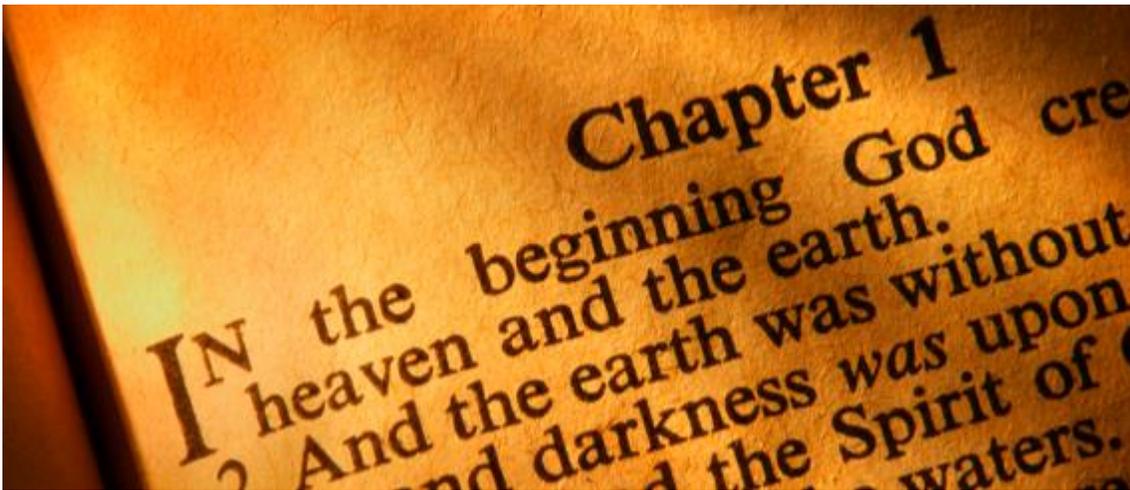


ORIGINS

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A study of origins from Genesis 1-3

by David Legge



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Origins - Chapter 1

"The Origin Of The Universe"

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Evening, thank you to those who led the praise so well. Let's pray: Father, You are a Holy God, an all-consuming fire, and we cry: 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God Almighty; the whole earth is filled with His glory'. Lord, we join with every heavenly voice and spirit, and every earthly created being in Your will, and we worship You. Lord, truly, we have to acknowledge tonight, particularly before such a deep passage of Scripture, that Your ways are not our ways, and Your thoughts are not our thoughts - but we bow tonight to Your greatness. You are God, and there is none other. Holy and victorious Trinity, we reverence You tonight, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, world without end, Amen; who was, and is, and is to come. Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns. Lord, may You reign now tonight in this place and in our lives, and in the preaching of Your pure word. Come by your Holy Spirit, we pray in Jesus' mighty name, Amen.

We're turning to Genesis chapter 1. As was announced, I'll be preaching in the evenings on Genesis 1, 2 and 3 over the next three Sunday nights - they always like to give me easy ones! Maybe you were panicking there, that we were going to read the whole book of Genesis tonight, were you? Well, why not?

Genesis chapter 1 verse 1, and we're reading down to chapter 2 verse 3: *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day. Then God said, 'Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters'. Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day. Then God said, 'Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear'; and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, 'Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth'; and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. So the evening and the morning were the third day. Then God said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth'; and it was so. Then God*

made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also. God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. So the evening and the morning were the fourth day. Then God said, 'Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens'. So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth'. So the evening and the morning were the fifth day. Then God said, 'Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind'; and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth'. So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth'. And God said, 'See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food'; and it was so. Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made".

I'm not sure if the whole series will be called 'Origins', but certainly the first three weeks that I will be with you is called 'Origins'. Tonight we're looking at 'The Origin of the Universe', next week, God willing, we will look at 'The Origin of Mankind', and in my third week with you we will look at 'The Origin of Sin'. Tonight we're looking at 'The Origin of the Universe', and let me say upfront that I am not going to give a lecture on creation versus evolution - I couldn't do it for a start! Nor am I going to give an in-depth commentary of this passage of Scripture in either Hebrew or English. I'm not saying that those are not worthy occupations, but there is just not time to do it, let alone ability. If you've come here tonight for all the answers concerning this passage of Scripture, or for that matter life, the universe, and everything - you've wasted your petrol! You're not going to get all the answers tonight, and apart from it being utterly impossible to do justice to expounding such a passage in the time that we have - in fact, even a lifetime, I believe, wouldn't do that - my objective tonight is to bring ministry to your spirit through the revelation of the Holy Spirit from the living

and powerful Word of God. For this reason I have deliberately avoided poring over tomes of books and commentaries and various literature of other men's thoughts, but I have been poring over the Bible, and this passage of Scripture in particular, waiting for the Spirit's enlightenment, to have something that will feed your soul.

The first thing I want you to see from verse 1 is the One who had no origin. 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth'. Children are wonderful, aren't they? I expect at least one 'Amen' there! Children are wonderful, aren't they? They come out with very inquisitive and intriguing statements and questions at times. One of the most common that I'm sure that some of you who have children will have encountered at some time or other is: where did God come from? Have you ever had that one? Where did God come from? Hmm, interesting! Or, 'Who created God? God made everything, but who created God?'. Is it any wonder that the Lord said that except we be converted, or changed, and become like little children, we will in no wise enter the kingdom of God? Now you might think those are silly questions, and well dare any of us simply kick them into touch, because those two simple, childish questions - we might feel - have within them two profound truths. Without realising it, the child is acknowledging his or her innate understanding that everything needs an origin - everything needs an origin! It's in them and they express it, they think that God needs an origin - we will overlook that for the moment - but they are acknowledging the innate knowledge that for there to be something in existence, someone had to bring it into existence. It had to have an origin or an originator.

But secondly, such a childlike question also grasps a certain appreciation of the mystery of transcendence - that is, there is something about God that we cannot understand. They, in their little infant minds, are trying to grasp an eternal God who is above and beyond us! Now there is nothing wrong with a child asking these questions, the problem comes when the child grows up and acquires the audacity to believe that we actually can answer these questions: where God came from; or even the concept or idea of God that we have invented Him for ourselves; and when we think that we can answer in our intelligence, and maturity, and evolution, other profound moral and philosophical questions. Ironically, right from the first phrase in this whole book - not just Genesis, but the Bible - mankind is faced with the devastating reality that he has not got what it takes to answer life's deepest questions. I want right away for you to confront this: you have not got what it takes! That's why you and I both need revelation, that's why we have the Bible. It is the revelation not just of truth and origins, but it's actually the revelation of God Himself, and the character of who He is, His personality, His attributes, and what He requires of us as human beings, and the message of how we can be right with Him. It's why we have the Bible, and is the message of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation: that we have not got what it takes, we need revelation. As Jeremiah 10:23 puts it: 'The way of man is not in himself' - so if it's not in himself, it has to come from outside of himself. That is where our salvation comes from, the answers to life's deepest questions, and indeed our redemption, comes from outside of ourselves.

Right at the very beginning of the whole of the Bible, we see that God is presented to us as a God of grace, a God who gives what we cannot achieve - not only through our

own merit, but through our own knowledge. It is our responsibility to receive God's divine revelation, and to believe it! That's where many people stumble. How do we receive God's grace? Well, this is fundamental, what you're going to hear just now, to how we approach God - not only how we approach the creation narrative in Genesis chapter 1, but how we approach the whole of Scripture. Please don't misunderstand what I'm saying tonight, I'm not anti-intellectual, and neither am I conceding that the Bible does not hold up to modern science - but we need to resist the, at times, insatiable appetite to understand and explain everything. We've got to come to terms with the fact that the Bible, primarily, is not a book to be explained, it is a book to be believed.

This is fundamental, because it is not knowledge that will get us to God, it is revelation - and in fact it is faith in God's revelation. We read this morning from 1 John: 'It is faith that overcomes the world'. You can have all the knowledge in the world, and you will not overcome. It is faith that overcomes the world, faith not in knowledge, per se, but in the revelation of God that He gives graciously to us outside of ourselves, something that we could not acquire or achieve ourselves. He imparts it to us, and our reaction and response is that we are to believe. Oh, how it thrills me to see how God doesn't take it upon Himself to justify His own existence in Genesis 1 verse 1 - or, for that matter, explain to our satisfaction how He does what He does. He just says: 'In the beginning God'.

Our response, primarily, to that statement, is to be faith. We are to believe what Scripture says. We have every reason to believe - that's a whole other subject - but I want you to understand that this is central to getting to know what God reveals, and in fact getting to know God Himself; because Scripture, as I hinted at this morning as well, is not an end in itself, Scripture is God's divinely given instrument to reveal Him, to get to know Him. 'Beyond the sacred page, I seek Thee Lord'.

Turn with me - put your marker in Genesis chapter 1, and turn to Hebrews chapter 11, please. Here is this great New Testament passage on faith, verse 1: 'Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen' - or the NIV puts it, 'the confidence and the assurance about what we do not see'. Verse 3: 'By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible'. Now here's the question: how do we understand how the worlds were made? Is it by getting a Ph.D. in cosmology? Is that how we understand how the worlds were made? No! Hebrew says 'by faith' we understand that the universe was made out of nothing, because faith is the evidence of things not seen.

Now, here we need a good dose of humility. If you don't already have it, having read this passage, you really do need it! We need humility to understand what we cannot understand by mere intellect alone or research, but what we have to accept by faith in God's revelation. Job in his trials and experience of really being turned inside out through various circumstances - read the book - but at the end of it all he comes to confront God. He knew a lot about God, and he had a great deal of second-hand information that was passed on to him from his forefathers and from his friends, but

at the end of the book he has to admit: 'Now my eye sees You, and I repent of all the things that I have said about You'. So often I have felt that way. You remember God had to scold him and reprimand him in Job 38:4: 'Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding'. Where were you?! We need humility, and faith is an expression of humility to understand God's revelation.

If you turn quickly to Job for a moment, and look at Job 15 verses 7 and 8: 'Are you the first man who was born? Or were you made before the hills? Have you heard the counsel of God? Do you limit wisdom to yourself?'. There is a need for humility. If you turn to chapter 28 verse 12, and I know that some of these are from Job's friends, but there is wisdom and truth in them nevertheless that agrees with some of what God says later on. Job 28 verse 12: 'But where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?'. Now if you were to go to Proverbs chapter 4 and verse 1 - you don't have to turn to it, I will read it for you - it says: 'Hear, my children, the instruction of a father, and give attention to know understanding'. Here is a basic biblical principle: revelation comes from outside of ourselves, and understanding comes by humbling ourselves and having faith to believe what God has said. 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth'.

