

# **The Mystery of Time in God's Recovery**

## **The Mystery of Recovery and God's Sovereign Hand**

### **Opening Remarks and Song Introduction**

I wanted to announce, once again, if you would turn off your cell phone. Is it okay if they put it in airplane mode? Best to turn off your phones because, you know, they are using the local internet here to translate. And with me, the folks who are translating need a lot of help. So please, if you would, turn off your phone for this brief period of time.

Well, David P. got me in a little trouble here. He got to talk about the camel train. You guys know the camel train? I do not know if you know this, but I came to every conference for the last 51 years, but probably for more than twenty of them, I was in exile. That is to say, they put me up in a closed-off shelter with the young people, closed the door, and at the end of an hour, they would peer through the window to see if I were still alive. And when they had seen that the Lord had stopped the mouths of the lions, they made me do it every year.

So, we learned some songs during that time. This is one of those songs, so I hope there is one or two of you still remember from those young people's days. Do you see some of these gray-haired people? They were my young people. Can you believe we got the words up there? Camel train is going real slow today. Somebody. Somebody put it up. Somebody put it up there. There we go. It took Rebecca to jump off the train. Get this thing working. I know but better put the words up.

Back in the early days, back in the '70s, when I first started dealing with the teenagers, they were kind of a rough lot. Not at all like these saints who were almost ready to be raptured. Boy, we had some tough ones, I am telling you. There you go. There you go.

Okay. 'Twas a day in early springtime by an ancient wayside well, Eleazar paused to rest his camel train. He had found a bride for Isaac. Here the evening shadows fell, his weary journey had not been in vain. Oh, get ready. Evening shadows fall, do not you hear Eleazar call? There is going to be a wedding, joy will soon begin, evening when the camel train comes in.

So he took the fair Rebecca, dressed in jewels rich and rare, to a faraway where Rebecca loved her Isaac and he loved Rebecca fair. Oh, it must have been the happy wedding day. Oh, get ready. Evening shadows fall. Do not you hear the Eleazar call? There is going to be a wedding and our joy will soon begin in the evening when the camel pack comes in.

Now the blessed Holy Spirit from our Father God above has come down to earth to hand a worthy bride, for our Isaac gold over yonder has prepared His tents of love and He wants His fair Rebecca by His side. Oh, get ready when shadows fall, do not you hear

the Eleazer call? Going to be a wedding and our joy will soon begin in the evening when the camel train comes in. We have left our kinfolk gladly; we have bade the world goodbye. We have been called to be His pure and spotless bride, where we will soon behold our Jesus in a blessed eternity. What a happy, happy wedding that will be. Oh, get ready, evening shadows fall, do not you hear the Eleazer call? There is going to be a wedding and the joy will soon begin in the evening when the camel train—one more time. Oh, get ready, evening shadows fall, do not you hear the Eleazer call? There is going to be a wedding and the joy is in the evening when the camel train comes in. Praise God.

Well, that is all I have the energy for. Ladies and gentlemen, you got the message. Let us just close with a word of prayer.

### **Reflections on Mystery, Recovery, and the Church**

So, we are trying to deal with something here. It is very mysterious. It is a mystery because God is working, God is moving, God is recovering, but so much of it is unseen by us. That is why we live by faith and not by sight. But we believe in a God who will restore all things to Himself, who will recover the church and us. These things, I know probably you have heard this, but I think it was Brother T. Austin-Sparks and Watchman Nee were together, and one asked the other, “What is the toughest scripture promise that you have to believe in?” And he says that the Lord is perfecting the church, you know, perfecting the bride, washing her, getting her ready. Because when you look around, that is not what you see. But our God is sovereignly at work.

So, we tried to take a look at His sovereign hand, because in that scripture here, which we recite once again from Isaiah 11:10–11, “Then in that day The nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious. Then it will happen on that day that the Lord Will again recover the second time with His hand The remnant of His people.” And so, I talked about, I tried to make the mysterious side of it His left hand, even as He shows Himself with His right hand throughout our recovery period.

So, we looked at that, and then we tried to look at something a little deeper, because that is something that needs vision. If we look and ask the Lord, He will show us His hand sometimes at work in the midst of our troubles and life, but at a deeper level, He has got to train our love for the Lord to understand His heart for Zion and the church in all her beauty. The Lord loves the gates of Zion, and we can kind of take or leave the church. A lot of people feel that way. But if you have touched what the Lord loves about His church, then you are hooked. Then we cry for the church, we pray for the church, we intercede for the church, and we try to do what little we can to recover the church, because we are gaining a heart after the Lord's heart. That is why we talked about David's heart for Zion, because it was God's heart for Zion, etc.

## **The Mystery of Time and “This Hour”**

### **The Mystery of Time**

So now I want to look at the third kind of mystery, as we would say, in this whole matter of recovery, and that is the mystery of time. You notice that the whole Conference title was God's Cry for This Hour. I want to talk about the mystery of the hour because there is an hour. And this is yet a deeper mystery because this sensitivity to the hour is something deeper than our heart. Can you believe? It is something that registers in our spirit. What time is it? You, see? So that is what we are going to look at.

