

## Restoration – Definitions and Expectations

The word “Restoration” is one of those rich, multi-faceted words that can be applied in many different but related situations.

This Oxford Dictionary definition highlights its diversity.

The action of restoring to a former state or position: the act of being RESTORED or reinstated. The action of restoring a person to health or consciousness: recovery of physical strength. The action of restoring something to an unimpaired or perfect condition. The process of carrying out alterations and repairs with the idea of restoring a building to something like its original form: a general renovation. The action of restoring something to one previously deprived of it.

Significantly, scripture has illustrations of each of the above conditions, and we can present them under the following headings:

Reinstatement; Recovery; Repair; Return; Reparation

### 1. Reinstatement

While in prison in Egypt, Joseph interpreted the dream of Pharaoh’s disgraced cupbearer with whom he shared confinement. The dream of three vine branches that quickly budded, blossomed and bore grapes which the cupbearer squeezed into Pharaoh’s cup had a happy interpretation.

*This is what it means, Joseph said to him. The three branches are three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your position, and you will put Pharaoh’s cup in his hand just as you used to do when you were his cupbearer. Genesis 40:12-13*

The cupbearer is restored to exactly his former position. He will again minister, “*just as you used to do*”, not on probation nor with proviso.

### 2. Recovery

When Israel rebelled against Solomon’s son Rehoboam, Jeroboam, King of the separated tribes, led his people on a headlong rush into idolatry. He created idols, shrines and altars, installing non-Levitical priests at high places throughout the nation, and establishing non-Biblical festivals and celebrations. A prophet from Judah confronted the king at one of the altars and declared its ultimate destruction and the death of the priests who served it. Jeroboam’s response was to point at the prophet and cry “seize him” but as he stretched out his hand it “*shrivelled up so that he could not pull it back*”. In his distress the king requested the prophet. “*Intercede with the Lord your God and pray for me that my hand may be restored*”. After the prophet’s intercession, “*the king’s hand was restored and became as it was before*” (1 Kings 13:1-6).

Jeroboam recovered full use of his hand. He did not have a hand disfigured or disabled which he could use with difficulty or discomfort, for it had *“become as it was before”*.

The cupbearer did just as he used to do and Jeroboam’s hand was as it was before. Reinstatement and Recovery – Restoration – is complete and entire and is never into something less.

### **3. Repair**

Nehemiah led a company of returning exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem with a specific mandate: to rebuild the city walls. Although the first wave of returnees had restored the temple about 100 years earlier, the city itself was devastated and desolate. *“The wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates have been burned with fire”* (Nehemiah 1:3). With the permission of King Artaxerxes, to whom he was cupbearer, Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem to engage in the “great project” of restoration. A grand catalogue of those involved with the operation is listed for us – and not a builder among them! The builders are priests and Levites, rulers and politicians, fathers, sons and daughters, neighbourhood work parties. Some commuted into town to work and others laboured beside their own houses. An interesting example is given in Nehemiah 3:8:

*“Uzziel son of Harmaiah, one of the goldsmiths, repaired the next section; and Mananiah, one of the perfume makers made repairs next to that. They restored Jerusalem as far as the broad wall.”*

Out of the ashes of burned stones and heaps of rubble, walls of strength arose, gaps were filled and Jerusalem was restored.

### **4. Return**

Jonathan’s son Mephibosheth was the only survivor of Saul’s family left alive after the prolonged conflict between his grandfather’s and David’s households (2 Samuel 3:1). Existing as a disposed and marginalised non-entity in a house not his own, in a place called Lo Debar, which means “no pasture” and lame from infancy in both feet, his future looked bleak. But with great compassion and for love of Jonathan, David desires to show kindness to him. And the kindness is lavish:

*“I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table”* 2 Samuel 9:7.

