

WEEK 2 — OUTLINE

The Original Condition of the Church, the Degradation of the Church, and the Recovery of the Church

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:18; Rev. 1:11; Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; Col. 1:18; 2:19

« DAY 1 »

I. Our history in the Lord's recovery is not that of an organization or of a movement; it is a history of recovery (John 1:1; 1 John 1:1):

A. In Matthew 19:8 we see the principle of recovery: "From the beginning it has not been so":

1. Recovery means to go back to the beginning; we need to go back to the beginning, receiving the Lord's grace to go back to God's original intention, to what God ordained in the beginning.
2. The word recovery means that something was there originally and then was degraded, damaged, or lost; thus, there is a need to bring that thing back to its original state and to its normal condition (Dan. 1:1-2; Ezra 1:5; 6:5).

B. When we speak of the recovery of the church, we mean that the church was there originally, that it became degraded, and that there is the need to bring the church back to its original state.

C. The Lord's recovery of the church brings us back to the beginning for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose and original intention regarding the church (Eph. 1:4-5, 22-23; 3:9-11).

II. We need to understand the recovery of the church in

relation to God's intention and accomplishment and Satan's work of destruction (v. 11):

- A. *The New Testament reveals that regarding the church, God has a definite intention, purpose, and goal; first, God purposed, and then He came in to accomplish His purpose (Rev. 4:11; Eph. 1:4-5, 9, 11, 22-23).*
- B. *The New Testament also gives us a clear record of how God's enemy came in to destroy what God had accomplished (Matt. 16:18; 13:24-32):*
1. The satanic way to destroy God's accomplishment has an inward aspect and an outward aspect:
 - a. The inward aspect is to damage and corrupt God's people (Acts 5:3).
 - b. The outward aspect is to destroy God's accomplishment (Matt. 13:32).
 2. Satan produced many substitutes for Christ, divided the Body of Christ, and killed the function of the members of the Body by the clergy-laity system (Col. 2:8; Rev. 2:6, 14-15).
- C. *Because God is a purposeful God with an eternal purpose and because once He has determined to do something, nothing can change His mind or stop Him; after Satan's destruction God comes in to redo the things that He had done before (Ezra 1:3-11; 6:3-5).*
- D. *God's redoing of what He has accomplished is His recovery; this is to bring back whatever has been lost and destroyed by Satan and to recover the church according to His eternal purpose and original intention (Matt. 19:8; 16:18).*

« **DAY 2** »

III. In order to recognize the need for the recovery of the

church, we need to know the original condition of the church and the degradation of the church:

A. The original condition of the church had the following characteristics:

1. In the original church there was no hierarchy among the believers (Rom. 12:4-5):
 - a. The believers were all brothers without distinction in rank (Matt. 23:8).
 - b. As members of the Body, the believers coordinated with one another on an equal level, and each one fulfilled his particular function (Rom. 12:4-5).
 - c. The believers were all priests to God, without an intermediary class or the distinctions between clergy and laity (1 Pet. 2:5, 9).
2. The early church was completely separated from the world; it was in the world but not of the world (Rom. 12:2; 1 John 2:15; 2 Cor. 6:14-17).
3. The original church forsook idols and fully allowed God to speak (1 John 5:21).

<< DAY 3 >>

4. There was only one church, one expression of the Body of Christ, in a locality (1 Cor. 12:27; 1:2; Rev. 1:11).
5. The churches were one in fellowship, but each one was independent in administration, and there was no head church or federation (1 Cor. 10:16).
6. The churches honored Christ as the Head and allowed the Holy Spirit to have authority (Col. 1:18; 2:19; Acts 13:1-2; 10:19-20; 11:12).

B. The degradation of the church involved hierarchy, union with the world, idols, divisions, not allowing God to speak, having organization for unification, and usurping the headship of Christ and encroaching on the authority of the Holy Spirit.

