

THE MEANING OF RECOVERY

Recovery and God's original plan

Recovery is a precious word. It is a word unveiling to us what God is doing in this universe. He is recovering. He is bringing things back to their normal state. He brings us back to His original thought when we stray, when we are off on tangents. Individually, nationally, historically, we may have drifted in many different directions. In individual and in corporate ways, God is always desiring to recover man back to His original thought and what He desires. This is the basic understanding of recovery. It means to be brought back from futility, vanity, that which has no purpose, to God Himself with His will, His purpose, and His economy. So we need to grasp the significance of recovery.

To appreciate the principle of recovery, we must know that it is implicit throughout the entire Bible. Indeed, it is part of the fabric of the Bible. Although the words in the original languages that mean “recover” are not always translated that way, the fact of recovery is everywhere (cf. Isa. 11:11). It is like the word Trinity. The word Trinity is not in the Bible, but if you break the Bible open, the fact of the Trinity is everywhere. It is all Triune God. The Scriptures are permeated with God Himself in His Triune being — Father, Son, and Spirit. In the same way, recovery is an intrinsic part of God's operation in the universe. So we must understand what recovery signifies.

Recovery

We are all being recovered. This is what is happening to us in our daily life. In case you did not know what is happening to you as a believer, you are being recovered. Our relationships are also being recovered. And the earth is being recovered. And the universe is being recovered. There is recovery going on. God is operating to bring us back to the original benchmark, to the original standard, to the authoritative revelation of the entire universe — God's will, God's purpose, and God's economy. This is the content of the original plan. Indeed,

all three matters — will, purpose, and economy — are revealed in Ephesians 1:5 and 9-10: ⁵ “Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will . . . ⁹ Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself, ¹⁰ unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him.”

God's perfect will and permissive will

Do you know God's perfect will, His original plan for the universe? It is possible that we have settled for something less. We may have taken God's permissive will. Let me illustrate the difference. In the beginning God made male and female. He created one husband,

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one wife. They were joined together by God, and what God joined together no man should separate. That was the original plan of God concerning marriage (Matt. 19:4-6). But later, due to the hardness of the hearts of the people, Moses permitted divorce to take place for certain reasons. So God, in a sense, accommodated the hardness of man's heart and allowed His permissive will with divorce according to the law of Moses (Matt. 19:7-8). But the Lord Jesus said, "But from the beginning it has not been so." So on the one hand you have God's perfect will — one husband, one wife, without divorce. On the other hand you have His permissive will allowing for divorce.

We can see in the Word that many times there is the perfect will, but due to man's failure, God allows His permissive will to come in. For example, the children of Israel wanted a king (1 Sam. 8:5-7). Of course, God's perfect will is that He would be the King. But everyone wanted to be like the nations, so the Lord said, "Okay, so-and-so shall be the king." And His permissive will came in. Sometimes we ourselves may be living on the edge, compromising, getting by, and saying, "What will God permit in my life while I still live my own life?" But one day we need to all come to a place where we do not choose His permissive will. We choose His perfect will. We choose His original thought.

Will, purpose, and economy

When we speak of recovery, it is with the background of the perfect will of God. It is coming back to His *original will*, His *original purpose*, and His *original economy*. These words are all in Ephesians chapter 1. When verse 5 says that our sonship through Jesus Christ is according to the good pleasure of His will, this means there is something in God called "will." And that will has a pleasure. It is the good pleasure of His will. God is self-determining. He does not go outside of Himself to make His decisions. He just decides according to the good pleasure of His will, that which is resident in His being. With His will He purposes in Himself. His purpose was to mark us out, to predestinate us, unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself.

In verse 9 the word "purpose" is in the verbal form. God purposed something in Himself. Romans 8:28-29 shows us that God's purpose is our conformity to the image of His Son in a corporate way, that He would be the Firstborn among many brothers. This is Christ and the church. This is Christ living in us, dwelling in us,

passing through us, being expressed out of us. This purpose of God is coming from His will. The will is the source. Out of the good pleasure of the will is the purpose that we all would be conformed to the image of His Son.

