

# Things fall apart

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[ 0 : 00 ] Genesis 3 Genesis 3 Genesis 3

Genesis 3 Basel 10 I thought I'd start the sermon just with a quote from a poem. W.B. Yeats wrote an interesting poem, gosh, 100 years ago, called The Second Coming. And it starts off with quite a famous line, turning and turning in the widening gyre.

The falcon cannot hear the falconer. Things fall apart. The center cannot hold. Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world. The blood-dimmed tide is loosed and everywhere. The ceremony of innocence is drowned. The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity. Things fall apart. The center cannot hold. Anarchy is loosed upon the world.

Funny how, and as it was written 100 years ago, funny how things haven't changed much. Here in South Africa, economic forces and political chaos swirl around us, threatening to undo our nation. In America, if you listen to the news, social and sexual chaos threaten to drown out innocence.

Good men do nothing, and the worst among us shout, filled with indignation, pay back the money, give us our land, etc., etc. Something is deeply wrong. Something is fundamentally wrong with the world. We all know what life in South Africa is like.

[ 2 : 48 ] Suffice it to say, when you scratch underneath the headlines, you find even more pain. You find even more regret, and you find even more suffering than you just read in the headlines. And so we've got to ask ourselves the question, what's happened to the world?

How on earth did the world get like this? Hopefully our passage today can explain how things fell apart. And because it's God's word, it tells us truthfully what went wrong.

It will give us an accurate description of what happened. Now, before we get into Genesis 3, we just get a snapshot of Genesis 1 and 2. And if you've been here, you would have realized or would have heard about how amazing the world is and what it was intended for.

Now, it's important that we understand when we come to the Bible, it doesn't start with sin and death. It's a small point to make, but it's a very important point to make. The scriptures don't start with sin and death.

Now, every other story that we've got in the world that tells us how the world starts, starts with sin and death. Nick would have mentioned some of the ancient creation stories from the old pagan nations at the time that Genesis was written.

[ 3 : 59 ] And they all start with fighting and people, gods killing each other, and then their blood drips down to earth. And from that blood, that's where people come from. So we were born out of turmoil in a sense and born into turmoil.

Evolution is one of those other stories. It can only happen because of death. Evolution only happens when people, or not people, whatever was there before, slowly but surely develops over time.

But you need death in order to do that. And so with evolution, you've got billions and billions of years of billions and billions of deaths in order to make life. Genesis is, or the scriptures are exactly the opposite.

You've got life that somehow turns into death. And thank God that the story doesn't end there, but tells us how to get back into life again. And so hopefully I'll do a little bit of a storyline of the Bible today for us to see that.

What we saw is that when God made the world, he called it good. You remember that little word that occurs again and again in Genesis 1?

[ 5 : 05 ] God sees everything. He sees that it's good. At the end of Genesis chapter 1, by the way, you've got your Bibles here. You might just want to keep it open. Or if you've got your notes or something.

So Genesis 1, I think it's verse 31. God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. Now that word good is an important word, because it tells us what God thinks of the world that he's made.

But it's a technical word that tells us that God is happy with it. But why is he happy with it? Because it's doing the thing that it was made to do. Nick would have touched on those kinds of things.

So think, when God made the light, what does the light do? Well, it shines. So it's good. When he creates the world, what does it do? It turns on its axis. There's night and day. When he tells the waters, go over there, and the land to come up.

The waters go over there, and the land comes up. These things are all good. Something that is good is doing what it was designed and made for. Think of a car. A car is good when you turn your key in and it starts.

[ 6 : 06 ] That's a good car. I don't care if it's a Bugatti, a BMW. It can be a little city golf. If you turn your key in and that car starts, you're happy with it. If it leaks, it'll be more of a problem.

If the engine don't start, even more of a problem. Those are not good cars. A typical thing to mention, I mean, a pen is a good pen when it writes, and then you pick up the pen and it's dry. That's not a good pen or computer. Anything that doesn't work is therefore defined as not good. It's meant to work. It's meant to do what it was designed to do. People are no different.