<< DAY 4 >>

IV. The recovery of the church has been gradual and progressive:

A. *Before the end of the first century, the Lord's recovery began, and century by century the recovery has continued on (2 Tim. 2:19-26).*

B. *In the sixteenth century Martin Luther rose up to begin the Reformation, and the sealed Bible was unlocked; based upon the Bible, he recovered justification by faith, but the proper church life was not recovered (Rom. 1:17):*

1. The Protestant churches were not separated from the world, and they did not eliminate the intermediary class.
2. Among the Protestant churches there were more divisions, and the various denominations did not put away organization for unification.
3. The denominations did not allow Christ to have the absolute position and did not allow the Holy Spirit to have absolute authority.

C. *In the eighteenth century Zinzendorf was raised up by the Lord to lead the Moravian brothers to a recovery of the church life; they were separated from the world, removed distinctions of rank, emphasized fellowship and coordination, endeavored to keep the oneness, removed formal organization for unification, and allowed Christ to be the Head and the Holy Spirit to rule among them.*

D. *In the nineteenth century the Lord raised up a group of brothers in England, who went further in the recovery of the church life (Rev. 3:7-13):*

1. In the hands of the Brethren, the Bible was truly an opened book, a shining book, for they absolutely obeyed the Lord's word; many important truths were released through them (1 Tim. 2:4).

2. They absolutely eliminated hierarchy and were brothers together and members one of another with an emphasis on mutual love and fellowship.
3. They eliminated sectarianism and maintained the testimony of oneness.

« DAY 5 »

4. However, in certain aspects they were a failure, and because of this the Lord could not go on at that time anywhere in the Western world.

E. We need to see the crucial points of the recovery of the church in the Far East:

1. In 1933 and 1934 we clearly saw a crucial matter—the principle of the church taking a locality as its boundary (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; Rev. 1:11):
 - a. On the one hand, this prevents division and confusion; on the other hand, it also prevents “extra-local” unions.
 - b. According to the teaching of the Bible, the church in each locality should live directly before the Lord and be responsible to the Head, Christ (Col. 1:18; 2:19; Acts 13:1-2).
2. We kept the principle of the administration of the church being local and the fellowship of the church being universal (14:23; 2:42; 1 Cor. 10:16-17):
 - a. The church in each locality has its own administration, and the administration of the church cannot go beyond the local boundary.
 - b. The fellowship of the church should not only be local; rather, it should be universal because it is the fellowship of the Body of Christ.
3. We clearly saw that churches in different localities should not have an organization for unification, for all churches should be directly under the ruling of Christ, the Head, and should directly obey the authority of the Holy Spirit (Col. 1:18; Acts 13:1-2).
4. We emphasized the universal priesthood; that is, we stressed the fact that every believer is a priest (1 Pet. 2:5, 9).

5. We also emphasized the Body's coordination in service, exhorting all the saints to keep the principle of the Body by serving together in coordination (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27).
6. We emphasized the practical service in the church (Rom. 12:5-11).

« DAY 6 »

V. The Lord's recovery is different from today's Christianity; it is impossible for there to be reconciliation between the recovery and Christianity (Matt. 13:31-33, 44-46; Rev. 18:4; 19:1-3, 7-9):

- A. *The recovery of the church is for bringing us out of the unscriptural system of clergy-laity back to the beginning for the pure practice of the church life according to the divine revelation (2:6, 15; Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:20-22).*
- B. *The history among us has been one of coming completely out of Christianity without compromise (Ezra 1:3-11; 6:3-5; Rev. 18:4).*
- C. *There should be no bridge between the local churches and Christianity; we should be what we are without compromise or pretense, maintaining the gap between us and Christianity (1:11; Gal. 1:4).*

« WEEK 2 — DAY 1 »

Morning Nourishment

Eph. 3:10-11 In order that now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church, according to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We have to realize that our history is not that of an organization or of a movement. It is a history of the Lord's recovery....The Lord's recovery brings us back to the beginning to have the proper church life. In the early days of the Lord's recovery in China, the Lord showed us the wrongdoings of Christendom, on the negative side, and the church, on the positive side. (CWWL, 1973-1974, vol. 1, "The History of the Church and the Local Churches," p. 109)

Today's Reading

[In Matthew 19:8], instead of arguing with the Pharisees, the Lord said, "Moses, because of your hardness of heart, allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it has not been so." The commandment concerning divorce given by Moses was a deviation from God's original ordination, but Christ as the heavenly King recovered it back to the beginning for the kingdom of the heavens.

