

LESSON ONE, INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSES OF THIS LESSON

1. As a general purpose, provide an overview of the study to come (the following purposes are more specific).
2. State the nature and objectives of the study
3. Defend the concept of restoration, and describe how a restorationist approach shapes such a study.
4. Take care of “logistical” issues: disclaimers, caveats and suggested out-of-class activities.
5. Set the “baseline” with a brief discussion of the nature and work of the apostolic church.

B. THE STUDY OF CHURCH HISTORY, AND THIS STUDY OF CHURCH HISTORY

1. Obviously, there are many different and valid approaches to this subject.
2. The approach for this study is going to emphasize the following subjects
 - a. The gradual corruption of the apostolic church.
 - b. Courageous efforts to correct “the Babylonian captivity.”
 - c. What each generation of reform leaders saw, and what kinds of changes they attempted.
 - d. The impact of culture and environment on their efforts.
 - e. A movement in the late-1700s and early 1800s which emphasized return to the original structure of the church.
 - f. The importance, to our faith and work, of all of these reform movements.
 - g. Concepts we have “inherited” from each of the reform movements which have preceded us.
 - h. “Core issues” which define and guide the practice of restoration.

C. WHAT IS OUR STARTING-POINT?

1. How much do we know about “The Acts of Those Calling Themselves Christians After the First Century”?
2. Can we learn anything from them that will be useful to us?
3. The following ideas are: completely true ... mostly true ... somewhat true ... complete misunderstandings ...?
 - a. There were no New Testament Christians from the late 2nd century until the middle 19th century.
 - b. The Reformation was not an attempt to restore New Testament Christianity, only to reform the Catholic church.
 - c. Attempts at the restoration of New Testament Christianity began only in the 1800s.
 - d. The difference between “reformation” and “restoration” is that the latter includes ideas such as: “no creed but the Bible,” demand for authority for every church practice; respecting the silence of the scriptures.
 - e. The objectives of the Campbell-Stone “American Restoration Movement” were mainly exclusive: to draw as sharp a distinction as possible between New Testament Christians and members of denominations.
 - f. The restoration of New Testament Christianity was completed at some point in the 1800s.

D. WHY SHOULD WE STUDY THIS SUBJECT?

1. What if ...
 - a. ... restoration did not start in the 1800s, but much earlier?
 - b. ... the idea of going “back to the Bible” is much older than 200 years?
 - d. ... restoration was a goal of all the reformers, and has always been a work of the church?
 - e. ... some of reformers were “men of God,” and some of their actions were “acts of God”?

2. Then ...
 - a. ... “restoration” might involve something more than correcting errors in church organization and worship.
 - b. ... the mere fact of declaring that one is involved in a “restoration” might not, in itself, guarantee success.
 - c. ... the great reformers—Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, et al.—might be able to teach us about scripture.
 - d. ... following the Campbell-Stone approach non-critically might make us just another denomination.
 - e. ... we might have a responsibility as Christians to continue the work of restoration today.

E. IN PRAISE OF RESTORATION

1. What is included in the concept of “restoration”?
 - a. Putting what the Bible says first, and what people say or have said about what the Bible says second.
 - b. Commitment to the pattern of Christ’s life of individual service and piety.
 - c. Considering how structure (“the organization and work of the church”) can impact individual salvation.
 - d. Accepting personal responsibility for reading, studying, understanding and putting into practice God’s will.
2. Advantages of agreement on a “restoration” approach
 - a. The New Testament gives us an inspired record of the (imperfect) imitation of Christ.
 - b. We don’t have to speculate whether some aspects of church organization are important or not.
 - c. We are directly tied, by our attempts to reach this ideal, to the life and teaching of the apostolic church.
 - d. We can define, at least in terms of an ideal, a basis on which individual congregations can be united.
3. Therefore, this study is being moderated by a restorationist, and it is for restorationists.

F. MISCELLANEOUS DISCLAIMERS AND CAVEATS

1. We’re going to cover a lot of ground in this quarter.
2. To cover all that ground, we must oversimplify the actions of the people we study and their ideas.
3. Besides, there are variant interpretations and opinions even among the “experts.”
4. Furthermore, every reformer we shall study was the superior of your (justly) humble moderator.

G. OUR STARTING-POINT AND DESTINATION: THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

1. “The one true church; marks that mattered”

a. Official name	none.
b. Organization	simple, congregational, and secondary to the purpose.
c. Pattern	the life and work of Jesus Christ.
d. Purpose	to be the body of Christ, continuing His work on earth.
e. Work	salvation of its members and expansion of the circle of the saved.
f. Priesthood	Jesus the High Priest, every individual Christian a priest.
g. Offices	elders (pastors, bishops), deacons, evangelists, priests.
h. Honorary standing of officials	none.
i. Relationship to civil government	incidental.
j. Restoration mission	always their work to restore the life of Jesus Christ in His body.
2. And then
 - a. What happened to the identity of that church?
 - b. What happened to the practice of restoration?
 - c. How far did things go in the “wrong” direction before the reformers began to find a different direction?
 - d. What were the issues that continued to arise, that each new leader and group of reformers had to confront?
 - e. What do all these people have to teach us about the work of restoration?