Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

Have you ever read a book but skipped the first few chapters? It sounds unthinkable and foolish, doesn’t it. In every book that I have read, it is in the first chapters that we are introduced to the main ideas or characters or scenarios that the rest of the book will explain or explore or unfold. And the Bible is no different, as we have seen. If you want to understand what major problem gets resolved in the rest of the Bible, you must understand the opening chapters of Genesis. Here is how one article from the Answers in Genesis website puts it:

*Genesis is foundational to our understanding of reality. Genesis explains how we got here, where stars, oceans, animals, and trees come from. It tells us why there is sin and death in the world … Genesis also establishes the basic parameters of living on God’s earth according to the precepts in His Word. It sets forth the Creator’s design and instruction for all that is, including humanity.*

*All major biblical doctrines are founded in Genesis … Here is a partial list:*

* *The doctrine of sin is founded in Genesis where the first man and first woman rebelled against God and ate from the forbidden tree.*
* *Genesis records God’s plan for [the two sexes]. God made humans male and female from the beginning ... God, not a politician or a panel of social engineers, laid the foundation for a correct approach to … sexuality.*
* *The doctrine of marriage, defined as one man for one woman, is founded in Genesis. God, not [courtroom or government], invented and defines marriage.*
* *The gospel is founded in Genesis. We need a Saviour because Adam (the father/head of the human race) sinned and brought literal death into creation (Genesis 3). That’s why Jesus had to come and literally die a physical death to take our place.*

In the *last* chapters of the Bible, we are given a description of the new heavens and new earth, where there will be no death or disease or dysfunction. **But to properly appreciate and long for that life’s majesty, we must first understand this life’s misery**.

And that is why we have spent so long in Genesis 3. We looked at the temptation by the serpent and **the origin of evil**. We looked at the guilty activity of Adam and his wife as our **study of sin**. We looked at how God graciously sought them and promised to send Messiah as our **study of salvation**. We looked at **the curse of sin and its consequences** for the whole of creation. And that brings us, finally, to this last part of chapter 3, which is where we see the **gospel activity** of Adam, His wife, and God. Gospel means good news. And everything that happens here follows on from verse 15, which is the very first promise of God in the Bible to send Jesus. So, we see the **believing reaction** of Adam and his wife, the **covering action** of God, and the **loving Ejection** of Adam and Eve by God. And we are going to see that it all has Christ at the centre!