There is a cry in this hour. Can you hear it here? It says in the Scripture there is a cry for that day. There is a cry, as Kenny said, “It will happen.” There is a cry in that day, and there is a cry for weal and woe. That is what a seminary professor told me. It is all about Isaiah, weal, and woe. That means good and bad, judgment, and blessing. Weal is the good, woe is the bad. Actually, it is just as short as that. In Hebrew, good is tov. Are you looking forward to tov? God is good. His ways are good. All that He does is good. Tov. How about woe? Remember how Brother Stephen used to call it woo, woo unto you? I love it. But actually, the Hebrew word is what? Hoy. You know, how is the Jewish expression “Oy hoy”? That is saying, oh, woe. And so that is the word sometimes used for the prophets when it says the burden of the Lord is the hoy of the Lord. It is an expelling of breath in grief.

### **Weal and Woe in Isaiah 66**

So just to get a perspective, I am sorry, but I want to get to the last chapter now. I mean, of Isaiah. Isaiah, my favorite Old Testament evangelist. So, I want to take us through much of Isaiah 66. Maybe we will skip a few verses. But you see, this shows us the weal and the woe. This shows us the glory and the judgment. Because the end time involves both, brothers, and sisters.

So, here we go, beginning in verse one. It is sort of a summation of all that has come up since Jesus was seen as the suffering servant who died for our sins. “Thus says the LORD, “Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest?”” And that is sort of like a father who is saying, “Okay, kids, you have tried to recover things. You have done a good job. But let me take it from here.” You ever had that experience where somebody just takes over who really knows what they are doing?

### **A Father’s Example and God’s Sovereignty**

I remember one time I was a little kid, and I was learning how to swim, and I lived on Long Island up in New York, and so we had to learn how to swim in the ocean. The problem is there were, you know, waves coming in. So, I learned how to swim. I could swim just like this, with my feet on the ground. It was really cool. Now, I did not go anywhere unless I walked, but this was good.

One day, my dad is a very quiet guy. Psychiatrists, they always look at you. "Hmm. When did you first find this out?" He comes into the water. He rarely was with us when we went to the beach. He was usually busy working. Anyway, he came, he was on vacation, came out. He says, "All right, son, we are going to learn how to do this." He says, "Grab hold of my neck and get on my back." And I swear, my dad was a dolphin. He went up and down in the water and up and down in the water, went over the waves and down under and up. He said, "Now just hold your breath when you are going down." And what? When I got out of that, I was ready to swim. He said, "Let me show you, son. You do not really put your feet on the ground. This is the better way." God is saying that heaven is earth and everything is mine. Of course, I can build my own house, so. But I am so glad that you helped out.

Verses 2-5: ""For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being," declares the LORD. "But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word."" God loved all the help He could get from those trembling ones. Is not that wonderful? ""But he who kills an ox is like one who slays a man; He who sacrifices a lamb is like the one who breaks a dog's neck; He who offers a grain offering is like one who offers swine's blood; He who burns incense is like the one who blesses an idol. As they have chosen their own ways, And their soul delights in their abominations, So I will choose their punishments And will bring on them what they dread. Because I called, but no one answered; I spoke, but they did not listen. And they did evil in My sight And chose that in which I did not delight." Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at His word."

Now here the remnant is seen as the daughters of Zion, now the daughters of the virgin. Young girls in Zion who, do not have much strength but really are loved and are pure.

Verses 5-7: "Your brothers who hate you, who exclude you for My name's sake, Have said, 'Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy.' But they will be put to shame. "A voice of uproar from the city, a voice from the temple, The voice of the LORD who is rendering recompense to His enemies. Before she travailed, she brought forth. Before her pain came, she gave birth to a boy."

Wait a minute. How suddenly did this birth happen?

Verse 8: "Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Can a land be born in one day? Can a nation be brought forth all at once? As soon as Zion travailed, she also brought forth her sons."

Now, there you go. As soon as we travail, the kingdom is coming in a day, in an hour. See, this is the mystery of time. We think it has to be a long time. "Well, it has got to be a long time from now." It is not. It could be any moment. It can be born in a day, the whole thing set up for glory. What a wonderful promise, huh? What a sovereign God.

Verse 9. "'Shall I bring to the point of birth and not give delivery?" says the LORD. "Or shall I who gives delivery shut the womb?" says your God." What a sovereign God. So be joyful with Jerusalem and rejoice for her all you who love her.

Verse 10: "Be exceedingly glad with her, all you who mourn over her."

Verses 15-16: "For behold, the LORD will come in fire And His chariots like the whirlwind, To render His anger with fury, And His rebuke with flames of fire. For the LORD will execute judgment by fire And by His sword on all flesh, And those slain by the LORD will be many."

Verses 18-21: "'For I know their works and their thoughts; the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and see My glory. I will set a sign among them and will send survivors from them to the nations: Tarshish, Put, Lud, Meshech, Tubal and Javan, to the distant coastlands that have neither heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they will declare My glory among the nations. Then they shall bring all your brethren from all the nations [these are the gentiles you see, and the Jews as they are dispersed.] as a grain offering to the LORD, on horses, in chariots, in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem," says the LORD, "just as the sons of Israel bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD. I will also take some of them for priests and for Levites," says the LORD." Can you believe that? Not even Jewish, but He is accepting Gentiles who love the Lord into His service.

Verses 22-24: "'For just as the new heavens and the new earth Which I make will endure before Me," declares the LORD, "So your offspring and your name will endure. And it shall be from new moon to new moon And from sabbath to sabbath, All mankind will come to bow down before Me," says the LORD. "Then they will go forth and look On the corpses of the men Who have transgressed against Me. For their worm will not die And their fire will not be quenched; And they will be an abhorrence to all mankind.'"