We're good when we do what God created us to do. And we're bad when we decide, nah, we're going to do something else. Okay.

Along with goodness comes blessing. And we saw that in Genesis. I think Nick did a great job of that in Genesis last week. Blessing is really anything that makes life worth living.

[ 7 : 03 ] Anything that makes life easy, enjoyable, fun, exciting, and also makes sure that it works properly. I'm just, I mean, there's a more theological reason, word behind blessing.

The Hebrew word is barak, just in case you want to know that. But anyway, blessing both supports life and makes more life more possible.

Remember the picture in Eden. There's trees, there's rivers, there's gold lying in the ground. There's fruit. There's just lush, verdant, abundant life.

Okay. So that's what blessing is all about. So you've got goodness and you've got blessing. And you really want both. And when you put those two together, you've got life. Real life. The life that we were meant to have. The life that God was intending when he created the universe and the world and Adam and man and everything in it.

Complete and utter goodness. Everything working together all the time, leading to more and more creativity, more and more joy, and more and more worship. Obviously because you can't just have a good world and live in the world without reference to God.

[ 8 : 09 ] Otherwise, by definition, you're not being good. So everything works together. Here in our modern world, we come to church to worship. We don't think of our Monday to Friday, Monday to Saturday as being in worship.

But that was originally the case. And in some sense, it's the case again because of Christ. So goodness, blessing, and life are all swirling around in the beginning of the garden.

And also there's order and I guess in a sense hierarchy. You've got God placing man, Adam and Eve on the earth, in the garden to rule over the world.

So you've got hierarchy. You've got order. You've got goodness, blessing, and life. Now all those things working together are meant to continue. And I guess Adam in some sense was going to take the garden of Eden and sort of expand it throughout the whole world.

And Nick did a good job of, remember, the rivers flowing out of Eden. Okay. Now, so we're so far removed from this kind of life.

[ 9 : 10 ] You could imagine maybe there's a little dialogue between Adam and Eve just to give us an idea. Now, this is not from the Bible. This is from our own imagination. So take it with a pinch of salt. Anyway, there's Adam.

So just to give an idea of how these relationships work, could have worked, might have worked.

There's Adam and there's Eve. Eve. Adam's been told to be creative, to go out and till the earth and work it and make things.

And he calls Eve. Eve, come and look what I've made. It's amazing. Oh, what is it? Says Eve. Well, I took some stones from the river and I built them together. And the water comes out and shoots up into the air.

Oh, that's amazing. What? Like, how did you do that? I don't know. I just did it. What do you call it? I'm going to call it a fountain. It's so pretty. It's amazing. Adam, you are so clever. I'm so glad I married you. Have a big kiss. Okay. You look like you could do with one of my amazing mango, banana, coconut fruit cocktails.

[10:13] Thanks, Eve. You're so much. You're so sweet. You know how I love those cocktails. Just remember, don't put any of the fruit of the knowledge of the tree of good and evil in it. No, silly. Anyway. Anyway.

Let's go to some of that increasing and multiplying God told us to do. Okay. Okay. And off they go. Now, they're very happy together. Everything is working nicely there. Compliments are flowing backwards and forwards.

Adam is doing what he's meant to do. Eve is so impressed with him. God will come down every now and then and visit. Later on, you'll hear God walking in the cool of the garden, in the cool of the day. It seems that he would have come down like a boss to come and check on what his people are doing. Adam. But now think of how when your boss comes to visit you in your work or at school. Are there any kids? Have all the kids gone out? Yeah. Okay. Fine. Okay. You don't really want him to visit. You sort of go. Oh, okay. Have I been working? Yes. I've been working. But when God visited Adam and Eve, Adam would have run and said, Lord, come and look.

[11:14] I made this thing called a fountain. Eve would have said, come and look what Adam has made. It's amazing. What Nick mentioned earlier, God would have been pleased. He actually would have been. He would have said, that's amazing, Adam.

