

Restorationism and the Tabernacle of David: Hype or Hope?

by Leonard Hjalmarson

"When the sky is the limit, it's easy to neglect foundations." Jimmy Long, *Generating Hope*

My wife and I joined a Vineyard church in 1994, the year that the renewal broke out in Toronto. It wasn't long before Vineyard churches in Canada were strongly impacted, and soon the renewal became a source of blessing to hundreds of thousands of believers world-wide. Yet unprecedented blessing shouldn't make us blind to the problems raised by some theological streams in the renewal.

We moved to a new community in 1998 and joined another church in renewal. New Life was still Vineyard in name, but had left the values and teaching behind in favor of new directions. Though we didn't know it at the time, this made a great difference in the philosophy of ministry and in the direction of the teaching. New Life was flirting with Restorationism, in the early days via the relational connections to Kansas City Fellowship, and more recently via the connections to the CNET team and Lance Wallnau.

In the fall of 2000 my wife and I left New Life after two years of participation. We left in spite of the fact that the Lord was doing many good things there, and we continued to love and respect those in leadership. Why did we leave a church community that was participating actively in the renewal movement?

It wasn't an easy decision. At the time there were many things that were unclear, but we felt a growing discomfort. We couldn't articulate all the reasons for our feelings at the time. It was clear to us that the Lord was leading us out, but we didn't understand why.

You may be under the influence of Restorationism yourself; it is increasingly common, particularly in charismatic circles. But even some of those who teach from Restorationism don't know its history, its dangerous approach to Scripture or its lack of solid biblical foundations. This article is intended to address these elements.

Restorationism and the Rebirth of the Latter Rain

In a message delivered before the First World Pentecostal Conference in Zurich, Switzerland in 1947, David J. Duplessis concluded his address to the delegates with this statement:

There is nothing that can ever take the place of the Holy Spirit in the church. Let us pray for a greater outpouring than ever, and remember when the flood comes it will overflow and most probably cause chaos in our regular programs.

There was a prophetic ring to DuPlessis' declaration, for within a number of months, a controversy erupted within the Pentecostal theatre threatening to split the movement wide open and usher in the predicted chaos conditions. History came to identify this controversy as the "Latter Rain Movement," with its origins in North Battleford, Saskatchewan in 1949. It's lax exegesis of Scripture became the cause of their doctrinal drift on a variety of theological themes.

In his book *The Third Force*, author Gordon F. Atter, a recognized authority on the history of Pentecostal revivals, cites a number of distinguishing traits which doctrinally set the Latter Rain Movement apart from orthodoxy. His list includes:

- "Kingdom now" teaching, emphasizing God's complete sovereignty over nature and active dominion over sin, sickness and the devil (lack of a theology of suffering)
- Restoration of the offices of Apostles and Prophets to the church;

- Claims of having received ‘eternal physical life,’ espousing the idea of immortality (“the Manifest Sons of God”)

While the effects of the movement were minimized by 1955, it has not faded from view. It exists today in a more contemporary form as “Restorationism,” an eschatological reading of Scripture calling for a ‘recovery’ of Davidic worship, praise and service, said to have been lost to the Church between the death of the Apostles and the Dark Ages. This ‘recovery,’ which is said to have commenced from the time of the Reformation under Martin Luther, supposedly enables man to experience all that God had planned in the very beginning.

Close cousin to the “Latter Rain,” Restorationism may be identified under a broad assortment of other names: New Kingdom Teaching, Ultimate Movement, the Praise Movement, Manifest Sons, the Melchizedek Order, the Tabernacle of David.

One cannot expect uniformity on all matters of creed among Restorationists. Like a patchwork quilt, its proponents display a variety of shades and hues. While you may be in touch with some aspects of the Restoration movement in your own church or your own circles, you may not find agreement on every element presented here. But the broad outlines should be apparent. I will look at the salient features of the teaching of contemporary leaders who claim a Kingdom-Now emphasis, and respond to the challenges they create for charismatic evangelicals.

Restorationism: Words and the Word

There are two necessary elements needed in order for an individual to adhere to Restorationist or Reconstructionist teachings.

1. a view of prophecy and prophetic teaching that assigns almost equal authority as Scripture
2. A spiritual and allegorical method of interpretation, as opposed to historical and grammatical methodology

Apart from this methodology, it is impossible to justify teachings like the restored Tabernacle of David, Kingdom Now theology or the particular postmillennial approach to prophecy and the restored church.

Among Restorationists, the prophetic voice is of paramount importance. Consider the words of Earl Paulk in his book *The Wounded Body of Christ*:

. . . prophetic voices of God must take the lead and speak as God in the flesh . . . Before the church can become the glorified church God is waiting for, our ears must be open to hear prophetic words of God. It is not prophecy to teach what has already been prophesied. Prophecy opens up to new revelation, insight and dimension.

