

RETURN TO APOSTOLIC TEACHING

The Church must re-examine doctrine in the light of Scripture

*Back to
the Word*

INHERITED MODERN TEACHINGS

- Passed through generations
- Influenced by tradition
- Sometimes filtered through Trinitarian hands
- Sometimes shaped as reactions against error
- Not everything inherited is apostolic



TRADITION
OF MEN

TRUE APOSTOLIC RE-EXAMINATION

- ✓ Search the Scriptures
- ✓ Test every doctrine
- ✓ Return to apostolic foundations
- ✓ Separate Scripture from tradition
- ✓ Restore truth by the Word of God

TRUTH
OF GOD



**THE LAST-DAYS CHURCH MUST NOT
INHERIT BLINDLY. IT MUST RETURN, EXAMINE, AND OBEY.**

NOT EVERY DOCTRINE HANDED DOWN BY MEN IS APOSTOLIC.

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” —2 Timothy 2:15

Restoring Onen Are we ready to move forward then ess Apostolic Truth
In the Last Days

Comprehensive Study Guide Series

By Pete Wierzbicki
Former Pastor | San Francisco, CA

RETURN TO APOSTOLIC TEACHING

The Last-Days Church Must Re-Examine What It Has Inherited

There is a dangerous assumption within modern Apostolic Pentecostalism: that because a doctrine has been preached for generations, defended by respected ministers, and handed down through our organizations, it must therefore be Apostolic.

That assumption is not safe.

Every generation of the church inherits more than Scripture. We inherit interpretations, traditions, reactions to previous controversies, denominational customs, organizational culture, terminology, and theological arguments developed by men who were themselves trying to understand the Word of God. Some of those conclusions are sound. Some may be partially correct. Some may have been necessary corrections to errors in their own time. And some may simply be wrong.

The responsibility of the church in the last days is not to protect everything we inherited.

It is to **return to the Word and test everything we inherited.**

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

— 1 Thessalonians 5:21

Paul did not say, “Hold fast everything your fathers taught you.”

He said:

Prove all things.

Then hold fast what survives the test.

1. THE APOSTLES ARE THE FOUNDATION, NOT OUR ORGANIZATIONS

The true church was not founded in the twentieth century.

Its doctrine was not established by modern Pentecostal organizations.

Its foundation was laid by Jesus Christ and His apostles.

Paul writes:

“And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”

— Ephesians 2:20

That establishes the standard.

If we want to know what Apostolic Christianity is, we do not begin with what an organization teaches today.

We begin with Christ.

Then the apostles.

Then the Scriptures through which their doctrine has been preserved.

Our question must always be:

What did the apostles actually teach?

Not:

What has always been preached in my fellowship?

Not:

What did my favorite minister teach?

Not:

What did the early Pentecostal pioneers conclude?

Not even:

What do most Oneness Pentecostals believe?

Those questions can be historically interesting, but none of them determines truth.

The Bereans were praised because they refused to accept even apostolic preaching without examining the Scriptures:

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”

— Acts 17:11

Think about that.

They were listening to **Paul**, yet they still searched the Scriptures.

If Paul's hearers were commended for examining his teaching, then no modern preacher, superintendent, theologian, author, organization, or Pentecostal tradition should be exempt from the same examination.

Apostolic authority does not belong to whoever carries an Apostolic label. It belongs to the apostolic truth preserved in Scripture.

2. NOT EVERYTHING PENTECOSTALISM INHERITED ORIGINATED WITH THE APOSTLES

Modern Oneness Pentecostalism did not develop in isolation.

It emerged within a much larger Christian world.

Before Oneness Pentecostal organizations existed, Christianity had already accumulated centuries of theological vocabulary, denominational assumptions, creeds, doctrinal systems, and traditions.

Early Pentecostals inherited some of that framework.

Then, when the Oneness revelation began to spread, Oneness teachers rightly challenged major Trinitarian doctrines. But even here another danger emerged.