God not only has the will and the purpose, but He also has the economy to carry it out. Then we see that the will with the purpose is all "unto the economy of the fullness of the times" (Eph. 1:10). Economy means that God has all the arrangements to carry out this purpose. He created a universe. Then because of all the problems in the universe caused by the devil, He arranged everything to deal with this enemy. He sent His Son, who came to be incarnated in the flesh, to live a human life, to die, to be buried, to be raised, to ascend, and then to descend as the Spirit to actually come into us to be lived out of us. He went through all this process. This is His economy. These are all the arrangements that He made in order to fulfill the good pleasure of His will and have His purpose. He has all kinds of arrangements.

The economy of God includes everything in God's redemptive process and our experience. This is why Romans 8:28 says, "All things work together for good to those that love God." That means everything in my environment is for one goal, and that is to conform me to Christ. Believe it or not, that is the goal. If you do not believe it today, ten years from now you will say "Amen!" You will believe it. I know it happened to me. And if it happened to me, it can happen to you. We are all the same. We are men of like passions (Acts 14:15).

So we can see the original plan. Do you know the original plan? Is it etched into your being? Can you tell others where in the Word the original plan is? If there is an original plan, we would be foolish not to know the original plan. It would be like someone going out to build and forgetting the plans. Foolish one! Get the plans, then build the house. Do not go out and just throw something up. Isn't this logical? Isn't this reasonable? Get the plans first. Know the will. Know the purpose. Know the economy. Know the original plan of God.

THE BACKGROUND OF RECOVERY

We need to understand the background of the principle of recovery, starting with what happened *before* the foundation of the world. Before there was the creation, something was going on in the Godhead with His will and His purpose and the way to carry it out, which is His economy. The following verses are related to the things revealed *before* the foundation of

the world: Eph. 1:4-5; 3:10-11; John 6:37-39; Heb. 13:20; Prov. 8:22-31; 1 Cor. 2:7-10; and Rom. 8:28-29.

The original earth

Now we come to the arrangement of creation which God made in His economy. Creation is the setting, the stage or the platform, so to speak, for God to work out what He wants for Himself. Let us go to Genesis 1:1. It is very clear: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” This is God’s creation, what we may call the original earth. Then we read verse 2, “The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep.” It seems that between verses 1 and 2 something happened.

In verse 1 when God created the original earth, there was a positive atmosphere. God had done something. When you look at the verses in the Bible that are commentary on Genesis 1:1, you get a fuller scenery of the atmosphere of this verse. One of the most descriptive passages is Job chapter 38, where God is speaking. He said to Job, “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?” (v. 4). Of course, we know Job had a lot of self-righteousness. He did not know how much of a hidden self was in him. He was righteous in himself, better than other people, always able to vindicate himself and explain his way out of everything. So eventually everyone else’s mouth was shut. Then God started to talk to Job. He said, “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know!” (vv. 4-5). Isn’t God wise? He knows how to get a point across. Then He said, “Or who stretched the line upon it? To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (vv. 5-7). Here “sons of God” refer to the angels, the angelic realm. When God created the heavens and the earth, there was this kind of atmosphere — singing and shouting for joy. There was an atmosphere of glory. This was the original earth.

Then Genesis 1:2 says, “And the earth *was* [Heb., became] without form, and void.” There are two Hebrew words here, *tohuw* and *bohuw*, which mean chaos and emptiness. It says the earth was that way. How can that be? God created this heaven and this earth! But here in verse 2 it is empty and void. It is waste. It is chaotic. There is something here that does not seem to match verse 1. Now we need to look at Isaiah 45:18 and see how this verse sheds light on verse

2. It says, “For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens, who is God, who formed the earth and made it, who has established it, who did not create it *in vain*, who formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord, and there is no other.” “In vain” comes from *tohuw*, the same Hebrew word that is in Genesis 1:2. Here it says that God did *not* create the earth *tohuw*. But Genesis 1:2 says that the earth became *tohuw*, that is, without form.

We must see that in Genesis 1:1 we have the original creation. Peter refers to this in 2 Peter 3:4-5: ⁴“For since the fathers [the patriarchs] fell asleep, all things continue in this way from the beginning of creation. ⁵ For this escapes them [the scoffers] by their own choosing, that by the word of God the heavens were of old and the earth was compacted out of water and through water.” Peter tells us that it was by the word of God that the heavens and the earth came into being. So here is the original earth — pristine, from the hand of God.