*Lord, we hear the twofold march of history: a march to glory, a march to shame, a march to weal, a march to woe, a march to salvation, a march to judgment. Because our righteous and holy and loving God has done everything He can do to seek and to save that which is lost, the rest will happen in history. Lord, we pray by Your Spirit, You would give us that kind of solemn and humble understanding of our prospects as we fellowship this last evening together, in Jesus' precious name. Amen.*

### **Job's Questions, God's Answers, and the Value of Recovery**

Now, I think by now we could say, and all would understand, recovery itself is a mystery when you think about it, because a purpose that was planned in eternity is being worked out in time. So, we did not get it all. We did not get the handbook. There is something that has been planned since the beginning of time. And because God moves in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform, as William Cowper wrote that wonderful hymn, "God Moves in a Mysterious Way," back in the 18th century, it is because His ways and His thoughts are so much higher. They are in a different realm of logic, and we cannot completely understand His plan.

### **Job's Questions and the Mystery of Recovery**

And so, what do we do? We ask a whole bunch of questions. We love to ask questions like Job. We are full of questions, as the left hand of God is recovering him and making him a son, captured and loved. But during that time, Job is asking questions. But only the vision of God Himself can answer the question.

It says in Job 42:1-6, "Then Job answered the LORD and said, 'I know that You can do all things, And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.' " 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' "Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know." 'Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask You, and You instruct me.' "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees You; Therefore I retract, And I repent in dust and ashes.'"

And in this mystery of recovery, we are so desirous, like Job, to find answers with our tiny minds. But His kingdom is perceived by bigger answers written by revelation upon the heart, beyond our imagination. So, of course, you know Job's story. After his friends absolutely wearied him with judgments and accusations, then God stepped in and depleted Job's whole long list of questions. You know, he had a question machine. He had been asking for thirty-eight chapters, and God took them down in seventy-seven unanswerable questions. God says, where were you when I did this? Where were you when I did that? I looked it up just today to be sure. I said. I said that to. I do not know. I do not know. I am on Safari. I do not know what AI is there. But I said, how many questions did God ask Job? And it said, it said He asked him seventy-seven staggering questions. That AI is pretty good, beyond the logic of any man. Oh, yes. And here we are today, questioning, questioning, questioning. Always questioning, and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth at that level that we want. As the Lord says, fools give counsel without knowledge.

My father got saved. He was 47 years old. He knelt down and accepted Jesus as his Savior. And he was a psychiatrist. He said to me, "Dana, you know so much. What I learned in psychiatry was counsel without knowledge." Anyway, so the mystery of His hand puzzles us, right, until we see its purpose in history and His heart. We have to come to a deeper level to see His heart. But now the hour which must be known in our spirit. Oh, as it says in Romans 11:33, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!"

### **God's Heart, Human Logic, and the Glory of Recovery**

So, we are now looking at the third level here, right? God's heart for a corporate bride. He is waiting. There is an hour involved. What a day when the Spirit unveils to us regarding His heart, that God's love is mightier and scarier than His hands. I do not know. If you thought a revelation of God's mighty hand would be scary, then you could see a revelation of God's heart. You say, "Whoa, this is a possessive heart that does not give up." It is a scary thing to fall into the hands of the heart of God. That is the wrong quote,

but you get the idea, right? It explains why God's hand of discipline at times is laid so heavily upon us, because His heart loves us so much.

Now, in general, as we scan the Bible, watching God's recovery, two questions occupy our tiny mite brains. And they have formed today two schools of thought, both of which have swerved away from Scripture by man's great logic. Because we might ask these kinds of questions: How can an omnipotent God create a creation that is so good and yet now have to restore it again out of its *tohu wa bohu*, which in Hebrew means empty and void? How could God be such, create something that is this good, and then have that be? How could He do that? He is obviously not omnipotent if that happens. Of course, we might also ask how the Lord could save people and build His church on the rock of His salvation and then have to come and recover it from ruin.

So, the theologians have pondered. They are sitting around while Job is hurting. They pondered until two of Job's friends, as I see it, appeared with opposite and ridiculous conclusions.

One guy called Bildad that needs more light, says God set the whole thing up for His Son and has already predetermined and fixed with cool calculation who is going to hell and who is going to heaven. Full stop. It is fate. Nothing you can do about it. That swerves far from Scripture, ladies, and gentlemen. Of course, I do not know if you have heard about the other more recent popular theology, which is called process theology.

Well, this is Job's other foolish friend guy. I call Zofaroff the blind-eyed, who likewise bucks with the clear truth of scriptures with dogma, saying, now God's part in the whole process of creation, of salvation, is He got in there and He took a chance. Took a chance on man, and man blew it, caused all kinds of problems. Now He is trying to work it out. He has not quite got out of the hole yet, but He sacrificed His Son, went a long way toward recovering things. But He is still trying to figure out, now what do I do now? The church has gone sideways. What should I do now?

See, God does not really know because He is not omniscient, but He is just working away with us in our existential existence.

Well, I would suggest, rather than taking sides with either of those two, you stick to the Bible, believe the Bible, and let God be true and every man a liar. There is no theology that man's mind can weave that can remain in the Bible once it takes its logical extension. There is something to know about recovery for those who would be wise. We can see in His sovereign recovery, which has so many levels and depths and heights dealing in space and time. But we can observe, I think, these three things. One, when He does recover something, it adds significance value to that which He recovers. Now, what do I mean by that? As good as creation is, when God finally recovers creation, it is not just good, it is glorious. Recovery is not just trying to bring back to what was before. He works something in there in His wisdom, which makes creation better than it was before. Saved sinners, recovered and transformed for God as they live, Christ in you, become more glorious than ever as just saved souls. God, there is a mystery about why

He is recovering things. But we can say when God recovers something, it is better than it ever was, right?

