

'God's Questions (1) - "Adam... Where Are You?"

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[0 : 00] Good morning and welcome once again to our service live stream from Stornoway Free Church. We're glad to have you with us. We pray that God will bless you and bless us together as we come to worship him today.

We're going to begin firstly by reading from God's Word. Our reading today is from Genesis chapter 3. The book of Genesis chapter 3 we'll read from the beginning. Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

He said to the woman, Did God actually say, You shall not eat of any tree in the garden? And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is 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 opened, 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 wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.

[1 : 18] Then the eyes of both 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 among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, Where are you? And he said, I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.

He said, Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat? The man said, The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.

Then the Lord God said to the woman, What is this that you have done? The woman said, The serpent deceived me, and I ate. The Lord God said to the serpent, Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock, and above all beasts of the field.

On your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

[2 : 33] To the woman he said, I will surely multiply your pain and childbearing. In pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.

And to Adam he said, Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, you shall not eat of it. Cursed is the ground because of you.

In pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken.

For you are dust, and to dust you shall return. The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. And the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

Then the Lord God said, Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live forever.

[3 : 39] Therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

Amen, and we pray God will follow with his blessing, this reading of his word. Let's now call upon the Lord in prayer. Let's join together in prayer. Lord our God, we come before you today thankful that we have your word.

That we have your word to guide our thoughts, to feed our minds, to warm our hearts. We bless you today that your word contains everything we need to know in order that we may be saved.

We give thanks, O Lord, for the plainness with which you reveal to us those things which are essential for us to know. We acknowledge that your word contains much that is beyond our full comprehension.

And we thank you, Lord, that it is so, for it is one of the marks that it bears as your word. We give thanks, O Lord, today that your Holy Spirit teaches us and enables us to apply your word to our own lives.

[4 : 58] It brings to us that opening of minds by which we are able not only to accept your word, but to seek to live by it. We thank you, O Lord, that there are so many people in the world today who worship you the way we do.

And yet we know that there are many also who don't. We pray that you would bless to us, Lord, the privilege we have of knowing you and of loving you and of serving you.

The privilege we have of being your people in this world. We pray today that that will be a matter of further thankfulness for us. Help us, we pray, to seek to live for you in a way that is clear, in a way that is committed to you, to loving you, and to standing for those great standards of truth which you have set before us in your word.

We bless you, Lord, that today there are many people in our own land who are concerned to stand by the teaching of your word against all that is made by way of assault upon it.

We pray today that you bless us as a people, as a nation. O Lord, we know that we have so much departed from your ways. We acknowledge, Lord, that we have sinned, that we continue to sin against you and to reject your standard and your will, your commands, your promises.

[6 : 34] We have turned to false gods that cannot save us. O Lord, we have done despite to your revealed will. O Lord, we pray that you would be merciful to us.

O Lord, we pray to know our sin and to acknowledge it. O Lord, we cannot appreciate your salvation in Jesus Christ unless we first of all come to know our sin and our need of a saviour.

O Lord, we thank you that all of that is contained in your word. O Lord, we pray today that you would bless your gospel among us. O Lord, we pray that you would bless your gospel among us. O Lord, that we pray that you would bless us.

Lord, we pray that you would bless us as we live for you in the world. O Lord, that your kingdom will advance. O Lord, that your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

O Lord, bless again, we pray those who are over us in leadership. O Lord, we pray for our governments in this land. Lord God we know that much of what is presented by them is not in accordance with your truth but we give thanks O Lord that we have the freedom by which we elect governments contrary to the privilege, contrary as a privilege to what many other nations in the world are like help us we pray Lord as we seek to pray for our government for our first minister and prime minister for those who lead the various administrations in our land Lord bless them we pray and bless them especially with that God-given wisdom and insight that would apply your word to their circumstances to the decisions that they need to take we pray for them and ask O Lord that you would grant to them in this providence that has overtaken us with the COVID virus Lord our God again we present that to you pray that you would grant insight to those who are seeking a cure for it we pray that you bless all who are already infected and those O Lord who have lost loved ones over it bless them we pray again graciously grant to us as a people and as a society that we may know that you are speaking to us through this providence

