

Restoring the Gospel

"He (Christ) must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as He promised long ago through His holy prophets." Acts 3:21

Five centuries ago, the Protestant Reformation dawned when God gave divine revelation to a Catholic monk named Martin Luther that "the just shall live by faith (Romans 1:17)." The truth of the gospel, which had been obscured for nearly one thousand years, became the torch that spread the fires of evangelism around the world. Yet the Reformation restored only a part of the gospel; certainly a major part, but something very crucial was still missing from the gospel. In practice, the Protestant Reformation restored the gospel of "the just shall be saved by faith," but never restored the whole gospel of how "the just shall live by faith." There is a vast difference. As a result, each generation of believers since then has known their sins were forgiven but has struggled unsuccessfully against the power of sin. This is the great dilemma that has challenged Christians to this day: After Christ saves us, how can we be His witnesses in the world without being overcome by the world? Unless we find God's divine solution, each generation of believers that is added to the church starts their Christian life by the Spirit but ends up vainly trying to overcome sin by their natural ability. It is evident that the body of Christ desperately needs the whole gospel.

Through the centuries, many Christians have looked to the Bible to solve this dilemma. In the 1500s, a band of believers thought they had found the answer. They advocated a return to practicing adult water baptism by immersion. They believed this Biblical truth would restore the whole gospel by insuring there are true converts to the church. Yet as time passed, it became apparent that something significant was still missing from the practice of the gospel. In the 1600s and 1700s, companies of Christians once again thought they had found the answer to the dilemma. They championed a return to holiness

as the way to restore the gospel. Yet as time passed, once again it became apparent that something significant was still missing from the gospel since a zeal for holiness was not enough to sustain true sanctification. In the 1800s, dedicated Christians once again thought they had found the answer to the dilemma and called for a return to the church's mission of world evangelism. Millions of new believers were brought into the church through this vast and noble undertaking. Yet as time passed, once again it became apparent that something significant was still missing from the gospel as many if not most of these new believers drifted away from the true faith. Then, in the early 1900s, a group of Christians thought they had finally found the answer to the dilemma. They believed the baptism in the Holy Spirit would give Christians all the power they needed to be Christ's witnesses in the world. Yet as time passed, once again it became evident that something significant still needed to be restored to the gospel in order for the church to become the pure bride ready for Jesus Christ's return.

In our present time, many sincere Christians are returning to a simpler, more Biblical model of practicing church. Of course, other groups of believers in the past have also attempted to practice a New Testament pattern of church with the aim of restoring the whole gospel. All of these - water baptism, the baptism in the Holy Spirit, the pursuit of holiness, global evangelism and a return to simple and organic church - are important parts of God's plan to restore everything before Jesus Christ returns. Yet none of these, in themselves, will enable the church to overcome Satan and his evil forces during these dark and perilous last days.

The answer to the church's centuries old dilemma is found in the cross of Christ. The mystery of the cross is like the centerpiece of a divine jigsaw puzzle that is the key to understanding the whole gospel of Jesus Christ. When we see the full meaning of Christ's crucifixion, the whole Bible and all its truths fit together to form the eternal purpose of God in

Jesus Christ. God knew we needed forgiveness for our sins; He also knew we needed deliverance from our sin nature. Otherwise, we could not overcome sin. Therefore, when Jesus died, He not only bore our sins on the cross; He also bore our sin nature on the cross. Since our bondage to sin came when we were born sinners; our deliverance from sin came when God included us in His Son's death. When Christ died, God performed a divine heart transplant and replaced our sinful heart with His Son's divine heart. Therefore, we no longer have a sinful nature; we now have Christ's holy nature. Thus Christ not only died in our place; He now wants to sovereignly live in our place. The cross of Christ is the secret to the victorious Christian life. When we know we have died with Christ, we can live by faith in the Son of God who lives in us. The gospel of the cross is the power of God to not only save the elect but to sanctify the church to be the bride of Christ. This is the whole gospel.

God has given us His Son to be our hiding place during the coming tribulation. This is a great promise but if we don't know Christ as our hiding place, we won't be able to experience God's provision when we need it. Jesus Christ becomes our hiding place when we know (believe and act) that we died with Christ and our life is now hidden with Christ in God. Therefore, the only way to prepare for the trouble ahead is to believe we have been crucified with Christ and enthrone Him in our hearts everyday as our Lord and King. If we practice living out this truth of the cross, Christ will be our shelter in the coming great storm. When God divinely reveals the mystery of the fullness of His Son's crucifixion to the church, she will overcome the world. Then our Lord Jesus Christ will return to crush Satan and claim His bride. This is the eternal gospel.

"And I saw another angel flying in midair, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people."
Revelation 14:6