The atmosphere when God created the original earth

When God created the original earth, the atmosphere was marvelous. There was great joy in the universe (Job 38:4-7). Even before the foundation of the world, before the creation, there was joy. The joy was over Christ being everything. In God’s counsels in eternity past He created everything in Christ and through Christ and unto Christ, that Christ would have the preeminence in the entire universe (Col. 1:16-18). Everything was centered in Him. John 1:3 says, “All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him not one thing came into being which has come into being.” So everything was Christ. Hebrews 1:2 tells us that the Father planned the universe through His Son. So we get a little insight into the kind of joy that was there. “Now I am going to have My good pleasure, My will, with My purpose — predestinated sons just like My firstborn Son.” So there was joy. The ecstatic joy at the time of the original creation was because of the centrality of Christ!

The origin and rebellion of Satan

Lucifer, an archangel, a chief, head angel assigned with great authority, was participating in the worship of Christ in the universe. He even led the singing and the worship to Christ (Ezek. 28:13-14). He was a beautiful angel. Then we read in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 that this Lucifer became inflated with pride by self-

reflecting on how beautiful he was. He became the devil and rebelled against the authority of the heavens, took a third of the angels with him, and formed an organized legion of principalities, rulers, and powers that are now existing over this earth (Eph. 6:12).

Before this happened, the Lord had assigned the earth to Lucifer as a domain for him to rule. He was under God's authority. He was to participate in the universe's worship of Christ and the fulfillment of God's plan for Christ to be everything. Luke 4:5-6, which records the temptation of the Lord Jesus in the wilderness, shows us that even after his rebellion the devil still kept this assigned position over the earth: ⁵ "And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the inhabited earth in a moment of time. ⁶ And the devil said to Him, To You I will give all this authority and their glory, because to me it *has been delivered.*" The Greek verb here is in the perfect tense, meaning that the present state of things is based upon something that took place in the past. The fact that the earth is still under Satan's rule is further confirmed in John 12:31: "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the ruler of this world be cast out." Here the Lord identified Satan as "the ruler of this world."

If you want the detailed descriptions of Lucifer, you need to read Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28. These passages show how this angel became the devil, Satan, the old serpent. Satan means adversary. It means someone opposing, adversarial. And that disposition has poisoned our flesh. In us, in our disposition, we may always be countering, we may be adversarial. For example, in your relationships at home or at work, things come up that you do not like, that you are against. You feel strong opinion in yourself. You are adversarial. You live in your self. So in the church when we feel this countering in us — toward the church, toward the saints, toward a brother, toward a sister — and it brings a sense of death, that could be the countering of the devil himself within us. He is a counterer.

Satan's lust for worship

The Father had a pleasure, a will. It was Christ. And He created Lucifer to be one that would aid in worshipping Christ. But Lucifer wanted to be the object of the worship. We see that all the way to the end of the Bible he is possessed by this desire to be worshipped. In Revelation 13 you can feel his insatiable desire to get into the beast, the Antichrist, the person emerging as the embodiment of evil like no one

ever before on the face of the earth. This beast gets all his power from the dragon, from Satan himself, who wants to be worshipped. There will be an actual image of him in the temple, a talking kind of image (Rev. 13:15; cf. Dan. 11:31). He wants the whole world to worship him. This goes back to an ancient lust that began to creep into his being before he fell. He wanted to be like the Most High. He wanted to ascend above the heights of the clouds and to sit on the farthest sides of the north (Isa. 14:13-14). He wanted to be like God. As a result he rebelled, becoming the devil.

This is the background for us to understand what God is doing in this universe. This is the background to understand why we need to be redeemed and recovered back to God's original purpose. This is why there is a church on this earth. This is why there are churches emerging on this earth — to carry out God's executed judgment over His enemy through His economy. God has a way. It is with His Son and it is with the church, a builded church that the gates of Hades cannot prevail against, a church that deals with His enemy. Then the kingdom comes. This gives us the background of why God recovers.

The earth judged due to Satan's fall

In Genesis 1:2 we see the judged earth: "The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering [like a mother hen] over the face of the waters." Here is a chaotic situation, empty and void. How did it happen? At the time Satan rebelled, he was already the ruler of this earth. This earth was the setting for God's glorious eternal purpose to be realized. Satan had come down to earth because he had something delivered to him, a realm to rule over. But now he usurped God's authority. So God judged the pre-Adamic world with water. In the Bible water often signifies judgment. We know this from the flood in Noah's time. That was God's judgment over that generation. Also, water baptism signifies the judgment over our old man, our flesh. In type it is buried and carried away. In Genesis 1 the judging water is there.