Hebrews 11 and verse 6 says: 'Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is', that He exists, 'and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him'. So you've got to have faith before you can understand God, or even know God. What I'm saying is not to stifle intellectual investigation - there is a place for that, there is a place for discovery. We have nothing to fear when unbiased scientific research is engaged in. But what I'm wanting you to know tonight is that to understand the Bible, and effectively to know the living God who created all things, we need faith! It is faith that receives the revelation of God's truth.

So right at the very beginning of this book of beginnings, we read that 'In the beginning God' - that's just like God, isn't it? 'In the beginning God', take it or leave it, believe it or do not. The One who had no origin, and then we see that the One who had no origin is the Originator of all things. 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth', God is the source of all existence, He created everything. Now, it does appear, in verse 2, 'The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep', that the universe existed, or at least the basis of our planet was present in some dark and chaotic state before the creation week. Now I'm not going to speculate about that, I don't have the answers about it, and there are various theories. It's not revealed in Scripture, but there is something noteworthy, I think, here. But more than some dark chaotic state before creation week, I'm more interested in the element, the creative element that brought order to the discord: 'And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters'.

This wasn't just a creative element, this was a personality, a Divine Person in the Godhead. The Spirit of God is hovering over the waters, and as we go throughout the whole of biblical revelation, we find that the Spirit is always the One who brings life and light into being. In fact in chapter 2 and verse 7, we will look at it next week, we find that it was the Spirit of God who was the creative instrument in man's coming

forth. Verse 7: 'And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life' - and the word in Hebrew for 'breath' is 'ruach', which means 'spirit'. It was the life of God in the Spirit of God that was breathed into the clay form of Adam, and he 'became a living being', or a living soul. Of course it's the Holy Spirit, when we come into the New Testament revelation, the New Covenant, who brings life to us, who brings re-creation and regeneration through the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, His life and light. Our Lord Jesus said, of course, in John 6:63: 'It is the Spirit who gives life'.

Here we see Him right at the very beginning giving original life. What lesson has this for us? We've passed a lot of time, haven't we, since then? Yet it is still the Spirit who gives life, it's still the Holy Spirit who brings order to chaos. You need to know this as a Christian: that you cannot live without the Holy Spirit. You can't be saved without Him, but you can't walk victoriously in the Christian life without Him. You need the blessed Holy Spirit. Maybe you have come into the gathering tonight with great chaos in your life, in your circumstances, in your mental or emotional state - I don't know. You need the Holy Spirit, you need His power, and His dynamic, His rule, and His reign and Lordship - the Lord, who is that Spirit, is still at work, and He is the dynamic force of the Christian life.

But we don't just see the Holy Spirit here, we see the whole Godhead in cooperation in creation. We read: 'In the beginning God', and the Hebrew word for 'God' there is 'Elohim', it is the plural of 'Eloah', singular for 'God' - and it's the word that causes us to believe, among many other verses of course in Scripture, that there is a plurality in the Godhead: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. So we see God, 'Elohim', and then we read of the Spirit hovering over the water, and then in verse 3 'God said', then you have the Word of God being spoken - 'Let there be light', and there was light'. The Word of God is the Lord Jesus Christ, the 'Logos'. If you turn with me to the corresponding New Testament passage of Genesis 1, it's John's gospel chapter 1, we see the Logos, the Word of God, His place in the Godhead, and also His role in creation. Verse 1 John 1: 'In the beginning was the Word', the Logos, 'and the Word was with God', 'pros ton theon' is the Greek, it means 'face-to-face with God', describing an intimate, deep relationship between the Father and the Son. So there is a distinction here between Father and Son, and yet it also says: 'And the Word', the Logos, 'was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men'.

So, I take that to mean that Father, Son and Holy Spirit were instrumental in the creation process, but specifically the Word of God, the Logos, Jesus Christ the Son of God in pre-incarnate form was the major instrument of creation. When it says the Lord spoke, and said 'Let there be light', it was not just His spoken word, but the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ in operation. As Hebrews says, 'His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds', by Him and through Him all things were made. What a blessing it is to know that we, with biblical hindsight, can appreciate that not only was the Godhead cooperative in creation, but in our redemption, our re-creation. We're covering a lot of ground and skipping over stuff, but we will look at it in weeks to come: the great fall of Adam, and therefore the

rest of mankind, into sin and depravity - and yet we see, as we come into the New Testament, Father, Son and Holy Spirit again moving toward mankind. The Father sends the Son to be Saviour of the world; the Son reveals the Father; the Son does the Father's work; the Son speaks the Father's words; and both the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit into the world. We see these three Persons sharing in the work of our salvation. First Peter 1:2 puts it like this: 'We have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ, and sprinkled with His blood'.

There's a lot of truth, of course, in Genesis chapter 1 - but does it not encourage you to know that the whole Godhead was for us in creation, and the whole Godhead is still for us in redemption? Does that not encourage you? Let me give you some helpful observations from the creation week in Genesis chapter 1. As I said, it's impossible to even begin to delve or to dip our toe into the shore of the depths that there are in Genesis chapter 1, but just a couple of observations. There are several patterns here in chapter 1, one is 'God said', 'It was so', and 'It was good' - you noticed that as we read through the portion: 'God said', 'It was so', and 'It was good'. There is a very simple lesson that I take out of this, and that is: what God says, what He speaks, will come to pass, and it will be for the ultimate good of those who live in accordance with His word. So the lesson is: God is a good God. Maybe that's hard for some of you to take in tonight, because the things that are happening to you at present don't seem to be good, and probably aren't good - but God is a good God.

Romans says He works all things for the good of those who love Him, those who are the called according to His purpose. This is intrinsic: it's when His creation chooses to assert their own will in independence to God's will, that evil comes into the world. We will see that later on in chapters 2 and 3, how there is a great fall when we go against His will - but when we are called according to His will, and obeying His will, we can know that even when bad things do happen (which they will in this fallen universe), that God ultimately will bring it around for our good. Again, that is something that does not come with knowledge but with revelation. It's not to be understood, as such, on a pure human level, but to be believed - we've got to believe that. You'll never grasp that with your mind, or even your emotions, especially when you're going through dark, challenging times. It's something that is grasped with the faculty of the spirit, which is faith.

Another interesting thing to note in chapter 1 are the categories of creation. You notice as we read down, it says: 'According to their kind', this is repeated over and over again, 'According to their kind'. God is a God of order. We have to be careful here what we bring out of this, but of course there is symmetry in creation and the universe. There is a mathematical nature to creation that has made science possible, and laws, and so on. Indeed, even in this chapter, numbers are highly significant. You may not have noticed it in our casual reading earlier, but it's quite remarkable - go home and notice the groups of threes that there are, the groups of seven, and even ten that feature. We don't want to push this too much, but in Scripture, three seems to symbolise God, or something to do with God - probably reflecting the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Seven in the Bible is often the number of perfection, and

ten seems to sometimes correspond to completeness. So we find in this chapter that only three times does God create something out of nothing, 'ex nihilo' in Latin, something out of nothing, three times - that's something only God can do. Three times we read of Him making something out of something that has already existed, three times, because it's something only God can do. Three times God calls something by name, and three times He blesses something - very interesting.

Then when we look for the number seven, we find that on seven occasions we read that God saw that it was good - of course, seven means perfection, God saw that it was good. There are seven days, of course, in the week, but in the first sentence in the Hebrew of this chapter there are seven words in the Hebrew language. Indeed, the last three sentences of the passage in the creation account also forms seven words in Hebrew. Then when we look at the number ten, some have seen ten commands of God in the original language, ten commands of God which might well reflect - knowing that Moses wrote this record, and the ten laws of God and the Ten Commandments - even here at the very creation that is being borne out. There is order in God's creation, there is even order in this account of the originations of the world.

Yet, even though our whole existence revolves around certain mathematical and principles of physics and so on, there is nothing predictable or boring about our world or our universe. God is also a God of great variety. In creation as we read it, but we only need to look around us - it's not monochrome, but it's a radiant spectrum of multicolour, it's almost endless. Something else to note: God desires fruitfulness. If you look at verse 20: 'Then God said, 'Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens'', verse 22, 'And God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth'. Now verse 20 says the sea and the sky was already teeming with creatures, but God wanted more! Yet there is room, God wants His house filled with the created expression of life.

Then we come to verse 26: 'Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image', there is the plurality in the Godhead, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth'. So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them'. Before we look at man here for a moment, what I want you to note is: everything up to now has been created as an environment for man. I want you to ponder that just for a moment. Imagine: this is going to be man's home, originally one man. This was given as our home - now, I don't know how palatial your home is, but I'm sure doesn't come close to this one! Here again is the principle of God's grace. This environment was created for man - and I want you to see this - before he was made, before he existed, before he even had a need of it! He wasn't going to be brought into being, and then have to wait on God getting round to making it. He wasn't going to have to search for it, or to build it himself. It was gifted to him to enjoy, it was made before him and he was placed in it, and all he had to do was maintain it. That is profound to me, expressing the heart, the lavish, manifold

gracious heart of our God. It reminds me of what our Lord said: 'If God so clothed the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'. For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things'. In another place it says: 'He knows your need before' - before - 'you ask it!' His grace is coming before, preceding, prevenient.

We see from verses 26 and 27 that God gave man dominion over all of His creation. He didn't just place him in it, He gave him authority over it to an extent. Of course, we have a lot of ground to cover, we know that Adam and Eve forfeited that dominion when they gave into the temptation of Satan in the Garden. But we know that in our Lord Jesus Christ - and this is important Christian doctrine that I believe many have overlooked - that dominion, at least in the spirit at the moment, but eventually in total consummation, has been given back to man through the Lord Jesus Christ. The first man, Adam, became a living being; the last man, Adam, became a life-giving spirit. But what I want you to note just now is the central place that man has in God's creation - the central place, he is the pinnacle, the climax is man's creation.

