

The Holy Spirit and Restoration

by James Robison

New Testament Prophecy of Restoration (Acts 3:19–21)

Restoration in every dimension of human experience is at the heart of the Christian gospel. It is woven through all the Scriptures and must be at the forefront of our ministry of the truth.

Acts 3:19–21 makes the most pointed reference to restoration in the New Testament. Peter urges a return to God for cleansing from sins. He adds that this returning would pave the way for a period of refreshing renewal that would result from the presence of the Lord with His people. It would also prepare for the return of Christ, whom, Peter said, "heaven must receive [or retain] until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21).

Many feel it is now, in these last days, that "all things" prophesied will be fulfilled and restoration completed. The ultimate restoration is the return of the church, the bride of Christ, to the majesty and glory God intended for her. To accomplish this restoration, God has begun to release His power and purity without measure through the church. The sifting has begun in order that the unshakable kingdom may be revealed (Heb. 12:27, 28).

The Biblical Definition of Restoration (Job 42:10–12)

According to the dictionary, "to restore" means to "bring back to a former or original condition." When something is restored in the Scriptures, however, it is always increased, multiplied or improved so that its latter state is significantly better than its original state (see Joel 2:21–26).

For example, under the Law of Moses, if someone stole an ox or a sheep, it was not sufficient for him simply to restore the animal he had taken. He had to pay back five oxen or four sheep (Ex. 22:1). When God restored Job after the terrible trials he endured, He gave him twice what he had lost and blessed him more in his latter days than in the beginning (Job 42:10–12). Jesus told His disciples that anyone who gave up anything to follow Him would have it restored a hundredfold (Mark 10:29, 30).

God multiplies when He restores. And so, in His restoration work today, God is not simply restoring the church to the glory it displayed in New Testament times. He is seeking to restore it to a state more powerful, majestic, and glorious than anything the world has yet seen!

Restoration "In the Beginning" (Gen. 1 – 3)

The beginning of the Bible's restoration theme is found at the beginning of all things—in the Book of Genesis. God created man in His own image—male and female. Man enjoyed the image of God, the intimacy of God, and unbroken fellowship with God.

However, man chose to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In so doing, he decided to take his life into his own hands. Instead of living from the wisdom, righteousness, and resources of God, he would live from his own limited resources—working things out for himself.

With that tragic decision, man lost his God-image (that is, godliness), as well as his intimacy and his fellowship with the Lord, His Creator. But God's restoration work began immediately. As the now self-conscious man tried the work of his own hands to make coverings for his nakedness, God provided clothing made from an animal skin. This clearly revealed God's plan of redemption and restoration for fallen man. That first sacrifice, providing clothing, pointed toward the ultimate sacrificial Lamb of God—Jesus Himself.

Man's Plunge into Degradation (Gen. 4–12)

After being dismissed from the Garden and barred from the Tree of Life that stood in its midst, Adam begot children that were in his own image of self-centered disobedience, rather than in the image of God. From that point man fell deeper and deeper into depravity, until the Lord deemed it necessary to destroy the race and start over with a single family, that of Noah.

The covenant of the rainbow (Gen. 9:13) was one of the most important of many signs God gave during this period of time—a sign by which He indicated His intent to restore what had been lost through Adam and Eve. It is a timeless reminder of God's plan to bring man beyond judgment into His purpose.

With the call of Abram (Gen. 12), that purpose began to unfold as God's program for man's restoration became expressed through a specific individual. The "great nation" He promised to bring forth through Abram began with Israel, but was destined to become the church, the household of God. Although there are many prophecies concerning Israel, we can rest assured that for their fulfillment God had the church at heart from the beginning. The church is no more an afterthought than was God's promise of His Messiah—Jesus Christ.

Restoration Foreshadowed (Joseph: Gen. 37 – 46)

The outline of God's restoration work stands out vividly in the life of Joseph. Joseph *was forsaken, falsely accused, and forgotten*. But finally he *was favored* by God and restored to the rule God had ordained for him.

1. *Forsaken*. When Joseph revealed to his brothers that God had called him to rule over them, they reacted with vicious envy, selling him into slavery in Egypt.

