

RESTORATION APPRECIATION
WEEK 2025

FRANK E. WELLER & FRANK VIOLA

Edited by John C. Nugent



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Great Lakes Christian College
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www.glcc.edu

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Preface

Great Lakes Christian College proudly embraces our heritage in the Restoration Movement and celebrates that heritage with our constituent churches. To foster greater appreciation for our rich heritage among our students, staff, and affiliated churches we launched GLCC's first annual "Restoration Appreciation Week" back in 2016.

We were pleased to host our tenth annual Restoration Appreciation Week, October 28-31, 2025. GLCC President, Frank Weller, led off with a powerful and timely reminder that the Restoration plea is tough. It is riddled with tensions that must be held together with humility. In "Humility, Unity, and Restoration," Dr. Weller sets for a challenge that is worthy of the founders' radical and deeply biblical vision. We were then blessed on Friday with a creative and engaging presentation by a renowned and prolific Christian author, Frank Viola. In "A Collision of Temples: God's Restoration Work Continues," he took us on a riveting journey alongside the earliest Jesus followers who had to navigate a complex religious landscape dotted with a multiplicity of competing temples, all vying for their attention. Both presentations were packed with practical applications for all unity-minded believers today who are striving to faithfully live out the way of Christ spelled out in Scripture. Viola's Friday session was followed by a robust discussion between our two speakers and those who came to hear them. We seek to keep those important conversations going by making both presentations available in this pamphlet.

These two sessions were also live streamed, recorded, and made available to watch online. For the most up-to-

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date information and congregational resources for past and future events, frequent our website at <https://glcc.edu/about-us/restoration-appreciation-week>.

Humility, Unity, and Restoration

Frank E. Weller

*If you have any encouragement
from being united with Christ,
if any comfort from his love,
if any fellowship with the Spirit,
if any tenderness and compassion,
then make my joy complete by being like-minded,
having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.
Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit,
but in humility consider others better than yourselves.
Each of you should look not only to your own interests,
but also to the interests of others.
Your attitude should be the same
as that of Christ Jesus:
Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God
something to be grasped,
but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself*

*by becoming obedient to death –
even death on a cross!
Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.*
Phil 2:1-11¹

Introduction

I almost grew up in the Church of God. My great-grandfather had two sons, Floyd and Miles. Floyd's family all joined the Church of Christ. Miles' family all joined the Church of God. My parents weren't especially religious when they first met, but the minister of the First Church of Christ, Charles Secrest, performed their wedding, so that's where they ended up worshipping. I have often wondered what might have happened if the Church of God preacher was available for their wedding instead of Brother Secrest.

I was carried into an Independent Christian Church as a baby and, if the Lord should tarry, I will someday be carried out of one. When I was in seminary at Huntington University the Bishop of the Church of The United Brethren in Christ told us there was \$350,000 sitting in a bank account that would be at the disposal of any of us who wanted to plant a church in Peoria, Illinois.

In the late 1990s that was a lot of money for a church plant, so I asked him some questions.

"Can I teach and practice believers' baptism by immersion?"

"Yes, you can."

¹ All Scripture quotations in this essay are from the 1984 NIV.

“Can we take communion each week?”

“Absolutely.”

“Can the church be governed by a plurality of elders?”

“We already have churches that are,” he told me.

And I admit, I was tempted. But then I remembered something that Dr. Fetters, one of my professors at Huntington, said, “I am a Christian first, a United Brethren second, and a Huntington man, third.”

Well, I am a Christian first, a Restoration Movement man second, and a Great Lakes Christian College man, third. So, I passed on becoming a United Brethren church planter. I may have come to the Christian Church by chance, but I have remained by choice.

When I was old enough to read, I was puzzled by something. When our family drove three miles from our farm into town each Sunday, we passed the Church of Christ on our way to First Church of Christ. I asked my dad about that and he told me, “They’re the non-instrumental church.” I couldn’t imagine a worship service without Thais LaRue playing the organ and Lois Cobler playing the piano, so that was the last I thought about it.

When I was about to graduate high school, I did pretty well on the ACT and got a letter from David Lipscomb University offering me an academic scholarship. It said on the brochure that they were a Church of Christ college, but were they a Church of Christ college or a *First* Church of Christ college? I asked one of our elders and he told me, “They’re not one of ours,” so that ended that. My view was a bit limited back then.

In Pursuit of Unity

It wasn't until Lloyd Knowles's Restoration History class that I started to fill in some of the details of my faith heritage. I grew up within walking distance of two Restoration Movement churches that had no fellowship with each other, yet our textbook – Leroy Garrett's *The Stone-Campbell Movement* – said that our movement began *as a unity movement*!

A unity movement.

How is it possible that a movement that began in search of unity resulted in two churches in my hometown with the same name, a common heritage, but no fellowship? How is it possible that a movement that began in search of unity has experienced so much division?

If we were able to ask two of our movement's founders, Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone, that question they would likely give us two very different answers. Even though they placed a premium on the pursuit of unity, they took different paths to achieve it. Dr. Robert Richardson, Alexander Campbell's son-in-law, personal physician, and biographer wrote, "This reformation was born of the love of union and Christian union has been its engrossing theme."²

The foundational documents of our movement were penned by Stone in 1804 and by Thomas Campbell, Alexander's father, in 1809. In his *Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*, Barton Stone and the other signers "willed that their presbytery 'die, be dissolved, and sink into union with the body of Christ at large.' They called on fellow Christians of every name to join them in praying that God would remove all

² Leroy Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement*, (College Press, 1981), 4-5.

obstacles to his work – including the disunity of his church.”³

Thomas Campbell wrote in his *Declaration and Address* that “‘the Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one,’ and that it consists of all who profess belief in and obedience to Christ according to the Scriptures and who show they are Christians by the life they live.”⁴

Stone and Campbell determined to drop denominational affiliations and dispose of creeds, to bid farewell to manmade traditions and institutions and simply unite as one church following Jesus.