There are two words in this chapter, there is the word 'created' and the word 'made', and they are both different words. They might seem the same to us, but in the Hebrew they are both different. The word 'made' means 'to make something out of something that already exists', and God does that in this passage. Of course nothing exists without Him, but things that He had already made, He utilised them - but only three times in the portion do we have the word 'bara', which is the word 'create', and that means 'to create out of nothing', 'ex nihilo'. It's spoken of matter, it's spoken of life, and it's spoken of man. He created matter, life, and man out of nothing. You might say, 'But He used dust, did He not?'. Yes, He did, but this is hinting at something unique about man, there is something other of him than matter. He is not merely a conglomeration of physical materials, there is something in man that had not existed before, he is unique. It is highlighted here in this expression that He made man in His image. Now there is a lot of meaning there that we cannot explore tonight, but not least that mankind has a spiritual relationship with God in a way that no other created being can have. This is remarkable. Whilst God is transcendent, above us and beyond us, there is an affinity between God and mankind - dare I say it, only that Scripture says - there is a likeness. There is so much different between us, and we tend to dwell on those things - rightly so - in awe and wonder, but there is a likeness that God found pleasure in.

I dare say that you might not feel like the pinnacle of God's creation tonight, you mightn't even think you look like it either! But maybe you're here tonight, and many people that I encounter in private ministry as well as publicly, have identity problems. They don't know who they are, they don't know where they fit in, they feel worthless, they've got very low self-esteem. You need to hear a message from God tonight, and that is: you are very special. Oh yes, we'll get on to the fallenness and sin, don't worry if you think I'm being easy on people - we'll talk about depravity next week, or the third week - but this is what we have in Scripture first: that we, as created beings,

in the image of God, mankind with God's breath in us, we are special to God, we are valuable to God. You may have experienced untold rejection in your life, and maybe a problem of acceptance with others or even yourself, but you need to hear what David says in Psalm 8: 'What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet' - that's how God made you! That's how special you are to Him!

Genesis is not only the first book, it's the foundational book in the Bible; and most, if not all, biblical truths are captured here at least in embryo. Genesis is the key that unlocks the rest of the Bible, and you're going to look at it in the following weeks in great depth. We learn so much in this one book: there is one God expressing Himself in three Persons, who created human life as sacred in the image of God. Acts 17 says that from one man He made all nations, that they should inhabit the whole Earth, and He marked out their appointed times in history, and boundaries of their land. We read that mankind has fallen into depravity and sin, that the curse has entered upon us; and consequently God's gracious plan of redemption, based on sacrifice, has been hatched. Yet we also see God electing a nation, the nation of Israel, for His channel of blessing to the world. There are profound themes running throughout this book that then, with tributaries right throughout the whole Bible, we find on every page right to the very last still these themes are present. Though there is great depth and great profundity to the book of Genesis, there is also great simplicity, great simplicity. Do you know there are only 76 separate root words in the whole of chapter 1? In the original language there are only 76 separate root words, and every one of those words is to be found in every language on earth, which means that Genesis chapter 1 is the easiest chapter to translate in the whole Bible. Even a child can read it, and even a child can believe it.

I know I haven't answered probably all of your questions, but Deuteronomy 29 verse 29 says: 'The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law'. We're not called to understand, we are called to believe and to obey. 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth', the One who had no origin is the Originator of all things. Do you believe this? Let us pray. I hope that there is a spirit of worship in your heart, a sense of awe and wonder. Will you pour that out to the Lord just now from your heart for Him to receive? He is worthy.

Father, we are completely awestruck and dumbstruck when we consider the heavens, the work of Your fingers. When we read, 'He made the stars also', tailed on with such seeming insignificance - and yet we lift our eyes into the heavens, and we wonder! Yet Lord, these are things that we can see, and we remember what Jesus, Your Son, our Lord, said to Nicodemus: 'If I have told you of earthly things, and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you of heavenly things?'. Lord, we are the heavenly people, and all of us struggle to some extent with these portions of Scripture, but Lord we pray that You will give us the mind of Christ, and You will give us faith to believe and to grasp the unseen realm of the spirit - whereby we just don't

know answers to difficult questions, but we know the Living God, and we trust in You, and we believe in You. We thank You for Your revelation of Yourself, the gift of grace that it is, and we thank You that it has been perfected in Your Son - that in these last days You have revealed Yourself in Jesus. Lord, may You help us to embrace everything that You say to us through the written and the living Word, by the power of the Spirit who brings light and life. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Origins - Chapter 2

"The Origin Of Mankind"

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Evening to you all. Thank you for the welcome again, it's good to be with you. We're turning in our Bibles to Genesis chapter 2, and if you were with us last Sunday evening we began what will be quite a long series for yourselves, but I'm starting it off in these first three chapters for you. Chapter 1 last week, and tonight we're looking at most of chapter 2, and we're going to take up the reading at verse 4 and read the whole of the chapter from there.

So Genesis chapter 2, verse 4: *"This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground"*, I'm not going to mention that at all, really, but it's important to note that rain had not fallen as yet. We see an explanation for this, I will leave you to be inquisitive about it: *"But a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground"* - and many believe it wasn't until the flood of Noah that the skies opened, and rain fell from the sky, but that's for another day for you. Verse 7: *"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being"*, or soul. *"The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads. The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good. Bdellium and the onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one which goes around the whole land of Cush. The name of the third river is Hiddekel; it is the one which goes toward the east of Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates. Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die'. And the LORD God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him'. Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: 'This is now*

bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man'. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed".

Let us pray together. As we come to the Lord in prayer, as I always do, I'm going to ask you if you might pray to the Lord that He would speak to you just now. Whatever situation you find yourself in tonight in relation to God, we want you to find an encounter tonight with the Lord who is here, we believe, and who is going to come in a special way upon His word by the Spirit. We want you to interact with that, we want you to be a part of this tonight. So let us all join together and seek God's face, and ask Him to really come personally and intimately to us, and be a part not just of this moment tonight but come and penetrate our lives. Let's all pray.

Almighty God, we bow before You tonight, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We cry: 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God Almighty, the whole Earth is filled with Your glory'. The heavens declare the glory of God, the firmament shows forth Your handiwork - and, Lord, we look around us, and every language on the face of the earth can understand the masterful artistry of creation, the wonderful palette of the spectrum that You have made with a word. Lord, we bow in awe and reverence, in wonder and in worship before the living God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Lord, we reverence You, we adore You, You are worthy of our praise - not just because You have made us, but You have redeemed us. We bless You for Your Son, the Lord Jesus, without whom nothing was made that has been made - but we thank You that He has also made a new and living way into Your presence by His own blood which He has shed. We thank You that we come right to You through the torn veil, and we pray tonight, Lord, that we would know what it is of that original created intent: that we might know God personally, in a very deep and tangible way. Lord, we ask that tonight we would experience an encounter with You through the living word by the power of the Spirit. Lord, whatever You have to say to us tonight, may we be ready - myself included - to be channels to both give and to receive, and to hear Your voice tonight, for the glory of this great God whom we extol and worship, but also for our own good. We need to hear from heaven, we need to hear that word from above, we need to feed on the manna from heaven tonight - so send us it, Lord, we pray, for the good of our souls. We pray for a very definite sense of Your presence with us tonight, that all of us would become present to Your presence. We bind, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, every other presence that would seek to distract and take away from the word. Lord, we come to You now, and we wait upon You, Lord. We're not here to hear mere exposition, or the thoughts of a man - Lord, we want to meet with You. So we ask You to come Lord, come to us now by you Your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Last week we looked at chapter 1, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth', and we spent some time looking at both the simplicity and the profundity of that statement and the following statements that outline for us - and we should say, I didn't last week, that it really is only an outline of the creation of the universe. There are as many questions as there are truths, and yet we saw last week that the imperative instrument, if you like, of understanding this passage of Scripture, and in

fact the key to all spiritual life, is faith. Without faith it's impossible to please God, and faith is the evidence of things not seen, and by faith we understand that the earth and the heavens were framed. So we just accept what God has said - now, it's not blind faith, it's open-eyed faith. It's not a leap into the dark, it's a leap into the light, it is reasonable faith. It's not foolishness, we don't need to leave our brain at the door when we come to worship God - it is the most reasonable thing, and He is the objective real. Yet we have got to also realise that we cannot know everything, the secret things belong unto our God, and that which is revealed is for us. We need to be very careful in matters that are not clearly revealed.

We move on tonight to chapter 2. In chapter 1 God was central to the portion of Scripture, the creation of the universe - but here in chapter 2, we see man is the centre of the narrative. We're looking tonight at 'The Origin of Mankind'. Again, as I said to you last week, it is utterly impossible to do any justice to a passage such as this - it would take a lifetime really, to delve into the depths, and even then I don't think it would be possible to exhaust the stores of the riches, spiritually, of these portions of Scripture. So tonight I'm going to look at it very piecemeal, and more from a thematic perspective. We're going to look at mankind, and some attributes of mankind that we find here in his origination in Genesis chapter 2.

The first thing I want you to see is in verse 7, chapter 2 verse 7: 'And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being'. The two greatest gifts, I think, God can give men and women is to see Himself as He really is, and to see ourselves as we really are. Now, as I said last week, the whole of the Bible - not just the creation narrative, but the whole of Scripture - is a revelation of the character of God. Of course, the Lord Jesus Christ is the Living Word, the thought and the expression of heart of God, the express image of His person, and the Godhead is perfectly revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ come in the flesh. We know as Christians that it is imperative that we seek to get to grips with the revelation of Father, Son and Holy Spirit - I mean, that's really what it's all about, isn't it? We heard read for us at the Lord's Table this morning John chapter 17, and verse 3 in particular I feel is a vital verse to understand New Testament Christianity - we talk about eternal life as if it's a ticket to heaven when you die, and praise God there is the assurance of heaven when we are in Christ. But Jesus defined eternal life in this way: 'This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent'. So the essence of this life of faith which promises eternal life is to get to know God through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is relationship, so we want to try to get to know as much about God as we can - that, surely, is the primary adventure and search of every Christian soul.

Yet equally (well, not equally, but certainly secondarily), we need to know ourselves. We need to understand who we are and how we are made, how we relate to God, and how we relate to one another, and how we relate to our environment - but also how we relate to ourselves. I think what I'm going to share with you tonight with the help of God will be a benefit to you in that regard: of understanding who you are and how you are made.

