

The Fall

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[0 : 0 0] passage that we read in Genesis chapter 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 ate and she also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened and they knew that they were naked and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. One of the big challenges that faces the church today is how to make sure the people to whom we're speaking understand what we're talking about. And of course I'm talking now about the words that you and I may be so familiar with and chances are that most if not all of us here tonight know exactly what these words mean, the words that we find in the Bible.

But in a world like the world we live in which knows increasingly, sorry, decreasingly what these words are, they become increasingly difficult to explain them. I was in conversation with someone this week and we were talking about how difficult it was to explain to someone what sin was. How do you explain to someone who's never been to Sunday school, probably never read his Bible, probably never come across a Christian, never had this kind of discussion before, maybe knows something that there may just be a God, is aware of the presence of something and yet hasn't really given it much thought. How do you go about explaining to that person what sin is? Because it seems to me that if we can't do that, we can't really go and tell people why they need to be saved and why they need to trust in Jesus because they'll just quite rightly say, well, why do I need to trust in Jesus? Why do I need Jesus so much in this world, in my life, in my heart? Why do I need it? And then you would have to explain it to them in terms of sin.

And so we were discussing this and discussing how we might try and use examples to get the message across to that person. But it seems to me that a chapter like this is also absolutely foundational in order for us to answer some of the questions that surround the whole discussion about what sin is.

Because, for example, the question, where did it come from? How did the world get to be the kind of world that it is tonight? What kind of a world? Why is it that amongst all the good things in the world, the things that we recognize as good, why is it that every so often we come face to face with such horror and such heartache and such sorrow and darkness and ugliness and awfulness in the world? Why is it that a young man of 17 years of age can get his father's ammunition and his guns in Germany and walk into a school and gun down people that he knew in that school? Why is it that he goes on the rampage thereafter, clearly intending on killing himself? And that's not the first time it's happened.

[3 : 4 9] It's happened many, many times. Every so often it does happen. And every so often the same questions are asked, every time it happens, why did this person do it? And in this case, as far as I can see anyway, reading the newspapers, the screeds of information that's available, the young man was a bit quiet, he was a bit of a loner. Well, there's plenty of people who are quiet, people who like to keep themselves to themselves. Nothing wrong with that. Nothing particularly strange in that. And he was well brought up.

He came from a rich home. And as far as everybody could see, there wasn't a huge amount wrong with him. You know, what's frightening in that is that if that is the case, then what's to stop more people doing exactly the same thing? You know, it really makes you stop and think. And that's, of course, only one very small element, one very small element, because all over the world, there are all kinds of acts of hatred being taking place. People are murdering one another. People are despising one another. People are stealing from one another. They're cheating one another. They're causing all kinds of mayhem and sadness and acting out of self-interest and pride. And you know, when you really, the more you enter into this, the more you discuss it, the more you discover

that every single one of us is involved to some extent or another. We may not be guilty of walking into a school with guns and shooting people. But we see something of the hatred and something of the imbalance and the irrationality that it takes for a person to do that. What is the breaking point? What is it that makes the difference between a person who does that kind of thing and a person who doesn't? And the frightening thing is this. We don't know. We don't know. And that means it could happen here. What's to stop somebody walking into the Nicholson? I'm not trying to frighten the young ones. But, you know, don't think that because we're an island that nothing happens here. There's nothing to stop. That very same thing happened. The question I'm asking is, why is it that we live in a world full of uncertainty, a world where you can't predict what's going to happen? You don't know. Every morning, first thing I do is turn on the TV to find out what's happened. Who knows what's happened? Chances are on a normal day, there's not a great deal. But then every so often, there are things that really make you stop in your tracks. And they remind us of the kind of world in which we live. A world in which we recognize that there are great things, lovely things, precious things, people in the world that we hold dear and that mean the world to us. And things that, well, we believe as