That's incredible. Well done. Now, the key to all of this is listening to the voice of God and living in obedience to it. When you do this, you'll be a good person experiencing goodness and blessing and living with harmony, your fellow man and with creation around you.

Now, Genesis 3 is how it all went badly and horribly wrong. But as you'll see with the Lord, there's always a silver lining. But in order to see the silver lining, we're just going to enter into the storm for a few minutes.

So the fall of man into sin. So that's the reading that we had. And there's some things that we need to look at and to remember and to take to heart. So how did we end up in this world where mankind doesn't want anything to do with God, where we fight each other all the time, and where the world is fighting back at us, and where everything ends in death and chaos and everything falls apart? How did we get there? Well, the first thing you'll see is that there's a snake and a little conversation with Eve on the side over there. Now, the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made.

[12:36] And he said to the woman, did God really say? Did God really say? Now, that little word really tells you everything you need to know. What he's doing is he's casting doubt on the word of God.

The whole problem starts with temptation. With the word saying, okay, yes, there's God.

Yes, he's told you what to do. But has God really said those things? So there's this little seed of doubt that gets planted in Eve's mind. What's happening here is this snake, and as Christians know, it's kind of really Satan.

But at this point, no one really knows who or what he is. He's kind of representing the created order in one sense. And so you've got creation. Instead of God telling man what to do and creation obeying man, you've got creation telling man who God is.

And of all things, a snake. Not like the wisest creature. Well, actually, it says he's one of the wisest creatures. He's more cunning and more crafty. Now, remember who God is.

[13:46] He's the creator. He's the Lord. What he says happens. His word creates reality. It's kind of truth incarnate. If God says, let there be light, there's light. Okay, and not just, I mean, the sun and the moon and the stars.

It's absolutely amazing. You would have thought, did God really? You don't even need to ask. You're Adam and Eve. What do you mean, did God? Yes, God said. What are we doing here? We're here because God said. God doesn't have a stutter. When he speaks, he means it. He only has to say it once. And when he speaks, he wants instant and happy obedience.

Do parents do that here? Instant and happy obedience with their kids? Okay, well, God is no different. He doesn't want you to do it later. He wants you to do it now. And he wants you to be happy while you do it. Now, of course, Eve should have been wiser.

She should have known. But we can't really blame her. Would any of us have fared any better? I don't think so. Now, so there's this little thing of, okay, did God really say?

[14:50] And we have to be a people that takes God at his word. Has God really said? Yes, he's really said. Now, because God's word defines reality, it's also reasonable.

It's understandable. It makes sense. It's not an arbitrary word. We have absolutely no reason to doubt it at all. When God speaks, he's the creator of communication.

It's not actually difficult to understand what we're supposed to do and not supposed to do. It's not like he's pretending and making it difficult for us. It's very clear. Don't eat from this tree over here. Yes, you're free to eat from every other tree, but don't eat from that tree.

Gee, I wonder what God, could he really, did he really mean he didn't have to eat that tree? Now, parents will know this. You've made something nice to eat.

You've put it out. Kids, don't touch that. Really? Don't really? Are you sure? Because, did mom? And then they eat it, and then later on you ask them, now what happened?

[15:55] Uh, uncle, what what told us we could eat it? Who, uncle, what what? I didn't say nothing about that. I told you not to eat it. Okay, so we make up all these little different rules and ideas about why we should do what God has told us not to do.

So the first step into sin really is to doubt God's word. And then the second step is to doubt God's character. Having got Eve to talk to him and not to call out to Adam or whatever, or to God and say, look, Lord, there's something going on here.

We should have stopped it. The snake kind of moves in for the killer blow. Listen, I don't think you should be trusting God. The fruit's not going to kill you. It's going to make you wise and high and mighty.

It's going to make you like God. God doesn't want that. He's lied to you. Verse 4, you will not surely die. I mean, he said to you, you're going to die.

And here's a snake saying, no, you're not really going to die. What? Notice also that Eve is already now looking at this fruit. She's stopped thinking about what God has told her to do.