Same End, Different Means

They pursued unity, but they went about it very differently. Stone believed unity among Christians would only happen if Christians followed “the spirit of the Scriptures, which spirit is love, peace, unity, forbearance and cheerful obedience.”⁵

Campbell believed that all Christians should leave their respective denominations and unite and that could only happen if we committed “to propound the ancient gospel and order of things in the words and sentences found in the apostolic writings – to abandon all usages and traditions not found in the Record, and to make no human terms of communion.”⁶

³ Douglas A. Foster, “Unity, Christian,” in *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, eds. Paul M. Blowers, Anthony L. Dunnivant, Douglas A. Foster and D. Newell Williams (Eerdmans, 2004), 755.

⁴ Foster, *Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, 755.

⁵ Foster, *Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, 755.

⁶ Douglas A. Foster, *A Life of Alexander Campbell* (Eerdmans, 2020), 248.

In other words, Stone believed unity was the result of the Holy Spirit at work in each believer to produce “love, peace, unity and forbearance,” while Campbell believed unity would only be achieved when Christians agreed on the facts of the New Testament. Put another way, Stone believed the New Testament church would be restored when believers lived by the Holy Spirit; Campbell believed the New Testament church would be restored when believers believed the same things. For Stone, achieving unity was centered in the heart and for Campbell unity was centered in the head.

Same goal; two very different approaches.

Unity and Restoration in Tension

And therein lies the significant challenge we face 200 years after our movement’s founding. We desire to restore the New Testament church, but as historian Leroy Garrett wrote in the 20th century:

Restorationism by its very nature is divisive. When this doctrine affected the Movement sufficiently it splintered it. North against North as well as South against South, and in Canada, Great Britain, and Australia as well as in the United States. The socio-economic forces of the Civil War doubtless placed pressure upon the well-being of the Stone-Campbell churches, but these alone can hardly account for the divisions that came, as some more recent historians have suggested.

We must not only explain why the Movement fractured in areas far removed from the nation’s civil strife, but why the Movement has continued to divide on the average of about one new sect or sub-group every decade during this century. Our thesis is clearly set forth in this study: *Restorationism, as herein defined, has always been divisive and always*

*will be, and when it gained sufficient influence within the Movement it divided it.*⁷

The uncomfortable reality we must confront is this: unity and restoration are two forces in tension. Both are important. Both must be pursued. But in pursuing them simultaneously we will always find ourselves in uncomfortable territory, because tension is uncomfortable. Some find it too uncomfortable and try and resolve that tension, to work it out, to minimize it.⁸

Trying to resolve the tension between unity and restoration of the ancient ways has resulted in much of the turmoil we face in our movement. One of our defining slogans is “In essentials unity; in opinion, liberty; in all things, charity.”⁹ It is a lofty ideal, but Christians struggle to agree on what is essential and what is not. More troubling still, in an environment of ongoing disagreement, we fail to treat one another charitably.

Resolving the tension between unity and restoration leads many to choose one at the expense of the other. Too many of our people, particularly recently, pursue unity at the expense of sound doctrine. They jettison truth and the ancient practices for the sake of fellowship with other believers. At the other end of the continuum stand

⁷ Garrett, *Stone-Campbell*, 10-11.

⁸ Andy Stanley says that every organization has problems that must be solved and tensions that must not be resolved. We make a mistake when we fail to solve problems or when we try to resolve tension. Problems need to be solved; tension needs to be managed.

⁹ See Victor Knowles, *Together in Christ: More Than a Dream* (College Press, 2006), 74. We like to imagine the slogan began with our movement, but it was uttered by a seventeenth-century Lutheran theologian, appeared on the masthead of a Russian newspaper in the late 20th century, and Pope John XXIII was fond of the saying, “*In necessariis, unitas, in dubiis, libertas, in omnibus autem, caritas*” (“In necessary things, unity; in doubtful things, freedom, but in everything love”).

believers who define restoration with increasingly precise narrowness, sacrificing unity with other Christians. Both of these choices come at a cost.

Those who focus on unity at the expense of doctrine stray into liberalism. Those who focus on doctrine at the expense of unity stray into legalism. Both are toxic. The only solution is to pursue unity *and* restoration, however uncomfortable the resulting tension is.

Restoring New Testament Christianity

Given the longstanding tension between unity and restoration, how do we restore the Church to the ideals and practices of New Testament Christianity? The only way to restore New Testament Christianity is for you and me to be New Testament Christians.

That is, *to become like Christ*. In his description of Jesus, John alluded to the tension Christians face: “The Word became flesh, and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, *full of grace and truth*” (John 1:14). Jesus was completely graceful *and* completely truthful. For you and I to be like Jesus we must be full of grace and full of truth.

But doing so is difficult.

There is tension in grace and truth just as there is between unity and the restoration of the ancient ways.