Some of the verses related to God's judgment of the earth by water include Isaiah 24:1, 34:11, and Jeremiah 4:23-26. Again, Genesis 1:2 says that the earth was "without form, and void," and there is commentary on that in 2 Peter 3:6: "the world then, being flooded with water, perished." This is Genesis 1:2. Some interpret this to be Noah's flood. But there

are also a number of Bible scholars who give a good explanation from the Greek of how verse 6 refers to Genesis 1:2. For example, Kenneth Wuest says, “[God] spoke the universe into existence. What a commentary as to the condition of the first perfect earth, the surface of which was made up of land masses surrounded by water. This earth ‘being overflowed with water, perished.’ This refers to the cataclysm of Genesis 1:2 where we read, ‘and the earth became without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.’ It was the judgment upon the fall of the angel Lucifer and the consequent apostasy of the pre-Adamic race.”* So the earth was flooded with water. We can see the earth in that stage — just emptiness and waste due to Satan’s fall. And the Spirit of God is hovering over the face of the waters to recover the earth back to God’s original thought.

In the first chapters of the Bible there is a serpent. Where did the serpent come from? Where did the devil come from? When you open Genesis 1 he is just there. When God gives man His purpose, He tells him two things: “You are to bear My image and have My dominion.” God created man in His own image and likeness to have dominion — “dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth” (Gen. 1:26). Then immediately in chapter 3 the creeping thing is there: “Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field.” Where did he come from? He is there based upon his assignment over the earth, but now he is in rebellion to God. He is opposing and adversarial to God.

Now man has been charged with dealing with God’s enemy. Of course, God could just take His thumb and crush the devil like an ant, if He wanted to. But He did not choose to do it that way. He chose to do it through us, through the creatures made in His own image, through our being conformed to the image of Christ, through our being related together in the church and built up. This image with this dominion is now to spread and multiply on the whole earth (Gen. 1:28). At the same time that God judged the earth, He is hovering to recover it (Gen. 1:2b). Praise the Lord! This is why we use the word recovery. To be recovered is to be a human being on this earth who is one with God — one with His will, with His purpose, and with His economy — to see the kingdom come according to God’s original thought.

* Kenneth S. Wuest, *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, Vol. 2, The Exegesis of II Peter, p. 67.

The recovered and restored earth

Genesis 1:3-4 says, ³ “Then God said, Let there be light; and there was light. ⁴ And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness.” Bible scholars all note one thing about the whole creation narrative — in very few places is the Hebrew word for “create” (*bara*) used after Genesis 1:1. Create means that something is made out of nothing. For example, God created man (Gen. 1:27) and some of the great sea creatures (Gen. 1:21). But another Hebrew word used in Genesis means “to make” (*asah*). You make something out of existing materials. That means materials from the original creation were already there, so God began to make and remake, along with further creating. Thus, a proper understanding of Genesis 1:3 to 2:3 is that most of the material is recovered, or restored, bringing back an earth that was damaged due to the fall of Satan. God does not scrap His original purpose, His perfect will. But He hovers over it, and everything comes into being. Then He makes man in His image for the purpose of expressing Himself and conquering and subduing the earth.

Image and dominion

Genesis 1:26-28 says, ²⁶ “Then God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. ²⁷ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸ Then God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and *subdue* it.” Some translate this “and conquer it.” Have you ever thought about why Genesis 1 says, “Subdue the earth”? Why is there the need to subdue and to conquer? The reason is that there is an enemy. There must be dominion over him. God is dealing with that old serpent that was once an archangel and now has come to damage humanity and frustrate His purpose. So right away God lines us up with His purpose — to bear His image and to have His dominion.

Day by day I am drinking Jesus. I am calling on the name of the Lord and identifying with Christ in my being (1 Cor. 12:3, 13). When my moods surface and want to possess me, when my lusts want outlets, when my mind wants to wander, when I feel the pressure of

the flesh trying to emerge in my whole being and in my relationships with others, I need to identify with Christ who is my life and not identify with those feelings. Actually I no longer have a relationship with those feelings. Christ is my relationship with those feelings. I no longer live to myself (2 Cor. 5:15). Christ is now my life (Col. 3:3-4). He died to sin. He died to the flesh. He died to the world. He died to the devil. And He defeated the devil. I am a crucified person — it is no longer I, but Christ who lives in me (Gal. 2:20).