Christians that God has given us these things to enjoy and to enrich our lives. But there are other things that we're frightened of, things that bring fear to us. And that's why I believe it is absolutely fundamental to go back to this chapter. Because if this chapter, by the way, isn't true, if it's not true that God made Adam and Eve, then the whole Bible collapses. The whole Christian message collapses. The whole message of the cross collapses. We might as well just go home because there's no reason for us to be here this evening if this chapter didn't take place. I'm not saying there aren't questions about creation and all of these things, and I'm not going to go into that, Genesis chapter 1. But what I'm saying is this, if God did not create Adam as Adam and Eve as Eve, then we are all in big trouble because there is really no explanation. And if there's no explanation as to why, think about it this way, if there's no explanation as to why there is wrongdoing in the world, then you have to conclude that it is part of our humanness to do wrong. Do you understand what I'm saying? If there's no explanation for it, then it's part of our nature to do wrong. Therefore, if wrongdoing or sin is human, why are we accountable for it? Why do we go to jail for it? Why are we punished for it if we're only doing something that's natural to us? But the fact is that every one of us here tonight, and in fact, there are very few people in the world that don't admit that there is something terribly wrong with the world. And it's because there's something terribly wrong with the world that we hold people accountable for what they do, so that if someone takes the life of another person, that person is accountable. If someone steals, that person is accountable. And everybody agrees that the person is accountable because we know that this world is not what it should be. And the Bible, I would say, is the only place where we can find out and discover a credible reason why the world is the way it is.

And so the Bible begins, of course, by describing how different and how unique human beings are. You remember that great process in chapter one where God creates all the livestock and the vegetation and the mountains and the seas and the fish. And then there's a pause right at the very end. On the sixth day, there's a pause in which in which he says, let us make man in our own image and in our likeness. Now, to me, that is a key verse for understanding who we are in the universe. One of the great questions that I'm sure we've all asked ourselves is this. Who are we? Who am I in the universe? Why am I an individual person? Am I just a... I've said all this before, of course, but they're real questions, aren't they?

[10:05] And we can take those real questions over coffee to our friends and we can discuss them to try and generate conversation that hopefully will eventually lead to the Lord Jesus Christ. These are the questions that we all ask.

And it's natural to ask these questions. Who am I? Am I really the product of millions of years of evolutionary process without reason, without any kind of cause and effect, all just chemicals? And just by chance, am I just an accident of history and nature? If you listen to those who try and convince us that there is no God, then that's all you're left with. But that's... I don't believe... I just don't believe that people at root are prepared to accept that. The Bible tells us that we are who we are because God has made us special, unique. There's something different about us. Something that is...

And the difference is this, that we reflect who God is. We reflect, we mirror who God is.

[11:17] Let's take away wrongdoing for a moment. Let's go all the way back to the very beginning of time. And let's look at Adam and Eve. If you were to meet him in this perfect world, you would see in his behavior and in his lifestyle and in his character, you would see a mirror of who God is. You would recognize God in him. That's what we mean by the image of God.

For example, he would communicate to you. He would speak to you. Why is there speaking and communication? Because God speaks. Who does God speak to? If there were no human beings, way back before time began, who did God speak to? He spoke to himself. The Bible tells us that there is Father, Son, and Spirit.

God is community containing Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Perfect relationship and harmony. And so he created us to have that same community and harmony and relationship within the human race.

That's why God said, it is not good for man to be alone. I will make a companion for him. And there he reflected even more the community of God in which he was able to relate to other people. First of all, his wife Eve, but then that community was to grow and it was to expand. And there were to be more and more of a reflection of who God is.

[12:50] But of course, that image with which Adam and Eve was created was perverted and twisted and became corrupted when sin came in.

And I'd like us to ask some of the questions which arise from looking at this chapter. The first one being, where did sin come from? The Bible only tells us how sin came into the human race. It tells us here in chapter 3. It starts with the serpent. Where did he come from? We don't know. We really don't know. There's some questions where we just don't know the answer.

And an even more profound question is this. If God is all-powerful, God knows the end from the beginning, without beginning and without end, in every way, sovereign, where he rules and reigns over all creation, the whole universe, why did he let sin appear in the first place?

Especially when you see all the carnage and the sadness and the devastation that sin has taken place as a result of sinfulness in the world.

[14:12] That's a really solemn question. And I don't think we should hesitate to ask the question. Although there is not an answer which we can readily give. We can see in the Bible how God can work his purposes.

And we believe that God will work his own plan through this sinful world. And despite this sinful world. And that God will one day, as we're saying this morning, he will recreate the new heaven and the new earth.