So, as old Haggai said, now you look at this present house of God you are building, and it does not look like much. But I tell you, by the time God gets through with His house, the latter glory is going to be better than the former. That is God, God's plan of exceeding in recovery.

### **Living In-Between: Kingdom Time and Our Age**

Okay, now we enter again the mystery zone, the twilight zone, whatever you want to call it. From the hand to the heart, now to this God's cry for this hour. That is what the book says. Our theme: God's cry for this hour. I thought it was maybe our cry. No, no. God's cry for this hour. Something there now, there is a mystery there. And part of it is we can understand this. I think all of you realize we are in between. We are in between what is going to be and what has already come. Regarding the kingdom, we are in the kingdom now, but the kingdom has not fully come yet. We are upon Mount Zion now, but we are not fully upon the Zion that is to come. So that famous Greek word when Jesus says, "My kingdom is at hand, repent." That is our mystery. And the very word that they use in Greek, *engus*, means what? It means near, but not here; now, but not yet. We have no English word that equals that. And that is where we are. We are in between, and we are living in between. And so, things regarding the hour and the time of things seem to evolve on different planes. And so, to find out about us, we live in a paradox. We do not know quite what is going on.

### **Firstfruits, Recovery, and the Final Joining of Heaven and Earth**

But the reason that He is working right now in this life among us as God's people is this: the Bible says what God is up to and will reveal has already been revealed when Christ rose from the dead as the first fruits of what is to come. And then we, as His children, as we are transformed, are also the first fruits after the resurrection, and then come into the millennium. We see this also in Revelation 14, where the overcomers are called first fruits of the Lord. So, there is a recovery going on as heaven and earth will be eventually joined together in eternity, and there will be no more need for recovery.

So actually, brothers and sisters, I am just a little minor point here, but Isaiah 11 is talking about that day. And the second recovery is talking about a millennium. But can you believe there is, after a thousand years, a further recovery, the recovery of recoveries when that glorious heavenly Jerusalem comes down and when time moves into eternity? And at that point, Elon Musk is going to have to call everybody back from Mars. Now they have found another planet that they think might be inhabitable somewhere off in some solar system. Well, that? When eternity covers time and heaven comes upon the Earth, that is the final, final recovery. Right?

Okay. Now, during this season of recovery, we find these two deep streams of recovery moving at the same time. First in time is a slow, progressive, gracious perfecting and recovering of Zion as the first fruits of all that will eventually be established in the

Kingdom. But there is also that stream, a mighty river of judgment that is stripping away all that resists recovery as this world is passing away. And in our lives, we experience both. Did you see what our dear brother sang? That woven into his life is both blessing and judgment. It is a very sobering thing. And Christians who are just silly, thinking, "Well, they are saved and that is all there is to it. And nothing can go wrong. And I am just looking forward to heaven, everything is wonderful," those things are true. But there is a whole other side to the story that is going to affect your life. And it is judging all that cannot go in the new creation. It has to be stripped out by the power of the cross.

And so that is why the Bible says mercifully, so we can understand this timing factor. Judgment has already been in the house of God. There is no assembly on the face of the earth that is here without judgment. Now we know His mercy. We know Spirit-filled freedom. We know worship and wonder. But also, if the Lord is head and Lord over His church, He is speaking and He wants us to hear with our hearts what He is speaking to the church. And a lot of times in our hilarity we do not listen and we get into trouble. I would rather be in an assembly that is in a little bit of trouble and is keeping close accounts, asking for God's mercy, asking to show us where we are falling short. Because, brothers and sisters, have you ever been to a fellowship that is not falling short? They might think that they are not, but when you visit them, it seems like a different story. You see, so these two streams are moving at the same time.

### **The Kingdom Time Zone and Spiritual Discernment of the Hour**

And the two streams impose upon us a question in our spirit. Do you know what time it is? Are you in the KTZ? That is my young people's phrase for Kingdom Time Zone. We are here on Eastern Daylight Savings Time. You got to have a double setting on your watch: Kingdom Time Zone. Do you know what time it is? I am afraid saints are ignorant. As a matter of fact, many saints think now that they are saved and they are in the church, they do not even understand that they have something to do with the kingdom. And there is a time factor in the kingdom, and there is a conditional thing in the kingdom. So may the Lord help us. I mean, I cannot cover all that, but listen, we need to have...

Well, I remember, I think some of you remember it was back a few years ago when there was an old prophet who would stand in our midst. And about the last two years I heard him speak. He said, "The Lord is coming very soon. Are you ready?" Next message he gave, "The Lord is coming very soon. Are you ready?" There was somebody whose spirit the alarm was going off. Now I know. Have you heard the story about Margaret Barber, how she walked down the street with Watchman Nee on New Year's Day? At every corner she turns, she says, "I am expecting to see the Lord. Oh, He is not here. I cannot wait till He comes. He is coming at any moment. He may come when we turn around the bend. What do you think, Brother Nee?" Brother Nee says, "What? What you are talking about?"

She was on a different clock. And it is not wrong. See? Get our brains out of this for just a second. Every generation since Jesus saved us has those faithful saints who love the Lord with all their hearts and believe Jesus was coming back tomorrow. They died not expecting to die, but for the Lord to come back. Now, were they wrong? See, only fools would say, "Oh, yes, they were wrong. Stupid people. They just had some crazy religious idea in their head that Jesus was coming back any moment. We need to be ready. What do they know?" Their spirit knew something. Sometimes they call it the spirit of rapture, but I will not get into that. There are some folks who think, who sense that there is a sense in there, the Lord is very near, even in the gates. You cannot prove it logically. The signs do not give it away. But there is something deep inside that we need: special spiritual discernment of time.