Paulk continues this theme by further informing us that “. . . the prophet is the only means God has of communicating to the world.” We are advised that “Mysteries are being unfolded today for the church that have never been understood . . .” This idea is further expanded in his book, *Ultimate Kingdom*. In Chapter One, “Principles of Interpretation,” we read: “Many things that were not recorded are now being revealed unto the sons of God by the Holy Spirit.”

The Bible is the written Word of God and because it is, the Old and New Testament Scriptures are authoritative and inerrant. In all matters of doctrine it stands infallible. However, Paulk would have us believing and yielding to the 20th. Century utterances and revelations in the same measure as canonical

Scripture. It is not that Restorationism denies the revelatory quality of Scripture. Rather, it subtly exchanges the Bible (the “then” word) as the reforming voice within the Church for a “now” Word.

The “now” word arrives in several dimensions.

1. we are in the last days and about to experience the final harvest
2. the Lord is restoring “the tabernacle of David,” Davidic praise and worship
3. the Lord will not return until He comes for a spotless bride; therefore the Lord is purifying His church and therefore we must strive for purity
4. Apostles and Prophets are being restored to the church in order to purify and equip the church for full restoration and Jesus’ return. “The latter glory of the house will be greater than the former”

We’ll look at these claims one by one. While many are familiar with the broad outlines of restorationism, not even restorationists themselves always understand the foundation they are building on.

Restorationism: A Prophetic Timeline

At the Sunday service on April 21st at New Life Fellowship in Kelowna, Lance Wallnau of the CNET team was teaching. He advocated the standard Restorationism timeline. I’ll quote directly from John Bevere’s new book “The Fear of the Lord,” where John uses the same outline.

“Come, let us return to the Lord; for He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us; and on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight.” Hosea 6:1-2

This passage is a prophetic Scripture describing God’s refinement of His church in preparation for His glory. He has torn but He will heal. A day with the Lord is a thousand years (2 Pet.3:8). It has been two full days (two thousand years) since the resurrection of the Lord. We are on the verge of God’s reviving and restoring His glory to His temple. The third day speaks of the thousand year reign of Christ when He will live and reign in our sight. Hosea gives further instruction about how to live and what to pursue as we prepare for His glory. (p.123)

“Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord. His going forth is established as the morning: He will come to us like the rain, like the latter and former rain to the earth.” 6:3

To John Bevere and the Restorationists, “we are rapidly approaching the latter rain of God’s glory” (p.115). John believes that the Lord has revealed to him the truth of the connections noted above. John would readily admit that the interpretation he brings to Hosea 6 is based on a spiritual interpretation of the Word rather than a literal one.

So, is it a big deal? We know that the Lord is going to return. Why not in our day?

Certainly it is possible. But rather than wait for Him or become preoccupied with a particular prophetic and end-times scheme, we should continue on with the ordinary day to day work of building the kingdom. Unfortunately there are worse problems with the Restoration system.

Restorationism: Dominion Theology

Restorationists believe that full sonship comes through higher revelation. The Christian life is fragmented into stages of maturity: the first step is that of servant of God; the next step is to become a friend of God; following this is to become a son of God and, ultimately, gods ourselves.

Yet the Scriptures teach that we are already all three: servants (Galatians 3:10), friends (John 15:14-15), and sons (I John 3:1). There is nothing in Scripture to support the idea that Paul or any apostle or prophet ever put aside his servanthood to attain sonship (many epistles begin with the salutation by the apostle identifying himself as a servant of God), or that they ever believed they would become gods themselves.

Restorationists accept Dominion theology, which states that the church must rule over all things before Christ returns. This includes governmental authority as well as spiritual authority.

The reader should keep in mind that Dominion Theology is not an easily delineated segment within the Church, but rather a loose networking of autonomous sub-movements that have different approaches to their attempts at establishing the Kingdom of God.

The central doctrine of all, however, is that **Jesus cannot or will not return to the earth until the Church has taken control of at least a significant portion of human government and social institutions.** Whether this incorporates belief in a worldwide theocracy, or theonomy, or the subjugation of individual secular states to the authority of the Church depends upon the particular brand of Dominion Theology one holds. Whether the Lord will return immediately after the Church has taken control or after it has been in control for some time up to and including the end of the Millennium, is likewise dependent upon individual beliefs.

When I first understood the direction of Kingdom Now theology, I was puzzled. Jesus clearly rejected the possibility of bringing an immediate earthly kingdom into being. His disciples were puzzled that He would reject that option, choosing instead the path of suffering. Even after His resurrection, Jesus rejected that option.

Consider: the early church was closer to Jesus than we are. The disciples had personally walked with Him. They were there on the day of Pentecost. Yet even so close to the glory of the Lord, the early church did not bring in a literal kingdom reign of Christ.