There is a quality Christians must exemplify to manage that tension. It is a critical characteristic that is in short supply today. The church’s response to contemporary political and social upheaval has seen far too little of it. The lack of this virtue has damaged the church’s witness and hampered our effectiveness. This missing ingredient has resulted in fractured churches and disillusioned believers. This missing ingredient has led to an exodus of Millennials and Generation Z from our

churches and, if we do not recover this quality, I believe the church's impact will continue to diminish.

This essential quality is humility.

Unity is impossible without humility. And, without unity we will never recover New Testament Christianity.

More importantly, without unity the Church will never accomplish what Jesus commissioned us to do. Marshall Leggett wrote, "The purpose of unity was that the world might believe. It was evangelism. The world will never be won to Christ as long as His people are divided from one another."¹⁰

Humility is the antivenom for the divisiveness of dogmatic restorationists. Humility is also the antivenom for the heresy of anything-goes progressives who reject the truth of scripture.

The Humility of Jesus

One of the most beautiful examples of humility is found in Paul's letter to the Philippians. Paul began his letter by writing about his affection for the Philippians. They were his beloved partners in the Gospel. Whether with them, or if prevented from being so by imprisonment, Paul wanted them to "stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel" (Phil 1:27). Despite his chains, despite some who preached out of impure motives, despite the suffering that Philippian Christians experienced, Paul wanted them to pursue *unity*.

That pursuit begins by being united with Christ: "If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ" (Phil 2:1). Jesus is the foundation of Christian

¹⁰ Marshall Leggett, *Introducing the Restoration Ideal* (Standard Publishing, 1986), 13.

unity. If I am united with Jesus and you are united with Jesus, then we are naturally united with each other.

In math this principle is called the transitive property. If x equals y , and y equals z , the transitive principle states that x equals z . Unity with Christ is the transitive property applied to spiritual things. Since *you* are one with Christ and *I* am one with Christ, then we are, according to the spiritual transitive property, one *with each other*.

That is a truth Isaac Errett, a second-generation Restoration Movement preacher and the first editor of *Christian Standard*, understood. He articulated minimal requirements for Christian unity, teaching that it was possible based on just two things: faith in Christ as the divine son of God and submission to immersion.¹¹ Belief in Christ and submission to Christ were, in Errett's view, the necessary essentials for unity.

But there is more to Philippians 2:1: "If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion." Christ's love compels us to pursue unity. The Holy Spirit working within us moves us to humility. The result? Tenderness and compassion for each other.

Serving as President of Great Lakes Christian College has been eye-opening. From time to time, I must respond to donors and alumni who have questions about what is taught at GLCC. There have been several times when I have written to people or had conversations with them about their questions.

Occasionally these exchanges have not gone well. In most such instances, the conversations have been cordial and respectful. I have, at times, agreed to disagree with

¹¹ Foster, "Unity, Christian," 755.

my brothers and they with me.¹² That doesn't bother me. What does bother me is when a brother refuses to have a genuine conversation. Or when a letter I have written doesn't receive a reply. Or when a brother, instead of replying to me, makes copies of my correspondence and distributes them to people who are not a party to the discussion.

The reason that concerns me isn't because I have something to hide, or because I don't stand by what I write. It concerns me because that kind of response shows no tenderness and compassion. That kind of response doesn't reflect the Jesus Paul describes in Philippians 2. It isn't charitable. And it doesn't promote unity.

But, if we have any encouragement from being united with Christ, any comfort from his love, any fellowship with the Spirit, and if we are tender and compassionate, Paul tells us we can become like-minded, have the same love, and become one in spirit and purpose.

Let's unpack those qualities.

"Like minded" does not mean we agree on everything. It means we are committed to one another in the same way we are committed to Christ. Wherever people are involved there will always be differences, but we can still have unity with each other. Why? Because we have unity with Christ.¹³

¹² It should never be surprising when Christians disagree over doctrine – even when they disagree strongly. Christians have been willing to be burned at the stake rather than give up their beliefs, so it ought not surprise you when another believer disagrees with you.

¹³ Anthony Ash, *The College Press NIV Commentary: Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon* (College Press, 1994), 57-58.

“Having the same love” means that even if I disagree with another believer, I recognize that she loves Jesus and is as committed to him as I am. “One in spirit and purpose” means you and I have the same basic direction for our lives. We serve the same Savior, are citizens of the same kingdom, and are working to expand God’s kingdom for God’s glory.

If we do all that—if we are united with Christ, if we are comforted by his love and have fellowship with the Spirit, if we show tenderness and compassion to each other and are like-minded, having the same love and being one in spirit and in purpose—then we can live out the commands that follow. “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also the interests of others” (Phil 2:3).

Unity Is Possible, But . . .

Stone called his followers Christians, while Campbell called his followers Disciples. In the winter of 1831-32, Christians and Disciples in Kentucky began uniting despite some of their differences of opinion. Believers in other states struggled to repeat what happened in Kentucky. When Stone moved to Jacksonville, Illinois in 1834 he found both a Christian and a Disciples church. Naturally, people wondered which one he would unite with. He told them that unless they formed one congregation, he wouldn’t unite with either. They did so immediately. Outside of Kentucky that kind of response was rare. When asked why that was the case,

Stone indicated one reason for the failure to bring about a union of all the Christians and the Reformers.

“This union, I have no doubt, would have been as easily effected in other States as in Kentucky,” he

wrote, “had there not been a few ignorant, headstrong, bigots on both sides, who were more influenced to retain and augment their party, than to save the world by uniting according to the prayer of Jesus.”¹⁴

If we are honest, we must admit that there are preachers and church leaders across the spectrum—progressive churches to conservative churches—who are less interested in unity than they are in protecting their doctrinal turf. In my experience church members do not struggle with unity nearly as much as their preachers struggle with unity. It’s always been that way.