The first thing I want you to see, particularly from verse 7, is: man is material. 'The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground', and then He breathed breath into him - but the Lord took dust, took soil, earth. It appears that He made a clay model of our form, and then He breathed His life into it. Now if you've got an NIV edition of the scriptures, you might have in the footnote that the Hebrew word for 'man' is 'adam', and it sounds like and may be related to the Hebrew word for 'ground', 'adama'. Now, of course, it's also the name that God gave man, 'Adam', but it all appears to be intrinsically linked: that we are creatures of the earth. I'm told, and I'm not qualified of course in this area, but I'm told that men and earth have essentially the same ingredients. The same essential elements are found in the body of men and animals as in soil: nitrogen, oxygen, calcium, etc. So this is a part of man's make-up that previously existed - the Earth was created by the Lord, and then He takes that dust and He makes our physical material frame.

Now, what do you think about when you think of dust? It strikes us as something that is very common, ordinary. It's not nothing, but it's next to nothing. This is what God took as the fundamental basis of what He was going to make in mankind. We find dust everywhere, it's on the ground, I wouldn't dare to say that it's on some of the surfaces in your home - but it probably is! It's common, it's ordinary, it's almost nothing, but it communicates to us - even as a metaphor, though this is more than metaphor - it speaks of weakness and frailty.

As we turn to chapter 3, and we don't want to run ahead of ourselves to next week, but if you look at verse 19 you see that after the fall, after mankind falls headlong through temptation into sin, the consequence, the curse we read in verse 19 of chapter 3: 'In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return'. Boy, there's a leveller for all of us, isn't it? 'For dust you are, and to dust you shall return'. You wouldn't feel very high and mighty about yourself after reading that, would you? You're just dust.

Turn with me to Psalm 103, please, and keep the passage at Genesis 2. Psalm 103 is a wonderful Psalm, but we just want to pick on a verse or two here - verse 13: 'As a father pities his children, so the LORD pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust'. God remembers that you are dust. Can I ask you a question: do you ever forget what God remembers? God remembers you are dust, you are frail, you are weak, you are material. He knows your shortcomings, He knows your abilities and your lack of them - do you? Now sometimes, even in a spiritual capacity and in the life of faith, we are very, very hard on ourselves. We forget the capabilities and the capacities of material flesh. Sometimes we forget what God remembers. God is a good God, He's a merciful God, He's compassionate, and He remembers how frail we are - He knows our frame.

But, you know, we could look at dust in a negative way and not realise that it also speaks positively of great potential - because, you see, dust, though it might seem next to nothing, when it's in the hands of an omnipotent God it has great potential. You've heard the little chorus: 'Little is much when God is in it', well, this is no

exception, because as God takes this clay, He makes from this dust - something that appears to be weak in itself, just like we are, it is strong in Him. That's what God wants us to remember: 'He knows our frame, and He remembers that we are dust', but God took this dust, made clay, and then took the clay and made man. Where there is dust, there is potential - but the potential is only there, I believe (and here's a great spiritual lesson), if we remember what we really are and how much we need Him. He is the Potter, and we are the clay.

So man is material, we do well to remember that just as the Lord does. God took of the dust of the ground to make man. If you have a New King James Version, in the margin of Psalm 103 verse 14 it says: 'He understands our constitution', He knows what we are. Now here's a question that begs, and we will have it answered, I believe, in this passage and throughout Scripture: do we understand our constitution? We started off by saying that it's vital to get to know God, but it's also imperative that we understand our own make-up - do we? The atheists or the materialists will say that man is only matter, but we read here - look down again at chapter 2 verse 7 - 'The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being', or a living soul.

Now the word for 'breath' there in verse 7 is the word which is the same word for 'spirit' in Hebrew, 'ruach'. It's the same as the Greek word 'pneuma', and the Latin word 'spiritus', it's the word for 'spirit', 'wind', 'breath'. It's onomatopoeic, if you can remember your English lessons that speaks of a word that imitates the sound, and this imitates the sound of breath, 'ruach'. So God breathed spirit into this clay form, he breathed His breath, His 'ruach', and it became a living being, a living soul. Immediately I read that, I think of the Lord Jesus in the Upper Room in John chapter 20 and verse 22, and it says: 'He breathed on them, and said 'Receive the Holy Spirit''. This is spiritual. So there is a material part of man, we're made of the dust, but man is not only material, he is spiritual - and this is the spiritual part of man that was breathed into his form, it is part of what is the image of God. This is the part that relates to God, that is like God.

Now, some people will dispute this, even in the church - maybe even here! I want you to look at an interesting verse with me in Job, turn with me to Job 32, verse 8 of Job 32: 'But there is a spirit in man', now that's important, we are not just flesh, we are spirit - this is the part that God breathed, this 'ruach', into us. It's a human spirit that each of us has, whether you're saved or not you have got a human spirit, and that's important to understand. 'There is a spirit in man, and' - the NIV doesn't have the word 'and' - 'There is a spirit in man, the breath of the Almighty', there it is: the spirit of man, the human spirit, is the breath of the Almighty and gives him understanding. It's through this spirit that we understand ourselves, I believe it is in the human spirit that we have our own identity, not in the soul but in the spirit. I'll explain that a little bit later, but it's also the place where we know God, where we have understanding of the Almighty who is Spirit and Truth. This is the Divine connector, this is the Lamp of the Lord that searches our heart.

Now let's leave that for a moment. Ecclesiastes 12 brings these two elements

together, the material and the spiritual. We read there in Ecclesiastes 12:7: 'Then the dust', at death, 'will return to the earth as it was', just as we read from Genesis 3, 'and the spirit will return to God who gave it'. So man is material and spiritual. Now there's a bit of a debate, as you can imagine there is in most things when it comes to certain scriptural truths, and certainly in the church. There are those who believe that we are only body and soul, and they believe the word 'soul' is synonymous with 'spirit'. There is no doubt about it, in Scripture they are interchangeable terms at times and there is a bit of a crossover - they are called dichotomists. But I believe that man is tripartite, he is made up of three aspects - not just three, but there are three that are highlighted in Scripture over and over again, and I believe that spirit and soul are distinct. So man is made up of spirit, soul, and body - and, indeed, I think that reflects the tri-unity of the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It's another way in which we are made reflecting God's image.

Let me just point out two passages of Scripture that would bear this out. First Thessalonians 5:23, you don't need to turn to it if you don't want to, I will read it to you: 'Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body' - note that God's order is not body, soul, and spirit, that's usually the way we quote this, God's order is spirit, soul, and body, but we tend to put body first because we can see it and we can touch it and know it, 'He wants to sanctify us wholly, spirit, soul, and body, and be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ'. Now some will say: 'Well, these are just metaphors for the inner and the outer part of man', there is no doubt about it, you could argue that, but there are other scriptures that seem to indicate that there are certain distinctions between these parts. One such is Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 12, again I will read it to you: 'For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow'. So, there we see clearly that it's very hard to divide marrow from bone, they are in unity just as man is in total unity, but there is a distinction in their role - so the word of God is able to divide soul and spirit, and the word of God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Now this is complicated stuff, but it is important. We need to be cautious, because it is dangerous to divide the unity of man. We are unified before God, but we also need to recognise that there are different aspects to our humanity. Just as there are different systems and organs in the body that have diverse functions, in the inner life there are different aspects between the spirit, the soul, the mind, and the heart at times - although they can cross over. I mean, even in Hebrews chapter 4 that we've just read the soul is likened to joints - I think that's the linguistics there. The soul is likened to the joints, and the spirit is likened to the marrow. If you like, the marrow is the source of the life, whereas the joint is the expression of the life, expressing movement and so on. That is exactly how I believe the Bible defines spirit, soul, and body.

Let me explain it: the spirit is the God-conscious part of us, the part that He breathed into us in His likeness, particularly in His likeness, but that part that can connect and relate to Him. The soul is the self-conscious part of us, I believe it's made up of three things also: the mind, the emotions, and the will. Then the body is the world-

conscious part of us that relates to the world outside. God's intention in creation is that through the human spirit within us, that He should influence our minds, our emotions, and our wills in order that we should, in our bodies, serve Him and glorify Him forever. The soul is like the linchpin between the two, the connector.

Now obviously, as we will see next week, the fall of man has meant that he has been cut off from fellowship with God. He is now dead in his trespasses and sins. Now please do not make the mistake that some theologians make by believing that death means extermination, ceasing to exist. It doesn't, it means to be cut off, it means separation - that's why unbelievers have got spirits, that's why they can worship themselves, they can bow down to themselves, they can worship idols, they can worship false gods, they can enter into occultish things, spiritual practices, because they've got a spirit. But their spirit is cut off from God, the True and the Living God, they are in darkness. It's like - I think I've said this to you before - it's like an embryo in the womb, and it goes through gestation, and it's not born until it comes into the light. It's like our spirits, we exist in the darkness, but we are cut off from God - and we don't come to the light and life until we are born again.

Essentially what happened was, when the spirit was cut off from God, man - well, his soul in selfishness, that self-conscious part of him, brought influence to bear on the body and he became self-centred and he became fleshly. He did what he thought, and what he felt, and what he wanted, apart from God. But, you know, at the fall we know that - and we will see this next week - our relationship with God was attacked, yes, 'Has God really said?'. The serpent came and lied to Adam and Eve, and they believed, and their fellowship with God was broken and they hid in the garden for shame, and we see that their relationship with each other broke down - Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent. But what a lot of people don't realise is that mankind's relationship with himself was broken.

You see, there is a brokenness and a disorder in our own hearts, there is a fragmentation, a dislocation in our own beings, our inner life. We've got to realise this. Whether you're converted or not here this evening, this can be a problem. Now, ultimately, the biggest severance is between us and God when we're not born again, when we're still in the dark and we've never come into the light - but even when we are born again, we can have injuries, woundedness, and trauma in our human spirits. Proverbs bears that out, Proverbs 17:22: 'A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones'. There's the bone analogy again. Proverbs 18:14: 'The spirit of a man will sustain him in sickness, but who can bear a broken spirit?'. That's a whole other deep subject, but I want you to consider it, I want there to be ministry tonight that benefits you - not just in your head, but in your heart. Some of you here tonight - and I know what I'm talking about - could have a broken, wounded, bruised spirit, even as a Christian. If you do, that will manifest itself in your thoughts in the soul. You see, the spirit is the life, the soul is what expresses that life - like the marrow is the life of the bone, and the joints express it, the spirit is the life and the soul expresses it. So if you're wounded, or you're not well in your spirit, it will be expressed in your thought life, your feelings, and even your actions - and maybe even manifest in your body. You need deep healing.