In verse 8 we see the principle of recovery. Recovery means to go back to the beginning. Things that exist may not date back to the beginning....In the beginning, God ordained one husband and one wife, and there was no divorce. Because of the hardness of the people's hearts, Moses tolerated divorce and allowed a man to divorce his wife by giving her a writing of divorce. The Lord was asking the Pharisees if they would care for God's ordination or for the hardness of their heart. Every seeker of God should say, "O Lord, have mercy upon me that I may care for Your original ordination. I do not want to care for the hardness of my heart. I condemn and reject the hardness of my heart and return to Your original ordination." This is what is meant by recovery.

Today many Christians are arguing for certain things. Because of the hardness

of the fallen human heart, the Lord tolerates some of those things. Should we agree with this toleration and the hardness of the human heart? Certainly not. Rather, we must receive the Lord's grace to go back to God's original ordination. We must go back to the beginning. (Life-study of Matthew, pp. 627-628)

The word recover means to obtain again something that has been lost, or to return something to a normal condition. Recovery means the restoration or return to a normal condition after a damage or a loss has been incurred....Because the church has become degraded through the many centuries of its history, it needs to be restored according to God's original intention. Concerning the church, our vision should be governed not by the present situation nor by traditional practice but by God's original intention and standard as revealed in the Scriptures.

We need to understand the recovery of the church in relation to God's intention and accomplishment and Satan's work of destruction. The New Testament reveals that regarding the church God has a definite intention, purpose, and goal. The New Testament also gives us a clear picture of God's accomplishment according to His intention. First, God purposed and then He came in to accomplish His purpose. Furthermore, the New Testament also gives us a clear record of how God's enemy came in to destroy what God had accomplished. The satanic way to destroy God's accomplishment has two aspects: the inward and the outward. The inward aspect is to damage and corrupt God's people. Then Satan seeks to destroy God's accomplishment outwardly. Nevertheless, God is a God with an eternal purpose. He is a purposeful God, and once He has made up His mind to do something, nothing can change His mind or stop Him. Therefore, after Satan's destruction, God comes in to redo the things that He had done before. This redoing is His recovery. This is to bring back whatever has been lost and destroyed by God's enemy, Satan. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 2447-2448)

Further Reading: The Conclusion of the New Testament, msgs. 223-224; The History of the Church and the Local Churches, ch. 1

« WEEK 2 — DAY 2 »

Morning Nourishment

Matt. 23:8 But you, do not be called Rabbi, for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers.

Rom. 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

After Satan began by using so many substitutes to usurp the place of Christ, he invented the clergy-laity system...Originally, all the members without exception were normal, functioning members. But gradually the enemy set up the clergy-laity system to limit the function to just a small number of believers. Since the majority have been put out of function, the Body has been paralyzed.

His first step is to replace the life. He does this with anything other than Christ. His second step is to kill the function. He has done this by installing the clergy-laity system.

We must see the evil strategy of the enemy, Satan, behind these moves...Every believer must be a functioning member in the Body. (Satan's Strategy against the Church, pp. 6-7)

Today's Reading

Only after we understand the original condition of the church can we know how the church has degraded and deviated, and only then can we know the matters that have been recovered and corrected and...what matters still need to be recovered and corrected.

Concerning the original condition of the church,...we can look...at some important points related to the testimony and the ground of the church so that through them we can know the church, including her principle, her constitution, and her ground.

One of the characteristics of the original church was that there was no hierarchy among the saved ones. They were all members one of another, coordinating mutually and serving together.

