

THE ORIGINAL WORK OF THE CHURCH
Eph.4:8-16
Ed Dye

I. INTRODUCTION

(1st, Some notes to explain what I'm doing for the next four nights)

1. Bro. Lowell Blasingame, in the Grenada, Ms. Church bulletin, Taking A Stand With Christ, Vol.39, No.4, Apr.2003, and Vol.39, No.5, May, 2003, wrote two articles titled: "Restoration – An On Going Need", wherein he proved the fact and the need for it by briefly tracing apostasy among God's people from the days of Joshua, Moses' successor, down to the early 19th century, to the beginning of the plea of brethren for the restoration of N.T. Christianity.
2. Judg.2:7-13 shockingly reveals to us how soon after the days of Joshua they forsook the Lord God, how soon apostasy among God's people became a fact, and the need for restoration, or bringing back the original, became a pressing need.
3. The O.T. reveals at least 6 different periods of servitudes of the Israelites under heathen nations with a need for divine deliverance brought upon them because of their sinful practices in forsaking the Lord God.
4. Down through time church history reveals that almost each and every generation, if not every generation, has been plagued with some form of departure from the original with a need for restoration. And our generation is no exception.
5. Now note with me some, a few of the, actual cases and evidences of present-day apostasy among churches of Christ.

(Read from different sources or publications)

6. In a previous lesson in this series on Bringing Back The Original we have identified the original church which is spoken of in the (original record, the N.T. in the) universal sense, of which there is only one, and the local sense, of which there are many, in different localities, all of the same faith and order, with the local church being the only functional unit, with no organization either larger than or smaller than, or other than the local congregation, made up of elders, deacons and saints.

7. The original church is, of course, the church belonging to Christ made up of all the saved; that is, of those who by faith have obeyed the original gospel of Jesus Christ, which was miraculously revealed through and preached by his chosen Spirit-filled, Spirit-guided apostles, and written in the N.T. record.
8. Then the local churches of Christ all of the same faith and order, not different denominations, are formed by the saved in different localities joining together for the purpose of work and worship, operating under the oversight of local elders in each church, served by deacons under the elders.
9. As we have noted, these local churches of Christ worshipped according to a divinely authorized, God assigned, system of worship, with God, the Father, as the proper object, and the following items of worship: the Lord's Supper; prayer; vocal music; giving or laying by in store; and teaching, thus continuing in the apostle's doctrine.
10. And as you would expect, since the local church is a functional unit or spiritual organization of elders, deacons and saints, a worshipping body of saints; it is also a working body of saints with a God assigned, or a divinely authorized work, which is the burden of this the 4th lesson in the series.
11. But in this lesson I shall not only set forth the original work of the local church revealed in the original record, the N.T. scriptures; but also deal with the controversies pertaining to this work down through the years, especially during the last 65 years, which controversies reflect that of earlier years back in the 1800s.
12. Remember this:
 - a. The N.T. predicted an apostasy from the faith, warning the brethren of their need to be on guard and to fight for the truth, Ac.20:28-32; 1Tim.4:1-6.
 - b. This falling away, the mystery of lawlessness, was already working during the days of the apostles, 2Th.2:1-7; Cf. Gal.1:6-9; Heb.2:1; 3:12; 10:23-31.
 - c. By 606 AD apostasy had developed to the point that one man was for the first time finally and officially recognized and crowned as Pope by the apostates.
 - d. Then in the 16th century what is called the Protestant Reformation became a reality with Martin Luther leading the way.

- (1) In this effort the emphasis was on reforming Roman Catholicism.
 - (2) It was only a partial step in restoring original Christianity, which failed miserably in either reforming or restoring.
 - (3) This was because its emphasis was on the wrong thing!
- e. Then in the 19th century a serious effort began by different men to **restore** the original, an effort to go back beyond all human creeds and doctrines of men, go back all the way to the Bible and the Bible only – to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent; to give book, chapter and verse for all they believed and practiced; to have unity in the faith of Christ, or unity in the doctrine of Christ.
- (1) This was called **The Restoration Movement**.
- f. By the late 19th century they were very successful in restoring N.T. Christianity. So successful in fact that some began to think Denominationalism was going to be wiped out in the U.S.
- g. But, then, in the late 19th century apostasy once again began to raise its ugly head among churches of Christ bringing division in the body of Christ, until finally in 1906 the U.S. Bureau of Census listed the churches of Christ and Christian Churches as two separate religious bodies – the division was officially recognized as complete.
- (1) This division resulted over corrupting both the work , the worship and the organization of the local churches. It was over:
 - (a) The M.S. established through which to centralize the local churches’ efforts to do their evangelistic work.
 - (b) The setting up of the Sp. Church, the receiving and disbursing church or eldership as a means of congregational cooperation in evangelism, which was another effort or plan to centralize their efforts in evangelistic work.
 - (c) The Institution Orphan Homes being built and maintained by brethren through which local churches could centralize their effort to engage in congregational cooperation in performing their benevolent work.

- (d) Introducing mechanical instruments of music into the worship of the churches, thus corrupting the worship of the churches.
 - (e) These efforts either corrupted the work, the worship, and the organization of the local churches, or corrupted all three!
- 13. After this, for some years relative peace reigned among sound, faithful churches.
- 14. Then in the 1920s the battle over the premillennial issue erupted creating division among the churches of Christ. That battle waxed hot and heavy on through the 1930s.
- 15. Once again in the 1940s division over centralization of resources and oversight reared its ugly head. This time it centered around the Sp. Church issue, and the Institutional Orphan Home, thus corrupting both the work and the organization of the local churches.
- 16. To help bring it into sharper focus and show the intensity of the battle let me cite some of my own personal experiences with the opposition in the controversy.
 - a. At Rector, Ark.
 - (1) In class in early to mid 1950s.
 - (2) I moved trying to avoid division; that failed, the Bld. locked to keep out the opposition just after I left.
 - (3) The episode with Dr. Clopton over his Dr. bill and the Orphan Home after I had left Rector.
 - b. At Kennett, Mo.
 - (1) Marked by letter in six states because we attended the 1st debate on the Herald of Truth Sp. Church.
 - (2) Lying to take away our radio program over the Kennett, Mo. station after I had moved to Cardwell, Mo. from Rector.
 - c. At Commissary outside Paragould, Ark. finally resulting in them filing a lawsuit against me. – Briefly the whole story from the 1st meeting there to the 2nd two years later and in between, as well as during and after the later meeting and the lawsuit.
- 17. At first it was more or less limited to centralized oversight in congregational cooperation through the Sp. Church and the Institutional Orphan Homes for church benevolence.
 - a. Later as evidence shows it has spread to what we have now where about anything and everything goes, with some who

still claim to be churches of Christ, even “main-stream churches of Christ”,

- b. Until now they are in a bitter battle among themselves as to what is right and what is wrong in the work, worship and organization of the church.
 - c. Those who opened to door to this apostasy in the past can't shut the door to its present spread to things they are unwilling to accept now!
18. With this as a background, I am introducing our study of The Original Work of the Church, which I hope will satisfy the aim or purpose for this the Tuesday night lesson – but , also, for the Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday night lessons.
 19. Therefore, I am making four lessons, or studying four lessons, under this one title: The Original Work Of The Church. (With apologies to bro. Fite for changes in the lesson titles for the last three nights of the series).
 20. Now to our four lessons proper on THE ORIGINAL WORK OF THE CHRUCH.

Note: This is our introduction to our study of “THE WORK OF THE LOCAL CHURCH” , originally cataloged in Sermon Outline Book #16, also found in Book #42, and now to be listed in Book #44.