[8 : 45] Lord forbid that we should ignore that voice that we should see this as only something of human dimension only or even physical O Lord help us we pray to look into it in its moral and spiritual dimensions for as you speak us through providence and through your word so you address us in our need and our greatest need is our need of yourself we pray Lord again that you bless our families our loved ones our children be near to them Lord today and grant to all those who have additional difficulties in their lives today whether it's through the virus or other illness through unemployment through various other ways in which people have their lives blighted Lord God we pray that you would grant to direct people to the gospel we pray that you bless your own people sometimes Lord we know that we are bewildered sometimes we have no answer for those who ask

us various questions

Lord we pray that you would keep us faithful that you would enable us to continue to walk in your ways bless any today who hear this gospel not only through this service but any other service but are themselves not yet saved Lord God speak to their hearts we pray open their hearts and their minds and give them the willingness to fall down in your presence and receive you gladly like Zacchaeus did long ago when you called him down from the tree when he received you into his heart and into his home and so Lord we ask these things confessing again our need of cleansing and seeking your pardon and grace for Jesus' sake Amen Okay children we're coming again to another of the birds of the Bible and today we're looking at the raven Raven's a fairly big bird it looks like a large crow it's mentioned a number of times in the Bible for example in Genesis chapter 8 verse 6 it's one of the birds that Noah sent out of the ark at the time that he was looking to see if the waters of the flood had gone down also used by God to bring Elijah food we find that in 1 Kings chapter 17 verses 3 to 6 when Elijah was told by God to go to the brook Kedith and he said I have commanded the raven to feed you there and that's what happened so God used the raven to keep his servant Elijah alive during these difficult times now a number of things about the raven that we can actually learn from and apply to ourselves spiritually as well for a start the raven is a very smart bird it's a very clever bird if a raven knows that another raven is watching it'll hide its food and it'll pretend to put the food in one place while really hiding it in another place

I've actually seen hoodie crows doing the same sort of thing but of course because other ravens are just as clever as the one that's trying to hide its food sometimes that doesn't work very well so it actually has the food actually taken from it by another raven after all but it is a very clever bird it can actually trick some larger animals such as wolves or other animals foxes for example it can actually distract the animal and then just take some of its food secondly ravens are very good imitators they can imitate a lot of sounds including human speech and sometimes you might see if you google raven look for ravens online you can actually find some video of ravens ravens talking something like a parrot just using human words that it's learned so they can imitate lots of sounds other noises car engines washing toilets all sorts of things it's very much an imitator now God has given us minds just like the raven is a very clever bird

God has given us minds we don't have to be very clever we don't have to be professors or something of that nature but God has given us the kind of mind different to any other creature so that we can actually learn the truth of God and it's so important that we apply our minds to think about what the Bible is saying about what people are teaching us so it's important that we use our mind to learn about God and about ourselves and just like the raven is able to imitate or copy things like human sounds voices so the Bible actually tells us that we have to copy God and especially Jesus to follow his example to follow the kind of things that God has shown us for example in the way that he's loved us and the extent to which he's loved us well Paul in Ephesians says be imitators of God just in the way that God gave Jesus to die the death of the cross so we are to imitate that by thinking of others ahead of ourselves ravens can also use gestures just like sometimes we point with our finger or hand to something that we want other people to get to see ravens actually do that with their beaks and they can actually show to another raven something that they want the other raven to see and point it out with their beak and that reminded me when I saw that when I read that reminded me of how important it is that we point others to Jesus that we show other people where they can find salvation where they can find

God's forgiveness God's acceptance in Jesus as their saviour so we have to point like John the Baptist did when he said behold the Lamb of God as he spoke about Jesus he was pointing people to Christ and that's important for us too even in your young days you point people to Jesus you tell them about how good Sunday school is and you invite them to come so that they learn about Jesus as well one other thing ravens actually when they're young they roam around a bit like teenagers really in some ways but ravens actually roam about in gangs you know what a gang a gang sometimes is a bad thing if they're going about doing bad things committing acts of vandalism or violence but a gang can be a good thing as well because together as young people you gang together in youth fellowship

[16:01] Sunday school tweenies they're gangs in the good sense and because ravens when they come to grow up and start building a nest and having a family if you like the young ones as they grow up before they reach that stage they form themselves into these gangs or groups and they go about together and that's what's good as well for us in a Christian gang in a Christian setting

Christian group whether we're young people or older people it's really good to belong to the church to belong to the gang that Jesus is the king of and the raven teaches us how important it is to belong to that group of people who love the Lord who worship God and who point people to Jesus so raven tells us teaches us a lot of things that are important for ourselves also let's now say the Lord's prayer together our Father which art in heaven hallowed be thy name thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom the power and the glory forever

Amen Now let's turn to Genesis chapter 3 we're going to look at a verse from Genesis 3 today Genesis chapter 3 and verse 9 especially we'll read from verse 8 where Adam and Eve 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 Lord God among the trees of the garden but the Lord God called to the man and said to him where are you?

