

Rebellion

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[0 : 00] This is the last of our short series on beginnings, just to remind us we've been looking at various things if you're visiting with us tonight, I hope that you're not coming into too cold and that you'll not be disadvantaged to gain something from the study this evening.

But we're coming, we've seen how important and significant these beginning chapters, these early chapters in Genesis are for us. And we've seen again and again that they are shrouded in mystery as well as very revealing to us.

We've seen that every word is weighted in these early chapters, that nothing's wasted and this account is given to us so that we have a significant and important fundamental understanding of who we are and why we need a Savior, why we need God, why we need Jesus Christ in our lives. In some ways, these early chapters of Genesis are a little bit like the black box recorder that people will look for when an aircraft has crashed. They look for that black box recorder to find out what has happened, what went wrong and why the plane crashed. Now it might not give you all the information that you would look for, there might be a lot of questions that are left even having listened to the black box recording, but nonetheless it will give some vital clues as to what went wrong and that is vaguely similar to these early chapters in Genesis. They begin to help us to understand what's gone wrong and speak about our relationship with God and why that relationship is broken and why Jesus needed to come and it all fits in so well. And as we saw this morning in that song that we learned this morning that creation speaks of God's glory, it's lost in the sin, it's redeemed through the second Adam, Jesus and it will be renewed in glory in the new heavens and in the new earth. So there's continuity with it all and it's not random, it's not out of date, it's not fable. I was speaking with Neil last week. Neil was telling me about some author or preacher or speaker who was talking about Jesus and the famous trilogy of responses that we must have to Jesus, the C. S. Lewis responses that Jesus is either a liar, a lunatic or his Lord.

And this author or preacher was saying and Neil was saying to me through him that there's a fourth one now possibly that people need to consider and that is legend. Liar, lunatic, Lord or legend.

[3 : 01] So many people would regard even particularly these early accounts in Genesis, it's just legend, just human stories of beginnings to keep us going. But we recognize something much more significant in this theological account, not a scientific account as we've seen but a theological account of beginnings. And all I want to do is I want to ask five quick questions and then leave one or two principles with us. But within these five questions and principles are two main things I want you to say. So I hope that doesn't sound too confusing and it makes hopefully sense to us.

So we have this account of what theologians have come to regard as the fall, the rebellion of humanity against God. And we've seen the significant and important place of humanity in God's eyes, the image bearing, the relationship, the love, the honesty, the openness, the nakedness which we didn't really speak much about, was that kind of sense of nothing there to hide a complete honest and open relationship with one another and with God. Five questions very quickly.

We'll start with the first question which is who's the serpent? Well, the serpent, we're told, was more crafty than any of the wild animals that Lord God had made.

And other parts of scripture, probably notably down in Revelation, Satan is spoken of as the serpent. And we recognize from the rest of the Bible that that is exactly what is happening here. We have Satan coming and tempting our first parents, Adam and Eve. Now we've spoken about the reality of evil that Adam and Eve would have known about that reality, would have been seeking to protect the creation that they were steered over from it. And here is this serpent, more crafty than any of the wild animals that Lord God had made. Not made then. Not made as a wild animal, different, separate, unique. We don't know a great deal about him at this stage.

[5 : 31] We don't know why he took this form or what it meant for him to take this form, this animalistic form, but he does. And we regard him scripturally and biblically as a fallen angel. It's one who was in God's presence, who previously had God's love and attention and closeness, but who himself rebelled against that. And mysteriously through that, our evil was introduced and rebellious and introduced into this universe. He had wisdom, he had guile, he had enchantment, he had attractiveness, and he has, comes in the form of, and we don't again, don't know much about this, one of the wild animals. So remind us that in that early creation there was wild animals, as well as tame animals, domesticated animals. And what did their wildness consist in this perfect universe? We don't really know. But there was different species and types and categories and cultures of animals.

Some would have been possibly much more as we would regard it domesticated, some may not have been. But that is what we're told, the form that he took. Second question is why did he go to Eve?

We're told that he spoke to the woman and he questioned her, why did he do that? There's no real answers given to that question, but there may be some reasons for it. It may have been that he chose. And the reason I'm asking that question is because there may be some principles that we can take out of that in terms of temptation for ourselves and the dangers that are involved. It may have been that Adam himself was more guarded than Eve. Having been given this leadership, headship, role and stewardship, may he have been more aware of what was happening. The prohibition that God gave that you shouldn't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was given to him. And you know how it is, don't you? When you're given a prohibition by someone, sometimes you're more aware of it than the next person is. And sometimes the next person is more able to break that than you are because you've seen it first hand, you've received it first hand. It may have been something to do that. Eve was less immediate at that level to the prohibition possibly.

It could have been that Adam himself had more intimate knowledge of the wild animals. Having been among them, having named them, having been part of their community as it were.