But let's get back to our subject tonight: man is material and spiritual, and we bring these two together. There are celestial beings in this universe, you know what they are - angels and demons, principalities and powers - but there are also terrestrial, there are the heavenly beings, but there are terrestrial, earthly, fleshly, physical - the beasts. But humankind is different, unique, because the human being is both in the sense that man is an interface between both worlds, the material and the spiritual - both worlds interact upon us as an interface. That's why we are prey not only to the influence of God, but to the influence of the kingdom of darkness.

Can I leave you, before I move on, with 1 Thessalonians 5? I've already read it to you, but I want to read it to you in *The Message*, 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, it's a paraphrase but it bears this out well, listen: 'May God himself, the God who makes everything holy and whole, make you holy and whole, put you together - spirit, soul, and body - and keep you fit for the coming of our Master, Jesus Christ. The One who called you is completely dependable. If he said it, he'll do it!'. I love that! God wants to make you holy and whole, you can't be holy without being whole - a lot of people want to be holy, but they're broken inside, and they need the grace of God and the power of God to make them holy. A lot of people want to be whole, they want to be fixed, but they don't necessarily want to be holy, set apart for God and for His use. God needs to do both with us, and He wants to do it by fixing what has been broken: the spirit, the soul, and the body, and the breakdown between these aspects.

So man, in his origin, is material and spiritual. But I want you to see a couple more things if time permits: he's responsible. Chapter 2 verse 16: 'The LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die''. He is created responsible, he has been given choice and free will, he has been made moral - man was made moral. This is a huge issue, and even though I think next week is billed as 'The Origin of Evil', that encompasses a huge philosophical and theological question that I'm surely not able to even begin to answer. But I spoke last week about the childish questions, the child asking, you know, 'Who created God? Where did God come from?', but another one that children often ask that we find difficult to answer is: 'Why did God put this tree in the middle of the garden in the first place? Why did God tempt them?'. Well, God didn't tempt them as such, but why did God put the tree there and open up the possibility for the serpent to come and to tempt? Behind such a question, perhaps not in children, but when we get up a bit, is the concept: 'Were they set up?'. I know there's a huge issue and debate of man's responsibility and God's sovereignty, and the relationship between the two, but there is a question here that is worth pondering from a very practical capacity.

I don't know whether you've ever seen - I think it's quite a left-wing, feminist type slogan - I've seen it on T-shirts and bumper stickers: 'Eve was framed'. Have you seen that one, no? The idea is that it was a setup, the temptation was there and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was there. They could eat of everything (I think you can overlook that very quickly), they could eat of anything and everything

but that one tree - why did God put it there? Well, I don't have all the answers, but one answer that certainly has satisfied me is this: all relationship is based on choice, all true relationship, all loving relationship. I believe this is no different: God did not create a robotic human, he was not preprogrammed, he wasn't some kind of mannequin to manipulate at will. God wants to be chosen, God wants to be loved, God wants us to know Him, and He will not force His love. Now don't misunderstand me here: He will certainly bring much loving influence to bear upon us - He will, He will bring all His power, but not in such a way that violates our personhood by force. Relationship is built on choice, and He gave them the choice. In fact, if you like, it was weighted very much - it was only one tree versus all the trees in the garden of the world - it was weighted very much in his favour, and yet man chose to disobey God.

So man is made spiritual, he's made material, but he's also made responsible - and that means that he is answerable for his choices. Man was made moral, but moral so he is answerable. Kenneth Woodward put it like this: 'Human freedom means the capacity to make moral decisions, which have radical and enduring consequences'. Speaking on hell, he says: 'Hell, then is not a place created by a God bent on getting even, but the alienation we choose for ourselves'. As C.S. Lewis put it: 'There are two kinds of people in the end, those who said to God 'Thy will be done', and those to whom God says, 'Thy will be done' - those who are in hell choose it'. What are you choosing tonight? 'Choose you this day whom you will serve', Moses says 'Choose life or choose death', Jesus says there is a narrow way and there's a broad way, and the narrow way leads to life.

Man was made material, spiritual, responsible, but also relational. Look at verse 18: 'The LORD God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him'', and then down in verse 20 we see Adam named all the beasts of the field and the birds of the air, but 'there was not found a helper comparable', a helpmeet, 'for him'. So: 'The LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made', or He built, 'into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man'. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined', cling to, 'to his wife, and they shall become one flesh'.

Man was created relational. Now it's very interesting to note that this was before the fall into sin - I'm not suggesting that marriage came out of the fall by any means! But some might say in pious idealism: 'All you need is God', and that sounds good, like a lot of things sound good but they're not particularly biblical. 'All you need is God to be satisfied and fulfilled in life'. Well, yes, that is true, that ultimately and supremely we need God - but man needs more than God, man needs food, man needs water, and man needs woman. The point being: God created man, and in a perfect world to not only need food and water but to be relational, to need others. It's not a fault, it's a design, we are made to be relational. Before we even look very briefly at marriage, man needs social interaction with other human beings. We see here enshrined in the very first book of the Bible that community is important to our well-being. Right

throughout the whole of biblical history we see how important God's dealings are with community - yes, He takes individuals and He does certain things with them, but often it's in relation to the community that is around them. In fact, we read that in the beginning God set the solitary, or the lonely, in families. We see that He calls out Abraham, but He wants to bring from Abraham a people, and we see the nation of Israel, and then we see God dealing with whole nations of people. Then we come to the New Testament and it's the community of the church, the Body of Christ.

I think God wants me to be reminded that none of us are to be lone rangers, we need one another. We might have different roles in the church, but we need each other - that's the way God intended it. But of course, here, what's specified is the deepest and most intimate relationship between a man and a woman, between Adam and Eve, this complementary relationship the woman was intended to have with the man, to be a helpmeet, a helper comparable to him. Now I don't have time tonight to delve into the subject of headship, and it's here, and the whole idea of submission is here. It's teased out by the other New Testament writers, especially Paul in 1 Corinthians 11 - but not only is there headship and specific roles here and submission, but there is also equality. I mean we can go back to chapter 1 verse 27: 'God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them'. I like Matthew Henry's quip in his commentary on this verse of Adam's rib being taken by God, and God building a woman out of the rib, he says: 'The woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved'.

Man was made relational, but we do well to note that man was made matrimonial. This relationship was in marriage, and if ever our society and the church needs to be reminded of the fact that God invented marriage, and institutionalised marriage, and enshrined the intimate sexual relationship in the context of marriage, we need to be reminded. God invented sex, He had the first sex thought - it is pure, it is holy, it is ordained of God, but what is also ordained is that sexual expression is within the bounds of marriage as God intended. Sexual expression is a very powerful thing, and Satan likes to take powerful things and tap into that power and use it for his own ends. Another one is fear - you know, fear is a gift of God that protects us, it's meant to be our servant, but the problem comes when fear becomes our master. Equally, sex is a gift from God, but it is very powerful like fear - and if it's not submitted and subjected to God's order and principles of use, it will destroy us. Safe sex can only be experienced in the bounds that God has set for us, the only safe sex is within marriage. God invented it, therefore He defines it - and I should also say that man's relationship with woman was matrimonial, and it was also heterosexual. We as the church today, in a loving, gracious way, must stand up and be counted to declare what the intent of the Creator is: that a man and a woman should be united together in life before God. The marriage bed is holy and undefiled.

Finally, man is material, spiritual, responsible, relational, and also governmental - in verses 19 and 20 you see that: 'God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever

Adam called each living creature, that was its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field'. Now I wouldn't just blame Adam on every single weird and wonderful name that animals get, but it's interesting - and it's a throwback, I think, to chapter 1 and verse 26, if you look at it again, in verse 28. 'God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth'', verse 28, 'Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth'. Man was given dominion, and it's expressed in God bringing creation to him to name the beasts and the birds.

We might have time to look at this a little bit more next week, I don't know, but we need to understand that God is sovereign and God is all-powerful - the omnipotent One. Yet in the very beginnings of revelation we see that God heavily dispenses so much of the welfare of this created realm to man, he is highly responsible. We now, of course, what will happen next week - he forfeits that when he effectively hands it over to the one who now becomes the god of this world, Satan. Praise God, our Lord Jesus Christ wrests from the grip of the evil one that authority, so that He can now say - resurrected from the grave, having died for our sins, and destroyed him who had the power over death, even the devil - He says to His own in resurrection life: 'All authority is given unto Me in heaven and on earth'. All authority is now given back to Him, and He will give it to His church if they want it! I believe that most Christians don't realise the restored authority that we have in Christ over the created realm. It's not going to be completely consummated until He returns, I know that, but in the spirit I don't think we have even begun to tap into what our Lord Jesus has done for us.

Could I close this evening by reading together Psalm 139, just, as it were, a response meditatively to all we have considered tonight. Psalm 139, please think of these words and apply them to yourself - do you know any better who you are? You're very complex, it has to be said - I'll not single anybody out in particular, but all of you are very complex! Look at verse 14 of Psalm 139, and even say this to God from your heart: 'I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them', I love this, 'How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with You'.