Jesus warned us that in future times false teachers would point to signs of a literal kingdom, saying, "Lo, here it is," or, "there it is." But we should not believe them, because "the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21).

Writers and preachers such as Earl Paulk make it clear that the first-century Church did not have enough "faith" or maturity to accomplish this feat, and so the Lord's return was delayed. Now it is up to us to do the job.

"What are we waiting for? Why is Jesus waiting in heaven at the right hand of the Father? Who is He waiting for? He is waiting for you and me to become mature, for the Bride of Christ to become mature, so that He can come again. Did you know that God has done everything He can do? If anything else is going to be done, we're going to do it." (Form with Power, 1985).

This also demonstrates the Arminian orientation of Restoration theology. Where Vineyard types and mainstream evangelicals fall within the Reformed and Calvinistic heritage, revivalists and Restorationists are rarely Reformed in theology.

Dominion theology is also called "Kingdom now" theology. "Kingdom now" theology leaves behind the tension of living "between the times," with the kingdom both present and not yet. Since we can become "sons of God," and partake of the divine nature, we can walk in perfection and in authority, even leaving behind our mortality. The passage claimed for this teaching is Romans 8:19-23:

"For the earnest expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by

reason of him who hath subjected the same hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

"For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body."

A doctrine crucial to the Manifested Sons of God, perfection (success in living sinlessly) will result in incorruptibility. This will qualify those who "overcome" as worthy to rule in the Kingdom of God. There are even those who believe that they have already attained perfection and, as a result, will never die. They have attained a higher degree of spiritual evolution, so to speak.

A careful reading of Romans 8:19 will show that the "manifestation of the sons of God" alluding to the redemption of our bodies (verse 23) cannot be properly understood apart from I Corinthians 15:51-52, which states that we shall all be changed, *"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."*

From these verses it is clear that the "manifestation of the sons of God" - immortality - will take place at the last trump. First Thessalonians 4:15 makes it even clearer that this will not occur before the resurrection of the dead at the coming of Christ.

Kingdom-Now teaching embraces both perfection and complete Dominion. The former is demonstrated in a publication by Bill Hamon, entitled *The Eternal Church*:

The church will demonstrate all the attributes of the Kingdom of God before the translation and establishment of the literal, kingdom of God on earth. (p.328)

Restoration: Government by Apostles and Prophets?

To differentiate between legitimate "Kingdom theology" and man's attempt to bring the kingdom now through his own efforts before Jesus' return, we'll call the Restorationist version "Dominion Theology."

In Restorationist thinking, to accomplish the monumental task of taking dominion, a significant number in the Church must come into "unity" of thought and purpose. While the goal of the Kingdom builders is total unity, they realize that partial unity may be all they can attain. Whatever the case, the realization of any significant degree of unity necessitates a single voice of authority: a hierarchical structure through which individual believers will receive the necessary pronouncements to exercise dominion.

The voice of authority, it is believed, will **reside in certain latter-day apostles and prophets** operating in conformity to their own peculiar interpretation of Ephesians 4:11-12: *"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."*

In order for the saints to be perfected (made sinless) there must be a restoration of the offices of apostles and prophets. It is a major prerequisite, therefore, that the apostles and prophets be recognized by the Church at large. (*It's interesting that we are currently seeing certain well-known Christian leaders referring to one another as "apostles" and "prophets".*)

Once they are acknowledged, these apostles and prophets will bring forth new revelations from God, which will be the guiding principles in establishing the Kingdom. These revelations will be given to the Church through the evangelists, pastors, and teachers who accept the hierarchy's authority.

One manner in which the apostles and prophets will receive these new revelations will be through **communication with heavenly beings (angels and departed saints)**, as well as with God - and specifically Jesus. It's expected that many of these "new revelations" will be authenticated through demonstrations of power in the working of miracles, signs and wonders.

Some also believe that for dominion to be effected, the world's wealth must be under the control of the Church. Hence the emphasis on prosperity and "divine health" as well as the ability to speak into existence things that are not as though they are (God-likeness). Hence also the sudden interest in "kingdom entrepreneurs" and the renewed emphasis on "bringing the full tithe into the storehouse" (Malachi 3:10).

After the Church has taken dominion, its task will be to **purge the earth of evil**, which is defined as lawlessness against God's moral laws and against the established authority of the apostles and prophets. This accomplished, the earth will be ready to be turned over to Jesus when He returns (some say 'if' He returns).

Restoration: The Tabernacle of David

One of the key teachings of Restoration teachers is found in Amos 9:11-13, and also in Acts 15:13-18. We can give them credit for attempting to anchor this teaching in the New Testament, and not only in the Old. The following four points are from Bob Johnson, a Restoration teacher, on the tabernacle of David (www.tabernacle-of-david.com). I'll quote Bob's material and then respond section by section.