[8 : 36] It may have been that Satan was deliberately choosing to usurp God's order and choosing to immediately move away from speaking to Adam who is the head of that marriage, the relationship, relational head as we saw this morning, and speaking to Eve instead.

And possibly more than anything, he probably recognized that Eve would be more persuasive in speaking to Adam than he would be. So we see subtlety and wisdom and temptation and guile in what he was doing. What does he say? The third question, what did he say?

Well, he asked a question, did God really say you must not eat from any tree of the garden? And then he goes on to say you will not surely die, for God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you'll be like God knowing good and evil.

He uses deception and he elicits a sense of desire from her. He questions God's, you know, we've seen this before, haven't we, in a sense, the principles of temptation that he comes in.

He questions God right from the beginning, that's what he does. He questions God, well, is that really, did God say that? You sure? Did you hear him right? Oh, yeah, hearing's perfect, okay, you must have heard. But is that what he said? You sure that Adam pass it on, right? And he begins to question what God says and then he kind of distorts the whole reality of what God says and the reality of what God has done for them. He questions God's goodness and God's generosity and God's reasonableness. He says, you know, you're not going to die when this happens? No, God's wrong. He's questioning God's honesty. You know, and he said, no, he's, God's hiding this from you. He doesn't want you to have this because, you know, when you have this, you'll be just like him. That's what it'll be like. And God's deceptive, he's keeping you from this amazing reality and experience of the knowledge of good and evil. You'll not die. He questions

[11 : 06] God's honesty. He makes God out to be a liar. Invites her to abandon trust in him and offers her something she doesn't have, a knowledge of good and evil. He doesn't have that. God has that.

God has that and he's able to hold that intention. He's able to keep that knowledge and still be perfect. She doesn't have that. And he's in a sense, he's saying, look, you can cross that boundary. You too can be like God. You too can be like God. You can have that knowledge. You can be independent. You don't need God over you. He's made this, but he's keeping this from you. And he's twisting and turning and confusing and questioning all of this honest and pure relationship that

they have with God. The fourth question is, what did Adam and Eve do?

And the woman saw that fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye and also desirable for gaining wisdom. She took it and ate it. She gave some to her husband. Who was with her?

And he ate it. So they entered into this astonishingly destructive choice of rebelling against God. Eve Wavard, she entered into dialogue with this satanic serpent type figure. She herself distorted God's word, didn't she? After he questioned her about what God was going to do, she said, well, you must not eat the tree that's in the middle of the garden. That was right. Then she said, and you must not touch it. Well, there's no record of that. There's no record of God making that prohibition that you mustn't touch it. She was making the prohibition out bigger and worse than it was.

[13:07] God didn't say you mustn't touch it. Well, certainly it's not recorded for us in the previous chapter, just that you mustn't eat of it. But she said, mustn't eat of it? He's not even allowing us to touch it. Making out God to be something worse than he was. She's wavering. She's already herself beginning to add to God's word and take away from what God is wanting them to be. And critically, she gives in to what he says, saying that this tree was good for food, pleasing to the eye, which presumably she knew anyway, but was now desirable also for gaining wisdom. She took it and ate it.

This is hugely significant. And we remember Adam is fully compliant and complicit in this as well. He himself saw, he was with her, he liked, he craved, he allowed his role to be abrogated, he forgot God and they conspired together. Now people will say, of course, my word, this is a huge consequence for choosing to eat an apple or something like that, as if it's some insignificant thing that, you know, we might associate ourselves doing as children in the back garden or the neighbor's back garden as I used to do, climb the wall of the garden into the next door neighbor's tree and steal his pears from the tree because they were sweet and good, much better than the rotten hard, bullet-like pears that were in our garden in the mants.

He'd lull a big juicy pears in his garden. It wasn't that funny. But we associate it with that. We associate that the fall of humanity was trivial, little steed-haggling of a piece of fruit from a tree. What a fable that is, what a ridiculous fable.

But there's so much unsaid here. There's so much that is not noted. There's so much that we choose to ignore and we allow to become fable because here, this isn't like the little boy or girl that steals something and puts it in their pocket. What we have here is a state of being where humanity, as it was created by God, was in this gloriously perfect, good and beautiful relationship with God where everything was provided. Everything is yours, God said. Everything is yours. And there was this perfect relationship of no death, no decay, no old, growing old and decrepit and painful and illness and all that went with that. A glorious universe in which there was this perfect relationship and this was the test of that relationship. Whether they were willing to allow God to be God and they were willing to remain as created beings, as once God says himself, he had made from the dust.

[16:12] Were they willing or were they going to be challenged and given and respond to the reality of evil that they knew was there and rebel against God utterly and powerfully and catastrophically rebelling against God as Adam was their representative head of humanity. And we know the significance of that, don't we? And I presume that they began and had some kind of understanding of the significance of that because not only were they made in God's image but they recognized and knew that they themselves would be image bearers to all humanity from them of which we're apart.