Getting on the level of struggling and striving to fight with my feelings is futility and a losing battle again and again. Four thousand years of history up to the time of Christ proved that flesh could not make it. So in our experience we need to identify with Christ and say, “Amen, Lord. You are my life. Go fight the battle, Lord. You are the one authorized to do it. You do it in me. Rise up in me. My part is to praise You, behold You, turn to You, drink of You, and take a larger drink of You. You have prepared a table before me in the presence of my enemies.” Whom do you identify with in the midst of your muck? Do you identify with muck or do you identify with Christ? In the last 48 hours whom did you identify with? How many of us identified with Christ? What a Christ we have to send out to tackle all our problems!

Identify with and participate in Christ

How do I identify with Christ? I have an identifying organ in me called my spirit, and it works closely with my mouth. When I praise and when I sing and when I call, I am releasing the well of water within me that flows and flushes out everything negative and defeats the enemy (John 4:14). In this way I am identifying with my Christ. First Corinthians 6:17 says, “He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” And Romans 5:5 tells us that God pours His own love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. So we identify with *His* love in our spirit. In this way we are transformed. We are changed into His image so that the very essence of Christ comes out of us. Our expression, our attitude, and our reactions change. From within we change. We are different. It is not just outward behavior. It is coming from an inward transformation due to our interaction with Jesus. By beholding Him, by drinking Him and eating Him, we are transformed into the same image.

This transformation is not merely for us to become a spiritual knick-knack on a shelf. But the image coming from our participation in Christ is in fact

dealing with the problem of an ancient enemy who needs to be conquered and subdued and brought under dominion. It seems that we should get out rifles and begin to shoot and have carnal warfare against this enemy. But image is what defeats him, and this happens by silent little turns to drink of Jesus. For example, when you are driving down the street, when you are engaged in your own thoughts, you turn and open to the Lord, and by this simple act of participation in Him His life gets transmitted into you and shines out of you. That is the image.

The result of image is dominion

Only where there is the image of God is there dominion. If you sidestep image and try to have dominion, then you have a movement on your hands: “We are going to conquer the devil!” And then you go home and your temper conquers you. There is no image in your home, yet in other places you think you are going to conquer the devil. When you let the Lord defeat you with your temper and your inordinate mind by saying, “Jesus, live in me — You be my relationship with my husband,” something more of God travels through your being. And with God there is authority. There is dominion in the household. Someone comes through the door and they do not feel tension in the atmosphere. They sense a peace. They may even say, “Something feels good here. I like this.” They do not know how to describe it. Do you know why they sense peace? It is because the enemy is defeated there. The kingdom is in that home because image is there. There is an expression — image and dominion. This is on a personal level.

The greatest expression of image is the church and the churches. When you come to the end of the Bible, you see the Lord Jesus standing at the beginning of Revelation 1—3. Here He is with a long history that goes back to eternity past, where He counseled with the Father about being the Firstborn among many brothers that express Him. He talked with Him about His bride. Now He comes to the end of the Bible, and the only remaining apostle is John. The churches that were raised up are now degraded. Some have lost their first love. Some are courting the world. Some are hypocritical. Some are just insipid, lukewarm. But this is all He has. He does not start over again. He stands in the midst of the churches as the High Priest and says, “Does anyone here have an ear? Let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

The churches as the administrative unit of the image

The Lord is burdened for the churches because the churches are the administrative unit for the full expression of God's image and dominion (cf. Rev. 1:4-6). That is why the church life is awesome on this earth today. To stand in God's thought, which is according to the cross, is to meet as the new man, where there is no more Jew, no more Greek, no more barbarian or Scythian, but Christ is all and in all (Col. 3:11). To stand in this way where we cannot be divided or denominated, to stand with just simple, pure Jesus, to have a standing on the earth just to express Him, is to come back to the original thought of God.