At times of disaster especially we've seen that even with the Covid virus times of disaster you find people often asking questions involving God questions especially when people don't accept the Bible's teaching about God but even then some Christians find it difficult to accept some things that happen without asking questions about God questions for example that people ask if God exists of course we know he exists but people will ask this if God exists why does he allow such suffering and such evil to take place in the world or why does he not intervene why does he not come and change things why does he not stop poverty why does he allow so many children to die and of course these are huge huge questions to which there is no easy answer and what we want to do what I'm going to do over the next few weeks

God willing is to reverse this and to come to the Bible and look at questions that God is asking us instead of the kind of questions we address to him we're going to look at some questions in the Bible where God is clearly speaking to us human beings the Bible has quite a number of these questions the most important questions indeed that you and I can ever be asked because they focus on the fundamental issues of life and eternity death life in this world what it's about we're beginning today with this question because as we go through the series of questions God we're going to touch on these really important topics and we're going to especially see how these questions draw us into an understanding of God of his salvation of our own human condition our sinfulness God's provision for that the salvation that's in Jesus we're going to ask questions we could come across questions where God is asking us very specifically about these things and our own relation to them and to him we're beginning with this one which is really basic to our understanding of the whole

Bible in fact it's basic to our understanding of salvation you cannot understand salvation you can't understand the cross of Jesus and why Jesus died unless you first ask the question where is mankind what kind of condition are we in so God is asking this question of Adam but in asking Adam he's actually addressing the whole of mankind as we'll see you and I where are you Adam where are you and there are three things in that that I want to deal with I'm only going to deal with the first of these today and the other two God willing we'll leave till next week first of all the question announces to us our sinful condition secondly the question addresses our sinful conduct and thirdly the question anticipates our saviour's coming we'll leave these two and just deal with the first one today the question announces to us our sinful condition here is God coming into the garden of Eden not that he didn't know where Adam was but he wants to bring

[21 : 37] Adam out and to confront Adam with what he's done and he wants to actually show Adam the seriousness of what he's now actually done and where he now is having come to be a sinner questions that announce the question announces our sinful condition first thing about that is that we're actually dealing here with facts and not with fiction this is not a story these verses and these chapters in Genesis this is not a story that's been created by a human beings to try and explain something they know is existing like to explain the existence of evil the existence of sin this is not a story created to try and explain those things to us it's actually God telling us how these things came to be why things are as they are why our human condition our human nature is flawed how it came to be in its flawed state so you have to take

Genesis 1-3 as historically true many people that dismiss these things these teachings these chapters as mythological that dismiss them as just something that humans have devised in order to try as as I said to explain something that they find true about themselves or in the world we have to

take these as historically true Jesus believed in the actual Adam and Eve these persons these people that are mentioned in these chapters as God created them Jesus believed in Adam and Eve Jesus believed that this was real history Jesus believed in what's specified in Genesis 1-3 they're real people they're real events and that destroys the idea that human beings began in a very primitive form and then advanced upwards to the level that humans are at today that's going to the kind of evolutionary theories that you find where human nature is trying you're trying to explain it in terms of development without God being involved at all it's not a development from something very primitive like an early form of ape to an advanced form that we are today where we are today it's actually the opposite the Bible tells us we begin with human beings as the pinnacle of God's creation at the very top of the created order that God brought about through his creation as Genesis describes it so it's not from the primitive to the advanced it's actually from the pinnacle that Adam and Eve were to the condition that's described as their sinful condition their fallen condition it's crucial that we believe this and accept this that's why

I'm taking time over this because it's crucial that we understand it and accept it because for one thing we will never actually be in a position to understand Genesis 3.15 which is the first gospel message addressed to fallen mankind where God is saying about the seed of the serpent who comes in the Bible to be Satan and the offspring of the woman the people that accept God he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel there is an announcement of salvation an announcement in its early form that God is not going to leave all of mankind in their lost fallen condition but we can't understand all of that unless we understand that this took place that this is really the history that God has recorded for us in these verses so it's facts and not fiction that the question is dealing with secondly the question deals with our condition before it deals with our actions now what do I mean by that what I mean by that is that the question addresses announces to us our sinful condition in other words what we are in ourselves before we even think about the things we do our sinful condition is the source of our sinful actions we do things which are wrong because we are wrong already in our souls and that again is different and contrary to the idea that you often come across that human beings are essentially good but need some sort of education process in order to advance them in their thinking and in their behavior that simply cannot be the case because this actually is a question with

