

PRESENT TRUTH

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Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 KJV)

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The Pressing Issue

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While this is not in “prophetic prose”, I do believe that it encapsulates what Jesus, who is the Spirit of Prophecy, is saying to His people today.

The key word from the Spirit is “restoration”. This word has been stirring in the hearts of God’s people for a long time. Long enough that we have heard a number of people expound on “restoration” and we have even seen “churches” and “ministries” that have been called “restoration churches or restoration ministry movements”. However, they have all fallen far short of what the Lord means by “restoration”.

To restore means to put things back into their proper *place* or *position* and in their proper *condition*. Anything that needs to be “restored” means that its condition has deteriorated, has components that are out of place, or has had other things added onto it that were not part of the original.

When the Spirit says “restoration”, He is saying that a process has begun. It is not a one-time event but a *continuing process* of restoration *until the original has been restored*. This process has many sub-procedures as individual aspects of the overall project are considered in order for the whole to re-gain its *correct form and function*.

The procedural steps are best outlined in the Lord’s word to Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 1:10 NASB

(10) "See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, To pluck up and to break down, To destroy and to overthrow, To build and to plant."

In this Word there are four negatives before the two positives. In restoration the negatives must come first! This is where we fail when we begin to consider the Spirit’s restoration word. In our desire to be un-offensive we “have gone along to get along” with too many things that are man’s ideas and not God’s.

Jesus told us that He would build His Church on the rock of the revelation of who He is. Jesus is

doing the building, not us. He is following the architectural plans given by the Father and He is building out of living stones. He, Himself, is the foundation.

1 Corinthians 3:11-13 NASB

(11) For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

(12) Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,

(13) each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is *to be* revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.

When we become a worker in the Kingdom of God, the Lord delegates our work to us. We participate with Him in the building of His Church. However, the only acceptable building materials have also been prescribed by the Lord—gold, silver, and precious stones. Yet, for centuries, we have built onto the foundation of the Church with wood, hay, and stubble—materials that are worthless to the Lord because they will not stand the test of fire.

So, when the Spirit says, “restore”, the first step is to tear down, destroy, overthrow, and pluck up all of the centuries of wood, hay, and stubble “add-ons” to the Lord’s architectural plans. We have to return to the foundation and evaluate each piece of the building material to make sure that it is in the proper condition and in the proper position according to the correct form and function desired by the Lord.

The restoration process began with the “Protestant Reformation” at the end of what we call “the Dark Ages”. (They are the Dark Ages because the light of the Lord in His people had grown very dim). After restoring a few truths, the “Protestants” began to build their own “add-ons” to the Church. The restoration process was not completed because they did not tear down all of the pagan and religion influenced additions until they reached the foundation.

Some of the wood, hay, and stubble left by the Protestants include the clergy-laity concept, ritualized worship, building focused “house of God” model, and a hierarchical authority structure. Many practices of the Church were simply re-labeled—Priests became “pastors” but the one-man leadership model was still in effect; Cardinals became “bishops” overseeing church districts; and Rome continued to be Rome only now each denomination has its own version at their home offices.

Because the Lord is building with living stones, restoration always begins in the individual with things like salvation by grace, baptism in the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, and all of the things that accompany these. However, restoration quickly moves from the individual to the corporate expression of the Lord in the earth—His Body.

This is where we are now—corporate restoration. This will happen whether we like it or not. The Lord will have a Bride, who is spotless and without blemish, prepared for Him before His return. Nothing in Heaven or earth can prevent this from happening. We just need to make sure that we are not hindering the process.

The “house church” movement is part of the corporate restoration process. However, this movement runs the risk of making the same mistakes that were made at the time of the

“protestant reformation”. For the “house church” movement to continue to receive the blessing of God, it must return to the foundation and examine all of the building materials. There is no longer room for the traditions or philosophies of men. Too many “house churches” are simply relocations of malcontents from the traditional churches. If you keep the same form and structure as the traditional churches, meeting in a house doesn’t change anything except the “pastor”.

I was part of the first wave of “house churches” during the Charismatic Movement. By the end of the 70’s there were thousands of “home fellowships” being created every month. Yet, today, most of them are no longer functional. Many “grew” into “charismatic or non-denominational churches”, which have very little practical difference from traditional churches. Others moved into deception and became cultic in their functions. Some simply faded away because they couldn’t determine their purpose as the anointing of the Spirit moved from the gifts to relationships and unity.

I see similar things beginning to happen with the current wave of “house churches”. Why did the first wave fail? Because its form and structure didn’t change from the traditional model. They did not return to the foundation. What is the second wave doing differently? So far, very little. It is imperative that the current “house church” movement return to the foundation and assesses and re-assesses all things in the light of the Holy Spirit.

The first test of the willingness of the “house church” movement to become what God intends begins with the foundation.

Ephesians 2:19-22 NASB

- (19) So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,
- (20) having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,
- (21) in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,
- (22) in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

The “house church” movement must be able to recognize and function with apostles and prophets, who are part of the foundation of the Church and are presented by Jesus as His equipping gifts to His people. This is a radical move from the traditional churches.

Accomplishing this will require radical change in form and structure in terms of assembling together, in terms of financial provision, and in terms of leadership. The ability to do this will determine the future usefulness of the “house church” movement to the Kingdom of God.

If the “house church” movement fails in this, it will coalesce into a “network of house churches” banded together for mutual support and then slowly solidify into another denominational structure. Lord help us! We don’t need anymore of those.

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