There is always a battle over any of us who take a step toward the church life for God's building (Matt. 16:18-19). Why? Because this happens to be part of recovering the earth back to God's original thought. Before the Lord Jesus comes, He is preparing a bride. Although He will not get the whole earth in this age, He will get it in the next age. What does He get in *this* age? He gets lampstands. That means this age is really dark. But every church is a lampstand (Rev. 1:20). If you could have a photo from the heavens of the earth, you would see pitch blackness and then you would see churches shining here and there — one in Ephesus, one in Jerusalem, one in Thyatira, one in Corinth. Some are shining brighter than others with more of Christ. These are lampstands. There is a testimony.

These churches are like stepping stones for the Lord to possess the whole earth (Rev. 2:26-27). He is saying, "Give Me a little footing on this earth, give Me some stepping stones, and then I will come." That is why He comes in Revelation and asks, "Who has an ear to hear?" Not every believer has an ear to hear. But to whoever has an ear to hear, the Lord says, "He who overcomes, he who overcomes, he who overcomes . . ." So recovery back to God's original thought always takes place with those who have an ear to hear and will overcome their present environment of living exclusively for themselves — living for their own purposes and their own interests — to have a transfer to God's good pleasure and His project of the building of the church, actually offering their body as a living sacrifice so that the image is not an invisible image (Rom. 12:1-2).

The invisible expressed in a visible image

Colossians 1:15 says that Christ is the image of the invisible God. This means the invisible God is made

tangible, practical, touchable, by Christ. When you see Christ, you see the invisible God. And when you see the church practically meeting as churches, you see Christ in His fullness. Image means something you can see. It is visible. Didn't the Lord pray, "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe and know that You have sent Me"? (cf. John 17:21, 23). Image means there is something of oneness that is not just talk, but is visible. It is practical, tangible churches meeting together with Christ as everything, so that the world could see.

Everything divisive in us as believers on this earth is over. There is no room for division in the Body of Christ. We must pursue the oneness of the Spirit in the bond of peace and break off the shackles of names and movements and other groups to a simplicity and a purity of just Jesus Christ as everything expressed in the churches. This is the recovery. It is not my recovery, your recovery, his recovery, or church history's recovery. No. This is the recovery of the universe by our Head, Christ, who is heading up all things in the heavens and on the earth.

THE PRINCIPLE OF RECOVERY

From the chaos of Satan's judgment and the fall of man

The principle of recovery is always related to something negative. For instance, there is recovery from the chaos of Satan's judgment by man having God's image and dominion. Then after that happened, there was another problem — the fall of man. Not only was there the fall of Lucifer, the archangel, but there was also the fall of man (cf. 1 John 3:8). This is where you need to see what the Bible calls God's "wisdom." God's wisdom is displayed when He takes all the damaged and ruined things, all the things that have been so undone by the enemy, and He puts everything back together and heads it all up in His purpose (Rom. 11:33). That is the divine wisdom. After the fall, man needs to be recovered again, so the Seed of the woman comes in to bruise the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15). That is recovery.

From the moral ruin of the race — Noah

Then there is the moral ruin of the race. After God's promise of the Seed of the woman, the human

race continued to degrade. During Noah's day there was a moral ruin — violence and immorality (Gen. 6:1-11). They were “marrying and giving in marriage” (Matt. 24:37-39). If you were to describe this present generation, two words could be written over it — violence and sex. These things ruin the availability of humanity to God. Immorality tears down your humanity. God wanted to accomplish a purpose, but man gave himself over to that other realm. Eventually God had to start again because humanity was so ruined. Violence, angers, killings, were on the earth. The earth needed to be recovered. Thus, God flooded the earth so He could recover it. He got Noah and his family and all the animals. He said, “I will start with just a few. Give me eight.” Eight typifies resurrection life. So God put the earth through the waters of death and watched it come out (2 Pet. 2:5). This was another recovery. God recovered in that age.

Isn't God recovering in this age if He recovered in that age? Look at the degradation today. And I would be so bold to say that by His mercy and His grace I am standing here in this place as part of a recovery. My daily life is for that recovery. And the church life is for that recovery. And the pouring out of our money, our time, and our energy is for that recovery. God is reconciling all things back to Himself. And the administrative unit of that process is the church (Col. 1:18). God's work of reconciling needs the standing of the church. We are not just loosely standing here. We are obeying a heavenly vision and the heavenly revelation (Acts 26:19; Eph. 3:9-10). That is why we have no right to name ourselves anything. We are just the church in our locality standing, receiving all the saints and being individually recovered in our personal lives and in the church life.