I. The prophet Amos declared that the Tabernacle of David was part of God's plan of restoration.

"In that day I will restore David's fallen tent (tabernacle). I will repair its broken places, restore its ruins and build it as it used to be, so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name." *Amos 9:11-13*

There is no dispute on this point. The tabernacle of David is obviously part of God's plan for restoration. The only question to ask is in what form it will appear? Restorationists argue for a literal restoration of the tabernacle, with praise and worship performed round the clock. They see this work as absolutely necessary; Christ will not return until these words are fulfilled by the church.

II. The apostle James and the eldership of the early church interpreted this prophecy of Amos (concerning the restoration of David's Tabernacle) as being fulfilled in the church.

"...James spoke up: "Brothers listen to me. Simon has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself. The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written:

"After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent (tabernacle). Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things that have been known for ages. " *Acts 15:13-18*

Again, this seems clear. The New Testament church was fulfilling the words given to Amos. Notice, however, that there is no new temple or restored temple worship or restored priesthood, in the Old Testament sense, happening in New Testament churches.. Instead, we are all priests. The church meets in homes. We worship not in Jerusalem but "in spirit and in truth." The people of God are now His temple.

III. If the Tabernacle of David finds its fulfillment in the Church, then the worship of David's Tabernacle is a model for the Church's worship.

What a HUGE jump! How did we get from fulfillment in the early church to the idea that we have to restore Davidic temple worship? If we have the reality, why should we go back to the shadow (to apply the message of the writer of Hebrews). This makes no sense. Let's look at Johnson's supporting points one by one.

A. The Old Testament types and shadows point to Jesus and his church, and give us deeper insight and appreciation for God's eternal purposes. "The New is in the Old contained... the Old is in the new explained."

What is happening here is the imposition of a particular millennial theology. Restorationists believe that the church is the new Israel in a different way than pre-millennialists. They believe God's specific agenda for Israel is complete, and now transferred to the church. So far so good, that could be true. But they take it a step further, as you will see.

B. The Tabernacle of David is the major type for worship found in the Bible.

1. The worship of David's Tabernacle is based on Heaven's worship.

2. The worship of the Tabernacle of David is described in great detail in Scripture. The majority of the Psalms were birthed in David's Tabernacle.

3. Even after David's time, Davidic worship reappeared in every subsequent revival mentioned in the Old Testament (Jehoshaphat - II Chronicles 20:18-2; Joash - II Chronicles 3:12-15; Hezekiah - II Chronicles 29: 25-30; Josiah - II Chronicles 35:15; Zerubbabel - Ezra 2:65, Ezra 3:10-13; Nehemiah - Nehemiah 12:27,36,45-46)

And the point is? These items are really in support of point III above. We'll have to read a bit further to let him develop this.

C. Davidic worship was practiced by the early Church. The worship of the Psalms is encouraged by Paul (Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16) and James (Jam. 5:13). The writer of Hebrews admonishes Christians to offer the sacrifice of praise (Heb. 13:15), a revelation received earlier by David (Ps. 51:15-16, Ps. 69:30-31).

Suddenly the worship of the early church is Davidic. He is beginning to define this for us by referring to the use of Psalms, but we need to define "Davidic." We'll let Mr. Johnson do this for us.

IV. *The worship of David's Tabernacle (I Chronicles 15 - 16:38)*

A. There was a *due order* (prescribed way) in which the people were to worship God (v. 13), and this order was commanded in accordance with the *word of the Lord* (v. 15).

B. David *prepared a place for the ark* (v. 1). We are to prepare ourselves to minister to the Lord, developing our spiritual sensitivity as well as our artistic ability

C. Only the Levites were to carry the ark (v. 2); and the Levites were to *sanctify themselves* (v. 12). *Levi* means *joined* and speaks of *loyalty*. Only those who are joined to the Lord Jesus and His church should minister in worship leadership. This faithfulness to God and His church requires us to daily sanctify ourselves by putting off the works of the flesh and putting on the garments of righteousness and praise. This applies to both congregational and appointed worshippers.

D. The Levites were appointed to their place of ministry (v. 16) and submitted to skillful leadership to *learn their art* (v. 22). There was no haphazardness to the ministry of worship at David's Tabernacle. Once the basic spiritual requirements had been met, skilled Levites were chosen to minister in worship leadership. These Levites participated in rigorous systematic training to learn their craft and were specifically appointed to their positions. These verses underscore the necessity of a regular, disciplined rehearsal schedule for those appointed to lead in worship.

E. Later on, we see both the Levites and the congregation *praising God with joyful songs* (v. 16) and *rejoicing* (v. 25). One of the results of a heart on fire for God are expressions of exuberant praise.