[17:11] She's thinking maybe God was lying. Maybe he doesn't have the best interests at heart, my best interests, her best interests. Maybe he doesn't know everything about everything. Maybe we do need to decide for ourselves how to run our lives and make our own decisions in independence from him.

Martin Luther, the great reformer, said this about what happened here. The sin underneath all our sins is to trust the lie of the serpent that we cannot trust the love and grace of Christ and must take matters into our own hands.

And it's a very telling statement there. So you doubt God's word. You doubt his character. Maybe, you know, I don't think God really is going to do it.

You're calling him a liar. So essentially every time you sin, you're calling God a liar. The God that made you and that knows how the whole universe works. No, he doesn't understand.

I need to make my own decisions. And then finally Eve reaches out and takes the fruit. Okay, so you actually go into sin. Now there's no going back.

[18:25] It's done. Once you've sinned, you cannot go back and undo it. Time and action only flow in one direction. Yes, you can be sorry. Yes, you can try and fix it.

But it's been done. You've dropped the jar of milk. It's smashed on the floor. You can clean it up. But you can't undo what's happened. And it's a sad and terrible moment in world history.

And guess what? Adam is right there with her. You see where she says in verse 6. So I'll just read it. When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.

And she also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate it. Adam was right there. He should have stepped in.

He's the leader. He was meant to protect her. And he just stands by passively and does nothing. And it's the whole thing happened right in front of him.

[19:30] What a mess. We all know the saying, evil flourishes when good men do nothing. And boy, do we need good men in our time to stand up and to stop the evil that's in our world. Now, just to make a quick and interesting point here about the body parts.

The text goes out of its way to talk about hearing, looking, I guess taking or touching, and eating. So have a look at verse 1.

This is about hearing. The serpent was more crafty. He said to the woman, did God really say? Verse 2, verse 3.

But God did say you must not eat. So there's talking. You've got to hear the words that are happening. And you've got God telling you what to do. And you've got someone else trying to tell you what to do.

So who are you listening to when you're making these decisions in your life about what you're going to do? You've got looking. Verse 6, you know, that thing when the woman, when Eve saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye.

[ 20 : 38 ] Verse 7. Then the eyes of both of them were opened. What are we looking at? What are we spending our time looking at? When you are going to the shops, we'll look at the nice little sparkly stuff.

We want something brand new. We want someone other than our partner. We want someone somewhere out there to do something that we can't, that we don't seem to have. So our eyes are a major culprit in bringing sin into our life.

We see stuff. And for some reason, we desire it. There's a famous experiment with marshmallows and little kids. Put the marshmallow there. And they say, okay, one marshmallow.

Just leave the marshmallow. I'm going to go out. If you don't touch it, you get two marshmallows. It's... And that kid, you know, they can't. That's it.

The marshmallow is there. And the only thing they can think about, how long, when can I do it? I'm going to do it. I'm not going to do it. I want to. But their whole mind is locked in on this thing. Of course, with modern technology, it's so much easier to see stuff that we shouldn't really see.

[ 21 : 50 ] There's taking and touching and eating. If we see something, we want it. We reach out and we take it and we consume it and we make it part of us.

We reason to ourselves, if God won't give us what we want, well, we'll just take it for ourselves. And of course, it all starts with who we're listening to.

Are we listening to our own inner selfish desires? Are we listening to ideas that seem to float out in the culture, that tell us constantly you need something brand new, you need something nice and new and shiny?

Whatever you've got that's old, get rid of it, you don't need it. You're listening to your own broken desires. Who you're listening to can make all the difference as to how your life goes, which path it takes.

Okay, so that's the pathway into sin. What is the consequence of sin? And the consequences of sin are absolutely deadly. First thing, broken relationships.

[ 23 : 06 ] Notice, the moment Adam and Eve sin, the moment Eve takes it and eats it, and Adam also eats it, their eyes are opened, and instead of giving them wisdom that they wanted, understanding the world, becoming like God, the real thing with the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil is it makes them able to decide for themselves what is good and evil.