Let us pray: Lord, we thank You for all that we have tried to receive tonight from the depths - unfathomable, unplumbable depths - of Your word and truth in the Spirit. Lord, we thank You, amidst the things that we cannot begin to understand, we thank You for what the psalmist expressed when he said: 'How precious are Your thoughts

to me! How great is the sum of them! If I could count them they would be more in number than the sand'. Lord, if we could only get to grips with this, if we could only attune our spirits with You, the Great Father of Spirits, as a receiver to pick up the myriad multitude thoughts that flow from Your being toward us. Lord, if we could receive the transmission we would be overwhelmed! Lord, some of us need to be overwhelmed tonight by Your love, by Your thoughts toward us. Lord, I pray for the broken tonight, those who know that primeval disconnection with themselves and with You. May there be healing tonight, or at least the road of healing begin. Lord, would You come by the power of the Gospel and bring light and immortality to life. We thank You that Your will is that we should be holy and whole, and knit together, spirit, soul, and body. No man can do this, Lord, but You - and so we wait for You, we wait for Your salvation, and we look to You alone. Thanking You in the blood of Jesus and in His resurrection, we have the victory, and by His stripes we are healed. We give You the praise and the glory tonight, and ask Your blessing upon us now as we go, and that nothing will be lost from what You have said to us - seal it into us tonight for good we pray, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Origins - Chapter 3

"The Origin Of Sin"

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Good evening all! It's great to be here, it's been good to spend a month with you - the proverbial 'month of Sundays'! Wasn't that bad! It was good to be here all of January, and it has flown in as usual. I do trust that you have been blessed through the word, and through the message of God, and tonight will be no exception. We're turning to Genesis chapter 3, and we will read the whole of the chapter together. Let's just pray together before we get the portion of Scripture, and just settle yourself - there was a good sense of the Lord's presence as we were praising, and let's just centre ourselves in the Lord, in the Lord Jesus. Do you know what that means? We were talking this morning about our foundation on Christ alone, and we want to centre ourselves in Him. That means we're not looking at ourselves from outside, we're not looking introspectively within, we're not even concentrating on our sins and our failures - of which we have many, myself included - but we are centring ourselves in Him. Looking out to Him and, yet, as we look out to Him and connect with Him by faith, He comes to dwell within us - that's centring ourselves in the Lord: Christ in you, the hope of glory. So let's get into that place, as we come to the Living Word, that we might connect even now in spirit, as we would connect with the Lord Himself, the Word of God.

Jesus, be the centre of this moment together. We thank You for the privilege of taking the sacred name upon our lips: Lord Jesus Christ. We invoke, with the confession of that name, everything that Your Son is, Father, and everything that He has done - all that He has accomplished for us. Lord, we ask that all of heaven's riches that are encapsulated in that name might flow now to us by grace, by the power of the Holy Spirit. So we ask You to come, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, come and manifest Your presence to us and in us. Glorify Your thrice holy name through the preaching of the word, and may our lives be transformed having encountered the Living Word. We wait upon You now, and we pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ: victory over the powers of darkness, any that would simultaneously seek to manifest to quench the word and the power of God. We bind you in Jesus' name, we take authority over you and strip you of your job functions. We pray, Father, now that You will release the mighty power of the Spirit through the word in the Gospel. We thank You for the power there is in the Gospel. So come, Lord, as we wait upon You now, and do wonders in our midst, we pray. For Christ's sake, Amen.

Verse 1 then of Genesis 3: *"Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?''. And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die''. Then the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows*

that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil'. So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, 'Where are you?'. So he said, 'I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself'. And He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?'. Then the man said, 'The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate'. And the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?'. The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate'. So the LORD God said to the serpent: 'Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel'. To the woman He said: 'I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you'. Then to Adam He said, 'Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return'. And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them. Then the LORD God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever'; therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life".

You will hopefully recall, if you were with us last week, that we have been looking at chapter 1, chapter 2, and now chapter 3. In chapter 1 we have, essentially, a revelation of God as the Creator. We saw that God was central to chapter 1, and then we saw last week that man, generally, was central to chapter 2. I made the statement that the two greatest gifts that God can give any of us is to see Himself as He really is, and then after that to see ourselves as we really are. Essentially those are probably the two greatest debates that will ever be had in the history of humanity: what is God like, and who are we, and how are we to relate either to God or to ourselves? Now I'm not going to repeat myself on those particular issues, you can get the recordings - but perhaps coming after knowing God as He is revealed within Scripture, and then understanding who we are - and we spent a bit of time, of course, on spirit, soul, and

body, and how they relate - then it's vital that we understand our enemy. I think that's what we have generally in chapter 3.

Right away we are confronted with this serpent - I'm not going to enter into conjecture over what the serpent was, or what it means - but we are confronted, very early on in the biblical revelation from God, with the enemy of our souls: the accuser, Satan. Now the title for the first week was 'The Origin of the Universe', the second title I was given was 'The Origin of Mankind', and this week the title I was attributed was 'The Origin of Evil'. I'm going to change that slightly to 'The Origin of Sin', because I believe that evil preceded man's sin - and that's really the subject in chapter 3. I'll explain what I mean in a moment, but I will use the term 'evil' interchangeably - but whenever I'm referring to it, I'll be mostly referring to evil in man. The reason why I say that is, verse 1, 'The serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field' - this is before the fall of man into evil, this is before man sins and transgresses, we have the serpent.

So my first point is: the source of all evil. The source of all evil, of course, is Lucifer. If we were to take time tonight we could look at two very important passages of Scripture - we will maybe look at one of them - the first is Ezekiel 28. The message is spoken to the King of Tyre, but we believe that there is a prophetic edge to it, in that God was speaking to Lucifer, to Satan as he was, this covering cherub. There is a very telling phrase in God's address to him, where God says: 'You were in Eden, the Garden of God'.

Maybe we should turn to Isaiah 14, which is the other Old Testament passage I have in mind - keep your place in Genesis 3. Isaiah 14, and again this is addressed to an actual human ruler, but behind it there is a spiritual meaning that most Bible scholars would agree God intended for us to understand. He's even more explicit in verse 12 of Isaiah 14: "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High'. Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol', or hell, 'To the lowest depths of the Pit'.

The source of all evil is Lucifer, Satan, the serpent. But having said that, I want you to go even deeper - you say: 'Well, how can I do that?'. As we read this passage, and Ezekiel 28, we see that essentially the source of all evil is pride. It was Lucifer who determined to ascend the heights as high as God, and that was his downfall! I want you to consider tonight that we are not - as we look at all Scripture, of course, all of it is profitable, particularly tonight as we look here at the origin of evil - we're not just looking at the origin of evil in a general manner, but we can be so specific and personal to understand the origin of evil within ourselves. This will help you immensely in getting a grasp as to the schemes of the wicked one, the plans, the methods of the enemy to trip us up - whether we are converted or not. The origin of all evil, whether it's in Lucifer himself, in his demonic hordes, or in fallen humanity, or personally in your own heart - the origin of all evil is pride. That might be a revelation

in itself. C.S. Lewis said that pride is the sin that made the devil the devil.

A great book I can recommend on the subject of humility is by Andrew Murray, it's just entitled 'Humility'. He makes several profound statements, one of which is: 'Pride can degrade the highest angels into devils. Evil can have no beginning but from pride'. Pride is, you see, the mother sin. If you like, pride is the devil in all of us that wants to exalt itself, as Lucifer did originally, to the status of God. It's the attitude of the spirit of the age around us: 'Better to rule in hell than to serve in heaven'.

Now the only answer to the Satanic poison of pride is the humility of Jesus Christ. I mean, I know we're jumping a lot of Scripture here, but you compare the attitude of Lucifer in Heaven - Ezekiel 28, Isaiah 14 - to the approach of the Son of God when He was in Heaven. What is the incarnation of Christ other than humility when He was in heaven - have you ever considered that? He did empty Himself and became a man, but when did that journey begin? It began in Heaven, He exhibited humility before His humiliation. What a contrast! Taking the form of a servant. What was His sacrifice? Obedient unto death, even the death of the cross - what was that only humility? Even His Ascension, when He was buried and He rose again from the dead and ascended on high, His glorification was because of His humility: 'Therefore God has highly exalted Him, and given Him a place above every name' - why? Because of His humility. Our Lord Jesus Christ was the embodiment of the humility of God. He is the One who is the express image of God's Person - and so, He reveals to us (and this is profound beyond imagination) that humility is at the heart of God!

One thing is sure: on a personal level, we need the humility of our Lord Jesus Christ perhaps more than anything else, because of the pride that is deep rooted within all of us. It's a grace, humility is a grace, it's not found by hammering yourself, or depriving yourself. Of course, denying self is involved in this Christian experience, but it comes by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ - it comes with the experience of having your own pride revealed, and coming to the cross and submitting yourself, and confessing it and repenting it, and the Lord cleanses you of it and delivers you: then He fills you with the gift of humility! It's not some pretentious thing, it's a grace, and it comes from Jesus - but it must happen. If you want evil to die in you, the origin and the source of it always has been pride - and so pride must die in you. As William Law said: 'Pride must die in you, or nothing of Heaven can live in you'. As Andrew Murray puts it in that little book I mentioned: 'As much as you have of pride within you, so you have the fallen angel in you. As much as you have of true humility, so you have the Lamb of God within you'.

So the origin of evil, completely, is Lucifer; but the source of it, essentially, is pride - and it's in all of us. I want you to see something else, and learn more of the approach of the enemy toward our hearts. The source of all evil, and then I want you to see the conception of sin - or, if you want - evil in man. It's found in verses 2 through to 4: 'The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die''. Then the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die''. This is the conception of sin, sin is conceived, or evil in man is

conceived through questioning the veracity of God's word.

These are foundational, fundamental truths that I really hope you get a hold of tonight. This is how sin, or evil, is conceived in every heart: when we question the veracity of what God has said. That is the purpose behind all diabolical activity, it is to cast doubt on the benevolent character of God - that's what it's all about, not just to rubbish the Bible! Satan wants us to question God's heart toward us. So often the questioning of the veracity of God's word sounds like this in our ear: 'God doesn't know what's best for me, He obviously doesn't if He's telling me not to do this, or to do that'. Then we construe that 'God does not desire my good. God obviously does not want my happiness'. The author of evil is still using this strategy today to undermine the teaching of holy Scripture and truth: 'God is a killjoy! Spoilsport! Party popper! He is a megalomaniac! He is a control freak!'. Of course these are all lies because, as we saw last week when we considered why God put a tree of knowledge of good and evil in the middle of the garden to give man a choice, He gives us the choice. He doesn't force us! He tells us the boundaries that are safe, and what will happen if we go beyond them. He actually - as we see, because every tree of the garden they could freely eat, only one tree they were forbidden and prohibited to eat of - so He actually sets us up not for a fall, but He set us up to succeed, and to be safe; but He never forces us. Never.

But you must understand, to know why sin is conceived and evil within us, that Satan's objective is to get you to resent the protective boundaries of God's word that are there to safeguard us from disaster. God gives us boundaries and principles because He is good, because He is loving, because He desires our welfare. It is Satan who wants your destruction. Sometimes I find myself saying this from the pulpit, and people are quite shocked. Satan hates you, I mean, he detests you! He wants to destroy you. He is a roaring lion seeking to devour you! It's amazing how we flirt and fraternise with him. This is a danger particularly for those who have grown up in Christian environments, Christian homes, with Christian parents, or gone to church from an early age. I'm one of them, and often we are more susceptible to this approach of the enemy. We feel we have missed out somehow.