Sometimes theology is developed not simply by asking:

What does Scripture positively teach?

but by asking:

What argument will defeat the opposing side?

Those are not always the same thing.

A doctrine can be constructed primarily as a reaction against another doctrine.

That reaction may contain truth while still going too far.

In attempting to prove that God is not three divine persons, someone can develop an explanation of Father and Son designed primarily to defeat Trinitarianism rather than one built purely from the biblical text.

In attempting to oppose salvation by works, someone can diminish biblical obedience.

In attempting to oppose legalism, someone can weaken holiness.

In attempting to defend holiness, someone can create commandments of men.

In attempting to protect churches from worldliness, someone can convert pastoral preferences into doctrines of salvation.

This is how religious traditions accumulate.

One generation fights an error.

The next generation inherits the argument.

The third generation forgets why the argument was created.

Eventually the argument becomes:

“This is what we have always believed.”

But age does not make a doctrine Apostolic.

Only truth does.

3. JESUS WARNED THAT RELIGIOUS TRADITION CAN REPLACE GOD'S WORD

This problem is not new.

Jesus confronted religious people who loved tradition so deeply that they could no longer distinguish between God's commandment and their inherited interpretations.

He said:

“Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.”

— Mark 7:9

And again:

“Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered...”

— Mark 7:13

Notice the language:

“which ye have delivered.”

Traditions are delivered from one generation to another.

That is exactly what makes them powerful.

People receive them from trusted fathers.

Those fathers received them from trusted fathers.

Eventually questioning the tradition feels like questioning the faith itself.

But Jesus made an uncompromising distinction:

There is **the commandment of God**, and there is **the tradition delivered by men**.

The two are not automatically identical.

That means the modern Apostolic church must possess enough humility to ask:

Have we inherited anything that Scripture itself does not require?

That question must be asked about every doctrine. (Our website provides clear interpretative studies on all these subjects, many of which are being taught contrary the historic teachings of the apostles.)

The Godhead.

Sonship.

What happens after death.

Hell.

Biblical Holiness.

Giving.

Church government.

Women in ministry.

Eschatology.

Pastoral authority.

Standards.

Appropriate use of the Law and Old Testament.

Church functions, routines, and traditions.

Church Programs.

Spiritual gifts.

Sanctification.

Nothing should be protected from examination simply because examining it makes us uncomfortable.

If it is true, Scripture will establish it.

If Scripture cannot establish it, we should not fear losing it.

4. REFORMATION IS NOT REBELLION

One reason churches resist doctrinal examination is that questioning inherited teaching can be mistaken for rebellion.

But returning to Scripture is not rebellion against truth.

It is loyalty to truth.

Josiah discovered this principle when the book of the law was recovered.

Israel already had priests.

It already had religious institutions.

It already had traditions.

It already had worship.

But when the Word was rediscovered, Josiah realized how far the nation had departed from what God had actually commanded.

“And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes.”

— 2 Kings 22:11

The answer was not:

“Our fathers have done it this way for generations.”

The answer was repentance.

Reformation.

Restoration.

When truth exposes inherited error, the correct response is not institutional self-defense.

It is:

Change us.

That same spirit is needed in the Apostolic church today.

We should be able to say:

If our fathers were right, Scripture will vindicate them.

If our fathers were wrong, Scripture must correct us.

We honor faithful ministers of previous generations not by pretending they were infallible, but by carrying forward their desire for truth while continuing the work they began.

The restoration of Apostolic truth did not end when the twentieth-century Oneness movement rediscovered baptism in Jesus' name and the Oneness of God.

Restoration must continue wherever Scripture reveals that inherited Christianity still differs from the apostolic pattern.

5. WE MUST ALSO RE-EXAMINE DOCTRINES CREATED IN REACTION TO TRINITARIANISM

This deserves special attention.

Oneness believers correctly rejected the doctrine of three divine persons.

But rejecting Trinitarianism does not automatically make every alternative explanation correct.

A theology can be non-Trinitarian and still be wrong.