It's not just knowledge of, as Nick was mentioning. It's deciding for yourself what's good and bad. But instead of them having control over their environment, suddenly their environment has control over them.

Immediately they realize they're naked, and then they hide from each other. Immediately there's distrust and dangerous vulnerability. Where there was once open and honest communication, it all begins to break down here.

Now they've got to cover up. They've got to pretend. They get that horrible, sick, yucky feeling of guilt washing over them. Instead of trusting and delighting in each other, they have to protect themselves from each other.

Now, it's just such a sad thing that the two people that were meant to have the best life ever have to protect each other from themselves. Man, of course, blames Eve.

[ 24 : 16 ] In fact, he kind of blames God. Remember what he says, verse 12. The man said, the woman you put here with me, she gave me some fruit to the tree and ate it.

Oh, okay, so now he's blaming God. No one takes responsibility. No one is sorry. There's only self-justification and blame. Every lie we've ever told follows the exact same sorry path.

Broken relationships. The relationship with God is broken. He wants to know what's going on. They hide from him. Now God acts as he really is, a king and as a lord and as a judge.

God stays true to his word. He said that disobedience would result in judgment and death. And in Genesis 3, he pronounces on it. God proceeds to act as the judge and as the king. And he pronounces a deadly curse on the snake and the land. What you may have noticed this or not, but he doesn't directly curse Adam and Eve. I think it's because they're made in his image. [ 25 : 24 ] It's just a thing that he doesn't want to curse them directly because they're such a special part of his creation. Although they're going to bear the consequences of it. But he curses the snake and then he curses the land.

Now just to pick up what this curse is. In the first part of Genesis I mentioned we've got blessing and life. Here you've got curse and death. And a curse, we don't deal with curses often in our daily life.

As you know, African traditional religions may do that still. In fact, they do. And basically you'll go and get a curse when you want someone's life to go really wrong. Either an ex-partner or a business partner.

Or someone you don't want to have a good life. A curse is something to inflict harm or punishment or in some way or something diminish their life.

A curse is intended to strip the victim of their health, their possessions, their wealth and their relationships. It's the very opposite of blessing. So in Genesis 1 you've got blessing. Here in Genesis 1 and 2 you've got blessing.

[ 26 : 26 ] And in Genesis 3 you've got curse. Blessing brings life. Curse is like a poison. It just sucks everything out of life. And slowly but surely you wither and die.

The curse introduces pain and toil, death and destruction. Everything is going to be hard from now on. Now God curses the snake.

And he goes down to the dust. Takes away his feet. So he's obviously walking around. You'll eat the dust all the days of your life. And verse 15. I'll put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers.

He will crush your head and you will strike his seals. And so now man and nature are in conflict. But this conflict is not going to last forever. And in fact it seems like man is going to have the last word in this conflict.

Now the theologians call this verse what's called the proto-evangelion. It's the beginning. It's the first hint that what is happening in the world is going to be changed.

[ 27 : 30 ] God isn't going to let the world continue forever in this place of curse and sin and death. But there's going to be a fight. And there's going to be a conflict.

And there's going to be pain either way. Notice that Eve's relationship with Adam is cursed. To the woman he said, I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing.

With pain you will give birth to your children. Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you. And that's not a nice word there. That's not romantic love he's talking about.

That word desire pops up again in Genesis 4 when Cain and Abel are busy fighting each other. And God warns Cain that sin desires him.

It's the same key word. But you must master it. Sin wants to control you and get control over you. But you must desire it. So what's happening here is that Eve wants to control Adam.

[ 28 : 29 ] But he's going to want to control her. So the marriage relationship is now a fight. And those who are married will know exactly what I'm talking about and how difficult it is.

It's meant to be a lovely, easy relationship and it's just not. And then Adam's role as man is cursed. The world is going to fight back and life is going to be really, really, really hard. Notice what God says. Cursed is the ground because of you. Through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.

