



**An undenominational publication
devoted to the teachings of Jesus and
His apostles and dedicated to those
who seek the truth.**

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Going Back To the Source



HOUSATONIC RIVER AT CORNWALL BRIDGE, CONNECTICUT
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The Housatonic River rises from pure sources in Western Massachusetts and flows southeast to empty into Long Island Sound. It's waters cascade over rocks and meander the valley of the Berkshire Mountains. Mohican and Algonquian tribes once fished its ideal waters and built wigwam villages along its shores. Today New Englanders admire the beauty of rapids, rowing teams and fall foliage in the hills. It is the destination for trout fly-fishing. Three covered bridges still span across it.

In more recent years, as the waters flow southeast they have become polluted by mercury and PCB discharges from major industries. Ducks, birds and fish that live around it contain significant levels of PCBs. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, fish caught in the Housatonic should not be consumed by humans; it is strictly catch and release.

The Housatonic reminds us of what has happened to the flow of Christianity from the 1st century to the present time. The religion of Jesus existed in its purest form during the life of Christ's apostles, but through the centuries man-made traditions and ceremonies polluted it. The scriptures foretold this tragic apostasy: *"The time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine"* (2 Timothy 4:3). Again, *"In the later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons....They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods"* (1 Timothy 4:1-3). It is time for those who love God and His holy word to return to the ancient faith Jesus put in place 2,000 years ago. This is a call for going back to the source, returning 'up-stream' where the waters are purer, for a restoration of God's plans for His people in every age and for all time.

— **David Tarbet, Church of Christ
New Milford, Connecticut**

Reformation or Restoration?



Two friends are car enthusiasts. One loves to reform and modify 1950's Chevy cars into muscle cars. The other loves to restore 1950's Chevys to their original and distinctive condition laid out by the designer and manufacturer.

The first friend seeks to modify his cars. He understands that the cars are no longer original and have left some of their distinctive designs. He develops a self-gratifying plan. He wants to get back to some of the original features, but not all the way back to restoration. He sees his work as improving on the design.

The other enthusiast is into restoration. His goal is to return the car to its original state as created by its designer and manufacturer, and to be as accurate and authentic as possible. He wants every rider to understand the distinctiveness and to see the beauty of its original creation. He knows the history of the automobile. Everyone who rides in that car knows it has been restored to its original condition and distinctiveness.

As with cars, so with religion. Some have tried to reform religious organizations that already exist with very little success. Others have decided to *restore* Christianity to its original teaching and practice revealed in the Scriptures.

God warned the early church to beware of wolves that come in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15). Sadly, through the centuries the Lord's church has been modified, changed and 'updated' to become something God never intended it become. The apostle Paul wrote: "Let us hold true to what we have attained" (Philippians 3:16). He asked us to join in following his example and observe those who walk according to the original pattern God provided (Philippians 3:17). We are not to change the divine pattern to suit ourselves, but to conform ourselves to the pattern and teaching of the New Testament. Ask yourself this question: "Am I following the pattern laid down by Christ and His apostles?" The New Testament will help you answer this important question.

— Kirk Israel, Green Mountain Church of Christ
Castleton, Vermont



Back To the Bible

Restoration of Authority

Over the ages some have thought their ideas and traditions would improve Christianity, making it more appealing.

The result of meddling with God’s original plan has led to thousands of different denominations that vary from the original pattern established by God. These teachings were devised outside of the teaching found in the Bible.

The apostle Paul recognized a tendency to make the Church in our own image instead of in the image of God. He explained: “Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions” (Colossians 2:18). Paul is essentially saying that people become so arrogant that they end up thinking they are smarter than God and have authority to change the scriptures according to their own wisdom.

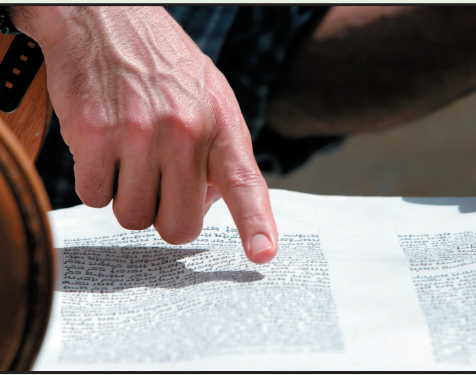
The effect is abandonment of Christ and the true faith. Paul describes this very occurrence: “You were running a good race. Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth? That kind of persuasion does not come from the One who calls you” (Galatians 5:7-9). The example in Galatians was in reference to people who required Christians to be circumcised. Circumcision was not mandated by God for Christians yet people thought it would be good to add it! Today we see things being added to the Christian faith and worship that God did not request.

The biblical principle which needs to be restored is this: *worship and service to God should consist of what God has commanded in the scriptures.* When we add to or take away from God’s commands we taint the purity and simplicity of the message.

In the end, we need to trust God and His message in the Bible — to have faith that He knows better than we do what genuine religion should be. We need to be humble enough to let the wisdom of the Bible guide us; to speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent.