But in his wisdom, he has seen fit to allow sin to come into the world, wherever it came from in the first place. Where did it come from?

Where did it originate from? We don't know. We simply don't know. All we have here is how it came into the world. And it came in through this being that we call the serpent, that Genesis chapter 3 calls the serpent, a speaking serpent.

There are so many questions that arise. Was there really a speaking serpent? He's obviously not an ordinary serpent, because ordinary serpents don't speak.

[15:27] And they didn't in those days either. Just the same way as animals just don't speak. Serpents don't speak. So what are we to make of this?

Is this some kind of, is this some kind of, of, of, a, is this some kind of symbolic representation of, of sin coming into the world?

No. I believe we have to stop, and we have to take God at his word. And, and we, we, the other, the reason I do so is because, there are other parts of the Bible that go back, to, the garden of Eden, and to the speaking serpent.

And it tells us, for example, Jesus himself. He says this in John chapter 8, verse 44. You, he's talking to the unbelieving, scribes and Pharisees. He says, you are of your father, the devil. And your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning. He is a liar, and the father of lies.

[16:30] In Revelation chapter 12, in verse 9, we read this, and the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil, and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.

Revelation 20, in verse 2, we read this, and he sees the dragon, that ancient serpent. So here's the New Testament, and it's recognizing that this being, in Revelation, and in Jesus, and in the scribes, and the Pharisees, that Jesus talks about, is none other than the serpent, the serpent in chapter 3

of Genesis.

And for some reason, he took on the body, and the being of a serpent, in order to make approach, to the woman.

Now, of course, you know, the command that God had given, to Adam and Eve, that he told them, that of all the trees, in the garden, that they could eat, from whatever they wanted, except for one. And the tree of the knowledge, of good and evil, was the forbidden tree. They weren't to eat, from that tree. And that, of course, was what the serpent, focused on, when he began, to speak to Eve, about what God, had actually said.

[17 : 51] And the question, then arises, when was it, that the woman, actually sinned? And there's no point, I don't think there's any, merit, in making much of, oh, it was the woman, that sinned first, and not the man.

Well, okay, so there may have been, a few seconds in between. What does that prove? Does that, let the man off, in some way? It doesn't. It doesn't. They both fell.

They both disobeyed. They both knew, perfectly well, what God had asked, and what God had commanded, and both of them, by listening to the serpent, they both fell. And in so doing, they brought sin, and death, into the world.

When though, did she first sin? It's a very interesting question, isn't it? As you read through there, you can maybe read it later on, and try and work this out. I mean, that question has been asked, many, many times.

When was it? Was it just when she reached out her hand, and took the fruit, or was it sometime beforehand? Was it when she began to doubt, the truth of God's word?

[18 : 55] You'll notice that, that's the one thing, that the serpent, homed in on, right away. He said, did God really say? Did God actually say? You see what he's doing?

He's questioning, God's word. And he still does today. That's the one thing, that he'll say to you, when you read your Bible. Is this really true?

Is this really, to be taken seriously? And of course, as soon as we begin, to listen to that, as soon as we begin, to go down that road, then, you end up, going down, the wrong road.

Perhaps she was resentful, at the fact that, there was one thing, she couldn't do, when the suggestion, was put into her head. Did God actually say, you shall not eat, of the tree of the garden?

The woman said to the serpent, we may not eat, the fruit of the garden, but, God said, you shall not eat, of the fruit of the tree, or you shall touch it.

[19 : 55] Now, God had never said, that you shall not touch it. But, obviously, this, perhaps, there had been resentment, in the woman's mind.

Was it when the woman, began to believe, when the serpent, promised her, that her eyes, would be opened, and she would be like, God's? When she began to believe it?

Or was it her pride, trying to reach, a level, which she, which God, hadn't given to her, beforehand? Pride affects, every one of us. Was that the first time, that she sinned?

Or was it because, she desired, she had this desire, that she knew, that was evil? Well, in any case, whenever she, she actually, took that first step, in her own mind, on, or whenever, she sinned, and as did, Adam.