It will produce thorns and thistles and you will eat the plants by the sweat of the brow. And until you return to the ground. From dust you are and to dust you will return. Work, which was meant to be fun and enjoyable.

Hey, Eve, look at this cool fountain I made. Just like that. Now, I mean, I don't know. Has anyone dug stuff out of the ground? Men? Ladies even? I mean, is it easy? A stone?

[ 29 : 36 ] Now, I've worked on my dad's farm. He's got a farm in Somerset West. We put the posts in and we put the vineyards in. And the hardest thing, the hardest substance on earth is the root of a tree in the ground.

First, you've got to dig into the ground and then you've got to get the root out. Anyway. Staying alive is going to be one long, hard-fought and ultimately futile battle for Adam.

So God, in a sense, punches him with hard labor.

Really hard labor. I'm making light of it, but it's really hard work. And then ultimately he's going to get the death penalty at the end of it. A lifetime of hard labor and then death.

Terrible. Terrible. Terrible. And the last thing to say about this, about the curse of sin, is that sin also spreads. In the rest of the story of Genesis, it doesn't just stay with Adam and Eve.

[ 30 : 41 ] The next story is Cain and Abel. Genesis 4. Their own brothers kill each other. One brother kills the other. Genesis 6. Man gets progressively worse. And God says, you know what?

I can't take it anymore. I'm just going to... That's the flood. And then Genesis 11.

Hey, they come back. Second chance. No, no, no. Let's build a big tower and show God who's the boss. Oh, well. Now, those are only a few chapters. And by the way, we're going to get to Abraham after that.

But from Genesis, from Adam down to Abraham, it's about 2,000 years. That's 2,000 years of history of humans going, eh, one big train smash.

Well, that's not a train. That's a plane. Okay. Then they get banished. Okay, you know what? Get out. You know what it's like when people are rude and naughty.

[ 31 : 37 ] You can't have them in your place. Adam takes... God takes Adam by the scruff of his neck, in a sense. Wow. Throws him out the back door. Closes it. Puts an angel there.

Big fiery sword. They're not coming back. They're on the outside now. The place of blessing is closed off to them. They're living a life of broken relationships and ultimately death.

Well, what is terrible, terrible, terrible state of affairs? Is there a way back for humankind? Well, if you're a creator and your creation ends up like this, you've got a couple of choices.

You can leave it. Okay. Your choice. I've given you free will. I can't do anything about it. I wish I could. I'm the God of the universe.

But you know what? You've got free will. I can't touch you. It's your choice. I've got to respect your choice. I'm not sure that that's the kind of God that we've got in the Bible. In fact, I'm sure that's not the God that we've got in the Bible.

[ 32 : 43 ] God can't let his, he just can't let it continue like that. There's something in him that says, no, I can't let humankind continue hurting each other and living in rebellion to me and breaking the world that I've made.

You can, of course, destroy it. You know what? You guys mess it up. Bonk. Finishing clah. I'll just make a new one. Oh, don't worry. I'll just start all over again. The God of the Bible doesn't do any of those things.

Because he's the creator, because he's loving, and because his creation is somehow special to him, I'm going to fix it. And the story of the Bible really, this Genesis 3 sets us up for the whole story of the Bible.

How God is going to fix it in Jesus Christ. So just some pathways out of sin into the New Testament. Now, first thing, we can't jump from Adam and Eve to Jesus Christ.

It's obviously tempting to do that, and the readings that we had earlier will end up there. But you've got to kind of follow the story of the Bible. So the story of the Bible, I mean, you'll notice, here's Adam and Eve.

[ 34 : 02 ] Here's Jesus, more or less, in the New Testament. Hello. There's a whole thick section in between. There's a story. And we've got to follow that story to understand how God saves and what his plans are.

We can't just jump directly to the New Testament. And the next place that we find blessing in the Scriptures is Abraham, Genesis 12. I'm sure you've done this before.

But in case you haven't, just quickly turn to Genesis 12, and then we'll end up in the New Testament. And by the way, there's one or two places of blessing, mostly with Noah, where God says, okay, I'm just going to bless Noah, but it's kind of like doing what he did with Adam again.