So we bear that rebellious and broken image and we ourselves become rebels. A hugely significant event mentioned so briefly albeit but hugely significant and there's a universe of untold reality behind this about the importance and the brutality and the greed and the awfulness of what they did. The other thing is it's not like our temptation because when we're tempted there's this temptation comes and hooks us and it's easy for temptation because we're sinners albeit grace touched and forgiven by God we're sinners if we are grace touched and if not we remain separated from Him but we can't do anything but give in to temptation unless we come to Christ and know His power and resource. That was not the case for Adam and Eve.

That was not the case. Temptation for them was hugely different from what it is for us and I don't know exactly what it means in the same way I don't know exactly what temptation meant for Jesus because Jesus also is not like one of us on that level but there was the possibility of giving in to temptation but there was also unlike us the possibility of rejecting temptation and probably although

it's unstated a probationary period after which they would be able to eat from the tree. Not of the knowledge of good and evil but the tree of life and live eternally free from the temptations of Satan and his wiles but they chose not to do that.

And my fifth question on this passage is what immediately happened? What immediately happened? Well there was a half truth wasn't there? Was the devil giving a half truth? You shall not surely die well that's right they didn't immediately die physically at that point but they did immediately die spiritually. The relationship with God from that moment was broken.

It was spiritual death entered into the world and there was a stunning stunning anti-climax stunning. This knowledge of good and evil was the most anti-climactic knowledge in the history of humanity. All they really recognized was that they were naked. They covered themselves and then they felt shame in their relationship with God. It was a new experience they hadn't had that before it never felt they need to hide from themselves cover themselves or more importantly hide from God. They are all of a sudden uneasy about themselves uneasy about their relationship with God. There's nothing but a raw physicality to confront them and the guilt of knowing immediately knowing having heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the cool of the day they hid from him and that's hugely symbolic hugely significant hugely important. They sensed his judgment as they'd never sensed it before. Tragic loss of innocence of life of relationship of purity of goodness of perfection of eternity of all these things they couldn't have been better off than they were in that original condition. They didn't need to give in but they chose to give into temptation and as the representative heads of humanity entered allowed sin to enter into the human race which has been the core of a broken and cursed and miserable and death filled experience for humanity. That's why this is important as image bearers we experience all the rottenness of what transpired in these events which is why Jesus is absolutely stunning.

[22 : 20] It's astonishing that from even this and before the creation of the world this reality which fills us with mystery and with unanswered questions and yet in its simplicity it makes things clear for us. That's why Jesus Christ is so incredible and we aren't even even read about this promise of the Lord the Redeemer God who in giving this story to Moses and his people is reminding them that he's redeeming them even from this point he's redeeming them and he's going to send the seed of the woman who will crush the serpent's head and his heel will be bruised. Astonishing because that therefore still impacts on your life and on mine because we are sons and daughters of Adam that's who we are and we have that same need of a Redeemer as they did and he's the only Redeemer and it's you know it's big stuff isn't it in our small and significant lives that he loves us so much that he's gone to this extent in order to buy us back and to give us a future and to ultimately introduce us into this new heavens in the New Earth. It's a perspective we need to recapture.

We'll just so befuddled with today and with my life and with my deeds and he's saying take a just take a step back and look at the bigger picture look at what I've revealed and expressed about beginnings just listen to the black box for a moment and hear about why the great crash happened and what it's the devastation that has happened and what has resulted in it and remind ourselves of the glory of Jesus and can I just say one or two things just as I close about one or two principles I know it's dangerous to take principles from this because it's quite unique and as I've said Adam's temptation Christ's temptation is different from our temptation but I still think there's one or two principles we can take and apply carefully to our own lives.

We remember however Satan appeared I don't know how what he looked like or whether he was attractive to Eve or what she certainly was caught off guard with him and we need to remember that in our own lives in 2 Corinthians 11 and verse 14 we remember when he's speaking about false apostles now this takes us right into the church right into our Christian lives and the church community and he says for such men are false apostles deceitful workmen masquerading as apostles of apostles of Christ and no wonder he says for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light it's not surprising then if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness their end will be what their actions deserve it's another most solemn thing you've ever heard that's saying masquerades is an angel of light and he comes very often is the voice of reason plausible attractive sometimes even spiritual but he hates you and he wants to drive you to the pit of destruction that's his task that's his role but he comes as an angel of light so church and knowledge Bible insight he has them all the truth knows it back to front I'll argue upside down the truth he knows it and that's how he comes and we are asked as Christians to be on our guard spiritually against his wiles and against his attacks so you see well that's that's very depressing he knows the truth sometimes

comes as an angel of light if he comes like an apostle of Christ well what hope of I have understanding him what's the temptation he will always bring his temptation will always be to drive you away from your relationship with

