

# Can The New Testament Church Be Restored Today?

## Bible Answers About The Church

Can we today be identical to the New Testament church in all essential matters? This question is often asked when we point out that the church of Christ is identical to the church of the New Testament. It must be remembered that restoration is at the very heart and soul of God's work in human history. Man has the tendency to drift away from our Creator (Rom. 1:18-32). While this was spoken of the Gentiles, Paul continues in the second chapter to show that the Jews likewise had drifted away from God and then concluded that none is exempt because "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23 KJV). Solomon wrote, "Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who {continually} does good and who never sins" (Eccl 7:20 NAS). Solomon continued by saying, "Behold, I have found only this, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many devices" (Eccl 7:29 NAS). Whenever this has occurred, our heavenly Father always has sought man's restoration or reinstatement.

This theme of restoration appears in the entire Bible. Whenever there was rebellion or wandering away, God pleaded for man's return. We have an example in Isaiah when Isaiah pleaded, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the LORD, and He will have compassion on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:7 NAS). This implies that God always has maintained a standard for man, some rule intended to guide man. The nature of restoration takes into account the fact that reconstruction must occur to the extent of the deterioration. However, the problem is that often man wants to remedy the problem upon his own terms. This has led to all sorts of schemes, running the gamut from individual isolation to the construction of groups who formulate human approaches to God. The results of these attempts are seen in the creeds and organizations of human origin in religion. Jesus warns against these, declaring, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt 15:9 KJV). These human schemes cannot be redesigned or modified in such a way as to make them acceptable to God. This was tried in the Reformation Movement and that movement resulted in many other human approaches (churches) to God. Before restoration to God can begin, there must be abandonment of these human plans. Jesus described the attempts of one not building on Him as being like a foolish builder erecting his house upon the sand (Matt. 7:24-27).

God's blueprint for this age is Christ and His Word which defines His kingdom, the church. Building upon Christ results in one becoming a part of God's house (I Pet. 2:5; I Tim. 3:15). The church that Jesus built stands forever, for it is God's eternal purpose to accept those who come to Him by Christ and through His church (Eph. 3:8-11). This kingdom of Christ, the church, is also eternal in the sense that its existence is continued through the eternal nature of the seed of the kingdom. Jesus in one of his parables said, "The sower soweth the word" (Mark 4:14). He added, "The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11). The apostle Peter said of this seed, "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified

your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, {that is,} through the living and abiding word of God. For, "All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, But the word of the Lord abides forever." And this is the word which was preached to you" (1 Pet 1:22-25 NAS).

Suppose all wheat growing in the world were in some way to disappear from the earth this season. Wheat would not be eliminated by destroying the plants as long as good wheat seed exists. The restoration of the wheat crop would be accomplished by taking the pure seed and cultivating it. This is comparable to individuals who seek to be restored to God. One's acceptance to God is in the one church depicted in the New Testament. The Word declares that all are reconciled unto God "in one body by the cross" (Eph. 2:16). Paul said this "body" is the church over which Christ rules as head (Eph. 1:22, 23). As long as the Word of God exists, that church exists potentially. In man's restoration to God, he must not attempt to ignore that seed and what it produces. Wherever the New Testament church does not exist or appear, it can be produced by planting God's Word, the seed of the kingdom, the church.

The New Testament church can be, and has been, restored today in its scriptural doctrine, organization, worship and practice. There is not one thing which we should teach, or observe, which is not authorized for us today by the Word of God. That divine seed (Word of God) perpetuates the church as Jesus planned it when it is followed and it promotes restoration as it is needed, even on an individual level. The easy part of restoration is the form, but restoration is not complete until the Spirit of Christ rules in our hearts (Eph. 3:17). The Monte Vista church of Christ is the restored church of the Scriptures.

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