

Sin Entering the World

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[0 : 0 0] we're going to turn this evening to the chapter we read genesis chapter 3 and verse 6 genesis 3 and verse 6 so when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise she took of its fruit and ate and she also gave some to her husband who was 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 loincloths and they heard the sound of the lord god walking in the garden in the cool of the day and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the lord god among the trees of the garden but the lord god called to the man and said to him where are you a few weeks ago i had a visit from a gentleman and his daughter from south africa and this gentleman was a man called mr greenfield and he came i had never met him before i had really not no connection with him at all but i got a phone call saying that he was in town and that he wanted to see the church and he was visiting for a while from south africa and his connection was that his great great grandfather was the minister here before the turn of the 19th century around about 1880 or thereabouts something like that and he was a canadian and he came over here to be minister in this congregation and this was his great great grandson and i'd read a little bit i've read even more now about this man called reverend greenfield who was the minister here and there's quite a character and in any case this was his great grandson now i get this from time to time people who come from time to time they want to visit the place not just for holiday but because their ancestors came from stornoway and many of them they trace their they try to trace their roots through the church because this was the church in which they were baptized for example and we've got baptism records that go back many many years and it's all fascinating stuff you'll find this on the internet as well that there are many websites that are used for people to try and trace their roots and there seems to be something within us that has a fascination from for where we came from it seems to be part of our rationality as human beings to want to know what our forefathers were like and who were our forefathers that's why you have an interest in family trees and it's all it's made even more easy nowadays with the use of computers and internet and all the information that we have in the world it's we're able now all the more easily to construct or to discover our family tree that goes back centuries in some cases and you find out who your great great grandfather was and there might even be a photograph or there might be some writing about him or or and his wife and and the relatives that you that you never knew you had in various parts of the world and it all gives you a sense of identity there's something within us that needs to have a sense of identity there are some basic human needs that we have as well as the physical needs that we have like eating and drinking that are emotional needs and one of the emotional needs is that set that feeling of belonging that's why that's why a community like this is so important because many people stay within the community because they are

they belong to it but the fact is that we all belong to the human race every one of us and you may not think that you're a relative of me for example but ultimately we all are because we trace our roots right back to the first man adam and that is where that is how the bible teaches that human beings originated with one man and one woman and it goes all goes back to this moment when in genesis chapter 1 god created the first man and the first woman but in genesis chapter 3 sometime after he created them you have this catastrophic event this moment in human time and history where the world that god had created to be very very good and in fact perfect all of a sudden became flawed and stained and imperfect and that was the moment when things changed for the worse and changed catastrophically never again to reverse back to what it once was and the account of that is given to us in genesis chapter 3 now i always believe it's a good thing to regularly go back to genesis because to reinforce our knowledge of where we came from and why it is that

this world is in the condition that it is why is it that as well as being a world of great beauty and wonder and loveliness and all the things that we enjoy in this world at the same time it's a world of horror where there are things happening both naturally and by way of evil and sinfulness why is it that that that tonight in somalia many people are being murdered and in various parts of the world and also why is it that in when in samoa for example there are people who are trying to come to terms with this massive natural disaster which which is not the first time and not the last time either and it's the same in sumatra there's been an earthquake there during the week which has killed over a thousand people and these are people like ourselves who have fallen victim to a natural disaster like an earthquake and we find it all but we also find the 9 11s of the world as well where thousands of people fall victim to the evil and to the sinfulness and the cruelty of humankind and it's a perfectly natural question to ask well why is it that this world is the way it is why is it as well as being a place of beauty and loveliness is it also a place where it's a full of instability and danger and where there is enmity and hatred and all the other awful things that you find in the world and i don't need to look across to the other side of the world to find enmity and hatred i only have to look in my own heart and there's the seed is there and more than the seed is there the seed of discontentment and greed and the seed of envy and the seed of of hatred as well it's all there in our hearts why is it that some well it's all here in genesis chapter 3 i'm not saying that this is a straightforward answer to our question i'm not saying that it answers all of our questions and we'll see in a few moments time that that it raises questions as well but what i'm saying is that as we believe in this bible there is good reason to believe in the bible someone said to me the other day you're only a christian because you were brought up to be that way i can't deny that i can't deny that there is some truth in that i can't help the way i was brought up i was brought up with christian parents and they taught me the bible and i've come to accept that but that doesn't mean that i haven't questioned the bible and i questioned whether i really do believe rationally and reasonably and logically what the bible say and the conclusion i come to for myself is i do believe not simply because i've been brought up that way but because i've come to