Barton Stone once said that he heard from an old Baptist preacher that “the enemies of Christian union, were the world, the flesh and the Devil; and I will add, [Stone] said, the fourth, more mischievous than all, the preachers.”¹⁵ Why do we struggle with Christian unity—whether preachers, church leaders, or church members? Because we don’t have the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus.

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death –

¹⁴ Enos E. Dowling, *The Restoration Movement* (Standard Publishing, 1964), 71-72.

¹⁵ Foster, *Alexander Campbell*, 244.

even death on a cross! (Phil 2:6-8)

Unity will only be achieved when Christians exhibit the same attitude as Jesus. When we lower ourselves and become nothing. When we willingly descend from our perches and take on the nature of a servant. When we humble ourselves and become obedient—not just to the commands of Christ, but to the cross of Christ. When you and I die to ourselves, then we can legitimately say we are on the path to unity.

What was the result of Jesus' humbling himself?
Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2:9-11).

When Jesus acted humbly, God glorified him. And when you and I act humbly, when we have the same attitude that was in Christ Jesus, we glorify God. Paul told the church at Rome, "May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 15:1-6). Humility and unity are interconnected. Humility is the foundation for the spirit of unity. Without humility, unity will never be achieved; without unity, New Testament Christianity will never be restored.

Conclusion

In 1997 I was called to preach in Butler, Indiana. I arrived in the middle of a February ice storm. I had no idea just how chilly things were in that little town of 2700 people. Four months before I arrived, the Church of Christ experienced a church split. The minister was

ousted by the elders and he and one-third of the church, including all the children's and student ministry volunteers, went across the street to begin a new church.

In time each of the two churches, Butler Church of Christ and Christ's Church at Butler, acquired additional property, such that they shared a property line.

Several years into that ministry I invited Knofel Staton to do some leadership training at our church, and we invited elders from surrounding churches to join us. The Christ's Church elders and preacher took us up on the invitation. Dr. Staton's sermon provided one of the more red-faced moments of my life. Here is what he said in his opening remarks: "I noticed when I arrived here that there are two Restoration Movement churches within sight of each another. What I find remarkable about that is this: you will shop at the same grocery store, eat in the same restaurants, send your kids to the same school, and cheer for the same football team, but you people won't take communion together."

God forgive us for our lack of humility.

How do we restore New Testament Christianity? By being New Testament Christians who embrace the humility of Jesus.

A Collision of Temples

God's Restoration Work Continues

Frank Viola

Introduction

My Christian background is very eclectic. But for reasons that I will never understand, I am invited to speak mostly by one of three groups: the Charismatics, the Methodists, and the Churches of Christ/Christian Churches. And those three have about as much in common as a fish, a bicycle, and a rubber duck. You'd have to be twofold a Solomon to figure out why this is, and it reminds me of a story.

One day, three ministers died. And they died at the same time. And they all appeared before Peter at the pearly gates. Peter congratulated them and welcomed them in, and he said, "Gentlemen, hold steady. We're a little backed up. I need to make a phone call." So he called Lucifer and said, "Listen, we've got three that just checked in. We're backed up. We have to do some organizing. Can you bring them down, put them in a

comfortable place for about three weeks?” Lucifer said, “Sure, send them down.”

One week goes by, and Lucifer calls Peter, and he is frantic. And he says, “We got a problem. You got to get these three clowns out of here now.” And Peter says, “What’s the issue?” Lucifer says, “Well, the Catholic priest is absolving everybody of their sins. And the Church of Christ minister is baptizing everyone. But the worst problem of all is the Charismatic preacher. He’s raised enough money to air-condition the entire place.”

The Subplot: A Clash of Temples

As the title indicates, this message is about a clash of temples. Though the New Testament continues the overarching plot of the whole Bible story, the New Testament also contains a subplot. It’s a richly layered narrative that can be described as a clash of temples, and here’s a quick overview.

In the Gospels, the subplot is “the old temple meets the new temple,” and in the book of Acts, it’s broken up into two parts:

1. *Acts 1-12* can be described as the old temple versus the new temple
2. *Acts 13-28* can be described as the false temple versus the true temple

And the rest of the New Testament is really a description of the tension between the false temple and the old temple with the new temple. When the new temple meets the old temple, you have popcorn. And when the false temple meets the true temple, you have fireworks. I want to show this to you in the New Testament and then make some application.

The Scriptural Meaning of the Temple

Let's first discuss the scriptural meaning of the temple. What does the temple mean in the Bible? Primarily, it means two things:

1. *The temple is God's living quarters.* It's His abode. It's where He dwells.
2. *The temple represents worship.* The Jerusalem temple was the place where people worshiped God, the living God, and it was also the place where heaven and earth intersected.

They overlapped in the Jerusalem temple. Two realms came together and there's a reason why: if you examine the Jerusalem temple, there are images of the Garden of Eden all throughout it, all inside it. It was echoing back to the time when God and humans interacted and there was an overlap of heaven and earth.

The Old Temple

During the Old Testament era, the old Jerusalem temple was God's idea. He designed it, he dwelt in it, he blessed it, but it was a signpost. It was a symbol. It was a shadow of a new temple that was to come, and that new temple arrived when Jesus Christ broke onto the scene and came to this planet.