1. Let’s start then with verse 20 and the **believing reaction of Adam and his wife**: “*The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living*.”
   1. Back in chapter 2:17, God had told Adam that if he ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, *on that day*, **he would surely die**. Well, Adam did die, spiritually. And the fact that Adam tried to hide from God shows that he expected to die, physically, once God found out what he had done. Well, God knew what Adam and his wife had done, because God knows everything! But God still graciously sought Adam and his wife out and gave them the opportunity to experience His grace. And we saw that grace, as God revealed that Adam and his wife were not stuck on the devil’s side. For God decreed that there would be hostility between the woman and her offspring and the devil and his offspring. And with those words, God revealed that the way back into fellowship and friendship with God was open. And the way back was about one particular descendant of the woman, who would bruise or crush the head of the serpent.
      1. Now, we know the particulars of what this promise was about because we have the rest of the Bible. We know that this descendant is the Lord Jesus Christ. So, this was a call to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. In **Acts 10:43**, Peter put it like this: “*Everyone who believes in [Jesus Christ] receives forgiveness of sins*.” **Romans 10:9** puts it like this, “*If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved*.” And **John 3:16** puts it like this: “*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life*.”
      2. But that is the gospel for people like us who live on this side of the cross. We know who Jesus is and what He did. So, our faith looks back to the cross. But Adam and his wife could not know what would happen 4000 years later. What God was commanding and inviting them to do was to believe His promise about enmity and a descendant who would bruise the head of the serpent. That is all they had. And so, even though God had told them that they would eventually die, they now knew that it would not be *that* day, because they were to produce descendants. And beyond that, one descendant would somehow undo what they had done. And this is the good news that they had to choose to believe. But in doing so, ultimately, their faith looked forward to Jesus.
   2. And Adam and his wife **understood and believed** **God’s promise**. That is what verse 20 tells us. You see, Eve means ‘life-giver.’ Up until now, she was simply called woman. But Adam gave her this new name because of God’s promise. Her new name was a declaration that death and the devil were no longer their masters; they would live, they would have children, the curse would be undone by one of their descendants, and their Masters were, once again, God and life!
      1. Question and Answer 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism asks, “**What is true faith?**” And the answer reveals that true faith involves three things – knowledge, conviction, and personal assurance. You must *know* the promise of God, you must be *convinced* that it is true, and you must be *assured* that it is true for you, personally! And this was true of Adam and Eve – they knew that because of this descendant, they could live, they were convinced this was true, and they were assured that this was true for each of them, personally.
      2. Let me give you the full answer of the Catechism: “True faith is not only a knowledge and conviction that everything God reveals in His Word is true; it is also a deep-rooted assurance, created in me by the Holy Spirit through the gospel, that, out of sheer grace earned for us by Christ, not only others, but I too, have had my sins forgiven, have been made forever right with God, and have been granted salvation.”
      3. So, I ask you, today: Is this true of you? Do you *know* that Jesus is Lord and that He died and rose again for the forgiveness of sins? Do you *believe* that this is true? Are you *assured* that it is true for you? If so, then you are a descendant of Eve – you too are one of the living! You too are a friend of God! And though you die, as we read in Romans 5, you will reign with Jesus Christ in eternal life!
2. But we learn more about salvation in Jesus Christ in verse 21, which is where we see the **covering action** of God. “*And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them*.”
   1. And at first read, one could be forgiven for thinking that God was simply giving them **better clothes** than the fig leaves they had sewed to cover their nakedness. And the skins were surely an improvement. But that is not why we are told about this action of God. So, what is going on here? Well, how do you get garments of skin? You must kill animals and then remove their skin. And when you kill animals, blood flows. So, what God was teaching Adam and Eve here is that our sins can be forgiven through the shed blood and death of a substitute – something that takes our place. And this is the doctrine known as **substitutionary atonement**.
      1. You see, Adam and his wife had disobeyed God and rebelled against Him. And God had threatened death as the appropriate punishment. And this threat holds true for every human being, as **Romans 6:23** tells us: “*The wages of sin is (?) death*.” If we break any of God’s commandments or fail to keep them, perfectly, we deserve death. And by death is meant spiritual death, physical death, and an eternity in hell. The Heidelberg Catechism summarizes it this way in Question and Answer 11: God’s “justice demands that sin, committed against His supreme majesty, be punished with the supreme penalty; eternal punishment of body and soul.”
      2. But it is clear from what we have seen that Adam and Eve would not have to face eternal punishment of body and soul. How was that possible? If someone else endured that punishment in their place. Again, the Heidelberg Catechism summarizes this truth most helpfully: “God requires that His justice be satisfied. Therefore the claims of His justice must be paid in full, either by ourselves or another.” So, with this animal sacrifice, God was teaching Adam and Eve that their sins could be forgiven by the death of a substitute. And this is a key teaching of the Old Testament.
         1. It is why we will see Cain and Abel offering sacrifices in the next chapter.
         2. It is a key part of the story of Abraham not having to sacrifice Isaac because the Lord provided a substitute ram.
         3. It is the lesson of the Passover lamb that died in place of the firstborn of Israel.
         4. It is the lesson of the daily and annual sacrifices that were required of Israel in Leviticus 1-7.
      3. Now, **Hebrews 10:4** is clear: “*It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins*.” Not one animal sacrifice in the Old Testament, including this one, actually took away sin. What they did was point forward to a sacrifice that could pay the price for sin – the Lord Jesus Christ. **Hebrews 10:7**: “*We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ*.” This is why Jesus is described in John 1:29 as “*the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world*.” So, with these skins, God was teaching Adam and Eve that the promised descendant would bruise the head of the serpent by shedding His blood and dying.