to reason the bible out by myself and to know i believe that this truly is the answer because it is rational and it's reasonable it's not nonsense it is it is rational but again at the end of the day you we must commit ourselves to god's word and to his son by faith it is faith that takes hold of god's word ultimately and finally and faith that draws us into that relationship with jesus christ i and uh illustration i very often use for this is uh it goes back to a holiday that we had some years ago in a place called chamonix in france and we took this cable car car all the way up to a place called lac blanc it's what ray in the heart of one of the mountains up there the most amazing place and we were walking up there when all of a sudden what began as a as a really lovely day all of a sudden changed the weather closed in the clouds came in and before you know it uh there was you couldn't see a thing in front of you you couldn't see your hand in front of you because of mist and we were out in the middle of nowhere and whereas beforehand we could see we could get our bearings because we could see far away now we there was no bearings at all all we could see was the ground on which we were we were standing but just a little bit ahead of us was a sign and the sign pointed the way to the cable car now what were we going to do were we going to say well i need to find out whether that sign really is true or not before or was there enough information there and then for me to say well it's reasonable for that sign to be there there is no reason why i would want to deny that sign so we followed the sign and as we were going on as we were going along we didn't know whether the sign was a load of rubbish or not we didn't know whether we would ever get to the cable car or whether we'd die that day but it was a sign that was rational and reasonable and before long we reached another sign saying the same thing to the cable car and pointing that way so we followed it if we hadn't followed the sign we would have perished it's as simple as that but we did follow the sign until there was another one and it said to the cable car so we followed that one as well and eventually there was the cable car the signs were right all along and we had put our trust in these signs that's what faith is faith does not get an answer to every single question that we have before you trust in the sign faith says is this reasonable for me to believe in the sign and if it is there is no reason for me not to and i'm saying that to you tonight there is absolutely no reason for you to not to believe the bible because there's every reason for you to put your trust in the way that god has described how the world was created and the way that god has described what happened to his perfect world and the amazing way in which god has described that god rescued this world from its sin and god promise he comes to us like that sign in our darkness tonight and he says i am the way and the truth and the life jesus says now what are you going to do are you going to the

question is this are you going to follow jesus christ on the basis of what he says and there is more than enough evidence for us to come to the conclusion that jesus christ is who he says he was jesus didn't didn't say these things without proving it supremely and over everything else in his rising from the dead but but that leaves us in the position where we must make that decision are you going to follow him are you going to take him at his word because that's what faith faith is now we are left with a choice if we have a problem with believing in genesis chapter 3 and believing that adam was a real person we are left with with a choice we're going to have to believe if you don't believe that adam was a real person then you're going to have to believe that that sin in this world is part and parcel of what being human is you understand what i'm saying the bible tells us that god created the world perfect and he created mankind innocent of all sin until the moment when mankind made the catastrophic decision to disobey god and it was that moment because of adam and eve's decision to reject god and his command that sin came into the world and affected the world so awfully and so horribly to the extent that it is today now that's what the bible says if you believe something different you're going to have to say that wrongdoing sinfulness evil greed hatred murder is a natural part of the human race in that case we have no right to be punishing one another for when they commit a crime because it's doing so they're doing something that is natural to themselves there's a sinful gene there's a there's a wrongdoing gene in all of us and when they act upon that natural impulse then they're not doing anything wrong because you've no right to be talking about anything wrong or right you see what i mean you're faced with a choice the bible explains the world as it is and as it should have been and the world that as we know that ought to be if you take another position you're left with the most horrendous decisions to make and and one which you will have to come up with an entirely different answer now i want tonight and just in the few moments that again we're trying to use our minds tonight to ask some of the difficult questions that people do ask because i don't believe the bible expects us or god expects us to not to think and not to ask the kind of questions that we would ordinarily want to ask as we're reading even in the process of reading this chapter for example one of the questions that that we ask is was adam a historical person was adam a real person or was he symbolic of the human race and to do that well there were no witnesses at the time except adam adam and eve were the only people at the time and so we believe that the book of genesis was or the early part of the book of genesis anyway was related by god to mooses mooses mooses wrote the book of genesis and we believe that this part in any case was given was spoken to mooses by god but the question that still remains was adam a historical person well if you read throughout the rest of the bible you'll find that there are many places in the bible that that infer and that more than infer that adam was for example in first chronicles chapter one the genealogy that's given there and again the bible recognizes the the importance of genealogies and family trees it begins with adam obviously first chronicles chapter one treats adam as a historical person if you go to the new testament and look chapter three you have once again the ancestry of jesus christ and it traces jesus ancestry back to adam the son of adam and the son of god in other words luke is telling us that all these people are historical when the pharisees questioned jesus about divorce in matthew chapter 19 jesus went all the way back to the real person who he obviously believed was a real person when he said god made man male and female therefore a man should leave his father and his mother and be united to his wife the apostle paul he too accepted the historicity the truth of our first parents in first timothy chapter 2 he gives us the ground for his teaching that women should not teach or have authority over men he says adam was formed first and then eve obviously he believed that adam was a real historical person a real historical person a real actual person and in paul's letter to the corinthians and 15 he tells us that for as by a man came death by a man came also the resurrection of the dead furthermore if you fail to believe that adam was a historical person you the whole gospel falls down around you paul in romans chapter 5 he talks about the transgression of one man for as by one man sin came into the world so by one man shall we be redeemed and shall we be saved in other words the bible is absolutely clear that adam was a historical person and there came that moment that single moment in time when the whole world shifted from what it was from the world that god made it all very good to the world that we know which is full of perversion and corruption and guilt and sin and so it's important for us to know that the bible is quite certain as to what adam and as to who adam was there's another question that rises in this chapter especially as when we come to the conversation that took place between the the serpent and and eve who was the serpent but before we before we even come to that we know that the serpent in that conversation he tempted the woman to sin and both of them by obeying the serpent they fell and they and they