2. *Falsely Accused*. God prospered Joseph—even in slavery, so that his master put him in charge of his estate. But then his master's wife falsely accused Joseph of assaulting her, and he was thrown into prison.

3. *Forgotten*. While in prison, Joseph interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh's butler and baker. The butler was elated at hearing he would be set free, and Joseph asked him to speak a good word for him to Pharaoh. But, once out of prison and doing well, the butler forgot Joseph.

4. *Favored*. God did not forget, however. Two years later Pharaoh had a dream. The butler remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh about him. Joseph interpreted the dream, warning Pharaoh of seven years of famine. Grateful for the warning, Pharaoh put Joseph in control of all the wealth of Egypt. Not only was Joseph restored by this act, but, when the drought struck, he was in a position to save his people.

Man's Futile Efforts at Self-Restoration (Jer. 8—10; Lam. 2)

God promised to send a prophet like Moses to the Israelites to assure their ultimate deliverance. This was necessary because they had refused to hear God for themselves, insisting that He speak directly only to Moses (Dent. 18:15, 16). Their fear of listening to Him put them under the letter of the law, where human effort labored to gain and keep divine acceptance. But God, knowing the limits of the law, instituted the Mosaic system of animal sacrifices to atone for their sins. He also placed the law as a schoolteacher to point to the ultimate deliverance through the shed blood of Jesus, the ultimate sacrifice (Heb. 10:10).

The failure of their efforts is presented most graphically in Jeremiah 8—10 and Lamentations 2, in the destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering of the people. These chapters paint a grim picture of human stubbornness, and the rebellion, immorality, idolatry, and general corruption afflicting the entire nation of Israel. They had forced God to such extremes of discipline that He had become like an enemy to them (Lam. 2:5).

Jeremiah 9:3 summarizes their plight, which resembles that of many in today's church: "And they do not know Me." Despite their most determined self-effort, they still did not have a personal relationship with God.

The Corruption of Leadership (Ezek. 34:1~0)

Having chosen to hear men rather than God, the people soon were hearing lies (Jer. 9:3). Ezekiel 34:1–10 exposes the wickedness and depravity into which the leaders had sunk. They used their offices and ministries only for what they could get for themselves, not to serve the people. They did not feed the flock, but rather they fed themselves. In His fury, God set Himself against these evil shepherds, vowing to take the sheep from them and put an end to this ruthless exploitation.

The shepherd analogy is retained in the restoration promise with which God follows these censuring statements. "For thus says the Lord GOD: 'Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock . . . so will I seek out My sheep'" (vv. 11, 12). God, then and now, wants His people to be directly related to Him, hearing Him, responding to Him, and living from His abundant life. He has never wavered from His commitment to restore the intimate love relationship that was lost in Eden.

The Futility of Religious Ritual (Amos 5:21–23)

Because man consistently has thought to earn God's acceptance by his own performance, men came to think even of their spiritual relationship with God only in terms of externals. They thought that just by observing certain rules and regulations, performing certain rituals, and speaking certain words, they could stay in favor with God.

The Lord set them straight concerning this misconception in the words of the prophets. He let them know that He despised their ritualistic worship and empty sacrifices (Amos 5:21, 22), mock solemnity (Is. 58:4, 5), and lip-service devotion (Jer. 7:4). He had become sick of their singing, in which they only mouthed deceptive words that meant nothing to them (Amos 5:23). He vowed to turn their singing into wailing and cause their songs to become songs of lamentation and mourning (Jer. 7:34).

The Shaking of the Works of Men's Hands (Heb. 12:26, 27)

Everything Israel and Judah built up in generations of self-effort was an abomination to God, and He systematically gave over for destruction all they had accomplished by "the works of their own hands" (Jer. 1:16; 32:29–36).

The message of their misconception speaks to us today, and the apostle Paul summarizes the shaking God is determined to perform (Heb. 12:26, 27). Everything built by the hand of man, in the energy and wisdom of the flesh, He has vowed to shake down. Only the things that cannot be shaken—the things built in His eternal power and wisdom—will remain.