At that moment, under the New Covenant, when Christ made his appearance on this earth, the Jerusalem temple became the old temple, and the old temple represents the following:

1. Human-Invented Religion (Religious Tradition)

In Mark 7:13, Jesus made an arresting statement. He said to the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law, "You nullify the Word of God, you cancel the Word of God, you make void the Word of God by your tradition."

What does the Scripture say about the Word of God? God's Word will not return void. God watches over his Word to perform it. The Word of God is active and living and powerful. God has exalted his Word even above his name, and yet, one thing can stop the Word of God dead in its tracks. Human tradition, religious tradition, and that's one of the things, brothers and sisters, that the old temple represents.

2. Empty Rituals

The old temple, the Jerusalem temple, focused on maintaining religious ceremonies rather than encountering the living God. God left the temple during the New Testament era, even before that, but you still had the priests slinging blood on the bronze altar. You still had the priests lighting the candlestick, the lampstand. You still had the high priest go into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. He poured blood on the ground because there was no Ark of the Covenant. It was gone. God left, but they still were going through the motions.

In that sense, it represents dead religion without life. And brothers and sisters, listen to me carefully. You can make a biblical thing, you can make a scriptural thing a dead, empty ritual if you're doing it out of religious obligation and not the leading of the Holy Spirit.

A. W. Tozer made the statement, and I think it's riveting that if the Holy Spirit was removed from most churches today, they would still go on, business as usual. So that's the second thing that the old temple represents.

In 2 Timothy 3, Paul talks about those who have a form of godliness, but deny the power therein. And in 2 Corinthians 3, Paul is speaking about the difference between the Law and the Spirit. And he says, "The letter

kills, but the Spirit gives life.” So it represents empty, dead religion and rituals.

3. *Exclusivity*

The final thing that the old temple represents is exclusivity. The temple authorities in the first century were the self-anointed gatekeepers who decided who was in and who was out. And they drew a sharp, clear line between the insiders, who were the Judeans and the Jewish people, and the outsiders, who were the Gentiles and the Samaritans. Exclusivity is another feature of the old temple.

The False Temple

Now that brings us to the false temple. What does the false temple represent? It represents all of what the pagan temples in the first century stood for. The statues and images of the pagan gods were put into pagan temples and they were worshiped there. And three of them are significant:

- *Kratos*, the god of power
- *Plutus*, the god of wealth
- *Aphrodite*, the god of lust

When the apostles preached that Jesus of Nazareth was Lord, Jesus of Nazareth was Lord, they were saying Caesar is not the real Lord. But they were also saying that Kratos, the god of power, is not Lord. They were also saying that Plutus, the god of wealth, is not Lord. And they were saying that Aphrodite, the god of lust, is not Lord. That’s why there were riots breaking out everywhere Paul and the other apostles preached.

What the False Temple Represents

Consequently, the false temple represents three things.

1. Idolatrous Systems

These systems compete with our complete allegiance to Jesus Christ, this world's true Lord. And power and money and lust are the main idols we contend with today. Sisters and brothers, Kratos is still alive. Plutus is still at work. Aphrodite, she's still operating.

2. Material Prosperity, Security, and Pleasure as the Ultimate Aim of Life

Pagan temples in the first century were intertwined with commerce, security, and sensuality. And those were cultural idols then and they are cultural idols today.

3. Validation Outside of Jesus Christ

If you were a pagan in the first century, you were validated by attending the pagan festivals and frequenting the pagan temples. And sisters and brothers, today humans seek validation in their country, their race, their nationality, their social media status, all outside of Jesus Christ. The false temple embodies all of those things. And the false temple, what it represents, is still at work today.

Last year I coined a term that describes the combination of the old temple in Jerusalem (the religious temple) with the false temple of paganism. I call it the Industrial Religious Complex. More on this later.

The Collision in the Gospels:

The Old Temple Meets the New Temple

Let's look at how the collision of temples plays out in the Gospels and in the book of Acts. We don't have time to trace it throughout the entire New Testament. In the

Gospels, Jesus Christ is clearly the new temple. He has replaced, outshined, upstaged, and overshadowed the old temple. And that's why there was constant conflict between the old temple and its leaders with the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me give you some snapshots.

John 1: The text says, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory." Well, the Greek word for dwelt is literally "tabernacled." And John is telegraphing to us that Jesus Christ was the embodiment of the tabernacle of Moses, where the glory of God came and filled it. Here was the reality of the tabernacle: Jesus of Nazareth. God's glory was in him and on him. God dwelt in him.

John 2: Jesus declares, "Destroy this temple, and I'll raise it up in three days." He was speaking of himself. He was saying that he was the replacement of the Jerusalem temple, the old temple.

Mark 2: Jesus claims the authority to forgive sins. Forgiving sins was a temple function, and he was accused of blasphemy when he did that. In that same chapter, Jesus heals a paralyzed man. Healing was also a temple function, and Jesus is taking it over.

John 7: During the Feast of Tabernacles, they had a water-pouring ceremony, and Jesus declares, "I am the living water. This is a picture. It points to me" (my paraphrase).

John 8: He says, "I am the light of the world." That was also during the Feast of Tabernacles when they had the large lamps lit in the temple, and the people could see them, and Jesus says, "I'm the real light. These lamps are a shadow. I'm the real temple."

Matthew 12: He made the statement, "Something greater than the temple is here." Again, he's the real temple.