First, all the saved ones are brothers without any distinctions in rank. When the Lord was on the earth, He told the disciples clearly, “The rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you [that is, in the church]; but whoever wants to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you shall be your slave” (Matt. 20:25-27; 23:8-11)....All the believers are brothers on the same level; there are no distinctions involving some who are higher and some who are lower.

Second, all the believers are members of the Body of Christ; as such, they coordinate with each other on an equal level, and each of them fulfills his particular function. This is shown very clearly in Romans 12:4-5, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, and Ephesians 4:16. Without exception, every saved one is a member of the Body of Christ....As long as a person is saved, he is a member with a particular function in the church and should serve the Lord in coordination with all the saints.

Third, all the believers are priests to God. In the Old Testament, among the people of Israel there was a group who served as priests, and the rest of the Israelites were common people....But in the New Testament, in the church, there is no longer such an intermediary class; rather, all the believers are priests to God, without any distinctions between the so-called clergy and laity. The normal condition is for all the people of God to be priests to Him.

Another marked feature of the early church was that it was completely separated from the world; it was in the world but not of the world, just as the Lord said in John 17:14-17 and 18:36.

Whereas idols are adversaries of God, the church is the testimony of God. If the church has idols, the nature of the church has been changed. This is a certain fact. From Acts 15:29 we can see that the original church forsook idols in a very thorough way.

In the original church there was no human opinion and no human system; instead, the believers completely allowed the Spirit to speak through the Scriptures. They allowed the Holy Scriptures of God to have their position, and they also allowed the Holy Spirit of God to have His position. (The Testimony and the Ground of the Church, pp. 187, 191-193, 195)

Further Reading: The Conclusion of the New Testament, msgs. 225, 231

« WEEK 2 — DAY 3 »

Morning Nourishment

Acts 13:1-2 Now there were in Antioch, in the local church, prophets and teachers....And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for Me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.

The original church also had another notable feature; there was only one expression in each locality....It was one in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1), one in Antioch (13:1), one in Ephesus (Rev. 2:1), and one in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2)....Originally, one locality had only one group of Christians, one church. This principle is very strict; that is, in one locality there should be only one church. (The Testimony and the Ground of the Church, pp. 195-196)

Today's Reading

Originally, although the fellowship among the churches was one, they were independent of each other in administration; there was no head church or any federation among them. In principle, a local church should live directly before Christ and honor Christ as the Head....This situation prevents division, retains the headship of Christ, and allows the Holy Spirit to have the authority.

The church is the Body of Christ, and Christ is the Head of the church (Col. 1:18; Eph. 4:15), reigning in the church through the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2; 15:28). It was this way in the early church. There was neither human opinion nor human authority. The believers...honored Christ as the Head and obeyed the authority of the Holy Spirit; this was the supreme characteristic of the original church.

Regrettably, this kind of situation did not last long; after a short time, the church gradually became degraded and lost its original condition.

The first item of the degradation of the church is having hierarchy. This occurred as early as the beginning of the second century. At that time there was an elder in the church in Rome whose name was Clement. In his epistle he clearly referred to the matter of bringing the Judaic priestly system into the church.

The second item of the degradation of the church is being in union with the world. In A.D. 313 the Roman Emperor Constantine accepted the Christian religion, thereby bringing the church into union with the Roman Empire, that is, with the world.

The third item is the bringing in of idols. This is an even more serious matter. In its degradation, the church was filled with all kinds of idols; this can be seen in the Roman Catholic Church.

The fourth item in the degradation of the church is not letting God speak. At a certain time the Church of Rome locked up the Holy Bible and took the pope's words as their criteria. Thus, they did not allow God to speak; they shut the mouth of God.

In the degradation of the church the fifth item is having divisions. From the second century or at the latest the beginning of the third century, a small number of the people in the church began to separate themselves from the majority due to differences in the interpretation of the truth and differences in systems.