The source of all evil is pride, the conception of evil within man is questioning the veracity of God's word, which is effectively questioning the character and benevolence of God. But a third thing I want you to see is: the product of evil. The product of evil is the blatant denial of truth. Look at verse 4: 'The serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die''. Now I want you to see this progression: wilful doubt will quickly lead to this, when you start to question the veracity of what God has revealed in His truth. You remember we saw in chapter 1 that that's what the Bible is all about: 'In the beginning God'. He doesn't outline an apologetic for His own existence, He just tells us: 'In the beginning, I made heaven and earth'. The evidence of things not seen is faith, it's by faith that we please God, it's by faith that we seek and are encountering God as a reward - by faith. But when we begin to wilfully doubt that, it will not be long until there will be blatant denial of truth in our hearts.

We witness this in society in too many ways to recount this evening - but the process

is simple: we begin to question truths as God revealed them in His word, then that causes doubt in God's character, in His goodness, His benevolence, as the Bible portrays God. Consequently we reject the truth of God. This doesn't always lead to atheism, but if it doesn't lead to atheism it will lead to making a god in your own image. If you question the truths of the Bible, then you say: 'God couldn't be like that!', so you reject those truths and you accept a foreign god, an idol, a counterfeit. You make God conform to your image! By the way, this is not a mind issue, it's often spun as 'Oh, it's an intellectual problem that people have with the Bible' - now I'm not saying that some don't have questions and issues of the mind, but I do believe that essentially this is a moral problem. The rejection of the truth is for immoral and selfish ends. It's not as much, 'I can't believe what the Bible says' - intellectual objection - but it's, 'I won't believe, because I will to do what I want to do without any restraints from God. I don't like this God, because He doesn't fulfil my greatest pleasures and lusts'.

So understand the process: the source of evil is Satan and pride in all of us; the product of this evil is the blatant denial of truth, having questioned the veracity of God's word. This is the wily-ness, the subtlety of this serpent, our adversary. In fact the Samaritan copy of the text here in Genesis chapter 3, instead of 'nachash' for 'a serpent', reads 'kachash' which means 'a liar, a deceiver'. In John 8, our Lord Jesus told us that that is exactly what Satan was from the beginning: a liar and a murderer, and he did not abide in - what? - the truth! He questioned the truth, that there should only be one, sole, high, supreme ruler in the universe. He would ascend on high in his pride, he challenged the revealed truth of all the eternal ages.

I don't believe there is such a thing as absolute freethinking. There cannot be, because we are all being influenced from outside. Christian, you have got to understand that you are as well - and I believe many Christians are being deceived by the god of this world, that's the same Lucifer, the same serpent, through the spirit of the age - that is, by the way, the spirit of Antichrist that is already working. The objective of Lucifer and the spirit of Antichrist is to get us to reject God's truth. It might even be subconscious, but that's what the enemy wants us to do. If you look at 2 Corinthians quickly, 2 Corinthians chapter 11 - this is a remarkable couple of verses on many levels - verses 3 and 4. Paul is writing now, you remember, to Christians, and he says: 'I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds' - note that, it is through the mind that he deceived Eve, and it is through our minds that he will deceive us - 'so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit' - incidentally, that means a Christian can receive (this is controversial, I know, but this is what the Bible is saying here) you can receive another spirit. Is that not what it says? You can receive another gospel, you can receive another spirit, 'Which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted; you may well put up with it!'. You see, Paul's concern is that the believers in Corinth should be deceived. A lot of what was deceiving these believers was the philosophy, the Greek philosophy that was infiltrating the church.

Come with me further: there is the attraction of evil also in this passage, verse 5,

Satan said to the woman: 'God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, you see, that's the way temptation comes. But maybe we don't appreciate that this original temptation was tantalising with enlightenment, 'Your eyes will be opened' - the attraction of evil. Now please don't misunderstand me, I'm not anti-intellectual, but one thing is sure from the biblical revelation: the mind was never designed to operate independent of the spirit. We saw last week that God's intent was that, through our human spirit that He breathed into us in chapter 2, His 'ruach', His breath, and man became a living being - it was His intent that through that connection that the human spirit has with His Spirit, that He would influence the soul of man (the mind, the emotions, and the will), and that He would activate the very body of man for His glory. But, you see, with the fall the spirit was cut off, it died before God, it was separated - it didn't cease to exist, but it was dormant as far as the Living God was concerned. So the man became selfish and soulish, and his mind, his emotions, and his will were dominated by self, and even the passions and the senses of the body. That was never God's intention, that the mind should operate independent of the spirit. That's why - even in evangelicalism, might I say it - there is so much soulishness, there is so much activity of the mind devoid of spirit! That which is of the flesh is flesh, and that which is of the spirit is spirit; and flesh breeds flesh, and spirit breeds spirit. That which is only of the mind - this is cyclical - it comes from pride, and it leads to pride. First Corinthians 8 verse 1: 'Knowledge puffs up'.

It's interesting to note here in Genesis 3 that Satan's first approach to Eve was through the mind. It was temptation through the mind - and, by the way, it was temptation to the mind. What was the tantalisation that was dangled in front of her: it was 'Your eyes shall be opened'. What was it a tree of? Knowledge of good and evil. Satan always offers secret knowledge, and when he is the source of that knowledge it is always a kind of knowledge that debunks the True and the Living God. History is replete with this: it's the essence of Gnosticism that many of the New Testament writers were writing against in embryo, and would become a huge problem and disease within the church. The Gnostics were just teaching that you have to have this special, extra knowledge that God only gives to certain chosen special prophets. It robbed the ordinary believer of their anointing, and the Holy Spirit's influence upon their lives to instruct them and lead them into all truth. But this is the same lie and temptation that comes to those who dabble in the occult. You know what 'occult' means, don't you? It means 'hidden, dark knowledge'. The idea here again is to question not only the veracity of God's word, but the character of God: 'God is hiding something from us, there is something He is depriving us of, some knowledge - so we need to look into it! We need to experiment, we need to explore the unknown!'

As we go deeper, we find that this is not just an enticement to knowledge, but look at verse 5, Satan says to Eve: 'Not only will your eyes be opened, but you will be like God!' That was Satan's downfall, wasn't it? He wanted to be like the most high. It's called 'autoatheism', worshipping yourself, being your own god. In fact, you might think Satanism is bowing down to some figure with horns, a tail, and a pitchfork - but it's far from it. It might involve some weird and wonderful things, and even sacrifices and what have you. It certainly does involve occult, and all sorts of dark magic - but the essence, here's how one Satanist has defined Satanism: 'Self-esteem,

individuality, self-respect, I think, are most important assets as Satanists'. Self-esteem, individuality, and self-respect - now don't misunderstand me, I believe in true, godly, self-esteem and self-respect, but you only get that in Christ when you're correctly related to God - but this is independent. Anton LaVey in his 'Satanic Bible' wrote in 1969, I quote him: 'I am my own god' - that's Satanism.

The origin of it is the origin of evil, Lucifer and pride; the conception of it comes from questioning the veracity of God's truth; and the product of evil is a blatant denial of the truth - and this is how Satan gets us: the attraction of tempting us with tantalising enlightenment, that we will have our eyes opened and we will be like God. Becoming a god is at the centre of many other religions - it's at the centre of Mormonism, you'll be a god one day and you and your wife will populate a planet forever. It's also at the centre of the New-Age Movement: you will have your eyes opened and you will be like a god. Tragically we see that, as often is the case when Satan comes to us, he mixes a measure of truth with a lie. Very rarely does he tell us an absolute blatant lie - and their eyes were opened, but not as God. Their eyes were opened to see things they should have never seen. They saw their own sin. They saw rebellion, verse 7, look at it: 'The eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings'. They saw pain, misery, and the curse.

You know an experience I had not so long ago - I wasn't going to relay this - I was praying with a young lad who had historic occult abuse in his parents and even his grandparents. He could tell me - I have to be careful what I say here - but he could tell me that he was able to weigh people up, he had a knowledge, like a sixth sense or sight to look in, almost, to people and know who was genuine and who wasn't. He said - there was a series of meetings I was doing - and he said that every night when he shook my hand at the door, he looked into me. At least that's what he thought he was doing, he was looking into me to see if he could see anything. He said to me that there were Christians he could look into and he knew the shams, he could tell those that were hiding something. I don't know, I'm just telling you what he said - and I'm very thankful that he said that for some reason he couldn't see into me the way he wanted to at the door. I'm glad of that! But a very interesting thing happened when we prayed together for that young man's salvation and deliverance in Jesus' name: that gift left him. I described to him how his experience was the opposite of the blind man who said: 'Once I was blind, but now I see', once he could see but now he was blind! You see, there is no value in seeing into the things that God has forbidden us to see into. We need to be careful, even in Christian circles, there are some who are even adopting those gifts after conversion and saying God sanctifies them and uses them. There are gifts, by the way, I believe that there are gifts - but not those gifts. God gives His own gifts.

Their eyes were opened, but not as God's eyes are opened. The lie was discovered. It's as if, as someone said, a deaf person was promised to be able to hear again, but all they could hear was screaming and crying. Their eyes were opened, but what did they see? Can I remind you again of Deuteronomy 29:29? 'The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our

children forever', and we should be satisfied with that!

The process of temptation is seen here for our warning - to be forewarned is to be forearmed. In verse 6 we see the lust of the eye, 'The woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes'. The lust of the eye and then the lust of the flesh - it was good for food, it would satisfy. Then we see the pride of life, it was 'desirable to make one wise' - there is mental knowledge that puffs up. By the way, these are the same temptations that our Lord Jesus had in Matthew chapter 4, if you want to turn to it. Turn with me there please, Matthew chapter 4 verse 3. Satan, the same serpent, comes to Jesus and said, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread' - that's the lust of the flesh. Jesus was fasting 40 days and 40 nights - you don't think He was hungry? You don't think His tummy was rumbling at the thought of bread? Did he not salivate at the thought of bread? You see, Satan was communicating to the mind of the Saviour temptation. There was nothing corrupt or defiled in Him, I know all that - but He was having real temptation communicated to His mind. This was the lust of the flesh. Verse 6, Satan said: 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down'. He set Him up on the pinnacle of the Temple, he said: 'Throw Yourself down. For it is written', in the Bible, "He shall give His angels charge over you", and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone" - that's the pride of life. Wouldn't it be wonderful just to throw yourself off the pinnacle of the Temple, and all these angels would come to your rescue? That would do wonders for your self-esteem, wouldn't it? Then we see in verse 9 the lust of the eye: 'And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You", he showed Him the kingdoms, He saw them with His eye, 'I will give you these', Satan said - because he had them, Adam gave them to him - 'If You will bow down and worship me' - the lust of the eye.