Matthew 21: He cleansed the temple. He was physically confronting the temple's corrupt practices and religious hierarchy.

Luke 21: He predicted that the temple would be destroyed, and that's what happened in AD 70. That act showed that God brought judgment on the old temple because the new temple had arrived.

Matthew 27 and Hebrews 10: When Jesus died, the temple veil was rent from top to bottom. And we learn from Hebrews that this was a significant picture and reality saying that the way has been opened. God's presence is now accessible to everyone beyond the Jewish priests. Christ is the real temple.

John 20: After his resurrection, do you remember when Mary Magdalene peered into the tomb, and she saw two angels on both sides of the empty slab? That's a throwback to the Ark of the Covenant—the Ark of the Covenant where God dwelt. There were two celestial beings on each end, and God spoke from the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant. The message is clear. Mary saw that Jesus Christ is the reality of the Ark, and God speaks through him (Heb 1).

All of this throughout the entire Gospel record, Jesus is the new temple, and he's in constant conflict with the old temple and its leadership. And finally, they put him to death.

The Collision in Acts 1-12: Old Temple vs. New Temple

Now we come to the book of Acts. The new temple versus the old temple. On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit comes and fills the 120 disciples, and what happens? Fire falls on their heads. That's an echo of the fire falling on Solomon's temple when it was freshly built in 2

Chronicles 7. The message conveyed is that this group of people, these Jesus followers, they *together* are the new temple. The new temple, which was Christ, has now been expanded. And each disciple, having the Spirit of God in them, became a living stone in the Lord's new house (1 Pet 2). Let me give you some snapshots of the conflict, the collision between the old temple and the new temple in the book of Acts.

Acts 4: Peter is declaring to the temple authorities that Jesus is the stone that the builders rejected, and He has now become the cornerstone, the foundation stone, the most important part of the building. He's the real temple, and then the Sanhedrin forbids them from speaking in the name of Jesus, and what happens? They meet together and the Spirit falls again on them. The message is clear: this group of people, these Jesus followers, are the new temple, and the Sanhedrin and the religious leaders are in constant collision with them, trying to shut them up and put them to death.

Acts 5 onward: The opposition to the new temple intensifies from the old temple. The temple authorities see these apostles and the early followers of Jesus as a major threat, and it climaxes with Stephen. And Stephen responds to the charges laid against him by the Sanhedrin, and what does he say? He critiques the exclusivity of the old temple, and he proclaims that God does not dwell in houses made with human hands. His speech is an accusation against the old temple and its authorities. He's stoned, and as he's dying, what happens? The heavens open, and he sees Jesus. The scene shows us the interconnection between heaven and earth. Stephen is a living stone in the new temple.

Acts 8-12: These chapters tell the story of how the new temple is expanding internationally beyond ethnic

boundaries. Remember, Peter had that vision. He saw the sheet coming down from heaven with the unclean animals. The message: this new temple that I'm building is going to include the so-called heretical Samaritans and idolatrous Gentiles. My temple is larger than the Judean people. I'm bringing all the nations, and this was prophesied all throughout the Old Testament. All the nations would come to Jerusalem and worship the living God in the new temple.

So that's what you have in the first part of the book of Acts. You have the old temple and its authorities persecuting the new temple.

The Collision in Acts 13-28: False Temple vs. True Temple

Then you have Acts 13 through 28, which is a clash between the false temple and the true temple. Here are some snapshots.

Acts 14: Paul and Barnabas confront idolatry in the pagan world, a first-class conflict ensues, and Paul is stoned because of it.

Acts 17: Paul is in Athens. He's talking to the Greek philosophers, and he gives this stunning message, and he echoes what Stephen said to the Judean authorities, only he's talking to the pagans. And he says the living God, the real and true God, does not live in houses made with human hands. And there's an eruption there because of that.

Acts 19: Paul is preaching in Ephesus. And his message threatens the livelihood of the silversmiths who are making statues in honor of the temple of Artemis, and it leads to a riot.

The Industrial Religious Complex will always attack the real temple, the true temple, the new temple. And one

of the ways it does it is through false rumors. That's how it did with Jesus. There were so many rumors about him, and it stirred up the people to be willing to crucify him. There were false rumors being circulated, and they were believed about Stephen, and that's what put him to death. "This man is speaking against the temple," the leaders alleged.

Acts 21: The same thing happens with Paul of Tarsus. He has a head-on collision with the old authorities, and they just about kill him because of false rumors. That's a point to consider.

Four Practical Takeaways

Now, I want to put some meat on these bones. Here's the big point: *God's restoration work did not stop in the early 1830s*. It continues today. It has continued for centuries, and it has two chief enemies, the old temple and the false temple. What the old Jerusalem temple represented is still with us today, and what the false temple represented in the first century is still with us today. This is where the rubber meets the road, because we can survey the New Testament and see it clearly saying, "Yeah, there is a collision of temples. The old against the new, the false against the true. Isn't that wonderful?" But there's much practical application here, and so I'm going to give you four.

Takeaway #1: The Old Work of God Will Always Persecute the New Work of God

The old work of God will always persecute the new work of God, and the leaders of the old work either attack or ignore the leaders of the new work. This and the other three takeaways I'm about to share are truths that will

help keep us aligned with God's restoration work today, and this is one of them.

Judaism was once God's work. It's all throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. Yet when Christ came into the world, it became his enemy, the very enemy of God. What began as a work of God became God's adversary. The old temple persecuted the new temple, and this is a truism that runs throughout church history.