For 2,000 years, curse has been reigning in the world by the time that you get to Abraham. Curse and sin and death. And notice, you'll pick up the language of blessing straight away. Genesis 12.

The Lord had said to Abraham, leave your country, your people, and your father's house, and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you. I will make your name great, and you'll be a blessing.

[ 35 : 06 ] I will bless those who bless you. Whoever curses you, I will curse. And all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. Notice the language of blessing, blessing, blessing, blessing. Yes, there's curse, but it's there now to protect Abraham, not to hurt him.

Again, the story of the Bible really is a story of how God is bringing blessing and goodness and life back into the world, but he does it through this family, Abraham's family.

Of course, the people of God, the Israelites in the Old Testament, don't quite live up to their calling, and so there's a constant refrain in the Old Testament, wait until the leader comes.

Wait until the leader comes. Wait until the king comes. When the king comes, he will restore everything and make everything right. And so by the time you get to the New Testament, they've been waiting for another 2,000 years.

Abraham is plus minus 2,000 BC for God to come and bring blessing back into the world and to make it stay. Okay. Now, I just want to pick up two New Testament passages, and then we'll finish off there.

[ 36 : 12 ] In a funny way, sin entered the world through eating. The knowledge of the tree of good and evil, taking this fruit they're not supposed to take.

Okay, you've got the next slide. That's fine. So you saw the snake with the apple. We didn't know if it was an apple, just so you know. No one knows what they ate. I looked at that, wondering why it was an apple. Anyway, the Latin word for apple is malus, and the Latin word for evil is malus.

So it seems like a word play. That's where we get apple from, apparently. But there's eating. Okay, well, is there something in the New Testament about eating that doesn't bring us death but brings us life?

Well, as it happens, there is. So turn with me to John chapter 6 and to see how Jesus, in a sense, fulfills this, but in another sense takes away the curse and brings life.

Now, Jesus is talking to the disciples in John chapter 6.

[ 37 : 34 ] Jesus feeds the 5,000. That's the beginning of the chapter. So there's a whole question about food and eating. And then Jesus makes a famous statement we all know about.

I'm going to read from verse 35. Hints of taking away curse and bringing blessing.

But, as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. He's talking to the Jewish leaders. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me, I will never drive away. So Adam and Eve got driven out of the garden. Jesus is saying, well, you can come back. But you've got to come back through me. I've come down from heaven not to do my will, but to do the will of him who sent me.

Ah, you've got disobedience in the Old Testament, and you've got Adam saying, I'm the perfect obedient son. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

[ 38 : 51 ] For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. Okay, so in the Old Testament you've got mankind just crumbles into dust at the end of his life.

And here you've got Christ saying, well, I'll just raise the dust up again. I'll bring you back to life. So in a sense, it's an undoing of what God has, of what has happened in the Old Testament, and of the consequence of sin and of judgment of God.

But Jesus continues. So how are we going to get this, how are we going to get this life out of Jesus? Just, there's a whole discussion there, but turn, just go down to verse 47.

Here's something interesting. I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Now what do you do with bread? You've got to eat it. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died.

But here is a bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.

[ 40 : 10 ] And this bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Now, isn't that amazing? So you've got eating and sinning in the Old Testament because it's out of disobedience.

Now to counteract that, you've got eating and receiving, well, you're eating in obedience and you receive life. Now the eating there really is obviously it's done by faith, but the Jews didn't understand.

There's a whole discussion. Now what happened? What is he talking about? How can we eat his flesh? Et cetera, et cetera. But you can see how some of the themes are coming together in what

Jesus is saying. We consume Christ by faith or by faith.

Interestingly, though, it's not just by faith. You know, we take communion every, is it every four weeks you guys do communion? And in the communion service, in the prayer book at least, it's a feed on your hearts, a feed on Christ in your hearts by faith.