From the rebellion of mankind at Babel – Abraham

After Noah's day the situation on the earth degraded again. It went into the rebellion of mankind at Babel. They wanted to build a tower that reached into the heavens, and the Triune God said, “Let Us go down and see what they are doing” (Gen. 11:5-7). This means that men were in absolute independence from God, making a name for themselves. But God judged that tower and He recovered His purpose again. Abraham was down there with everyone, worshipping idols (Josh. 24:2-3). He was wealthy and had a lot of security (Gen. 13:2). It would have been so easy for him to settle down in Babel, in Ur of the Chaldeans,

because he had many things. But the God of glory appeared to him and he crossed over the Euphrates river and came into the good land (Acts 7:2-4). He lived a life of an altar and a tent, because the God of glory appeared to him. God showed Himself. That was part of God's economy to recover again. In His appearing He was saying, “Abraham, you need to come to the land I have chosen, because I must have a foothold on the earth. Just give Me a piece of the earth. Palestine is all I need. If I can have a piece of land, and on that piece express Myself in My building, then I have a place to come and administrate the whole earth. But I must have a piece.”

Why did God choose Israel? Why did God give them a land? It is because He wants the earth. And the way He gets it is by His people taking the land. Thus, the standing of the churches on the ground of oneness in cities is giving God pieces of the earth so that He can eventually come and take the whole earth. It is not a movement. It is not a denomination. It is a recovery of the earth. Believe it or not. We need to get into the Word and see what the Word says. Consider the Word and let the Lord give you understanding (2 Tim. 2:7). Let the Word expand your vision.

From the bondage of Egypt – Moses

Then God's people ended up in Egypt. There were tens of thousands of them in bondage, and God wanted to bring them out. He used Moses to do it (Exo. 3:6-10). This was another recovery. But the people wandered for 40 years in the wilderness. Just think of the painstaking patience of God. Here is the Triune God with a preeminent will, purpose, and economy from eternity past. And here are all these men down here acting like little squirrels — going off in this direction, flitting off in that direction. But praise the Lord, God is a God of recovery (Heb. 11:27-29).

From the wandering in the wilderness – Joshua

Then the Lord sent Joshua into the good land. God's people went into the land and possessed it, but not completely (Josh. 15:63; 16:10). However, this was still a recovery. God recovered the land from most of their enemies (Josh. 22:4).

From the enemies' occupation of the land – David

When they came into the good land, the children of

Israel were supposed to take Jerusalem. That was the place where the temple would be built and where the Lord's name would be. But for years they did not do anything about it. The Jebusites were sitting on the wall of the city mocking God's people and trying to frighten everyone away. Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion (2 Sam. 5:6-7). He took Jerusalem and paved the way for Solomon to build the temple. So there was a recovery of God's plan through David (1 Chron. 28:11-12).

From the Babylonian captivity – Daniel

Then eventually the kingdom was divided. The southern kingdom went into captivity down in Babylon. Again, God's purpose was not there. But thank God that Daniel discovered "by the books" that there were only 70 years of captivity (Dan. 9:2). He handled God's Word, and because he saw this in the Word he got on his knees and started to pray: "Lord, Your Word says this. Now I am opening my windows toward Jerusalem three times a day. Lord, bring us back. Bring us back." Then the Babylonian empire was defeated. The Medes and the Persians took over. And one day one of the kings declared, "Let all the Jews go back to Jerusalem." He made a decree: "Anyone who has a willing spirit can go up to Jerusalem and build the house of the Lord" (Ezra 1:1-5). So over 42,000 of God's people went up out of Babylon and rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 2:64). That was recovery. They recovered God's purpose once again.

From the deadness of Pharisaical religion – Jesus

The Lord Jesus was born into the deadness of a system of Pharisees. Oh, did He offend them! He and His disciples walked through a cornfield and picked the corn on the Sabbath day, which was not lawful to do (Luke 6:1-5). Also on the Sabbath He went into a synagogue and healed a man's withered hand (vv. 6-11). He did not behave according to the religious protocol of the day (John 2:13-17). He was life itself. This is why we should never be set on a way to do things. We just care about keeping the oneness of the Spirit. Just keep life. Just keep God. That is all that matters. Whether we do things this way or that way is not what matters. Many of us are programmed in ways, but we must learn to follow life. Jesus moved in recovery by life.

