

“One Fold, One Shepherd”

by Paul J. Gage

Chairman, Conference of Restoration Elders

To The Saints of the Restoration Branch Movement:

How often do we read or hear a scripture or a statement and think it applies to everybody else? When Jesus said in John 10:16, “...there shall be one fold and one shepherd,” did He really mean it? If so, how does that apply to the Restoration Branch Movement today? It is very clear that we are not one fold. We are so many separate branches, and some branches cannot even be defined as “Restoration Branches” because of their deviations from the ordinances and doctrine of the Good Shepherd. One can stand on the Temple Lot and be within a mile of at least eight factions of the 1830 church. Within the Restoration Branch Movement there has never been a majority of elders support or register, much less attend a Conference of Restoration Elders (CRE). This has also been true for the Joint Conference of Restoration Branches (JCRB). So we remain for the most part, a scattered flock, because we either do not hear or do not know the voice of the Good Shepherd.

How can we ever be “one fold” if we never come to the same green pastures where the Good Shepherd awaits to “feed us?” Some are always running ahead into new pastures. There are those who feel that way about the CRE and the JCRB. Some are always hanging back until they actually see the green pastures, because they say they want “evidence.” If we are part of the fold of the Good Shepherd, we must go in faith, believing, asking for guidance, and waiting to hear His voice. It is understood that we are not to be “shaken” by every wind that blows or blindly follow any person, group, teaching, etc. It is equally understood that we are to “prove all things and hold fast that which is good” (I Thess. 5:21).

Some feel that the CRE has not fulfilled its original intents and that it may be time to chart a new course. Some feel the JCRB supporters have moved too quickly and that it may be time to pause and re-evaluate the goals, structure, and intentions while clarifying concerns that many continue to express. Some may be of the opinion to “scrap everything” and start all over. Every facet of the Restoration Branch Movement has done some good, but we are not one fold, though somehow we “claim” the same Shepherd.

The year 2007 could be very meaningful for the whole world and especially for those who long for Zion. It is time for us to stop longing and talking, and start living as if we were in Zion. We can do this by setting our own individual lives in order according to God’s commandments and by setting in

order our families and homes and our branches, and by letting God set His Church in order, as He has said He would.

The Israelites observed a Year of Jubilee every 50 years. Slaves were freed, debts were erased, the land was rested, etc. It has been 50 years (1957) since the church received the Endowment Paper by Brother Earl Curry. Could 2007 be a “jubilee” for the Restoration? Can we free ourselves of all the contention, competition, disputation, isolationism, and lack of brotherly love? Can we embrace the truth and look upward, and be free in Christ Jesus?

In *The Endowment*, we were told that the Church could have received the Endowment within ten years (1967) if the people “will make themselves aware of the world’s great need, if they will become aware of the Church’s desperate need for mighty spiritual power, and if they will go up to the mountain of the Lord’s House.” From 1967 to 2007 is 40 years. Forty years is often associated with “the wilderness.” Isn’t it time for us to come out of the wilderness? Haven’t we wandered around in the wilderness with the ten spy report of “we can’t do anything because the people are giants and we are as grasshoppers?” Shouldn’t we now boldly adopt the Caleb-Joshua faith that our God is bigger than all our obstacles and problems? Isn’t it about time we come out of the wilderness and go forth into the promised land, Zion?

As we survey the situation within the Restoration Branch Movement and as we anticipate the week of April 1-8, 2007, when once again, the CRE and the JCRB will share the week, each member in general and each priesthood member in particular, is encouraged to begin or continue personal, family, and branch preparation for that week. Brother Curry spent two hours daily for three months and received the endowment experience. What sacrifices are we willing to make for Zion? A 40-day scripture study guide is in this issue of *Tidings*.