That means we must not ask merely:

Does this defeat Trinitarianism?

We must ask:

Does Scripture actually teach it?

If the doctrine concerning the Word as the conceptual Son exists primarily because it gave Oneness theologians a definitive answer against Trinitarian arguments, that doctrine still must face Scripture independently.

We cannot permit Trinitarian theology to determine our doctrine indirectly by causing us to build our entire Christology on plausible opposition.

Truth is not merely the opposite of error.

Truth has its own positive biblical identity.

That is why every generation must return to Genesis, the prophets, the Gospels, Acts, the Epistles, and Revelation and allow the biblical revelation of God to speak for itself.

The same principle applies beyond the Godhead.

Some of our doctrines may have *come through* Trinitarian Christianity.

Others may have been formulated specifically to oppose Trinitarian Christianity.

Neither origin guarantees truth.

The only final question is:

What saith the scripture?

— Romans 4:3

6. THE LAST-DAYS CHURCH NEEDS RESTORATION, NOT DENOMINATIONAL PRESERVATION

The church in the last days cannot afford to confuse denominational preservation with faithfulness.

Jesus is not returning for an organization.

He is returning for His church.

Paul describes that church:

“That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing...”

— Ephesians 5:27

A church preparing for Christ must therefore be willing to undergo correction.

Traditions must be examined.

False doctrines must be abandoned.

Truth that has been neglected must be restored.

Scripture must stand above organizational history.

The last-days church needs ministers who are not afraid to ask difficult questions.

It needs saints who love truth more than familiarity.

It needs teachers willing to say:

We may have inherited this, but did the apostles teach it?

It needs pastors willing to distinguish biblical holiness from man-made control.

Biblical giving from religious financial manipulation.

Biblical authority from authoritarianism.

Biblical Oneness from philosophical systems developed merely to defeat Trinitarian arguments.

Biblical sanctification and holiness from either lawlessness on one side or commandments of men on the other.

Biblical grace from grace mixed with law.

Biblical doctrine, administration, and function from philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

The goal is not to become less Apostolic.

It is to become **more Apostolic than our traditions have allowed us to be.**

7. "CONTINUE STEADFASTLY IN THE APOSTLES' DOCTRINE"

Acts gives us the original pattern:

"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

— Acts 2:42

That is the church we are trying to restore.

Not merely Apostolic terminology.

Not merely Apostolic organizations.

Not merely Pentecostal culture.

The apostles' doctrine.

The church must therefore take everything it currently believes and carry it back through history until it reaches Scripture.

If a doctrine came through Catholicism, examine it.

If it came through Protestantism, examine it.

If it came through early Pentecostalism, examine it.

If it came through early Oneness theologians, examine it.

If it came from our own organizations, examine it.

If it was created in reaction to Trinitarianism, examine it.

If we have preached it for one hundred years, examine it.

Truth has nothing to fear from examination.

Error does.

CONCLUSION: BACK TO THE WORD

The great need of the Apostolic church is not another generation that simply repeats what the previous generation said.

We need a generation willing to rediscover **why** we believe what we believe.

The early Apostolic movement courageously challenged centuries of inherited Christian tradition when Scripture demanded it.

That same courage is required again.

We cannot celebrate our fathers for questioning Trinitarian tradition while forbidding our children from questioning Pentecostal tradition.

The principle must apply equally.

If Scripture is supreme, then Scripture is supreme over **everyone**.

Over Rome.

Over Protestantism.

Over Pentecostalism.

Over Oneness organizations.

Over respected theologians.

Over pastors.

Over traditions.

Over us.

The church of the last days must therefore return to the apostolic foundation with an open Bible and an honest heart.

Keep what is true.

Correct what is incomplete.

Reject what is false.

Restore what has been lost.

And refuse to call anything Apostolic simply because Apostolics have taught it.

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

— 1 Thessalonians 5:21

That is not rebellion.

That is restoration.

The last-days church must not inherit blindly.

It must return, examine, and obey.