Christ from God that is what will set him apart anything that comes that questions God's grace and drives you from God's grace and from his word and from his worthiness that tempts us to consider God as a liar a cheat or untrustworthy come from the pit of hell now it's not against questions it's not saying that we need to be foolishly and blindly accepting everything wrong with questions but we need to be wise in recognizing the difference between questions that will drive us to greater faith or at least to submission to Christ recognizing there are not answers to all that we would love answers to and those that drive us away from his love and his forgiveness and his grace and his joy so what's it in your life anything that drives you away from Jesus Christ be very careful about getting into bed with it be very careful about getting into bed with anything any argument any way of life any relationship that takes you away from the love of Jesus that is our only hope he is our only way and his grace is our only choice and we need to be aware like we learn from Eve the danger of distorting God's word adding to it as she did making God more more of a prohibitionist than he was sometimes taking away from it we need to be aware of wanting instant gratification as she wanted and Adam wanted we need to sometimes beware about reasoning with the devil and with temptation and sometimes be like

Joseph when he was tempted to sleep with Potiphar's wife and she appeared ravishly beautiful to him and offered her body to him he simply ran away there was no reasoning with it there was no sitting down and discussing he simply ran and there's times when we need to respond in the same way with the evil one and with his temptations and we need to always remember the consequences you know that don't you in your own life I certainly do in mind consequences of giving into temptation they're always hugely anti-climactic they're maybe great for a day or two but being tempted to cheat on your wife being tempted to cheat on the tax man being tempted to do things that you know God doesn't want you to do because he loves you can be very attractive very pleasing to the eye but hugely anti-climactic and lead us into a relationship of shame with our God and he loves us and he doesn't want us to be in a relationship of shame with him that's why he sent Jesus it's a spiritual matter and so he requires of us which is why we sung these Psalms about confession the important when did you last confess your sins to the living God and I don't mean the generic and forgive all my sins amen at the end of a grace or the end of our prayer I mean when we were honestly aware of our failure before him giving into temptation choosing the sweet sinful desires which we all know are sweet and sinful and attractive there's no attraction to them they wouldn't they wouldn't be what's not a thorn bush that that that Eve was tempted to to try and get a rotten sour gooseberry from it was something that was attractive and beautiful and pleasing to the eye and that's what it is isn't it for us that's what it is don't we don't sit practically and think well I don't give into temptation because of course we do and of course we're tempted by it and but the reality in Christ is that we've got a Holy Spirit and the power of God to take us back to in a sense I think there's differences but to take us back we're Adam and Eve where where they could have said no now until we come to Christ we can't say no we can't please God we can't do right Sabbath observance going to church being moral it's worthless unless we're in Christ but in Christ some of the power of the

[32 : 03] Spirit we can have the right motive for saying no and motive is because Lord we love you and because you're worthy and because we can take a step back and we can consider the consequences of choosing to rebel against you and I guess in conclusion it's a reminder just of high-handed sin do be very careful about that we all sin we all sin all the time we all need forgiveness 70 times 7 sometimes we need forgiveness so much we're afraid to ask for it but sometimes we need forgiveness so much we need to ask for it and we'd say Lord give me back the years the locusts have eaten because I've messed up everything but beware of high-handed sin where we go into sin deliberately say yeah I know this is wrong I'm what I do it anyway and I know God will forgive me all I can say that's a really dangerous thing to do it's a dangerous place to be and don't mess with that and don't allow it to become a I'm you know I sin all the most that grace be abound and may it never be may it never be and because it's a misunderstanding of all of grace so may it never be let's bow our heads and pray Lord God we ask and pray that it might never be that we because we know we do it that we would sin high-handedly we never treat sin lightly and think it's insignificant and unimportant we would remind ourselves as Christians how the great cost to set us free the amazing cost of God becoming man and living that life and then dying on the cross and

facing Satan and all his power and all his raging evil on that tree and may we really sit down and meditate on that and think about it and remind ourselves that that is an unbelievable cost that someone would do that for me and may it transform our lives because there's nothing else that will and we know there's nothing we can do to make ourselves right with you and the awfulness of what happened at the beginning has gone through the centuries and is only corrected in Jesus may we not sin high-handedly we also not think sin doesn't matter we would not shrug our shoulders and and say well it doesn't really matter because I'm redeemed anyway may grace not be cheap for us but Lord help it to be something that we treasure and value may we not be grudging Christians may we not do your will unhappily but really always looking over our shoulder and wanting to be rebellious wanting to sin wanting to do all the wrong things forgive us when that's so often our attitude and it's so often the way we live the grudging grace and dragging our feet spiritually rather Lord give us that great sense of joy and wholeness and healing and beauty in that relationship with you forgive us when we don't see hoping our eyes to see and fill us with your spirit we pray in Jesus name Amen