## **Slowing Down, Sabbath, and the Theft of Time**

### **The Speed of Life and the Sabbath**

But let me start right out by saying this: it is impossible to discern the times until we slow down to the speed of life. Do you know there is a speed of life? You even have a circadian rhythm that tells you to slow down. And then the Lord says, "My people observe the Sabbath." We think that is fool stuff now. We like to work seven days a week, making more money that way. We do not know how to relax. What Sabbath? The Sabbath. That will keep you alive. But not only that but give you discernment. If you will spend just a while in the presence of God. Just a while. The Sabbath's worth. We are not talking about some legalism here. Not going to the store on Sunday. No, no, no.

But we are talking about those things that the brothers have already been talking about, like having a real devotion to the Lord. How about two hours on Saturday morning? If you do not work on Saturdays, for two hours, maybe you get back into the rhythm of life, to the speed of life. In New York City, we are out of whack. We are out of whack. You should not even listen to me. I come from New York. It is crazy in New York. We got a brother. He proudly wears a hat, saying FOMO. FOMO is mostly right. Fear of missing out. How can you rest? You might miss something.

Some of you are sitting here right now saying, "But, but, but, but, but what if they have fireworks in Hanover County here, so you might miss it?" Some of you are going to say, "I got to get out of here, get in the car," because I understand now, if you go up to Kings Dominion and park in Burger King, you can see the huge fireworks display they have up there. FOMO. I cannot miss that. I may never get a chance to do it again.

### **Time Bandits, Trends, and the Prison of FOMO**

That is a New Yorker. New Yorkers live on lines. And why do they live online? Because they live by trends. And why do they live by trends? Because they have influencers. And why do they have influencers? Because they are people who are on TikTok. Tick tock, tick tock. Bandits of time. The Time Bandits have formed a corporation called TikTok.

And the influencers tell you, you cannot rest. You have to go over here, just a couple of blocks away from the apartment Julie and I live in New York City, there is a place called Pana, P-A-N-A. I have no idea what. It must be a foreign term. It was a coffee shop, but they make homemade ice cream, sometimes like guacamole ice cream, onion ice cream, all kinds of avocado ice cream, all kinds of stuff.

And somehow the TikTokers got hold of this, influencers got hold of this. Trending happened. And we have lines of two hundred people right now. They are standing out there, two hundred people to get a \$7 cup of ice cream this size. Because I, before I die, want to eat celery ice cream. All right, check it off. Check it off that bucket list.

Every one of our young people in our fellowship has a bucket list. And they have already fulfilled half of it. They are under 30 years old. They have been everywhere. Everywhere in the world. I say, wow, is that not a beautiful picture of Paris? Oh, yes, I went there. Yeah, I remember. Yes.

Anyway, New Yorkers are out of control because the Time Bandits have us in prison. Thank God there are some young people who loved the Lord enough to get up for the 10 o'clock in the morning service. We were afraid to make it any earlier or nobody would show up. So, our service starts at 10 a.m., and we usually get started by 10:15. And about half of the congregation is there by eleven. Well, we are pretty much dragged in there, and we have a wonderful time together.

But that is New York City. We are out of whack. You are not New York City. We need some knowing the hour of our visitation for recovery. And when you look at the story of recovery, as has already been explained tremendously by our different brothers here, the whole story of recovery is about the timing of things.

### **Biblical Timing, Kairos, and the Kingdom Time Zone**

You remember when Abraham received that covenant, as the fire came through and everything. And God says, "Your descendants are going to go down to Egypt for 400 years, and for four generations you are going to be slaves in Egypt because I cannot let you back to the promised land yet, because the iniquity of the Amorites has not been filled up yet."

So, for some reason, do you know what it is? God is a righteous God. The Promised Land was the Amorites' land. So, God had to wait till their iniquities brought judgment upon them and the forfeiture of that land, and it would take another, longer period of time. And so, you are going to have to wait.

I am sure Abraham heard that but made no sense of it at all. It is only his descendants who recorded His promise, who found out that indeed they were down in Egypt and they became slaves and all that kind of stuff. You see that is the important thing there, right?

Or in the wilderness. The timing is so important as the children of Israel march through the wilderness. Here is how it is interpreted in Hebrews 4:1–2. "Therefore, let

us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they are also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard." So here is a rhema, a living word out here. Go into the land. I have given you the land. It is living rhema. It is moving, it is shaking, it is still grabbable. You can still believe in that and go through. But they did not mix it with faith, and it fell down. God said, okay. Back in the wilderness 40 years. I tell you, in My wrath you shall not enter My rest. I gave you opportunity. That was your time. What did you do? The men got together, tried to figure things out and the grasshoppers lost. You see, it is a timing thing.

So, we heard the wonderful story today, right, about Samuel, how he had to wait until he found David, that was against Saul and all that. And then David, how he had to wait and not kill King Saul. Tremendously there you see, it is timing. It is the hour. What is the hour? And then even after David became a king for Judah and was in Hebron, they had to wait several years before he could be king over the whole of Israel. And how did he become king? Because the sons of Issachar, as we find in, I Chronicles 12:32, "Of the sons of Issachar, men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do." They came to the ten northern tribes and said, "It is time to unite with Judah and Benjamin as a whole nation." That was Issachar's wisdom. They knew what time it is, the understanding of the times.