And, disobedience was, the final, step, that brought, the carnage, into, her own self, and into, her own family, and into the garden, and into the world, it really was, the most devastating, single moment, in all the world, and it was, the moment, which this world, changed, from being a place, of perfection, and peace, and harmony, to a world, full of fear, and chaos.

[21 : 20] What were the results? I often think, it's, interesting, to compare, to try, and compare, none of us, can possibly, appreciate, a world, without, sin, and sadness, and wrongdoing, because, all of us, have been born, into, a fallen world, but I, I often wonder, what must it have been like, to live, in the peace, and the contentment, and the unbroken joy, the changeless joy, every day, you'd wake up, you'd never wake up, the wrong side of the bed, you'd never get grumpy, there'd be nothing, to get grumpy about, there would be no, cause for sadness, there'd be no fallouts, everything, would be done in harmony, but never any, disappointment, never any fear, never any worry, never any, never any, coldness, never any, insecurity, can you imagine, and when you begin, to imagine that, then you begin, to appreciate, what we lost, what Adam and Eve lost, and I reckon, as soon as that step, was taken, all of a sudden, this, this, this, this feeling, would have come, thundering into their hearts, and they, they would have known, in an instant, that something,

catastrophic, had gone wrong,

I, I really believe that, I believe in a moment of time, that they were just changed, from, perfection, to, to, to, a, a state, which was, full, of all the things, that you and I, are so used to, that we hardly think of them, anymore, the first of these, was disappointment, it must have been disappointment, because, the serpent, had said to her, that, they were, that, they would be like gods, it didn't happen, he didn't keep his promise, where was that, new level, of humanity, that she was promised, by the serpent, the serpent, never keeps his promises, just like he'll say, to someone, who's an unbeliever, tonight, it's best, not to believe, in Jesus, your life, will be happier, and more fulfilled, and you'll make, the most of your life, by keeping away, from the gospel, and not reading your bible, and not taking anything, to do, with Jesus Christ, you'll promise you, everything, and it won't happen, it'll be nothing, but disappointment, because at the end of the day, the bible's promises, will come true, you will find yourself, in front of God, and you'll be lost, where then, for with all, for all the promises, that the devil makes, that the serpent makes, it's always the same, he hasn't stopped, Jesus said, he's a liar, from the beginning, and that's what, what Eve discovered, but it was too late, she was filled, with disappointment, all she saw, was instead of being, elevated to a new, level of humanity, where she would, have a better life, you'll never have, a better life, if you don't listen, to God, if you work away, from God, and take a step, away from God, you'll never, ever, have a better life, it will only, lead to shame, and that's what she, all of a sudden, she, she realized, can you imagine, it's like, and I hope I'm not being, I don't mean to be rude, it's not rudeness at all, but can you imagine, what it'd be like, if, if, if clothes fell off, all of a moment, right, that's the way, it must have been, she must have just, been absolutely, devastated, all of a sudden, that's what it says, it says that, that her eyes were opened, all right, that was absolutely true, but she saw that she was naked, and she saw her husband was naked, and, and, for the, beforehand, it wasn't a problem, it wasn't an issue, it wasn't anything, it was in a perfect world, but all of a sudden, the reason why we wear clothes, is because of this very thing, is to cover the shame, and there's a natural shame, and that, of course, it reflects the kind of world, that we live in, the, the, the, the, exactly what we read here, so instead of, instead of fulfilling his promise, and them enjoying this greater humanity, that, that the devil promised them, they were filled with shame, and they ran, you can imagine, that they would run, and hide, and, sewed themselves fig leaves, but the, the other thing, it didn't, it didn't stop there, that was only the beginning, there was also fear, every one of us, knows what fear is, every one of us, from the oldest, to the youngest, we all know, what fear is, that shouldn't be, if the world, had remained, a perfect place, there wouldn't be any fear, you might say, well what about the fear of the Lord, that's beginning, surely we should fear God, but that's a different kind of fear, the fear of the Lord, is a fear that loves God, and that wants to be with God, and wants to, wants to serve God, and wants to know him, the kind of fear, that she, that Adam and Eve, experienced there, was one which they dreaded,