One could say, "No big deal." This is far more structure than some would prefer; it is really a new liturgy. But if you happen to be in the Presbyterian or Anglican traditions, you might be fully comfortable with more liturgy.

But the point Restorationists make is much stronger. **UNLESS WORSHIP IS PERFORMED IN THIS PRESCRIBED FASHION, THE CHURCH IS NOT REALLY WORSHIPPING THE LORD.** The restored tabernacle of David requires this, and Jesus will not return until we get it right. Dick Iverson comments in *Present Day Truths*:

Before Christ can come again, praise must be fully restored It will be with high praise of God in our mouth that we will conquer all our enemies, even the last enemy - death There will be a generation of people created in the last days who will break their appointment with death. (p.27-30)

In order to establish this restoration as necessary, we would have to ignore the books of Colossians and Hebrews. Before we discuss this let's look briefly at John Bevere's presentation.

God's glory will be restored to the church and will exceed the glory as it was in the days of David. James quoted Amos 9:11 to the leaders of the church and applied it to the last days by saying:

"After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent (tabernacle). Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things that have been known for ages. " *Acts 15:13-18*

By the Spirit, James saw this great harvest of believers coming into the kingdom with the restoration of His glory. He speaks prophetically, but he did not complete Amos's message, for that specifically applied to our time. Let's see the completion of Amos message:

"Behold, days are coming," says the Lord, "When the plowman will over take the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills alike shall flow with it." Amos 9:13

No matter what application John Bevere applies to this passage, he is arguing from the silence of Scripture. First, it is possible that James did indeed quote this verse, but Luke did not record it. John comments that, "There are also many other things that Jesus did, which is they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written." The Gospel writers were actively involved in recording and choosing accounts; not everything Jesus said and did was recorded. To assume that James did NOT quote Amos 9:13 is a large assumption.

But even if John is right and James did not quote verse 13, we are left to sheer speculation as to his reason. It is a faulty and flawed hermeneutic to guess his reasons and apply them to a particular prophetic agenda.

In Spirit and in Truth

It's always wrong to build doctrine on personal experience. It is equally a mistake to assume that the Lord no longer speaks ("My sheep will hear My voice"). With this in mind, let me tell you a short story.

It was October of 1999, and the first morning of the IHOP (International House of Prayer) conference with Mike Bickle at New Life in Kelowna, BC. I woke that Friday morning wondering what the day would bring. As I lay in bed, a strange picture suddenly appeared in my mind's eye. As I looked at a picture of a clock with the hands at 12, I realized it was the Lord. Then internally I heard these words: "I am watching over my word to perform it." Then, as I continued to look at the clock, I heard a verse from the gospel of John chapter 4: "the hour is coming, and now is, when those who worship the father must worship him in spirit and in truth." At the time, I didn't understand the significance of the words.

A week or so later the Leadership Center magazine arrived, and on the cover was the same clock with the hands at midnight. The cover was "the church in the new millennium." The magazine was filled with quotes on what the new church would look like, but the heart of it for me was in these ones:

The church in the New Millennium will be a major force in society only in as much as its leaders empower all of God's people to do the works of the church, inside and outside its walls. When that is allowed to occur and the people take hold, they will be the evangelistic light that brings people to Christ in record numbers and Christianity will once again be the dominant force in society.

Sue Mallory, Executive Director, Leadership Training Network

The church in the new Millennium will be successful to the extent that its focus is on ministry that is biblically transforming, relationally shaping and spiritually empowering. Dr. Paul Magnus, President, Briercrest Family of Schools.

The church in the new millennium will be defined through experience and relationship. Postmodern culture is looking for an experience of God, not an explanation. The future church, like the ancient, will live in the mystery of the presence of the risen Christ and demonstrate authentic community in a culture of isolation. Michael Slaughter.

This vision excites me more than anything else, and has been part of my heart since 1983 when I was attending Regent College and got to know a Plymouth Brethren elder who was trying to bring reformation to an old structure.

"In spirit and in truth" was spoken by Jesus to a Samaritan woman, who was confused about the relationship of worship and culture. Jesus, by His example, was already tearing down old things to bring new vision. Consider for a moment what is occurring in the passage in John.

First, Jesus meets her at her point of need. He uses a word of knowledge to get her attention. Then he turns the issue from a personal and cultural one to that of His own person. When he has her attention and has her trust, she asks him a question, a very bold thing for a Samaritan woman to do!

In fact the entire passage is a clash of cultures.