Could we expect God’s specific guidance and enlightenment if at least 70% of the Melchisedec Priesthood attended the CRE with only the desire to worship God and seek His will? *I know so!* Could we expect God’s specific guidance and enlightenment if at least 70% of the Restoration Branches sent elected delegates to the JCRB with only the desire to worship God and seek His will? *I know so!*

Brothers and sisters, isn’t it worth it to at least try? I am not promoting the CRE or the JCRB, but it’s obvious that these two groups have at least made an effort to bring the priesthood

and people together. It is understood that no elder attending the CRE or branch sending delegates to the JCRB is bound by anything that happens until the branch endorses it.

We are all bound by our covenant, and thus our obligation to the world to help bring about the cause of Zion. Can we be free of the blood of our generation as long as we can't or won't even work in harmony with each other? Our refusal to come together in love and unity to promote Zion may one day render judgment that will move us out of the Center Place or keep us from coming. In the meantime the plans of men and Satan are flourishing rapidly. Isn't it time for Zion to flourish? It is Zion that is to rejoice and flourish, Doc. & Cov. 34:6, 39:4b, 49:5b, and 64:8. Can we take Doc. & Cov. 123:16, 17 as God's word to us today? Can we respond as Nathanael did when Philip said, "Come and see?"

As one song states, "Are you tired of chasing pretty rainbows? Are you tired of spinning round and round? Wrap up all the shattered dreams of your life, and at the feet of Jesus, lay them down." Brothers and sisters, let us come, to the Center Place in April. Let us come to worship, praise, and seek His holy will and not to debate, argue, contend over things that are killing us spiritually and which we really cannot resolve anyway.

God has told us many times that it is His Church and He will take care of setting it in order, and take care of all the things that He knows are important to setting His Church in order. Let us come to the Center Place in April as spiritually prepared as possible, praising God, singing songs of everlasting joy, and hungering and thirsting after righteousness and Zion. Let us come in true humility, with aught against no one and with broken hearts and contrite spirits.

What do we have to lose? "Brokenness, strife, ill will, division, disputation, contention, broken covenants, broken branches, homes and lives, physical distress, emotional strain, mental anxiety, and spiritual depression, etc."

What do we have to gain? "True fellowship with God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Ghost; true brotherhood and love one for another; the return of Enoch's City, an ensign to the world, and the opportunity to have the light of Jesus Christ with us whose name shall be called Emmanuel, God with us!"

"Come, ye blessed of my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:35). The Spirit says, "Come" (Doc. & Cov. 119:4c).



Conference Week April 1-8, 2007

"One Fold, One Shepherd"

Everyone is invited and encouraged to join us in Independence, Missouri for conference week. This is the week that the CRE and JCRB will share. The CRE will begin with a session on Sunday, April 1, 2007, at 3:00 pm at Center Place Restoration School (CPRS)/Waldo Avenue Restoration Branch. The CRE will continue through Wednesday, April 4, 2007 concluding at noon. The JCRB will convene Wednesday, April 4, 2007, after lunch and continue through Sunday, April 8, 2007, concluding about noon.

Daily schedules, business sessions, classes, and worship services will be similar to past conferences. The CRE and JCRB are again coordinating various events and activities together.

The Pastors of Zion (POZ) organization may again sponsor a Sacrament Service on Sunday, April 1, 2007. Time and place is yet to be decided. The Auditorium is not available during this week.

Center Place Restoration School (CPRS) will be presenting a dinner/theater on Friday and Saturday, March 30 & 31, 2007. If you are interested, you can obtain details by calling the school at 816-252-1715.

JCRB Mailing List

Request has been made for the use of the CRE mailing list by the JCRB. The decision reached by the Coordinating Council was to honor people's privacy. However, if you desire to receive the JCRB Newsletter and other communications we would encourage you to contact the JCRB to be included on their mailing list. The JCRB may be reached in the following ways:

Location:

JCRB Conference Center
1100 W. Truman Road
Independence, MO 64050
(Hours M-F 10am-2pm)
Mailing Address:

Joint Conference of Restoration Branches:

P.O. Box 3310
Independence, MO 64055-8310
Phone Number:
(816) 252-1457

Internet Address:

www.conferenceofbranches.org