It was seen in the recovery of the house of God how the remnant who had stopped building for 15 years started building. And they found out when they were tattled on that it was a new king who said it was okay. And then they remembered the prophecy of Haggai. What a time, a time-sensitive prophecy. This is at the beginning of Haggai 1:2-4. ""Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'This people says, "The time has not come, even the time for the house of the LORD to be rebuilt.""" Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate?"" Is that what time it is?

Verses 7-8: "Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Consider [because he is an old man] your ways! Go up to the mountains, bring wood and rebuild the temple, that I may be pleased with it and be glorified," says the LORD."

That is what time it was. And they had been building their houses thinking it was not the time. Do you think it is possible for Christians to miss the timing, to miss the visitations? My, my, my. And when Jesus came upon the scene, the kingdom time zone became even more sensitive than before. According to Mark chapter 1:15, Jesus came onto the scene. And here is what He said: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Now that word "time," let me explain something for younger people here. I am sure the old ones know this. In Greek there is two words for time: Kronos, from which we get the word chronograph, chronology, all that kind of stuff. Kronos means ticktock, tick-tock

time. Kairos in Greek means filled time that has importance. Time where it has significant days, crucial hours. That is the kairos.

Jesus says the kairos has been fulfilled. Now it is full. And the kingdom of God is among us. It is near, but not quite here. It is. It is right here in our midst. Repent. And that is the way in. And the people who were standing there when Jesus spoke that kairos gospel, they felt like the Shekinah glory had fallen upon them. And a spiritual conviction brought conviction and repentance upon many of those people who were baptized in the Jordan River. What a powerful thing to be in the presence of Jesus, who says the time is now, kairos time. Wonderful. The kingdom time zone comes. And when the kingdom time zone, you sense it on your clock, it is time to make your decision now. There is time for waiting. And then the alarm goes off. Can you tell what time it is?

I have tried to define simply for the young people for years that, to me, the kingdom of God is wherever Jesus is Lord. Now, you may be a Christian, but if He is not Lord of what you are doing and what you are up to right now, well, you are in the kingdom, but are you in the kingdom? You are in the kingdom. Are you enjoying the kingdom? You are in the kingdom. Are you experiencing the grace of the kingdom? The challenge of the kingdom? The faith of the kingdom? The self-sacrifice of the kingdom? Oh, now there is somebody who is in the zone, you see. See, the kingdom of God is wherever Jesus is Lord now. If you are a Christian, good. Is Jesus your Lord, now? This is a crucial time.

## **The Gospel of Isaiah 61 and End-Time Church Conditions**

### **Good News and Our Calling**

Well then Jesus came, of course. I will just read a little bit of His good news, because His good news includes us, right? He quotes from Isaiah 61, beginning in verse 1, where He says, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the good news to the afflicted, sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, proclaim liberty to captives, freedom to prisoners, to proclaim the gracious year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So, they will be called the oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified. Then they will rebuild the ancient ruins." Wait a minute, now see, we are in the picture. "They will raise up the former devastations. They will repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations."

Well, now there we are, repairing that which is lost, finding those who are broken. And there has never been a time in our American civilization where so many people are broken. Boy, we need to be those vested with this gospel to heal the brokenhearted, to restore gladness to those who mourn. It is a lonely world out there. Our young people were robbed of a generation when COVID hit. Some of them do not know how to get along with their kids. They live so separately. Some of them have found their best friend to be their iPhone. What a pitiful condition. Some are afraid to get married. They do not

even know how to relate to people. They are kind of lost, trying to find their way. Oh, to be those who come with this timely message. This is where we should be right now.

### **The Last Days and the Household of God**

Well, we do not have to go far into church history before we can see that what happened in the book of Acts in a wonderful way found declension, compromise, loss, and the infiltration of the world into the Church. And so, we will read some fragments because the second half of the story and half of Paul's epistles has to do with what will happen in the latter days, which happens to be now, for II Timothy 3:1-5: "But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these." And Paul is talking about the Church.

I Peter 4:7. "The end of all things is near; therefore, [this is what we should do, brothers] be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer." Then, later in the chapter, verse 17: "For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?"

II Peter 3:3-4: "Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation."

Verses 10-13: "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God [timing], because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells."

### **Prophetic Weeping, Zion's Daughters, and the Heart of God**

Now, we come to a difficult section here: this stream of judgment which must come. I was exercised quite a bit about it, especially being in the now-but-not-yet time zone. And in this world, darkness and light are both increasing every day, and people are choosing darkness over light. And there is crippling insecurity, fear, and brokenness that has happened to many young people. And I found a description as I went into the prophets to look at this whole matter of judgment and everything. The first place I found was—and I felt like this was our young people. God has done a marvelous thing across the nation and brought to being some young people who are pure and they love the

Lord. In my days working with young people, we never saw something like that, a few overcomers. But oh, my goodness, these kids are so precious.

### **The Daughters of Zion and Isolation**

And in Isaiah chapter one, as Isaiah talks about the crumbling of the kingdom of Judah, he speaks of the daughters of Zion. The daughters, the pure ones in Zion, the young virgins, still praying, still believing, still waiting, still loving Zion. And he is talking about these daughters being isolated. Listen to what he says in Isaiah 1:7. Your country lies desolate. Your cities are burned with fire. In your very presence, foreigners devour your land. It is desolate as overthrown by foreigners. And the daughter of Zion is left like a watchtower in a vineyard, like a hut in a cucumber field, like a besieged city. If the Lord of hosts had not left us a remnant, we should have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah.