From the narrowness of Judaistic religion – Paul

Peter had a relationship with the Lord firsthand. Nevertheless he would not eat with the Gentiles even after being filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Think of it — on just one occasion there were 3,000 people who came to the Lord and were added to the church through his preaching. Everything was happening. And yet this same person was so entrenched in tradition that the Spirit had to come in a vision three times to convince him to have fellowship with the Gentiles. Each time he reasoned, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean" (Acts 10:14). Eventually the Spirit was so strong with him that he later testified, "The Spirit bade me go, doubting nothing" (Acts 11:12). That means no reasoning. This shows us that it was not easy for the brothers in the early churches to be recovered out of their narrowness (Gal. 2:11-14). But thank God for Paul and for the ministry that opened up the new man and the receiving of all believers. This was recovery.

From the degradation of the churches – John

Even after the early apostles, the churches went downhill. By the time the book of Revelation was written, there was a degraded situation (Rev. 2—3). So there is a recovery once again. It is the recovery of overcoming believers in the churches being prepared as the bride of Christ (Rev. 22:16-17).

GOD'S WAY OF RECOVERING

Redemption

Redemption is recovery of that which is lost. God bought back what originally belonged to Him, and He did it through the death of His Son (1 Pet. 1:18-20). Redemption is the recovery of all the lost sheep handed from the Father to the Son in eternity past (Heb. 13:20-21). So redemption is a crucial matter in God's recovery process.

Regeneration

Regeneration is recovery of that which is dead (1 Pet. 1:3). Our spirit was made to be alive with God. So when He redeemed us, He concomitantly provided regeneration. This means we are not only washed and forgiven, but the life of God has been imparted right

into our spirit to make our spirit alive (John 3:6). Regeneration is recovery. We are recovered back to living a life with God as our source, because God Himself indwells us.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation is recovery from being at enmity with one another (Eph. 2:16). That means between us, the races, where opinions and views prevailed in our relationships, we are reconciled. We are recovered from all the enmity that existed between us (2 Cor. 5:18-20). All the enmity, the bad feelings, have been slain at the cross. So when we are reconciled — when we can say, “Forgive me. Let us drop it. Let us just enjoy Christ together” — that is a recovery of God’s image. Even though it is hard for me to let go of my offense, it is hard for me to forget it because it is still lodging there, by His grace and mercy I am going to identify with another source. This is what Paul said: “Forgive in the person of Christ” (2 Cor. 2:10). Identify with Him. Let Him be your forgiveness when you do not feel it. Take a step of faith, and let Him take care of your feelings. You simply side with and identify with Him. This is reconciliation. Would to God that there could be reconciliation among all His saints, that there would be no enmity but just Christ Himself between us.

Renewal

Renewal is recovery of that which is old. Be renewed. When we get old, God needs to bring us back to our newness by renewing us (Col. 3:10-11). Division is oldness. Oneness in the one new man is what is considered “new” in the New Testament. It is the church where Christ is all and in all!

Restoration

Restoration is a scriptural word that means recovery to God’s original thought. In Acts 1:6 the disciples asked the Lord, “Will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” Now notice the Lord’s reply. He did not say, “Do not talk about restoration.” He said, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.” This means there will be a restoration, the restoration of all things in the kingdom age (Acts 3:20-21).

Recapitulation

Recapitulation is recovery of a collapsed universe. This is referred to in Ephesians 1:10 as the summing up of all things in Christ, both the things in the heavens and the things on the earth. The universe is in a collapse until Christ recovers it by heading it up in Himself through His Body, the church.

Recovery brings us back to God’s original thought. We are being recovered out of this judged earth and its degradation back to God’s original thought of image and dominion. This gives us a deeper appreciation of the word recovery. We are not talking about a movement. We are not talking about denominations. We are not talking about something we ourselves are trying to do. We are talking about obeying a revelation that is hanging over a universe which has been collapsed by Satan’s damage (Acts 26:16-19). Despite it all, God’s will, purpose, and economy has never flickered, not even once. He redeems. He regenerates. He reconciles. He renews. He restores. He recapitulates. He is recovering. Ultimately, the practical expression of God’s image with His dominion is found in churches. That is why our prayers are for the earth — for the Lord to recover overcoming saints in the form of local churches bearing His image and having His dominion.

— Bill Freeman

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