The great shaking Paul prophesied has begun and is continuing in the church today. For the same evils that plagued Israel—seeking to please God by external performance, lapsing into idolatry and moral decay, corruption in leadership, and worshiping the works of men’s hands—are too present even in the church. Their removal is an essential part of the restoration process.

The Place of Repentance in Restoration (Is. 58:1–14)

After pronouncing fierce judgment and chastisement on the people because of their apostasy, God presents wonderful promises of restoration. He says He will bring forth their righteousness as the noonday, and they will become like a watered garden. He will take away their iniquity, heal their apostasy, And love them freely (see Is. 58; Jer. 31–33).

Between His voice of judgment and His promise of restoration, however, God’s prophets consistently impose one vital exhortation:—Repent! In Isaiah 58 it is indicated: "If you turn from your ritual fasts and submit to the true fast." It is contained in the voice of grieving Ephraim in Jeremiah 31:19: "I turned back, I repented." And in Hosea 14:1, it is couched in the pleading words, "Return, O Israel."

"Repent" did not mean to return to more dedicated efforts to please God by keeping the law or performing better works. The plea has always been simply to turn *to God Himself*—to allow Him to cleanse and restore.

Restoration of the Tabernacle of David (Acts ’5:16–8)

In Acts 15:1–29 a question was raised as to whether Gentiles could be accepted as Christians without submitting to the Law of Moses. Peter responded by noting that neither the Jews nor their fathers had been able to bear the burden of the Law; therefore, it made no sense to burden the Gentiles with it. "We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they [the Gentiles]" (v. 11). James confirmed Peter’s statement by quoting a passage from Amos, in which God promises to "rebuild the tabernacle of David . . . so that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD" (Acts 15:16, 17).

Many other Scriptures refer to the tabernacle of David, though not always by that name. The name often used is "Zion," Jerusalem’s mount where the tabernacle stood and where God dwelt among His people.

Joel 2 begins with the thrilling cry, "Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain!" Hebrews 12:22 says: "But you have come to Mount Zion." Both refer to the tabernacle of David. An understanding of the concept of God’s restoration of this tabernacle is essential, for it affords a clear, biblical view of what God is doing in the church today. ;

The Tabernacle of David: Origin and Description

The tabernacle of David was established shortly after David succeeded Saul as king. The ark of the covenant, which represented the presence and power of God, had been captured by the Philistines. After a series of plagues, the Philistines returned it to Kirjath Jearim, where it remained at the house of Abinadab (1 Sam. 4:1–7:1). David coveted God’s manifest presence with him and the people of Israel, so he sought to return the ark to Jerusalem and place it in a tent on Mount Zion (2 Sam. 6; 1 Chr. 13–16).

Prior to its capture, the ark had been housed in the tabernacle of Moses—resting in the inner chamber called the Most Holy Place. No one but the high priest was allowed to enter into the presence of the ark, and he only once a year to sprinkle the blood of a sacrificed animal on the mercy seat that covered the ark (Heb. 9:1–7). The people could approach only to the outer court of the tabernacle to present their sacrifices and worship God.

The tabernacle of David marked a revolutionary departure from this system of separating God from the people. Without violating the spirit of the Law of Moses, David cultivated a spirit of intimacy again between the people and the Lord.

The Significance of the Restoration of the Tabernacle of David

The great significance of the tabernacle of David lay in the fact that the ark, the very presence of God, was back in the midst of the people in Jerusalem. The people were taught by David to worship God with praise, thanksgiving, and rejoicing. Mine sixteen ministries were ordained to be performed twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. None of these ministries were related to guilt or condemnation; all reflected recognition of the mercy and lovingkindnes6 of God and His unconditional acceptance of all who approached Him in faith.

Restoration of the tabernacle of David today means doing away with legalism, judgmentalism, and condemnation, and turning to the hurting people of the church and the world with the open and accepting arms of a loving God (Heb. 10:1–25). The Lord is inviting all to turn to Him, to let Him wipe their sins away, and to receive the refreshing that comes from being in the very presence of the Lord (Acts 3:19).