1. Jesus, a Jewish male, is talking to a woman
2. Jesus, a Jew, is talking to a Samaritan
3. Jesus, contrary to the Jewish law, is telling her that worship is not confined to the Temple

Jesus tells her that it doesn't matter where she worships or who she is (culturally) because worship is a spiritual and inner transaction between her and the Lord. The Jews believed one had to go to Jerusalem to the temple.. but God doesn't dwell in buildings made with hands. This is the heart of the new (old) wineskin. Where once the Temple was the center, now WE ARE the Temple. We carry the Spirit.

There are three central elements in the Mosaic covenant: sacrifice, priesthood and tabernacle. Together these constituted the covenant relationship between God and His people. Sacrifice and priesthood and atonement cleared the way to God and were the center of covenant faithfulness.

We stand in a new dispensation, however, where Jesus Christ has fulfilled sacrifice, priesthood, and tabernacle. He is our great High Priest; therefore we need no earthly priest (Heb.4: 14; 8: 1). The priesthood has passed away, or rather has been given to all believers (1 Pet.2: 9).

Likewise Jesus is the true sacrifice, to which all sacrifices looked forward. No further sacrifice is necessary or even possible (Heb.7: 27; 9: 14, 25-28). The sacrificial system has become redundant because all that was foreshadowed in the covenant with Moses was fulfilled in the death of Jesus. The only sacrifice that remains is the church herself as a "living sacrifice" (Romans 12: 1-2).

It is also true that Jesus is the fulfillment of the tabernacle (Heb.8-9). He became flesh and dwelt (literally, "tented") among us (John 1: 14) and "has entered, not a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf" (Heb.9:24). In another sense, the church, His body, is part of the true tabernacle. We are "God's house," (Heb.3: 6; 1 Tim.3: 15), a "holy temple," (Eph.2: 21; 2 Cor.6: 16), a "dwelling of God in the Spirit" (Eph.2: 22).

Sacrifice, priesthood, and tabernacle - all these were instituted through Moses, and all passed away with the coming of Jesus and the birth of the church. The church was born without any religious cult, though it

took some time for the understanding of these things to soak in (see for example Paul's dispute with the Jerusalem leaders in Acts 15, reflected in Galatians 2 and 3).

The temptation has been to reinstate these three elements among God's people and to turn community into an institution. At times, the church has done just that. Returning to the spirit of the Old Testament religious system, she has set up a professional priesthood, turned the Lord's Supper into a sacrificial system, and built great Temples. When Reformation has responded to these backward trends, reformation in doctrine has not always been accompanied by changes in structure. While the modern church is orthodox in theology, she is often heretical in practice.

We have an opportunity to cross all cultural boundaries, because it doesn't matter where we worship. Worship is related to the Spirit, who worships God in and through us. Furthermore, worship is related to service (Ro.12:1,2). We are all priests, and our spiritual sacrifice is our service to Him even more than it is our praise of Him.

No walls are needed.

No priesthood or special roles are necessary.

No special training is required.

All that is required is for us to be in tune with the Father and known by Him. And when this happens to Joe and Susie Lunchbucket, the world is our oyster. We can turn the world upside down. We can truly penetrate our culture with the gospel. There is no more "Jew or Gentile, male or female;" in Christ Jesus the walls have fallen down.

But if we have to call people into four walls for a special service where specially trained people perform elaborate rituals.. we have just returned to the Old Covenant. We are likely to return to a new legalism also, and we will disempower an entire generation. Remember..

The church in the New Millennium will be a major force in society only in as much as its leaders empower all of God's people to do the works of the church, inside and outside its walls. When that is allowed to occur and the people take hold, they will be the evangelistic light that brings people to Christ in record numbers and Christianity will once again be the dominant force in society.

Sue Mallory

Looking back, I can see that the Lord spoke through the Scripture on the morning of the IHOP conference because Mike Bickle was about to teach on the Tabernacle of David. Mike, who is a great guy and a Christian leader of integrity, is also a Restorationist.

Now consider again the events of the Jerusalem Council. Some men went from Jerusalem and were trying to convince the new Gentile converts that they must be circumcised and keep the laws of Moses. Paul and Barnabus head for Jerusalem because the very foundation of the gospel is at stake. James quotes from Amos and then states in interpretation:

"Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled and from blood" (Acts 15: 19-20)."

The context of Acts 15, so often ignored by those who teach on the need for the restoration of Davidic worship, is precisely the opposite! The Jerusalem council declares: "We don't have to make the Gentiles into Jews! God has accepted them! The Jewishness of our faith must end. The law is fulfilled in Christ, and we have died to the law in Him!"

Of course, at the time, they themselves are still making sacrifices in the Temple. They haven't seen the full implications of the Gospel. Not until after the Temple is destroyed do some of these things become clear. Later Paul will write to the Colossians,

“Let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, BUT THE SUBSTANCE IS CHRIST...”

If they do these things they “are not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body is nourished and knit together.”(Col.2: 16-19).