God, for the first time ever, I don't know how long it was, between their creation, and their fall, I don't know, people have speculated on that, some people think, that it wasn't long, well who knows, but, they experienced fear, do you know of course, how awful fear is, sometimes, you can have irrational fear, sometimes we fear things, without reason, and, we, we, we become afraid, like when you wake up, in the middle of the night, sometimes, at three o'clock in the morning, you don't know why, you're panicking, but you are, you're thinking of all the, has that never happened to you, that, that, you think of all the worst things, that could possibly happen, the accidents that could happen, the illness that could happen, that you could lose your family, or, or, or, or someone else, or, or whatever, and, and you begin to have this irrational, it's all gone in the morning, can you imagine, that wasn't there, none of that was there, and then there are things in the world, that we do legitimately fear,

I don't need to tell you what they are, there are many, many young people here tonight, and, one of the, the, one of the big problems, that I hear being discussed, amongst young people, is what, are they worried about, what are they afraid of, what are they worried about, about the future, and it's, it's a, it's a real problem, in, in, in, within young people, I'm told, but, we live in a world, that's full of, of fear, and then, it doesn't stop there, because, when God, came into the garden, and this was the moment, that, beforehand, they had loved, more than anything else, there was no problem, with God coming into the garden, to be with them, and to speak to them, and to converse with them, and to give them his company, his close fellowship, this was what they looked forward to, but now, it was the last thing, they wanted, as soon as they heard him, coming into the garden, whatever that

means, that he came into the garden, that he walked in the garden, well, we don't know what that means, but, but it's,

[28 : 55] God is making himself, patently clear to us, in this passage, and, they ran, they ran, and God asked them, why, where are you, Adam, why are you running, why are you hiding, because I was naked, who told you, that you were naked, and, he said, I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid, what he should have said, was I was afraid, because I had done wrong, you see, he's already, evading responsibility, he's trying to pass the buck, onto someone else, trying to blame his wife, this is the next thing, that he did, he blamed, his wife, and so, she of course, blamed, the serpent, and so, sin, came into, the world, and the world, has suffered for it, ever since, we live in a broken, fragile, fearful, ugly world, a world that is full, of dread, and catastrophe, where there are victims, and where there is agony, and pain, and suffering, and where there is pride, and deceitfulness, and hatred, a world that has gone, so hopelessly, and badly wrong, and you can't blame God for it, you can only blame, our foolishness,

Adam and Eve, and their foolishness, and thank the Lord tonight, that God's message, did not stop, at Adam, where are you, or even who told you, that you were naked, God went on, in this very chapter, and he said to the serpent, he said that he would put, an enmity, that means, a hostility, in future years, between what he called, the seed, of the woman, and the seed, of the serpent, and the Bible, is full, page after page, of that hostility, that there was, between, the children, that were born, to the woman, who loved the Lord, that was the seed, of the woman, the offspring, of the woman, were those, who loved, and served, and worshipped God, but the seed, or the offspring, of the serpent, they too, were human beings, but instead, of loving, and honouring, and worshipping God, they, they, try to, make the most, for themselves, and try to, better their own lives, and live, as if God didn't exist, and even today, we live in a world, in which, millions of people, run, to and fro, and try, to, try to achieve, what they want, for themselves, and push God, out of the picture, I wonder, if that's you tonight, I wonder, if, I wonder, which seed, you belong to, which offspring, you belong to, the offspring, that worships God, through Jesus Christ, and that serves him, because God goes on, in this very verse, and he says this, in verse 15, which is the first, announcement, of the gospel, verse 15, I will put enmity, between you, and the woman, and between your offspring, and her offspring, he, shall bruise, your head, now he's talking, to the serpent, and he's saying, that at a time to come, years to come, someone will be born, he, a single person, a male, he will be born, and he will bruise, your head, although you, will bruise, his heel, now you work out, what that means, work it out, I will put offspring, in other words, from now on, there's going to be, two humanities, humanity, that serves, and worships God, and a humanity, that hates God, and wishes he didn't exist, in the humanity, that worships God, someone is going to be born, from that humanity, he, will bruise, your head, who do you think that is, who is that one, single, male, individual, that was going to be born, in time to come, that would bruise, the head, of the serpent, was it not Jesus, who else was it, if it wasn't Jesus,