That which had been lost through conquest as the spoils of war and the fruit of victory, forfeited by the loser to him who had triumphed, was to be returned. Restored to its previous owner. What is more, this son of a rejected household, and hated because of his physical condition (2 Samuel 5:8 margin) is now “like one of the king’s sons” with his crippled feet under the royal table! (2 Samuel 9:11)

### **5. Reparation**

*“If anyone sins and is unfaithful to the Lord by deceiving his neighbour about something entrusted to him or left in his care or stolen, or if he cheats him, or if finds lost property and lies about it, or if he commits any such sin that people may do – when he thus sins and becomes guilty, he must return what he has stolen or taken by extortion, or what was entrusted to him, or the lost property he found, or whatever it was he swore falsely about, he must make restitution in full, and add one fifth of the value to it and give it all to the owner on the day he presents his guilt offering.” Leviticus 6:1-5*

The idea of reparation is enshrined in Biblical law and gives us confidence that Christians impoverished by the lies of Satan; the church impotent through being robbed of power; and creation itself, imprisoned and frustrated by corruption will yet experience the enriching, empowering and liberating blessing of restoration.

God says, *“I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten”* Joel 2:25.

If God repays (or “restores” KJV) the years, he will not do so by giving more years, but by multiplying harvests in each succeeding year; unprecedented bumper harvests. These harvest years will be bigger and better years than we have ever known, for a fundamental truth of biblical restoration is revealed to us in the words of Leviticus, *“... make restitution in full and add one fifth of the value to it and give it all to the owner ...”*. You get back more than you lost!

### **The provision in the Law**

We have noted the added fifth in Leviticus 6:5 but that is not our only reference. The wisdom of Proverbs tells us:

*“Men do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his hunger when he is starving. Yet if he is caught he must pay sevenfold, though it cost him all the wealth of his house”* Proverbs 6:30-31.

Even an “understanding” offence – to some an excusable one – is however inexcusable because it violated spiritual principles, and therefore has spiritual repercussions. The thief must make a sevenfold restitution, however disproportionate that may appear to be, and however it increases his own poverty.

In practice, scripture dictates differing compensations for different offences.

*“If a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he must pay back five head of cattle for the ox and four sheep for the sheep ... if the stolen animal is found alive in his possession – whether ox or donkey or sheep – he must pay back double”* Exodus 22:1-4.

The principle, however, is constant – Restoration with interest.

### **Legitimate use of the Law**

We must take a while to establish the legitimate use of the law in this way. Although Christ is the end of the law (Romans 10:4) and the law can make nothing perfect

(Hebrews 7:19) it remains a rich seam of example, illustration, and spiritual application: *“the law is holy. The commandment is holy, righteous and good”*; *“the law is spiritual”* (Romans 7:12; 7:14). Paul reminded Timothy that, *“the law is good if one uses it properly”* (1 Timothy 1:8) and that he should *“correctly handle the word of truth”* (2 Timothy 3:15). Jesus said, *“every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old”* (Matthew 13:52).

The apostle Paul brings out from the law, using it properly, handling it correctly, and revealing its spirituality, a remarkable revelation. As Moses' instruction in Exodus 22 is about oxen and sheep it is perhaps significant that Paul also speaks about the law in connection with the ox.

*“For it is written in the law of Moses: do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain. Is it about oxen that God is concerned? Surely he says this for us doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us ...”* 1 Corinthians 9:9-10.

This forms part of Paul's teaching about living from the gospel. He uses obvious natural or “human point of view” arguments from various walks of life. The soldier, the vinedresser, the shepherd, the farmer. But his main thrust is what the law says. While his human arguments are logical and persuasive, the law is conclusive. It is not that he illustrates his point with a biblical reference to the ox, but that he boldly reveals that it is us, not the ox, who are the principle objects of the verse. It was for us, not the ox, for whom this scripture was written. The law is scriptural and teaches scriptural truths.

### **The principle of the Spirit**

It is not surprising, then, to discover the laws of restoration producing deep spiritual responses.