Today, October 31, is Reformation Day, hat-tip to Martin Luther. The Reformers were being slaughtered by the Roman Catholic Church. Then they turned around and attacked the Anabaptists. The Anglicans attacked John Wesley and his movement. Follow me here. The old work of God attacks the new work of God. The Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians all rejected the Stone-Campbell Movement. And this principle continues today, brothers and sisters. The old work of God will always attack the new work of God. It's written in the bloodstream of the universe, and if you're going to continue in God's restoration work, be warned. Be aware.

Takeaway #2: Beware the Danger of Being Captured by the Same Spirit You Oppose

This is a tough one. Beware the danger of being captured by the same spirit you oppose. I'm going to illustrate this one historically.

There were two movements that began in the early 1830s. Same time, almost the same day. One began in the United States. You are all familiar with that movement. Another began at the same time in Plymouth, England.

Both movements recognized that the church of their day was in ruins. Both movements recognized that God wanted to restore the pristine simplicity of the church. Both movements said that creeds are divisive. Both

movements said that God wants unity. “The church is one,” they said. So they stood for the oneness of the body of Christ. Both movements sought to return to the simplicity of New Testament principles and practices. If you compare the movements, they are uncanny in their similarity, and they both started on different continents.

But here’s what happened. In time, both movements began to fracture. Both movements began to splinter. And some, underscore and put in bold the word **some**, some of those splinterings became exclusive, divisive, legalistic, the very things they stood against in the beginning. And that is historical fact. This happened to both movements. What happened? They became captured by the same spirit they opposed.

I remember when I was a young Christian, I started getting into church history, and I was reading one of the Reformers. I’m not going to mention who it was. And at the time, he and his movement were being mercilessly slaughtered by the Roman Catholics. Now he, of course, was still alive, but his movement, people in it, were being tortured and killed by the Roman Catholic Church. And he was writing about the evils of inflicting violence against fellow Christians. And it was brilliant, eloquent, articulate.

Not long after that, he and his movement began to brutalize, in gruesome and horrendous ways, the Anabaptists. The same guy who wrote these things against attacking other Christians and being violent toward them was doing the same thing. What happened? He was captured by the same spirit he opposed.

Now, brothers and sisters, this is a danger for any Christian who is standing in the lineage of restoration. What’s the antidote? I’m going to give you one of them as takeaway number three.

Takeaway #3: Jesus Christ Often Comes to Us in Ways That Make It Easy for Us to Reject Him

I wish I learned this when I was a young believer, but Jesus Christ often comes to us in ways that make it easy for us to reject Him. As glorious as he is, as attractive, irresistible as the Lord Jesus Christ is, he comes to us in ways that we often find strange and that will tempt us to reject him or dismiss him or ignore him.

How did he come into the planet? He didn't come as a warrior. He came as a frail baby, the Messiah, the King of Kings. He wasn't born into a politician's home or a palace. He was born in a feeding room for animals amidst the stain and stench of animal manure. His parents were not wealthy. They were a poor Jewish couple. And when he broke into this planet, all the Bible scholars of the day who had memorized the Hebrew Scriptures and studied when the Messiah was going to come and where he was going to come from—when Jesus Christ came to this earth, none of them were present. You know who was present? Some shepherds and pagan astrologers were there.

He comes to us in ways that make it easy to reject him. “He came to his own and his own received him not,” John says. He grew up and ate and drank in their streets and they didn't recognize him. Why? Because he associated with all the wrong people.

I am struck by the fact that the old temple authorities, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the elders, the scribes, the teachers of the Law had studied the Hebrew Scriptures and served the Living God. Yet when he was right there in their presence, they didn't recognize him. They dismissed him. They rejected him, and finally they put him to death.

He comes to us in ways that make it easy for us to reject him. And brothers and sisters, none of us is immune to this. I can go through so many Scriptures where Jesus is speaking about this very thing. You know, he told his disciples, “If they reject you, guess what? They reject me.”

Or when John said to him, “Hey, Jesus, we saw some dude casting out demons, but he wasn’t part of our movement. He’s not with us. Rebuke him.” And Jesus had some strong words to say. He said, “Don’t stop him. If he’s not against me, he’s for me.” That’ll throw your theology off a little bit.

The Standard for Receiving Others

Paul had a problem with the divisions in the Roman church and in Romans 15:7 (this is a good verse to tattoo on your forehead), he gave the standard for receiving a person as a fellow believer. He said, “If Christ has received them, we ought to receive them. If Christ has received them, you receive them” (paraphrase).

“But they don’t believe like we do!” I’m not talking about denying the deity of Jesus, or his atoning death, or his bodily resurrection. I’m not talking about that. I’m talking about the 10 million plus other things that Christians divide over and excommunicate each other over.

Sisters and brothers, if Christ has received a person, we must receive them. If not, we’re not on biblical grounds. We grieve the Holy Spirit. We’re being divisive, elitist, exclusive, etc. And this is what Paul was dealing with in Romans 14 and 15. Read it. And he’s talking about meat eaters and vegetarians, Sabbath day keepers and people who regard every day the same. Well, you can insert in there your favorite doctrinal distinctive.

Jesus Is Active in Many Camps

The tragedy today is that many cessationists reject Charismatics. A cessationist believes that miracles and healing have stopped. The Holy Spirit doesn't do what he did in the first century anymore. That's all gone.