The sixth item in the degradation of the church is having organization for unification. This damaged the principle of the original church of "one city, one church." As early as the middle part of the third century, Cyprian had suggested unifying the churches. He also used the term catholic church, meaning "universal church."

The most serious point of the degradation of the church is the usurpation of the headship of Christ and the encroachment upon the authority of the Holy Spirit. When the church began to have an unlawful organization for unification, Christ lost His position in the church and the Holy Spirit could no longer rule in the church....[Today] all of the characteristics of the church have become completely degraded; none of its original characteristics are left. From the inside to the outside, from the principle to the nature, from the inner reality to the outward appearance, from the testimony to the ground, everything of the church has become degraded. (The Testimony and the Ground of the Church, pp. 199-201, 203-207)

Further Reading: The Testimony and the Ground of the Church, Section Three, chs. 1-2

« WEEK 2 — DAY 4 »

Morning Nourishment

Rev. 3:8 I know your works; behold, I have put before you an opened door which no one can shut, because you have a little power and have kept My word and have not denied My name.

1 Tim. 2:3-4 ...Our Savior God, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the full knowledge of the truth.

We see that before the end of the first century, the Lord's recovery began. Thereafter, history shows us that, century by century, the recovery continued on. At times it was dim, but it was gradually becoming stronger and stronger. This went on until the 1500s, when Brother Martin Luther was raised up in Germany. He inherited the items of recovery from the past and culminated all the Lord's recoveries during the preceding sixteen centuries. But this does not mean that the recovery was completed; rather, it continued on. (The New Testament Priests of the Gospel, p. 103)

Today's Reading

By the sixteenth century...the sealed Bible was unlocked. This was a great accomplishment of Luther. Based on the Bible, he also recovered the truth of justification by faith. However, the ways of serving in the church and preaching the gospel remained unchanged. (The New Testament Priests of the Gospel, p. 29)

The beginning of the Protestant church was the formation of various state churches; thus, the church fell into the hands of political governments. Therefore, the Protestant church was not freed from the world; it was still, in principle, the same as the Roman Catholic Church which was mixed with the Roman Empire.

The Protestant church did not eliminate the intermediary class.

When the Protestant church began, there was a division into numerous state churches according to distinctions of nations and national boundaries. Later, due to the promotion of different truths, the adoption of different policies and

systems, and the holding of different spiritual giants in high respect, the church was further divided into many private churches.

The various denominations of the Protestant church also established respective headquarters for unification.

In summary, although the Protestant church was much improved in comparison to the Roman Catholic Church, it did not have a thorough recovery—it did not allow Christ to have the absolute position or the Holy Spirit to have the absolute authority.

After another two hundred years, in the early part of the eighteenth century, God had a further recovery with [Brother Zinzendorf and] the Moravian brethren.

The Moravian brethren not only had the Bible in their hands, but they also obeyed the words of the Bible....They were truly freed, separated, from the world. They did not mix themselves with politics....They were absolutely not defiled by idols....They removed distinctions in rank....They also endeavored to keep the oneness by abandoning differences in doctrinal views....In this recovery,...they did not have a head church and branch churches....In such a situation, the Moravian brethren allowed Christ to be the Head and allowed the Holy Spirit to rule among them. (The Testimony and the Ground of the Church, pp. 213, 215-218)

In the nineteenth century, there was a further recovery when the Brethren were raised up. (CWWL, 1989, vol. 2, "The New Testament Priests of the Gospel," p. 30)

This recovery was very thorough....First, they obeyed the Lord's word absolutely....Many important truths were released at that time....It was not until the time of the Brethren that the hierarchy in the church was truly and thoroughly eliminated....They were purely before God as brothers and as fellow members of the Body of Christ, paying attention especially to mutual love and fellowship.