Eden as its background this is a question addressed by God to Adam and Eve to Adam especially before he was driven from the garden and here is a question that has this background of Eden where God had given Adam and Eve the best possible conditions they could have they had all the right conditions to remain faithful to God to actually get to know God better to improve themselves day by day as they went on in fellowship with God everything in the garden of Eden was perfect for them in order to advance their lives yet they sinned they disobeyed God so that gives the lie to the idea that we are essentially good but need a bit of education Adam and Eve were essentially good they were perfect as God created them and yet even in that environment they still disobeyed God we cannot begin in looking at a human nature of human condition hour of salvation indeed we cannot begin at the point where humanism or liberal theology begins with an optimistic view of human nature so that we just improve as we learn from year to year from generation to generation the core problem is our human fallenness the truth is that at the core of our human being there is a problem we have become corrupt the world's problem has always been man's fallen nature and that's still the problem and always will be the problem that addresses us that meets us in human society in our human individual selves the evil that's in the world the wars that have been in history the bloodshed that you still find in many places throughout the world the hatred that exists between people the distrust that human beings have towards each other the abuses that you find of all age groups including the unborn the suffering of millions and millions of people the existence of death itself where is all that from it's from our fallenness it's due to our corruption it's due to the fact that our condition as human beings is sinful and that from that condition proceeds the actions that are actual sins so that question from God where are you addressed to

[29 : 43] Adam it's a question that's addressed to us so that we'll face up to our human condition God doesn't ask us these questions and we'll see this as we go through them he doesn't ask these questions just to make us feel bad it's not something just to leave us in despair it's not something that is designed by him so that we'll say well if that's the case then what can we do about it it's so that we'll face it honestly and seriously and then read through the Bible and find God's answer to it God's answer in his son Jesus Christ where our sinfulness is addressed by God's saving power through the cross so facts not fiction it's dealing with our condition before we come to think of our

actions thirdly it's addressing Adam as a representative as well as an individual that also is hugely important in the Bible

Adam is the representative of the whole of humankind as well as an individual in his own right the Bible the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the Hebrew word Adam is a word which means not just the name of this individual but it's the Hebrew word for mankind for human beings for humans Adam means humankind mankind and the individual Adam in the teaching of the Bible stands as a representative of all his descendants apart from Jesus the individual Adam is a covenant representative people speak about the covenant that God made the covenant that was between Adam and God some people use different words but Adam in the Bible is seen to be a representative of all his descendants at that point that he was placed in the garden of Eden as created by God he's representative of all of humankind in other words when Adam fell we fell when Adam sinned we sinned a shorter catechism question 16 puts it this way did all mankind fall in Adam's first transgression and the answer to that is the covenant being made with Adam not only for himself but for his posterity all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation that leaves out Jesus all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression now you notice how it puts it very carefully all mankind descending from him sinned in him and fell with him and that picks up a text in Romans chapter 3 verse 23 which says all sinned and come short of the glory of God in other words the Bible is telling us that because Adam was our representative our perfect representative we actually sinned in him when he sinned we sinned in him God took the whole human race to have sinned in him as surely as if we ourselves had been there in the garden of Eden ourselves today you and I are therefore responsible for our sinfulness it's not just that we're responsible for the things we do we are responsible for the sinful condition from which the things we do proceed we are responsible for being sinners as well as for sinning and you might say that's really unfair how can God hold me responsible for something another individual centuries ago millennia ago did how can it be fair of God to regard me as a sinner and responsible for my sin if that sin was committed by Adam as the Bible tells us in the garden of Eden surely that's not fair surely that's not right well let's turn it around is it fair of God to have his people represented by Jesus by his son because when Jesus went to the cross surely as just as much as he was as he lived in the world he was united to his people his people were united to him just like Adam in covenant with his descendants so Jesus in covenant with all the people he was going to save is it right of God to say that righteousness which Jesus created by his death on the cross now becomes mine because I am in him because there is a covenant in which I am united to him gee we're thankful for that of course but it works the other way too that God holds us responsible as if we ourselves had been in Eden on that occasion just the same with