And many Charismatics reject cessationists. And many Calvinists reject Armenians and say they're heretics. And many Armenians reject Calvinists and say they're heretics.

And yet, Jesus Christ is active in all those camps. I'm going to say it again, flat-footedly, unapologetically: Jesus Christ is active in all those camps. There are people who love Jesus Christ who are Armenians, Calvinists, Anglicans, Episcopalians, Baptists, Methodists, Christian Missionary Alliance, etc. I'm talking to unity people here. I should hear a resounding amen.

"Frank, are you saying they're all saved?" I'm not talking about everybody, but goodness me, if they've named his name, they've repented, they've given their believing allegiance to him, they've been baptized in his name—sisters and brothers, who are we to say they are not part of Jesus Christ?

Diversity Is a Sign of Fullness

Diversity is not a threat. Diversity is a sign of fullness. Look at your physical body. All the different parts are diverse. That's Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 12. We're not all the same. We don't all function the same.

And I am arrested at the fact that the Reformers drew their swords against one another over seemingly small differences over the Lord's Supper. Some said, "The bread and the wine are the *actual* body and blood of Jesus." Others said, "Well no, Jesus is *with* the bread and the wine." And over that, they drew blood.

Takeaway #4: Understand Who You Are in Christ and What Your True Identity Is

All right, here's takeaway number four. Understand who you are in Christ and what your true identity is. If you have repented and you have entrusted yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, you've believed on him, you've given him your allegiance, you've been baptized in his name, then put your hand on your stomach. I hope you never forget what I'm going to tell you.

Do you know what's beneath your hand? *The living God*. The God of the universe dwells inside of you. You are the temple of the living God right now.

Well, Brother Frank, that sounds like new age religion. I mean, we weren't taught this. Is that right? Well then, listen to the New Testament:

1 Corinthians 3:16 — Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you.

1 Corinthians 3:17 — The temple of God is holy. Which temple you are?

1 Corinthians 6:19 — Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you?

2 Corinthians 6:16 — For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said, I will dwell in them, I will walk in them, I will be their God, they shall be my people. We're talking about the New Covenant and Paul is quoting that statement.

Romans 8:9-11 — But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his.

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

2 Timothy 1:14 — Guard the good deposit that has been entrusted to you. Guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in you.

The Reality of the Indwelling Spirit

Sisters and brothers, the Holy Spirit is a person. He's real. He lives. He speaks. He guides. He leads. And if you are in Christ, he lives in you as a person. Praise the Lord.

I'm not sure how many of you know this, but Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone both believed in the reality of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Both of them. It's crystal clear in their writings. Later in time, Alexander Campbell began to emphasize that the indwelling Spirit was a reality. However, in *conversion* and *sanctification*, the Holy Spirit always works with the Word of God. And that's true.

But he never said that the Holy Spirit was replaced by the Bible. He never said that the Bible was the equivalent of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit always works with the Scripture because he inspired it. And if the Holy Spirit guides and leads a person to do or say something, it will always be in line with Scripture. When it comes to *service*, *ministry*, and *fellowship*, the Holy Spirit will never contradict the written Word of God.

The Distinction Between Scripture and Christ

Sisters and brothers, the Bible is not the Holy Spirit. And Jesus Christ is not this Bible, this book. This book points

to him. This book reveals him. This book magnifies him. Not just in the New Testament, but Genesis 1 points to Christ. He's the real light. He's the reality of who Adam was. Paul says this in Romans 5. Adam was a figure of Him who was to come. In 1 Corinthians 15, Jesus Christ is the last Adam. He's the second man. All of it points to Christ.

But the Word of God, the written Word of God now, and Jesus Christ, while they're not separate, they are distinct. If you were to be able to see into the other realm, you would not see Jesus sitting at the right hand of God the Father as a book. The Bible is not sitting at the right hand of God. Jesus is a real person. And guess what? He is in the Spirit now. And when Christ ascended, he descended in the Spirit. And that's what you had on the day of Pentecost, and that's what you have all throughout the New Testament.

The Challenge and the Call

Here's my closing point. I got one more bomb to drop, and I hope you're encouraged by it.

The Lord Jesus Christ continues to build his new temple and his true temple, his ecclesia, which replaces the old temple and the false temple. And it's in conflict with both even today, because the old temple still lives and so does the false temple.

The Lord is looking for a people who will transcend human-invented traditions, even those that have come from their own camp. No matter where you're from, we all have them, as well as the idols and carnal influences of the world system, that is, the false temple.

And every generation who takes this stand for the new temple of the living God, standing in the lineage of the restorationists who preceded us, will stand in conflict with

the old temple and the false temple. They will be persecuted and attacked at worst, or dismissed and ignored at best by the Industrial Religious Complex.

Here's the challenge to all of you reading this: *become what you already are*. Don't look to the left or to the right, ignore the ignorers, and don't allow the persecutors and the attackers to make you crumble. Instead, become what you already are, and that is the temple of the living God, both individually and corporately.

That is what the Lord is looking for. That is what pleases his heart. Here's the attitude and posture. "It doesn't matter where the opposition comes from. Old temple or false temple, I'm going to stand. I'm going to stand, and I'm not going to move. I am the temple of the living God. The body that I meet with, we collectively are the temple of the living God. We will be led by him. We will allow him to guide us. We will allow him to reveal himself through us. We are here for his expression. It doesn't matter if we are small and insignificant and nobody knows us. We're on the map in heavenly realms."

And that is what the Lord is looking for.