The matter of leaving the denominations began with them....They came together to maintain the testimony of the oneness of the church. (The Testimony and the Ground of the Church, pp. 219-222)

Further Reading: The Testimony and the Ground of the Church, Section Three, ch. 3; Three Aspects of the Church, Book Two: The Course of the Church, chs. 13-14

« WEEK 2 — DAY 5 »

Morning Nourishment

1 Cor. 10:16-17 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the fellowship of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the fellowship of the body of Christ? Seeing that there is one bread, we who are many are one Body; for we all partake of the one bread.

The Lord had to go on in His recovery. In the nineteenth century, the Lord raised up a group of brothers in Great Britain. They went further in the recovery of the church life, but in certain aspects they were still a failure. Because of this the Lord could not go on at that time anywhere in the Western world.

In the beginning of the twentieth century the Lord came to the Far East and raised up a young Chinese brother by the name of Watchman Nee. Initially, the help he received was inherited from the Brethren. But after ten years he discovered that what he had received was not that complete. As a result, he had a turn, even many turns. (The New Testament Priests of the Gospel, p. 103)

Today's Reading

In 1933 and 1934 we clearly saw a crucial matter—the principle of the church taking a locality as its boundary....In many places there were brothers who rose up to meet together, but there was a question concerning the boundary of each of these meetings....A certain brother, after spending much effort in studying the Bible, found that the church takes a locality as its ground and boundary; that is, he saw the light of one locality, one church.

Based on this principle, from 1934 onward, no matter how large or how small a city is, we have taken the way of having only one church. On one hand, this prevents division and confusion; on the other hand, it also prevents “extra-local” unions. If one locality were united with another locality, it would cause Christ to lose His position and the Holy Spirit to lose His authority. This is not pleasing to the Lord, and it is most offensive to the Lord. According to the teaching of the Bible, the church in each locality should live directly before the Lord and be

responsible to the Head, Christ. There should be no superior church, no head church, and no federation.

Because we saw the preceding item, we all kept one principle: the administration of the church is local, and the fellowship of the church is universal. From the Word of God we clearly saw that the church in each locality has its own administration and is independent of the other churches. Each local church has its own eldership and its own administration. The administration of the church cannot go beyond the locality; once it goes beyond the local boundary, it causes the church to lose its local nature. Thus, the churches in all the localities will not be able to live directly before Christ, the Head. The fellowship of the church should not only be local; rather, it should also be universal because it is the fellowship of the Body of Christ. A local church should have fellowship with all the other churches; otherwise, it will be a sect.

We also clearly saw that churches in different localities should not have an organization for unification, because the administration of the church is local. All churches should be directly under the ruling of Christ, the Head, and should directly obey the authority of the Holy Spirit.

In addition, we also emphasized the universal priesthood; that is, we stressed the fact that every believer is a priest. In Judaism, the majority of the people are laymen, and only a few are priests. The Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant churches adopted the Judaic system...[But] all brothers and sisters are children of God, members of the Body of Christ, and priests to God; not only so, all can approach God and serve God directly.

We also emphasized the Body's coordination in service, exhorting all the saints to keep the principle of the Body by serving together in coordination instead of serving independently.

We also emphasized the practical church service. In all aspects of our service we did not want merely a theory; we also wanted the practice. (The Testimony and the Ground of the Church, pp. 232-235)

Further Reading: Three Aspects of the Church, Book 2: The Course of the Church, chs. 15-16

« WEEK 2 — DAY 6 »

Morning Nourishment

Matt. 13:33 Another parable He spoke to them: The kingdom of the heavens is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened.

Rev. 18:4 ...I heard another voice out of heaven, saying, Come out of her, My people, that you do not participate in her sins and that you do not receive her plagues.

The Lord's recovery is absolutely different from today's religion. We are not concerned with knowing the Bible merely in letters. We are here to carry out God's economy in His recovery. It is impossible for there to be reconciliation between the recovery and Christianity. In the recovery we repudiate the wood, the grass, and the stubble. But these inferior materials are not only welcomed by many Christians—they are appreciated, praised, exalted, and advertised....In the recovery we would rather have a small amount of gold, silver, and precious stones than a huge pile of wood, grass, and stubble....The spiritual eyes of many religious leaders and Bible teachers are blind. They may study the Word in letters, but they do not know the mysterious reality of verses such as Exodus 25:1-9. We do not care for the traditional teachings but for God's revelation in His Word. (Life-study of Exodus, pp. 967-968)

Today's Reading

Because Christendom is a mixture, when one gets the fine flour, he also gets the leaven because these two have become one. This is why it has been difficult for us to fully come out of Christendom.