Restoration of the God–Image (Is. 4:2, 3)

Just as the tabernacle of David represents restoration of the fellowship with God that was lost in Eden, so the analogy of the Branch symbolizes restoration of the Godimage—godliness and the family tie with God. Isaiah 4:2, 3 speaks of a "righteous Branch of David" that will spring forth. That Branch is Christ, the Head of the true church, consisting of those who have received salvation and the new birth by grace through faith. Jesus identified Himself as the Vine and His disciples as the branched and He said they would bring forth much fruit if they would abide in Him (John 15:5).

Numerous other Scriptures denote that, in Christ Jesus, God restores His people to the Father–child relationship that was broken by Adam's disobedience. All who believe in Him are brought back into the household of God (Eph. 2:19) and are destined to be conformed to His image (Rom. 8:29).

Restoration of Intimacy with God (Rev. 19:7–9)

The Lord illustrates the restoration of His intimacy with His people through the analogy of the Bride and Bridegroom. The passage in Revelation 19:7–9 depicts the wedding feast of the Lamb, Jesus, when He claims His bride, the church, after she has made herself ready for Him. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul explains how the bride will prepare herself: by submitting to God and allowing herself to be cleansed by the washing of His Word, so that she may be presented to the Bridegroom without spot, wrinkle, or blemish (Eph. 5:25–27).

When the bride is prepared and Jesus returns for her, the intimacy broken in the Garden will be completely restored, and man will again become one with Christ and with God, as Jesus prayed in John 17. But, as in the first "marriage," the bride must be bone of His bones and flesh of His flesh—that is, she must be like Him. He will not return for a defiled, defeated bride. In these days of restoration, God is preparing the bride with beauty and power and dressing her in His glory.

The Holy Spirit: The Agent of Restoration (Joel 2:28, 29)

God's work of restoration is a work of the Holy Spirit in and through the lives of those who have believed in Jesus and have been born from above (John 3:3). The prophet Joel foretold a day when God would pour out His Spirit "on all flesh" (Joel 2:28, 29). Thus, His power would be shared with all His people and not limited to one chosen individual. This explains why Christ told His disciples it was to their advantage for Him to leave them and go to the Father (John 16:7), because then the Spirit could be sent to indwell each of them, to fill them and to enable the supernatural works of God to be done through them.

Titus 3:5, 6 reveals that even salvation—the regeneration of the dead spirit of man and the cleansing that makes the new man acceptable to God—is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, in Acts 1:8, Jesus tells the disciples to do nothing until the Holy Spirit has come. Then, He promises, they will be empowered to witness of Him and their witness will spread the Good News throughout the world.

What Restoration Means to the Individual (John 10:10)

Perhaps the best way to summarize all that restoration means to the individual believer would be to use the simple word God used in both the Old Testament and the New Testament: *life*. In Deuteronomy 30:20, Moses said of the Lord, "He is your life." In Colossians 3:4, Paul speaks of "Christ *who is* our life." And Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). But no words exceed the splendor or completeness of David's when he said of the Lord, "He restores my soul" (Ps. 23:3).

Restoration, to the individual, means the replacing of spiritual death with spiritual life. Ezekiel 36:25–28 graphically describes just such a transplant. But not only do we receive a new type and quality of life, but we must also grow in it. Ink see that process of growth as a work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:23; 17:22; Rom. 8:13; ~ Phil. 1:6; 2:13; Col. 1:27). By His Holy Spirit, God continues and perfects the work He began in us at salvation.

What Restoration Means to the Church (John 13:34, 35)

To the church as a whole, restoration means more than becoming a reproduction of the New Testament church. It means becoming all God originally intended the church to be. Remember, restoration means the establishment of something more and better than the original.

First, restoration means that the church will display the kind of love Jesus demonstrated during His ministry on Earth. By this love, He said, all men would know His disciples (John 13:34, 35). Restoration also means the release of God's power without measure through the church. That release will come through His people as the gifts of the Spirit operate without restraint or restriction under the direction of the Holy Spirit—and in the holy spirit of God's love.

Through the full operation of the gifts and ministries that God appoints, and operating in the love essential to His own nature, the church will reach a level of maturity and unity that can be measured only in terms of "the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). As the church becomes a spiritual house (Eph. 2:20) inhabited by a holy priesthood, offering up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:5), all men will be drawn to Him; the world will at last see the glory of God through this restored church.