Dear saints, some of those pure ones, some of the new Christians, some who love the Lord, feel so isolated up in a watchtower there. You had a field, crops growing, and somebody would stay overnight in a watchtower, watch out for the animals and this and that to come in there. And there they are in the middle of a burned-up field, the church, and they are hungry for food, for sustenance, for a purpose, for a job, whatever it is. And they are in that place of judgment.

### **The Prophets and the Pathos of God**

So then as I was preparing, I made the mistake of going into Jeremiah. And I realized something that struck me personally as I read Jeremiah. I realized that the prophets were not as interested in sharing the doctrines of recovery as I was. They were living through the emotions that brought recovery. These prophets, like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Ezekiel, were speaking not so much about the mind and the truths of God as they were revealing the heart of God. As Brother Sparks often says, "The prophets were sent to represent God to us and they were crying. They were sent to represent God's heart incarnate within them." So missing, I think, among God's people in his day. Among those, Jeremiah was looked at with such disdain, he was such a wuss. He was always crying over the state of Judah because Israel still worshiped. Do you remember? Oh, it was only lip service, but they had a good worship service, and they did their annual repenting rituals with their feasts and ceremonies at the right time. But they never really rendered their hearts. Oh, listen, there was a game going on and Jeremiah was onto the game.

And so, he showed us something that really touched me. I do not know what kind of God you have, but if I understand Jeremiah, he is telling us that God's weeping, that God's sobbing, that God's longing, that God's desiring. It is not just an emotionless God up in the sky looking down with disgust. He is weeping and groaning and longing for those He has redeemed. Now, are the prophets wrong about that?

Jeremiah 9:1 "Oh that my head were waters And my eyes a fountain of tears, That I might weep day and night For the slain of the daughter of my people!" Chapter 8, verse nineteen. "Behold, listen! The cry of the daughter of my people from a distant land: "Is

the LORD not in Zion? Is her King not within her?" Jeremiah 3:14. "Return, O faithless sons,' declares the LORD; 'For I am a master to you, And I will take you one from a city and two from a family, And I will bring you to Zion.'" Why would God send prophets like that? Is there something that we are missing in the pathos of God?

When I say God is coming to judge, I do not just mean He is coming to stamp on you and give you a tough time. But is your heart in sync with His heart? There is something there that I feel I have missed. Too cerebral, maybe, not realizing how much the Lord looks, perhaps, for people to weep over Mount Zion because these prophets, they had to go through a process. They had to be lifted by vision. Up, up, up upon Mount Zion where they looked upon Zion itself and they saw. They saw. Like looking into some kind of a cavern of hell. The things that they did in Zion, eating and drinking and carrying on and laughing about God and making it. I mean, it is all there to be read.

Only the prophets could see that because they had something of the heart of God, and God took them up on that mountain and then broke their hearts. And they could not become the real spokesmen of God until God had broken their hearts. They went through the Valley of Baca, the Valley of Weeping, before the Lord gave them a word to speak.

And when we look at Jesus as He came onto the Mount of Olives, looking over Zion, it says there in Luke 19:41, "When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it." Now, this is a high holy day, Passover coming up. Why would He weep over that beautiful golden city with all the worshipers down there chanting and yelling, with the smell of lamb in the air with its sweet aroma, that He said, "If you had only known, even, especially in this day, the things that make for peace! But they are hidden from your eyes."

Verses 43-44: "'For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, [why?] because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.'" You did not know I had shown up. The Messiah. You were looking at Him, and you did not see Him. You missed Me. And so, you are into this judgment.

### **Watching, Serving, Redeeming the Time**

#### **Sobriety, Judgment, and the Kingdom Time Zone**

Well, we... So having said that, I am sure I have gotten you all pretty depressed by now, because it is a serious thing. We just finished a Bible study in Romans in New York City. I was really blessed by studying it, but I was especially taken by a little section there in Romans, chapter 11, where Paul has to deal with the Gentiles who have gotten a bit cocky about the fact they have been saved. And the Gentiles were kind of saying, "Well, to the Jews, God loves me more than you." And Paul said, "Listen, you Gentiles, you know you are in here by mercy, right? You do not deserve to be in My olive tree. This is God's beautiful olive tree. But you have been let in because for a season My people have

rejected Me. Now, do not get smart about it and think that you are somebody. Come humbly to Me, or I will have to cut you off the tree just like I cut them.”

I do not know. There is something that I sometimes feel is so blasé about Christian experience. People do not even sense the kingdom time zone.

But I feel like there is a judgment that we should be sober about now. I do not want you to go around and flagellate yourself with some kind of leather straps and say, yes, I am guilty. Woe is me. I am just a sinner. I am guilty. I am no good. Lord, no. No, that is not what we do. What do we do? In light of the fact that both of these great fountains of water, of judgment and of grace, are upon us in the church, here is the only thing that I can suggest. We have to go back to talking to Jesus, seeing what Jesus says. And when we come back and look at Jesus in light of all this, that He knew. He knew what was going to happen. He knew that there was this collapse of Judea and all of that. And what He did? He knew it already. In the parables of the kingdom, He had already said it. There is going to be tares, there is going to be bad soil, there is going to be leaven. There is going to be this horrible human tree with birds, evil birds, on the top. He already knew that. But He said, what do you do about it? Keep on sowing, keep on being light, keep on being salt. Let God bring the woe, you bring the gospel. Judgment, let us leave that to God.