— Nathaniel Hios, Church of Christ
Kittery, Maine

Restoration of Pure Religion a Biblical Example (Josiah)



In the Old Testament we read of King Josiah's grandfather who was captured by the Assyrians who put a hook in his nose and led him captive to Babylon. Josiah's father, King Amon, was completely corrupt and his officials assassinated him. Josiah was only 8 years old when he was crowned king. In those days, people worshiped any number of deities and idols and who was to say if there really was only one true God? Confusion reigned in the land, morality plummeted and corruption was everywhere.

At 16, the young king decided to worship only the Lord, the God of his great, great, great, great grandfather, King David. By age 20 he systematically destroyed the idols that filled his kingdom. At 26, he began to restore the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem and the workers discovered an ancient scroll, the Book of the Law.

Now Josiah had the guidance that he needed. Before his reform he was spiritually blind. He did what he thought was the right thing, but now he had God's plan and the reform, like all good reforms, began with the king's own heart. On hearing the words of the scroll, the king tore his robes, humbled himself and wept bitterly. With the Bible before him, Josiah learned how to be pleasing to God. King Josiah discovered the "seed principle." (See 2 Chronicles chapter 34.)

The Seed Principle. In 2005, Israeli scientists announced a Judean Date Palm – a tree long thought extinct – had just germinated. Today that plant is over 3 meters high and doing well! Forty years before, archaeologists uncovered a jar full of 2,000-year-old date palm seeds. No one thought seeds that old could grow, so they sat in a desk drawer for four decades! Then a botanist planted one and the rest is history.

The Apostle Peter wrote that the word of God is seed. When it is planted, it produces people of God (1 Peter 1:23). Rather than becoming enmeshed in people's opinions, dogma and theology, why can't we just be Christians and read the Bible for ourselves? Just as tomato seeds produce tomatoes and strawberry seeds produce strawberries, so the word of God, when planted in good and honest hearts, produces Christians. It's ancient seed.

— John McKeel, Church of Christ
Groton, Connecticut

Restoring the Bible's "One Baptism"



A Bible teacher declared: "I don't believe in baptism; I believe in Jesus! However, Jesus commanded baptism and so I teach it." Having gained my attention, the teacher listed these 7 principles for studying Scriptures:

- **Determine the biblical context. Context is of prime importance**
- **Establish what the scripture meant to the early Christians, before what it means today**
 - **Find the Scriptures' central importance or "center of gravity"**
 - **Strive to be "full of grace and truth (genuineness)"**
 - **Look for harmony with other texts**
 - **Involve the Holy Spirit, and be humble**
 - **Consider parallel Scriptures on the same subject**

There is unnecessary confusion about the meaning and purpose of baptism. The biblical teaching of baptism can be "restored" in the 21st century by understanding what it meant to 1st century Christians.

The word "baptism" is taken from the Greek word "*baptizo*," from "*bapto*," to dip, immerse, submerge for a religious purpose..." (*The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament* by Spiros Zodiatos). In Scripture baptism is by *immersion*.

The *purpose* of baptism is made clear in Acts 2:38, "*Repent and be baptized, every-one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*" Baptism should not be separated from *repentance*, *remission of sins* and receiving the gift of the *Holy Spirit*. These all work together.

Jesus taught: "No one can enter the kingdom of God (be saved) unless he is born of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5). Seeking harmony in Scripture brings us to the understanding of one new birth, with two elements (water and the Spirit). I can only baptize in water, but I cannot give the Holy Spirit. My Dad explained it this way: "*Water without the Spirit gets one wet but it is without the life giving power of God. A Spiritless water birth is no more beneficial than a waterless Spirit birth.*" When one is born of both water and the Spirit he enters into God's kingdom. What a blessing! Bible teaching about baptism needs to be restored today!

— Jack Exum, Jr., Church of Christ
Keene, New Hampshire

Restoring the Lord's Church

Where Do We Begin?



We had just finished our Sunday morning worship when the phone rang in the church office. A man was crying on the other end of the line asking if we could meet right now. He came with tears still in his eyes. His situation was terminal with only six months to live. His question was simple, “I have been to churches all over this county and they all say that they are right, can you tell me who is right?” My response was simple also: “The Bible is the only thing that determines what is right; that is what you are searching for”.

Being a minister in the northeast for 19 years has taught me the importance of the true mission of restoring the Lord's Church. It is essential for us to teach the powerful simplicity of God's Word and let the Lord work on people's hearts.

Some don't know the Lord's Church even exists! Others have no concept of what the Lord's Church should look like. It seems that people view “church” as a social club with no definite guidelines that determine right and wrong. They think that whatever “the church” does is okay; that every person has a right to believe what he wants to believe.

Restoring the Lord's Church is our mission. In scripture, His Church is well defined. Jesus is the Head (Colossians 1:18) and members of the church are His body (Ephesians 5:22-33). Unity in faith and teaching is a valid reason for the church to let its voice be heard. There is no reason why believers should remain divided over important teachings and practices such as baptism, communion and worship.

Is there a way of knowing what the true Church looks like in order to restore it? I believe it goes back to the man who asked: “Who is right?” My answer is the same today as it was that day: “The Bible is right.” Philip in Acts chapter 8 was able to show salvation to a man traveling in a chariot with only the scroll of Isaiah. How much more should we be able to present the Word of God to our world?

Let us continue to restore the Church we read about in God's Word. Let's discover again God's plan for saving us from our sins.

— Don English, Church of Christ
Albany, New York



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