So there's an actual taking, actual eating, but a feeding by faith. It's a kind of a spiritual feeding. Now, just to end off with the New Testament reading in Romans chapter 5, because that kind of brings the whole thing together, where you've basically got two ways of living, although really one isn't a way of living.

[ 41 : 31 ] You've actually only got one way of living. One is a way of dying, and that's to stay in Adam. The path of life is to come to Christ. Let's just end up in Romans chapter 5. To see how Jesus turns everything back to good again.

Verse 12. Notice how Adam acts as a kind of a leader or a king.

We're all included in him somehow. We're all included in his sin somehow. And our deaths have their origin in his death. Verse 15.

But this gift is not like the trespass. Verse 17.

Judgment is deserved in the Old Testament.

[ 42 : 55 ] Judgment is deserved because of our sins. But grace and mercy are completely undeserved. And notice Jesus also acts as a king, as a leader here. Where he goes, we will follow.

And he gives all these amazing benefits to his people. Isn't it amazing what Christ has accomplished? Death has been raining for 4,000 years by the time Jesus arrives.

And the world has got progressively worse and worse. You know when you drive a car and it gets worse and worse? You hear that first clunk, clunk, clunk. You might take it in. If you keep driving it, that engine is just going to get worse to it.

And the longer you leave sin unchecked, the more difficult it is to fix things. Think of a building that dilapidates and deteriorates over time. I give a building 4,000 years.

You have to be a master crafter to get that building back into ship shape, shiny shape. Jesus single-handedly solves a problem of sin and death which no man has been able to solve.

[ 43 : 55 ] Think of the strength and the ability and the power that he's got at his disposal to make these things happen. Verse 20, the law was brought in so that the trespass might increase.

But where sin increased, grace increased all the more. So that just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Yes, things have fallen apart. And yes, they still fall apart. What of it? We have one who will bring all things back together again. And how do we have access to all these benefits?

It's opening a hand, reaching out, and taking hold by Christ in faith. Now I started with a poem about how bad the world is.

The things have fallen apart. Blood is in the world. People can't stop it. I'll end with another poem. It was really a sermon.

[ 44 : 57 ] He's famous back in the day. It's 200 years after Jesus. We don't know him. My leader of Sardis. Actually, Sardis is one of the churches spoken about in Revelation. It's the end of his sermon at Easter time.

And he says this about Jesus. But he arose from the dead and mounted up to the heights of heaven. When the Lord had clothed himself with humanity and suffered for the sake of the suffering, and had been bound for the sake of the imprisoned, and had been judged for the sake of the condemned, and buried for the sake of the one who was buried, he rose up from the dead and cried with a loud voice, Who is he who contends with me?

Let him stand in opposition to me. I set the condemned man free. I give the dead man life. I raised up the one who had been entombed. Who is my opponent?

I, he says, am the Christ. I am the one who destroyed death, and triumphed over the enemy, and trampled Hades underfoot, and bound the strong one, and carried off man to the heights of heaven.

I, he says, am the Christ. Therefore, come all families of men. You have been befouled with sin, and receive forgiveness for your sins. I am your forgiveness.

[ 46 : 09 ] I am the Passover of your salvation. I am the lamb which was sacrificed for you. I'm your ransom. I am your light. I'm your savior. I'm your resurrection. I'm your king.

I'm leading you up to the heights of heaven. I will show you the Father. I will raise you up by my right hand. So really got two paths in the world. One leads to death, and one leads to life.

Which one are you holding on to? Let's pray to Christ. Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for a lovely reminder of your grace, and power, and mercy to save.

Lord, we're so sorry that this world has fallen into sin, and everything is broken, and we're part of that brokenness, and we contribute to ourselves. But Lord, you've come to change all of that.

Your death has brought life. Death was not strong enough to hold you. You are stronger and mightier than any force of nature, and indeed the very tempter himself is trampled underneath your feet.

[ 47 : 20 ] Thank you, Jesus, for a mighty salvation. Help us to hold on to you and to bring us to life. In your name and for your glory. Amen.