entered into a state which was very different to what they began as but there's another question that falls that arises as well and that is where did sin come from it's quite clear from this chapter that that controlling the actions and the mind of the serpent was the devil the bible makes that clear but that doesn't answer the question where did sin actually come from we know that as far as human beings are concerned it came from the outside it came from the serpent the serpent that the bible identifies as the devil and it was him that introduced sin into the human world there was no sin before before before this point in the human world until that point where because as a result of of the conversation between the the serpent and the woman so we know that sin did not originate in human beings but in the spirit world amongst the angels and of course that leads us on to other questions like when did god create the angels was it was it before he created the world or after he created the universe these are all fascinating questions the bible does seem to indicate in jude chapter 6 that there was a rebellion amongst not jude chapter 6 but jude verse 6 that there was a rebellion within the community of the angels and that was when sin took effect amongst them but that still doesn't answer the question where did sin come from it arose

[20 : 14] within the angelic world so the angels themselves or some of them were vulnerable and fallible otherwise they would never have sinned they would never have fallen and rebelled but where did it come from we don't know there is no answer to that question but it is an interesting it's a fascinating question it's an important question but it's a question that we must come to the point and say we don't know how sin arose in the universe we know that it entered into the human world through the action of of this speaking serpent was the speaking serpent a real serpent or was this some kind of just parable that is that is given to us uh in in chapter 3 some skeptics they will they will tell you that many parts of the bible are just parables including the miracles that jesus did they'll tell you that these things were impossible well we know that they're impossible that's why they're miracles a miracle isn't a miracle if it's possible to do and the fact that the fact that it was impossible just shows that jesus had the authority and the power to walk on the water and to change water into wine a miracle that's what makes it a miracle but they'll also people who are skeptical about the bible they will say that well surely you're not going to believe in in genesis chapter 3 surely you're not going to believe in a speaking serpent but every indication in chapter 3 tells us that this is a story it's a historical story that actually happened god is giving us the story in the history of after all why do we believe the story of abraham and isaac and jacob if we're not going to believe the story of the fall and if adam and eve were real human beings living in a perfect world and if the serpent is actually not a real serpent and it was was some kind of story or a parable then where do you draw the line between what's real and what's not and what's actual history and what's not i put it to you tonight that you accept all of it as the the explanation the historical actual real explanation as to how as to how sin came into the world the serpent again the rest of the bible tells us who the serpent was and he said jesus himself tells us he told the pharisees you are of your father the devil and your will is to do your father's desires he was a murderer from the beginning and revelation as we've read some months ago you're it tells us that that the evil one is that ancient serpent who is called the devil and satan it causes i calls him again that ancient serpent so there is every reason once again i know it doesn't follow the world's logic it seems so far away from us and seems hidden in the realms of time and some people would say fantasy but it's but again if we read the bible as god gives it to us and as we come to it in faith it gives us a perfectly reasonable rational explanation as to how sin entered into the world it ends it it begins with an actual place an actual place in space time history an actual people and a voice of uh of the evil one who is uh the bible says a fallen angel another question is well when did eve actually commit sin the chapter tells us of the conversation that took place between the serpent and the and the woman after god having told adam and eve that despite being allowed to eat of every tree in the garden they

