which would bring to fullness that which was infant.

Man's guardianship extended to his environment. It is no coincidence that the nearer we come to the fullness of our age and the return of Jesus Christ, the more environmental concerns have become major issues. Even in his warped and fallen condition man still has an awareness of the divine commission; he realises his responsibility for the environment and what he is doing to it, as well as for all the creatures dependent on that environment - including himself. The continued pollution of our world's rivers, waters, seas, and land; the increasing use of pesticides poisoning our soil; the endangering of the food chain; deforestation; genetically altered foods and other ill-considered 'advances' of genetic science - all these show the continued irresponsible attitude of fallen man to his divine commission. Man may seek to hide his economic self-interests behind pseudo-moral motives, but the sum total of all that is happening in man's continued assault upon his environment is an abrogation of his mandate. There are consequences to flying in the face of divine purpose. Violation of God's mandate carries its own judgement.

When Adam - manifesting the divine image and likeness of God, operating as his regent, with guardianship of the world and his fellow man - rebelled and fell. There followed the tragic consequences of alienation from God, domestic conflict that led ultimately to violence and murder [Gen 4:1-8] as Cain killed Abel. Although man continued to exist after the Fall, he was now in conflict with his creation purpose. Cut off from God, frequently at war with his fellow man and at enmity with his world. Restoration, then, must incorporate the reconciliation of man to God, restoring fellowship between the creator and his creature. It must also bring family reconciliation between man and man, and reconcile man to his responsibility as guardian of the earth and his environment.

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[1] Richard Hughes, Ed., *The American Quest for the Primitive Church*, University of Illinois Press, Chicago, p.2

[2] Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives: the Primitivist Dimension in New England Puritanism*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill; 1988, p. 11

[3] Richard Hughes, Ed., *The American Quest for the Primitive Church*, University of Illinois Press, Chicago, p.2