         1. And can you see then **how much easier is to be a believer on this side of the cross**? Old Testament believers just had promises and sacrifices. We have Jesus Christ, crucified and risen!
      4. But this doctrine of substitutionary atonement is what we rejoiced in as we confessed our faith earlier in the service. We are guilty sinners who deserve eternal condemnation. Can we pay this debt ourselves? Certainly not. Actually, we increase our guilt every day. Can another creature; any at all; pay this debt for us? No. To begin with, God will not punish another creature for what a human is guilty of. Besides, no mere creature can bear the weight of God's eternal anger against sin and release others from it. What kind of mediator and deliverer should we look for then? One who is truly human and truly righteous, yet more powerful than all creatures, that is, one who is also true God. And who is this mediator; true God and at the same time truly human and truly righteous? Our Lord Jesus Christ, who was given us to set us completely free and to make us right with God.
         1. And I trust that this is the hope and comfort of each one of you! Because if you do not believe this, then you will have to endure the supreme penalty; eternal punishment of body and soul, yourself.
3. But we see even more of God’s grace and kindness in verses 22-24. For there we see the **Loving Ejection of Adam and Eve by God**. For there we read of God banishing Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden and keeping them out by stationing a cherubim angel at the entrance with a flaming sword! And we are about to see more of how foundational the events in the opening chapters of Genesis are to everything else that will follow in the Bible.
   1. And perhaps you are wondering why I have called this a ***loving*** ejection? I expect that each of you boys and girls can remember a time where you were promised a treat – a visit to a park or the zoo or a sleep-over at a friend’s house. But you misbehaved in some way, badly, and Mum or Dad said, “Right! That’s it. No treat for you!” And you missed out on that special outing. That is a painful lesson to learn, isn’t it, boys and girls. And the worst part of it is knowing that you only have yourself to blame :-( Well, at first read, this episode sounds like God not wanting to let Adam and Even play in the beautiful Garden of Eden because they misbehaved. And so, like our parents, God was teaching them a lesson about the consequences of bad behaviour. And that would make this a *punishment*, not a *loving* ejection?!
   2. But that is not what is going on here. And we have talked about this in a previous sermon. Maybe you remember that if Adam and Eve had obeyed God and not eaten the forbidden fruit, eventually, as perfectly obedient friends of God, they would have been allowed to eat from **the** **Tree of Life** and enter eternal life. But now they were guilty sinners. And if they had eaten from the Tree of Life in that condition, they would have been permanently stuck in that condition. So, this was indeed a loving ejection. God was doing them an eternal favour, if you like. For this action made it possible for them to return to the state of sinless obedience through faith in Jesus. And this a major theme of the Bible!
   3. But there was another special privilege that Adam and Eve had enjoyed in the garden, which they were also no longer fit to enjoy. Can anyone tell us what that special privilege was? It was enjoying **the presence of God**. They had walked and talked with God in the cool of the evening. But now, as sinners, God could not be with them. And this too will be a major theme of the Bible.
      1. Eventually, God will return to dwell with His people in the form of the glory cloud that came down into the tabernacle and temple. But because of the idolatry of Israel, God eventually left the temple, never to return.
      2. But He did say, in the prophets, that He would come back to be with His people. And there is a special name in **Isaiah 7** that means ‘God with us.’ Can one of you boys and girls tell us what that name is? Immanuel. And who is Immanuel? It is Jesus! Jesus came down to earth to be just like us and to live with us for the time that He was on earth. And as we have seen, He came down in order to pay the claims of God’s justice, in full, on the cross, for all God’s elect ones.
      3. And all those who believe in Jesus will one day be with Him in a face-to-face existence in the new heavens and new earth.
      4. And what else will be in the new heavens and new earth, according to Revelation 21? The Tree of Life!
   4. But notice also how Adam and Eve were prevented from re-entering the garden: God placed a **Cherubim**, which is a type of angel, with a flaming sword, “*to guard the way to the tree of life*.”
      1. And I mentioned before that the glory cloud of God’s presence came down to dwell above the mercy seat of the Ark of the covenant in the tabernacle and temple. And what were the two golden creatures that sat atop the Ark where the presence of God was? Cherubim.
      2. And to keep the people from seeing the presence of God, and dying, a heavy curtain was hung in front of the holy of holies. And what was embroidered on that curtain? Cherubim!
      3. But what happened to that curtain the moment that Jesus died? It was torn in two from top to bottom, symbolizing that God’s people were now able to enter into God’s presence through faith in Christ.
      4. And for those of you who were here last week and heard Brother Brett’s sermon about the resurrection, Genesis 3 opened with the serpent tempting the woman. But what happened on the morning of the resurrection? Angels told a woman, Mary, that Jesus was risen!
      5. And in Revelation 21, we are given a description of the holy City – or the new heavens and new earth. And we are told that this great, square, temple city has twelve gates – three on each side. And each gate has an angel in front of it. And we read, “*And its gates will never be shut … and nothing unclean will ever enter it, only those are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life*.” In other words, that will be our home; the place where we are welcome and the place where we shall enjoy being with the Lord Jesus and with each other!

And congregation, it takes the whole Bible for us to get the full picture of God’s eternal plan. It takes the historical events and ceremonies and prophecies and songs of the Old Testament, the eye-witness accounts of the Gospels, the history and sermons of Acts, the letters of the New Testament, and the Revelation of a victorious Christ and heaven for God’s plan to be fully unfolded before us. But it all has its beginnings in the opening chapters of the Bible. And that is why it is so sad that many professing Christians do not view Genesis 1-3 as literal and historical events. These chapters are foundational for who we are, for salvation, and for understanding history. And I hope you will agree that it has been eye-opening and soul-refreshing to spend the time that we have spent studying sin and salvation in Genesis 3. May God’s name be praised. Amen? Amen.