Jesus and his people that righteousness is yours just as surely as if you had created it yourself this idea of covenant representation runs right through the Bible what we're saying is that Adam was a representative as well as an individual which is why the Bible talks about us sinning in him falling in him becoming corrupt in him as he fell so there are three things we're dealing with facts and not fiction it's our sinful condition before we think of our actions and Adam was a representative as well as an individual but there's one other point because what you find here in the question is that it's addressing fear rather than fellowship it's addressing fear not fellowship addressing [36 : 24] Adam in his state now of sinfulness and he's afraid you see what's happened everything we've said so far is built in to this question and the stuff that's around it there is actually telling us that what was really affected is not just our own human nature but our relationship with God the question shows that Adam is no longer in fellowship with God the way he was prior to this he's no longer lovingly attuned to God's voice and to God's presence in fact he's become the opposite of what he was created for he wants to hide he's afraid of meeting with God it's the very opposite of what he was before this and what he was as God created him what we're seeing is because Adam is mankind because he's our representative this is mankind this describes what we actually are this describes why we are the way we are this is mankind in his separation from God in our rebellion against God in our enmity against God see that's why it's important to know the meaning of these versions this fear that Adam had instead of the fellowship he once enjoyed is now what's passed to us and what we find true of ourselves that's why we need the Bible calls the one the Bible calls the last

Adam that's Jesus that's how you find him described in Romans chapter 5 for example and the whole of the passage there deals with the parallel between Adam the first Adam and Jesus the last Adam and how as it says as we through our union with the first Adam fell and how also our union with the last Adam brings us into righteousness and salvation and if I read from chapter 5 verses 8 to 11 you can see how that really encapsulates much of what we've seen in Genesis today but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us since therefore we have now been justified by his blood much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God for if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son much more now that we have reconciled shall we be saved by his life more than that we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have now received the reconciliation you see as we said already this is why God is showing us our sinfulness and how our sinfulness came about so that it will lead us on to Jesus that it will lead us to Christ from this very question Adam mankind man woman where are you and as we see where we are in our sinful condition in our alienated state from God in our enmity and rebellion that we will come to the point where we say I need Jesus I need the last Adam in the book A Just God and a Saviour which is a collection of some of the essays and writings and sermons of the late professor R.E.

Finlayson who was in the Free Church College as it was then this is something he actually has in one of these essays in that book he says the question addressed to Adam in the hour of his banishment that's this question we're dealing with today Adam where are you he said the question addressed to Adam in the hour of his banishment failed to get any adequate answer until the cry was heard from the darkness of Calvary my God my God why hast thou forsaken me there in that darkness was where mankind was and this is where his representative and sin bearer Jesus had to go to reach him he had to go there to reach him which is why he died the death he died so now to me and to you

God is speaking today God is asking us this question you can put your own name as an individual in the place of Adam but this is his question where are you where are you in relation to God where are you in relation to salvation where are you in relation to your sin being forgiven where are you in relation to heaven to eternity to hell what is your relation to all of these important vital concepts that the Bible sets before us so here today as we are faced with the question as the question announces our sinful condition for you and for me may it be that we are drawn by it or driven by it even as long as we get there to

[42 : 17] Jesus the anticipated and now risen saved let's pray Lord God our Father in heaven as we confess our sinfulness and as we give thanks for the way in which your word opens this up for us help us to confess it in sincerity help us to do it Lord with honesty the realization that we are speaking about ourselves we give thanks today for your provision of life in the place of death of righteousness in the place of sin of hope in the place of despair of heaven in the place of hell we thank you that all of this has been achieved through the perfection of the work of Jesus we pray today Lord that he as the last Adam will be the one that we cleave close to one we love and the one that we regard the thankfulness as our saviour so receive us

Lord in our worship we pray go with us and bless us throughout the day and forgive our sin for Jesus sake amen now we're going to sing in conclusion in Psalm 51 Psalm number 51 that's in Scottish Psalter version and the Blue Psalm books that's page 280 we'll sing to the tune St Kilda and it's verses 1 to 7 this is where David makes his confession of sin and seeks God's forgiveness and cleansing and acknowledges that in the inward parts and his very soul God requires truth there Psalm 51 After thy loving kindness Lord have mercy upon me me or thy compassion's great lot out peace for my iniquity be cleansed from sin and truly washed from mine iniquity for my transgressions

I confess my sin I ever see yet thee only have I sinned in thy sight done this ill but when thou speakst thou must be just and clear in judging still behold I in in in in in thee was formed the womb within my mother also be conceived in guiltiness and sin behold thou in thee behold thou in the inward hearts with truth delighted arms and wisdom thou shalt make me know within the hidden heart do thou with hyssop sprinkle me

I shall be cleansed soul yea wash thou me and then I shall be whiter than the snow the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore amen once again let me thank you for joining in the service with us and I trust that it will have been a blessed time to you and have been the next week.

I hope that it will be a blessed time to you and the next service will be at 6.30 this evening and that will be conducted by Reverend Kenny I. MacLeod. Thank you once again.