2 Samuel 11 records the sorry tale of David and Bathsheba. David's sinful conduct, beginning with lust and ending in murder, is even more despicable when compared with the honourable attitude of Bathsheba's husband, Uriah. Bathsheba is pregnant by David, and the king weaves a web of intrigue to make it appear that Uriah is the father, but the plan fails. Then David's scheming plumbs deeper depths and he sees Uriah's death as the only answer to his predicament. He gives instruction to have Uriah exposed to enemy fire in a battle currently being fought, and this time the conspiracy succeeds and Uriah is killed. Bathsheba becomes David's wife. In sober understatement the scripture reports *“but the thing David had done displeased the Lord”* (2 Samuel 11:27).

God sent Nathan the prophet to the king with a message of moral outrage; a kind of prophetic parable or an accusing allegory. It was the story of a poor man whose only possession was a ewe lamb which he treated like a daughter. In the same town was a rich man with herds of cattle and flocks of sheep, but when he needed to prepare a meal for the traveller used none of his own livestock but stole the poor man's lamb. The story had the desired effect, and David burned with anger. His first, emotional reaction is; *“the man who did this deserves to die!”* (2 Samuel 12:5). One of the major functions of the law was to restrain the unregenerate spirit which manifests

itself in desires for revenge: “you hurt me – I’ll kill you”. But the law restricts the furious response and over-reactions of the wronged and offended. It can be no more than eye for eye and tooth for tooth. Therefore David’s more reasoned and biblical response is: “*he must pay back for that lamb four times over*”, which is exactly what is stipulated in Exodus 22. But of course, it is David himself who is “the man”. David understood the laws of restoration, and on being confronted with his sin against God, sought the Lord with great passion. One of the results of his repenting is Psalm 51, written “*when the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba*” (title). The king, sought forgiveness purely on the grounds of God’s mercy, unfailing love, and great compassion. He earnestly seeks a renewed spirit and the restoration of the joy of salvation. Just as restoration was effective in the area of property and possessions, so, David reasons, it can be experienced in the human heart and in the spirit. “*He restores my soul*” (Psalm 23:3).

A story from the New Testament also contains the idea of restoration. Luke 19:1-10 is the story of Zachaeus the little man who made big money as chief tax collector, collaborating with the Roman occupiers. He met Jesus and his life was transformed. The transformation is demonstrated in his acts of restoration. “*If I have cheated anybody out of anything I will pay back four times the amount*” (although as his dealings were all financial one fifth would satisfy the law!) But even more wonderful is that such an act is made after he has given half of his possessions to the poor! Grace takes us way beyond the dictates of the law, and elevates the principle of restoration onto a much higher plane. At this level, working in a spiritual dimension God’s will is for that which is fallen to be reinstated; the enfeebled and sickly to recover, and that which is broken or in ruins to be repaired. He wants lost things returned and reparation paid.

The bible speaks of “*the time ... for God to restore everything*” (Acts 3:21), a glorious climax of God’s redemptive purposes when everything is recovered – with interest. So we look for believers not returning to a pre-fallen Adamic state, but moving on to be restored to the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:17); a church, not of the New Testament or the first century, but perfected; “*... mature attaining the whole measure of the fullness of Christ*” (Ephesians 4:13). “*We look forward to a new heaven and earth, the home of righteousness*” (1 Peter 3:13) that is not an earth, a church or a man and woman in their original condition, but all in God’s ultimate intention, filled with his glory (Habakkuk 2:14).

Jesus said “*the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life, and ...*” (John 10:10). Not only life, but life **and**; life plus; life with interest. And what Jesus does for the Christian: “*if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*” (2 Corinthians 5:17), he also does for the cosmos: “*the old order of things has passed away ... I am making everything new*” (Revelation 21:4-5). That is restoration.

Little wonder the poet was moved to cry:-

Where he displays his healing power  
Death and the curse are known no more  
In him the tribes of Adam boast  
More blessings than their father lost.

("Jesus Shall Reign" Isaac Watts 1674-1748)