were forbidden the one tree of knowledge of good and evil was forbidden from them and the serpent came to them and he denied this is what he said did god actually say you shall not eat of the tree of the garden and the woman said to the serpent we may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden but god said you shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that's in the midst of the garden neither shall you touch it lest you die but the serpent said to the woman you will not surely die for god knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be open and you will be like god knowing good and evil so when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was to be desired to make one why she took of its fruit and ate and she also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate now never underestimate the severity of what

happened on that moment in that moment in space-time history never underestimate it never say to yourself well is that all don't tell me that god is going to curse the world simply because a woman takes a piece of fruit and gives it to her husband is that all what would anybody who says that fails to recognize the severity of breaking god's word and god's command doesn't matter what it is it doesn't matter what it is and here god is giving them one simple prohibition nobody could misunderstand it was impossible for the first man and the first woman to misunderstand what god has said so you could never say i didn't understand the question or i didn't understand the command so please don't underestimate what happened what happened is not just to be reduced to the taking of a piece of fruit what happened was an act of rebellion when god said one thing and humankind said the opposite god said do not do not take the fruit and they said we will take the fruit god said do not take and it was the exact opposite to what he had said that's what happened and that was an act of rebellion the question is of course then what when at what point did eve sin was it when satan put doubt into the woman's mind has god really said and does he not still do that today from time to time even christians who have been on the road for many many years there's there often those times when we're tempted to doubt our bibles when we read something in the bible and when those seeds of doubt come in and when we find ourselves asking is this really the truth he's at it all the time trying to sow the seeds of doubt in our minds was it because the woman was resentful in some kind of way was big was it because she began to feel that god was keeping something from them that while he he had given them a perfect life that was what it was in a perfect world yet somehow god there were some dimension that god was hiding from them and she wanted to know and experience that extra dimension and she began to be discontent with what god had given her the foundation of the ten commandments of the tenth commandment i should say you shall not covet and did was it that a covetous thought the imagination that somehow that even having a perfect life she could have an even more perfect life on a higher plane on a higher level was it unbelief when she chose

not to believe in god and she chose to accept the devil's word rather than god's word when she made that fatal catastrophic choice as to which action she would take was it pride that rose within her heart wanting to be like god that's what the devil said to her and you shall be you shall not surely die for god knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like god knowing good and evil you can never get you know when you analyze yourself if you're really honest with yourself and if you try and trace your life from day to day and be an honest examination of our lives will show that you can never get away from pride pride exists in all kinds of different forms was it pride or was it evil desire that she saw something that attracted her attention and attracted her sense of of appetite not the natural appetite but an appetite for something that she didn't have for something that would make her happier if that was at all possible and disobedience of course whenever the sin began was the final step she took the fruit and that's what james tells us in the new testament that temptation begins on the inside and you know if i was you i would go and read this chapter again as you prepare for the coming week because there are going to be all kinds of such situations in the world where you're going to be tempted the evil one the devil we believe him to be a real being active in this world communicating with us trying to have as much influence on our minds and our hearts as he possibly can and trying wherever god has begun a work in us trying to destroy that work and trying to destroy you and your character and your your your life even and there will be times this week when you and i will be both tempted and it's strange how the devil the devil always follows the same subtlety and techniques as he did as he did and we can learn a lot from this chapter as to how we could respond and to be better to be best prepared of course is to be is to be made ready for when that happens you know the way in which god created uh humankind there is absolutely no reason why they should have sinned there is nothing within creation there was nothing within creation god created the world the heavens and the earth very good he looked at all the creation that he had made and it was very good there was no reason logically why even adam should have fallen that day in that moment sin is as a mystery it's illogical after all if god had if god created humankind to reflect his glory and his image and his likeness why did they sin i don't know the answer to that question and when i ask my quite the question of myself why do i sin with a new life that jesus has given me with a resurrected life if any man be in christ he is a new creation why do i continue to sin i don't know there is no logic to it it doesn't follow any logic and i'm sure you've asked yourself from time to time you become aware of something you've done and you ask yourself why did i do that and there is no answer you kind of slip into it you don't know what's happening and then afterwards you think why did i do that what an absolute idiot i was