Although I had contact with Brother Nee's ministry in 1925, I did not come into the Lord's recovery in a full way until 1932. Since that time I have seen the recovery passing through a process of coming out of Christendom. Even today we have not come out of Christendom in a thorough way. We still have something of Christendom within us, even unconsciously. When we come to a meeting, we

may expect a good speaker to speak to us. In nature, this is the element and cause of fallen Christendom. This is the evil element of Nicolaitanism, the clergy-laity system, which the Lord hates (Rev. 2:6). Why do we not come to the meetings prepared to minister something? We may say that we are weak, but we are strong in expecting to listen to a good message. We may dislike going to a meeting where there is not a good speaker. This is the subtle element of the clergy-laity system still remaining within us.

The Lord's recovery is for bringing us out of this unscriptural system and back to the beginning of the pure practice of the church life according to the divine revelation.

I am sharing this to help us realize that the history among us has been one of coming completely out of Christianity without compromise. It is a shame that some so-called co-workers among us have tried their best to compromise. They say that between the denominations and the local churches there is a gap, and they consider themselves as the bridge to bridge the gap.

Because of our standing for the pure church life, others have been offended. But what can we do? Paul said in Galatians 1:10, "If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a slave of Christ." If we were men-pleasers, we would not suffer persecution as Paul did. The history of the Lord's recovery is a history of coming out of and being outside of the present evil age. We have burned the bridges between us and Christianity, but some among us have tried to build a bridge to bring us back. We need to burn all the bridges. There should be no bridge between the local churches and Christianity. Everything should be after its kind. The denominations are after their kind, and the local churches should be after their kind. We should be what we are without compromise or pretense.

We need to maintain such a gap between us and Christianity. The wider this gap is the better because it is a gap between us and the present evil age....Our history is a history outside of the present evil age. (CWWL, 1973-1974, vol. 1, "The History of the Church and the Local Churches," pp. 110, 94-96)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1973-1974, vol. 1, "The History of the Church and the Local Churches," chs. 1, 4-5, 9-10

« WEEK 2 — HYMN

In Revelation two and three

The Church — Her Course

1274

The musical score is written in G major and 4/4 time. It consists of two staves. The first staff contains the melody and the lyrics: "1. In Rev - e - la - tion two and three, The sev - en lo - cal". The second staff continues the melody and lyrics: "church-es see: The les - sons there for you and me Are for the Lord's re - cov - er - y." Chords are indicated above and below the notes.

2. The words to them are words to us,
So that the church be glorious,
And all their warnings we must heed
So that the Lord can meet His need.
3. To Ephesus, the word is clear:
“To your first love you’re not so near;
You’ve left to work so far away;
Repent, return to Him today.”
4. Thus, we must all turn back to Him,
Leave other loves, for these are sin.
Oh, let us hearken to His call—
If we miss this, we’ve missed it all!
5. Then unto Smyrna, suffering, sore—
“You have been tried, but something more—
Be faithful unto death,” we’re told
(Not just of body but of soul).
6. Be faithful ’til what’s natural dies;
Your circumstances don’t despise;
The Lord has sent them all to you
To prove that your first love is true.
7. From Pergamos we clearly see
The world has wed Christianity!
And faithful Antipas did fall—
He dared to stand against it all.
8. To wed the world we all must fear:
His spoken word will save us here—
If to His speaking we give heed,
We’ll separated be indeed.
9. Then Thyatira comes at length:
Her mixture with the world her strength.
Fine flour leavened by the yeast,
A harlot riding on a beast.