Jesus, was born, of a woman, that's what the Bible, tells us, it tells us, that he, was the son of God, and the son of Mary, God, and man, sent into the world, by God, in order to destroy, the Bible says, the works, of the serpent, the devil, how did he do that, he did that, by becoming, by becoming, a sacrifice, for us, there was only one way, in which, our sin, could be atoned for, and that's of course, the great question, what can I do, about my sin, how can I be right, with God, if I live, as a sinner, in a sinful world, how can I be right, with God, is there any possible way, of being reconciled, to God, you know, you ask people that, and they say to you, well that's okay, you just follow, whatever religion, you happen to favor, you just because, there are many roads, that leads to God, God is at the top, of the mountain, and you just take, whatever roads closest to you, or whatever road you want, you've heard that story, before haven't you, people trying to suggest, that it's as easy as that, but that assumes, that there's a mountain, it assumes, that God's at the top, of the mountain, it assumes, that there's many roads, and there are ways to God, and it assumes, that once you get, to the top of the mountain,

God's going to accept you, it's a lie, there is no mountain, there are no roads, there are no roads, it's a myth, and the reason is, because, because who's going to make the road, I don't find many people, in this world, who are desperate, to be right with God, how many people, have you met, who you go up to them, and say, would you like to be right, with God, and you'll say, not really, how many people, do you know, who really are desperate, to find the Lord, and to be right with him, to be forgiven, all that, no, they just don't exist, that's a myth, religion, is a way, of doing the best we

can, and hopefully, by earning my way, hopefully, one day, God will say, that's okay, you can come in, because you've been better, than other people, but that's not, the way it works, why should God, accept any one of us, every one of us, by virtue of the fact, that we belong, to the human race, we're all lost, we're all fallen, and that means, we're liable, the Bible tells us, to the punishment, of God, and that, is the stark reality, the fact is, that God alone, created a way, he created, the road, back to himself, and that road, is himself,

[36 : 18] Jesus said, I am the way, he didn't say, I am the way, he didn't say, I am one of the ways, he didn't say, here is the way, I've come to show you, which way, he said, I am the way, the truth, and the life, then he went on to say, no one, comes to the father, except through me, you know, that's one of the most, devastating, the boldest, statement, that you will ever, come across, and it's one of the reasons, why people, abhor, Jesus Christ, they abhor, the Christian faith, because it dares, to say, that there is no other way, to God, except, through Jesus Christ, it's not the Christian faith, that says that, it's Jesus himself, that says, I am the way, the truth, and the life, and when he said that, he says, there's no other way, there's no other truth, there's no other life, I am the way, the truth, and the life, so either tonight, he's telling the truth, despite how utterly, extraordinary, it must be, and it must sound to you, or else, he's the greatest liar, that ever walked, the face of the earth, because either he's telling the truth, or he's not, if he's not, then don't listen to him, but if he's the truth, then run to him, how can you not run to him, to me anyway, reading through the pages, of Matthew,

Mark, Luke, and John, there is no question, in my mind, that he's proved himself, over and over, and over again, that he is the way, he's the son of God, he's God in the flesh, God amongst us, God with us, having come down, into this world, because we were, incapable, of taking any road, even if these roads, existed to God, we were unwilling, and unable, to take any road to God, but God, came into this world, to rescue us, from our sin, through the cross, so that by his death, on the cross, we could be reconciled, and set free, and forgiven, and washed, and justified, and brought back, to the place, where God wants us to be, this is the most marvelous news, in all the world, that we could be right, with God tonight, so take that way, come to Jesus, trust in him, ask him, to come into your heart, to come into your life, to change you, to take away, all the corruption, and the filth, and the dirt, and the shame, and to turn you around, to follow him, for his glory, let's pray, Father in heaven, we pray once again, that you will bring your word, to us with great power, and we thank you, for the explanation, that we don't have an answer, to all the questions, that we ask, as we read the Bible, but we have the answer, to the most important, the most foundational, fundamental question of all, and that is, how can we be right with God, we thank you for the love, that brought Jesus, into the world, for God so loved the world, that he gave, his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life, we pray that you will give us, that life now, to give that life, to anyone tonight, here who needs it, who needs to hear, the greatest news, in all the world, and who needs to discover, the greatest person, who ever lived, in Jesus name, Amen.