Have you ever contrasted the temptation of Adam with the temptation of Jesus Christ? Adam was in Paradise, the Garden of God in Eden; Jesus was in a wilderness, a desert. Adam was surrounded by tame creatures that he had named; Jesus was surrounded by wild beasts. Adam had food, every tree in creation he could eat from, but this one tree of the knowledge of good and evil; Jesus was fasting 40 days and 40 nights in the desert. Adam had company, he had a helpmeet; Jesus was alone. Adam had the advantage of having dominion over creation that God had given him; but Jesus was facing a foe in Satan who was dominant over humankind. Yet Adam was defeated, and Jesus was victorious! Adam was overcome by evil, but Jesus overcame evil with good! Satan for all time, almost, would torment Adam and his seed; but at the end of the temptation of our Lord we read, 'And the devil leaveth Him' - isn't that wonderful? For Adam, he sinned and fell and was cast out of the Garden, and angels were put as guardians to guard the entrance into Paradise again; yet when the devil left Jesus, it says angels came and ministered and strengthened Him.

Isn't it wonderful to know that Jesus, our Great High Priest, was tempted in all points as we are without sin - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life - and, best of all, He understands what it is to go through temptation. He understands what it is to have wrong thoughts planted in your mind. Now I know that pushes some of you further than you can go here tonight, but these thoughts to do what Satan

tempted Him to do - where did they come to? They came to His mind. They didn't come out of His heart, they came from outside into His mind. Temptation is not sin, our Lord was tempted and - praise God - He overcame! But He understands what it's like for us, and temptation is still the same - 1 John 2:15-17: 'Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever' - Amen!

Satan is not interested in getting you to sin - is that a surprise? Satan is interested in destroying your relationship with God. He wants to mar your usefulness for Him. That's why relationship was attacked with Adam, that's why it was attacked in Jesus' temptation - in two of the temptations, Satan said: 'If You are the Son of God' - 'If', relationship was attacked. He doesn't just want to get you to sin, he wants to put something between you and God.

Quickly, I have so much else to say. In verse 6 we see the contagion of evil - it spread: 'So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate'. Now that lays bare another lie: 'Oh, sin is my personal choice, I'm not harming anybody. I might harm myself, but I'm not affecting anyone else' - it's a lie! Sin is contagious.

We see something else: the perversion of evil. Not only is evil contagious, it contaminates. Verse 7: 'Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings'. Their fallen minds - remember, that's where the entrance of temptation came - their fallen minds found shame in their nakedness. God had created their nakedness. God, the great Artist, had designed the human form, male and female. There is nothing inherently sinful in it, naked or not - but what happened was: their fallen imaginations found shame in their nakedness. Now it may well have been, and I tend to lean toward this, that they had been covered in a garment of glory - because light is given as a covering, the Bible says on several occasions. Satan was a light-bearer before he fell. It seems unthinkable that God would have given feathers to the birds, and fur to the animals, and man and woman are running around stark naked. It appears, I feel, that there may have been a covering of glory that went when they sinned - but the point I want to make is that something that was pure, the human form, and blessed of God: it became tainted because of their evil imaginations. This is the perversion of evil, and my mind went to Romans 1: 'Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonour their bodies' - do you see it? It hasn't changed from the beginning!

The Libertarian lie is that we will know free, guiltless pleasure if we just indulge - cast off all moral restraints! The truth is that we are robbed of the free, innocent, and

guiltless enjoyment of God's good gifts by sin. In fact, the mind itself becomes perverse - that's what Romans 1 says again: 'Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness'. Evil taints the beautiful, pure gifts of God.

See something else, seventhly, Adam and Eve's cosmetic solutions for the evil in verse 7: 'they sewed fig leaves together' to cover over their nakedness. Fig leaves are everywhere today, did you know that? Practically every area of society is trying to deal with sin and its consequences, all societal institutions, the government, education, business, the judiciary, the penal system, the health service, even religious institutions - and all of them have good, and do good, many of them are even God-ordained functions; but in and of themselves they can only slightly diminish the effects of the fall, they can't remedy it. These fig leaves, remember they came from God, they were actually gifts from God - and whilst they could temporarily cover over their nakedness, they weren't intended to erase their guilt and shame.

I want you to see, eighthly, the ultimate tragedy of evil, verse 8: 'They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden'. Evil separates us from the holy God of heaven. There is a beautiful allusion here in this tragic verse to what fellowship was like before the fall. It says that Adam heard God walking in the garden - this is before Jesus was born in human form, so this must be some pre-incarnate form of the Word of God, Jesus - and He was walking with Adam! There was this close, intimate relationship. It says they were walking, and obviously talking, communing, in the cool of the day - or, better translated, 'the breeze of the day'. From Hebrew geography and culture, we guess that that's probably late afternoon. The idea was that Adam would be working - and remember it was work without a curse - he was farming and tilling that garden in all of its wonder and beauty all day, without depleting energies that we now know, with great satisfaction and investment as a creator himself - and at the end of the day he would walk with God and talk with Him, and enjoy fellowship, maybe even a meal with Him.

That was the intimate relationship that was broken through evil, and it bred shame and guilt that caused Adam to hide, hide from God. Do you know what one of the fruits of evil is? An ungodly fear of God, an ungodly fear of God. There is a godly fear of God, we ought to reverence God, but a godly fear is in the full knowledge of God's true character of grace - and that is found in verse 9: 'God called to Adam and said to him, 'Where are you?'. God, in the midst of man's depravity, is seeking to find him, searching and calling for the sinner - that's the heart of God! But an ungodly fear is to allow your sin to build walls of shame and guilt behind which you hide from the God who wants to forgive you and restore you. It was actually their pride that caused them to erect those barriers. We'll not go into that tonight.

God, we see, then questions Adam: 'Who told you that you were naked?', etc. it's not because God didn't know the answer, He needed Adam to face the knowledge that he was ignorant of. I wonder is that true for anybody here in the gathering tonight: God

needs you to face knowledge that you are either wilfully or unwilfully ignorant of. Even in Isaiah 1 we have that - God saying: 'I want to cleanse your sins, I want to forgive you. Come now, let us reason together'. Yet face-to-face with God, if ever we see the depravity of man's heart and the evil of sin within him, he still equivocates and he blames others! Verse 12: 'The man said, 'The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate''. He effectively wasn't blaming Eve, he was blaming God! 'The woman You gave me' - it's Your fault! When we come face-to-face with truths through God's revelation, often our initial reaction is to blame others, to blame God, or even blame the devil. That's what Eve did, isn't it, in verse 13: 'The LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?'. The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate' - the devil made me do it! It's that devil! If he wasn't around, I'd be all right!

But that won't cut it, because when you come to chapter 4 and verse 7, and the issue of Cain and his offering, God said: 'If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it'. Your version might say: 'Sin is crouching at the door'. God is personifying sin here, as if it's an entity, a being, a personality. Its desire - it has desire - is for you! I believe there are demonic empowerments of sin, a demonic element to temptation, like we see here - but the point I want you to see is: God says, 'You should rule over it'. You can't point the finger at the devil and say, 'He made me do it!', or demons and say 'They forced me to do it!'. They will make it very difficult, Satan will bring all the influence of hell upon you and make it hard, but the final choice lies with us! What will we do? Will we seek God, or will we comply and roll over for the devil?

This is the way the enemy works. In verses 14 to 19, we're not going to take time to look at it, we see the curse of evil - that's a whole subject in itself - how the serpent was cursed, the woman was cursed, the man was cursed, even the very ground was cursed. Finally I want you to see, just as I close, the rescue from evil. The promises given in the midst of this cursed to the serpent, in verse 15, God says: 'I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head', or 'crush your head', 'and you shall bruise His heel'. The promise that a Man, the one who Satan wanted to divest of the authority and the privilege that God had given to him, there would be a Man who would come who would crush Satan's head - our Lord Jesus Christ. Even in the interim, the rescue from evil was set in place in verse 21, Adam and his wife Eve: 'the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them'. There was a temporary covering, and we got the whole sacrificial system in the Old Testament coming in. There were even preservative measures out of the loving heart of God, verses 22 to the end, He barred the way to the tree of life, lest Adam should eat and live eternally in curse. These are all boundaries of this living, loving God; these are preventative measures, and they are for our restoration so that Paradise might be restored.

We gain more than Adam ever lost in our Lord Jesus Christ - isn't that wonderful? I'd love to have time, and I don't tonight, to talk about Galatians 3:13: 'Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')'. What a subject this is! Maybe the Lord will

allow me to preach on it sometime here: how Adam, given dominion over all creation, gave it to Satan; and our Lord Jesus, in the temptation, the first Man ever to stand before the enemy and win as a man - not like a steamroller because He was God's Son, but as a man before the Living God he defeated the enemy! Then went to the cross and bore the curse, and rose again, and one day He's coming - and He tells us, let the Spirit say to the churches: 'To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God'.

What will that be like? Listen, could you do something for me - and I'm finishing - close your eyes, close your eyes and imagine this: 'In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city'.

Father, I pray tonight, as we have been humbled, and as we in our hearts fall in worship before who You are, and how You have made us, and the enemy that we face but our Lord Jesus Christ has crushed - hallelujah! We pray that everyone in this gathering tonight will know victory over sin and over Satan and every demonic foe. For those who are struggling tonight, I would, in the Spirit, pronounce over them: 'The Lord will bruise Satan under your feet soon. This will come to pass, and your Lord Jesus will crush Satan under His feet and your feet soon. 'I give you power to tread on serpents, scorpions, and every manner of evil''. Now you must receive that, dear one tonight, it must be received by faith - the victory in Jesus, in whose name we pray, Amen.

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