All of this points to another problem with Restorationism: hermeneutics. Instead of a historical and grammatical method of interpretation, Restorationists tend to allegorical and spiritual interpretation, and often neglect historical context. Richard Longenecker, Professor of New Testament, Wycliffe College, University of Toronto:

In the end times, James is saying, God's people will consist of two concentric groups. At their core will be restored Israel (i.e. David's rebuilt tent); gathered around them will be a group of Gentiles (i.e., "the remnant of men") who will share in the messianic blessings, but will persist as Gentiles without necessarily becoming Jewish proselytes.

Whether “all Israel” will be saved literally, (Ro.11:26) or whether “all Israel” is the totality of those among both Jew and Gentile who make up the “new Israel” depends on your own reading of Romans.

In any case, it is far-fetched Old Testament exegesis and misplaced emphasis that allows one to ignore the historical context and literary meaning of selective biblical narratives like 2 Samuel 6:217 and I Chronicles 16:1, and thereby claim a restored Davidic tabernacle and pattern of worship.

The Now and the Not Yet

The tension between the “now and not yet” is a difficult one. If we take all the sayings of Jesus and all the teaching of the New Testament we find that there are basically four propositions that Jesus used to describe his relationship to the Kingdom of God. In this section I rely on the writings of Derek Morphew (European Pastors Conference, 1998).

1. There are a lot of texts where Jesus is saying that the Kingdom of God will come some time in the future. Here he stands with Isaiah and Daniel and all the Old Testament prophets in saying, “It is somewhere in the future. It will come one day.”
2. Then there are an equal number of texts where he says, “No. The Kingdom of God *has* arrived. It is here. Kingdom *now!*”
3. Then there are a number of texts where he is saying, “The Kingdom of God is not here, but it is almost here. At any minute... it is very, very near, but it is not here yet.”
4. And then there are a whole lot of texts where he says, “Actually, the Kingdom of God has been delayed for a long time.”

What do we make of this? No wonder there is confused teaching out there.

First, we acknowledge that the kingdom of God is still future. At the end of his life and ministry Jesus sat down on the Mount of Olives and was still preaching about something that was going to happen “one day.” It is definitely future. We are still living, waiting for the coming of the Kingdom of God. It hasn't come yet. We are still waiting for it. We are living in the hope of the coming of the Kingdom.

Then there are all these texts about the fact that the Kingdom has definitely arrived in Jesus, mostly in reference to John the Baptist introduction of him. These texts signify that it has arrived, because in Old Testament expectation Elijah would come and introduce the Messianic age. Jesus also says things like, "Since the days of John the Baptist" - in other words, since the bâton was handed from John the Baptist to Jesus, the Kingdom of God has been forcefully advancing. At his birth the angels sing, "To you is born this day in the City of David a Saviour who is Christ, the Lord." The Messiah has come. We are still waiting for it... but it has arrived! Hmmm.

For this reason we talk about the "already" and the "not yet" of the Kingdom. The Kingdom is here already, but the Kingdom is not yet here.

In other texts, it will arrive any minute. The time is fulfilled. "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." "Repent and believe the good news." Derek Morphew comments:

The phrase, "at hand" uses a very particular Greek word. It means something that is so near, so close as to be hanging over you in a kind of pregnant silence before it arrives. Where I come from we get these dramatic storms and the wind blows for days and all of a sudden it stops and you get these huge cumulo-nimbus clouds, black clouds, and you smell something. It is the smell of rain coming. And all the birds go silent. And it is like, brrrrhh And the mothers say to their kids, "Get inside. Get under cover." And then there is lightning and flashes, and it just comes down in buckets! Now the word that Mark uses there means that moment just before the storm. And so Jesus is saying, "Look! It is so very close."

And then, there are a whole lot of texts saying that it is actually delayed for a long time. He talks about the foolish and the wise virgins. And why were the foolish virgins foolish? Because they had to wait a long time for the bridegroom to return and their oil went dry and they didn't refill. But the whole context is that the marriage banquet was delayed - which is the coming of the Kingdom. And then, absolutely explicit, Luke 19:11 - the story of the nobleman. Before he begins this parable he says that there were those who supposed that the Kingdom of God was going to come immediately (*he laughs*). And he says, "Oh, no. It is going to be a long time before the nobleman returns."

This apparent contradiction, this paradox, is the reason for many distorted theologies, and probably the main reason for the existence of a prophetic and eschatological distortion like the Restoration movement. People simply lose the ability to live in the tension between the times.