### **Watching, Waiting, and the Parables in Matthew 24**

So, He teaches, we know we do not have time to go into all of this, but we know in Matthew, chapter 24, He goes in telling us about three tremendous judgments and moments, important hours. The first one being as the Jews are destroyed, which takes about the first twenty verses of Matthew 24. The temples, Jerusalem, Judaism is coming to destruction. And He tells the disciples, and boy, that was a sobering thing. And then He speaks in His second section about how there is going to be, just in the middle of the day, some people gone missing, as in the day of Noah, when finally, the door was shut and Noah and his family were missing. And then the judgments came. And then the third and final section where He talks about, what do we do in these days? And so, He says, here is what you want to do.

Regarding the kingdom time zone, Matthew 24:36: “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.” Verse 42: “Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.” Verse 44: “For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.”

Yes. See, what does Jesus say you should do? Well, He gave three parables. So, what do you do? We are waiting for the Lord. It says He is coming soon. He says, “Yes, I am coming soon.” What do we do? And again, Jesus tells us, “Walk ahead.” Three things: Be a good servant in the house of God. Do not be a spectator. Do not be somebody who does not give. Do not be somebody who sits back and lets other people speak and do this and that and the other. You be a good steward, like the good steward in that

parable. And do not get lazy and get abusive, because the Master is going to come back at an hour that you do not expect. So, in the house of God, the church that you are in, serve lovingly, faithfully, until He comes. Be that servant that always has one eye looking for the Master's return.

And then He speaks of the ten virgins. What is the lesson of the ten virgins? Basically, it is this: you and I, in our personal spiritual lives, need to buy oil of the Holy Spirit. You need to listen to the Holy Spirit, be filled with the Holy Spirit, be disciplined by the Holy Spirit, buy oil, listen to the Lord, come to know His ways, come to feel His heart. Break your heart and weep. Do what it is the Lord wants you to do. Follow the Holy Spirit and you will gain. And be ready. When you hear suddenly the trumpet, the midnight cry, "The bridegroom's on the way," you see, you cannot do anything special, but in your personal devotions, you should be doing something special while you are waiting.

And the final one, with the talents. And He says this: Listen, brother and sister, it does not matter what kind of gifts and talents you have in the body of Christ; those talents you have are also meant for you to bring to show the love of Jesus in your life. Out in the world, take your talents, which is actually money. It is not talking about our skills, but be ready, and in this world, show by your talents, by your skills, Jesus Christ in your life. So now there is an obligation, and I feel at times we really fall short of this.

### **Redeeming the Time and Growing into the Kingdom**

Our priority sometimes is, as little assemblies of Philadelphia, we do not get out and help a broken community. There is a broken community out there all over the place, but we tend to stay aloof. I only tell them because I have heard the story, but I know it is true from those I have heard.

So, in Romania now, our dear brother doctor goes in there and some others from Memphis, they go into Romania every once in a while. They preach the gospel and teach the Bible and do those very things. So, the saints in Romania want to save Romanians. So, the work is hard. They are doing plowing and sowing and seeding, and Jesus has just dropped the seed and said, "Let Me do the work."

But do you know what? The Gypsies are getting saved left and right. If they go, they go out in the marketplace and they preach the gospel. All the Romanians and the Gypsies say, "Hey, I want to know Jesus." I mean, listen, you have Gypsies around. We have people who really need the Lord.

You have broken people just waiting to hear that the Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me to help out those people who are broken, need help, and you are the guy with your talents. Go out there and make friends of worldly mammon, make friends of the kingdom with your—well, you see, you get the story.

Okay, well, Paul says the same thing, except he uses an interesting phrase, and that is redeem the time. And it is literally buying back the time. Do not do things in the dark.

Do not do the things that are evil. Buy back the time by being filled with the Holy Spirit, singing, and speaking to one another with thanksgiving and songs in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks unto the Lord Jesus, unto God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, that is a good way to buy back your time. And then he mentions in Colossians another buyback, where he says in verse four of Colossians, verse five, walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, buying back the time. I have somebody I am walking with here who is not a Christian. Now, can you put some coins in there? Preach the gospel. Let us reclaim that position you have on your job, the workers you have in your group, in your office, whatever the thing may be, God has you there. Redeem the time.

## Conclusion

Well, I know we are out of time. There is so much more one could say. But finally, here is what I want to say, because we have some new Christians here and young Christians here. We need to understand this now. Who is going to come into Zion and come into glory and enjoy what is to come? It is those who keep growing alive in the Lord, those waiting on the Lord. Young, all those things that we have heard over these days, are those who are growing. Listen, if you are growing, Peter says, if you are growing in love and knowledge and patience and all these things, you will have abundant entry into the kingdom. Is not that wonderful? You just have to keep growing. Do not stop. You do not want to get old like me. You want to be young. Mount up with wings as eagles. This is what the Lord is speaking in this hour for those who have ears to hear, hear what the Lord is saying to His people.

*Lord, we just pray. We know the time is short, and we often are not listening. We are not aware of just what is going on. How close we are to the end; we have no idea. Lord, could we have faithful people? And could we have people with a heart? Maybe some who weep and some who intercede? It has to be a key to recovery right there. Lord, show us Your way. Not my way, just some Bible verses, but, Lord, Your way for our lives. That we could be those who are restoring the ruins. By Your wonderful, amazing mercy and grace, we pray for wisdom in Jesus' name, Amen.*

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