especially when you see the carnage and the results and the effects that sinfulness has on our lives and our thinking and our relationships and all the rest of it you think i don't know why i did that that's the way it goes illogical senseless that's why the bible calls it anomia one of the words that the bible uses anomia it's lawlessness it doesn't follow any logic and it certainly didn't in the garden of eden and despite whatever the devil promised eve on that fateful occasion the result of her and his action was catastrophic the first result was disappointment the very thing that satan promised them was the thing that they didn't have yes they were able to know right and wrong they were able to see good and evil but they certainly weren't like god and it certainly didn't give them the happiness and the new dimension that satan promised them that's always the case and that's why tonight as you face once again the choice of coming to jesus and discovering the new life that he can give you it's not a life in which you you're made immune from sin but it's a life in which he cleanses our sin from all its guilt and he gives us a new beginning and a new purpose and the choice between coming to him and and giving yourself as you've always done and as we've all by nature given ourselves to doing wrong there is no result except disappointment if you choose the wrong path the next result was fear they were hiding themselves from god particularly when god said where are you the result was fear adam said i was afraid and i hid and there was a fear of what god might do to them as a punishment they were culpable and yet their wrongdoing brought upon them the guilt and the punishment and the hence the fear there was an evasion of responsibility there was all kinds of awful effects and yet the lord came to them that day in mercy and in mercy and in grace where are you that was the first call of the gospel in the bible and perhaps the most surprising and the most amazing thing of this chapter is not that god would condemn not that god we would expect god to condemn adam and eve for what they did but instead even having to put them out of the garden god announced to them that he there was an answer and there was a way of forgiveness he made skins for them he brought skins for them to cover their nakedness that meant that he had killed an animal and he had taken the skin of that animal and he had he had taken it to cover them not just to cover their shame but to show them that there was a way of forgiveness in death and in the shedding of blood in order to kill the animal he would have to shed its blood and the central message of the gospel is found even there that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness but with the shedding of blood there is forgiveness and god he said to the the serpent that he was to be cursed more than any other creature you will crawl on your belly you will eat the dust all the days of your life and i will put enmity now listen to this this is what i want to close with tonight because even at the very beginning even on that awful day when eve and adam fell and where they rebelled against god god comes to them in mercy and in forgiveness and in promise of the coming redeemer the promise was this i will put enmity between you the serpent and the woman and between your seed and her seed what that meant was that thereafter there would be two kinds of humanities there would be one kind of humanity that would listen to god and accept his word and accept his promises by faith and live in obedience to him there would be another kind of humanity they would listen to god and they would do the opposite they would live as far away from god as they possibly could and they would live sinfully and they would live in evil and in disobedience but then god says but her seed will bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel and the his is singular in other words that in the fullness of time one person will arise one person will come into this world world as the seed of the woman and he will bruise your head and that's another way of saying that he will crush you to your very core and that was an indication of what jesus would do in the gospel that by his death that in the fullness of time jesus came into the world and he tells us himself to destroy the works of the devil to crush him to his very core and we believe tonight that the cross was god's crushing of the evil one his destroying his influence and his power so that men and women who were held captive to him all through the ages are now set free by the gospel and by what jesus did in his death and in his resurrection and tonight that is still god's message to us that is still god's invitation to us to come and to trust in the seed of the woman jesus christ who has by his death crushed the serpent and set us free from the guilt of sin may we all know that freedom and that liberty and that salvation for ourselves let's pray our father we thank you that from the very beginning of time from the very beginning of the world that the lamb of god was slain we give thanks oh lord that your plan of salvation predates the world itself and that jesus came in in the fullness of time was born of a woman and that he lived amongst us in this world and bore our sorrows and bore our sicknesses and bore our sins and in his body on the cross we pray oh lord that you will once again make him plain and make him clear to us so plain and so powerful and so evident that we will want to run to him for the forgiveness of our sins and for

and the new life that you give everyone who puts his trust in jesus for we ask in his name amen