Maybe you simply have to be a prophet to understand the tension. Prophets are rarely logical, and are given to symbolic thinking. Furthermore, in the prophetic world views, the immediate future and the distant future can all be telescoped together. Maybe that is why Jesus says, "Unless you are born again you cannot see the Kingdom of God." Derek Morphew comments,

Christians are people who are living in this world and living in the next world at the same time. We are the most modern, the most *avant gard*, the most future orientated, the most visionary orientated people in the world. And yet we live with our feet on the ground. We, too, have bank managers and overdrafts and children with diapers - and everything is the same. Sometimes you think you are a schizophrenic, because you have moments when the Spirit of God is moving and you say, "We were in Heaven. This is Heaven." And then you go back and the bank manager wants to see you and you think, "Oh, no, no, no... I'm not in Heaven at all!"

And so the way the scholars describe this - the *only* way to understand it - is that somehow mysteriously, unexpectedly, supernaturally (in a way that no Old Testament prophet could possibly understand it) in Jesus and in Pentecost the powers and the reality and the presence of the future world broke into this present world. And yet this present world was not terminated.

CONCLUSION and IMPLICATIONS

When I gave my life to the Lord in 1977, Hal Lindsey's "The Late, Great Planet Earth" was all the rage. Everywhere there were books and seminars and elaborate charts outlining God's plan for the last days. The detail in some of these charts was astonishing.

What a waste of scholarship. What a distraction from the day to day work of the kingdom. As Paul pointed out, we should not despise prophecy, but there is a more excellent way.

Restorationists have a crisis event view of salvation history and emphasize the dramatic intervention of the Lord. A "side effect" of this view is that it becomes difficult to value ordinary ministry and ordinary means of grace. We begin to look for "the big bang" and the next mountain top experience. But it is the "cup of water in Jesus' Name," the servants of the main and the plain who are most needful in our time. Paul makes it clear that we can "prophesy and understand all," but love is the better way.

Another side effect of the primacy given to the prophetic is the creation of an elite group of leaders who hear from the Lord with unusual clarity. How many will stand up to a man who proclaims that he now understands what has been hidden to the church for two thousand years? When a private interpretation of Scripture is proclaimed as new revelation, the plain meaning of Scripture is set aside and with it the common authority of Scripture. Now only the enlightened can judge the REAL meaning of the biblical text.

This has two effects: it reinforces the clergy/laity split and disempowers ordinary believers, and it reinforces a passive consumer mentality. And we wonder why everyone is looking for the new word and the new thrill!

When the consumer ethic informs expectations, real priesthood is lost to us. Individuals suddenly seem insignificant in the life of their own church. Furthermore, the only events that matter are the "crisis" events occurring elsewhere in the world. This devalues "ordinary" ministry, which is the bedrock of kingdom growth.

When ministry has to revolve around anointed leaders, the contribution of the "weaker" gifts is lost. Where Jesus anointed common fishermen to change the world, too often Restorationists model that only professional ministry is truly significant. This disempowers the people of God and limits ministry to specialists.

A new liturgy is not a problem in itself. The problem arises when the liturgy is proclaimed as part of a new revelation, and as part of a necessary process leading to Jesus' return. We should affirm the physical element of worship, and the use of symbols can be appropriate. But symbols are only pointers to a greater reality. The fulfillment is Christ. Therefore symbols and physical means of worship have only conditional meaning. We worship "in spirit and in truth."

Restorationists argue that the Lord is returning for a pure bride. Obviously, we are far from perfect, so there is much to be done if we desire His return. Paul's vigorous exegesis of Acts 3:21 magnifies this law of perfection even further:

Jesus is waiting in the heavens until the earth has been restored by the Church . . . The Bridegroom cannot come back again until the Bride has finished the preparation. ("The Wounded Body of Christ," p.73)

While there IS much to be done, sanctification is an ongoing process. None of us will achieve perfection in this life. In spite of that, however, WE ARE ALREADY CLOTHED IN WHITE. We have become the righteousness of Christ. The Lord will indeed return for a pure and spotless bride, but not because of human effort.

We live in the Presence of the Future. In Jesus the new age has really dawned. But it is not fully here. We live between the times.

I hope this discussion has been helpful. It is important to remember that we have sincere brothers and sisters in the Restoration movement. These men and women tend to be examples of purity, humility, and love for God and His people.

May the Lord lead them back to the radical middle.

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NOTES: Positive Confession

If all that's necessary for the Church to take dominion is to speak and act "in faith," then the only problem is to get enough Christians to do so. Positive Confession's belief in faith as a "force" into which anyone can tap is a tenet of witchcraft. It places God at the disposal of anyone who can learn the formulas (or "principles") of "faith," and tries to force Him to work on their behalf regardless of His will.

Positive confession is not prayer; it's not communication with God. Rather, it's mental affirmation of what the person "confessing" wants accomplished with little or no practical consideration of what God's will might be. While Positive Confession has no definitive eschatology, it has established certain teachings that prepare Christians to accept Dominion Theology.

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