

“KNOWING THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE FALL”

HOLINESS
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Dick Johnson: Dear Lord, we just thank You for this opportunity that we have to come together to learn more about You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We pray, Lord, that You would anoint Jim, and that he would share the truth of who You are, and that you would prepare our spirits in bond with Your Holy Spirit, Lord, to build a foundation of truth in our lives that we can rely upon. So, Lord, we just ask for Your blessings upon us this morning. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Jim: Well, last week Bruce asked me to lead the study. I've been working on a short series called “**Keys to the Kingdom**,” and this lesson is under the subject that I called “**The Key to Understanding God's Grace**,” and another title could be “**The Key to Understanding Biblical Doctrine**,” because this is such an important part of it. And I call this section “**Knowing the Consequences of the Fall**,” and Bruce asked me to share it, because the consequences of the Fall are so foundational to what we believe, and so often we really don't understand what they are.

So, that said, if we're to ever adequately grasp the true nature of grace, it's essential that we understand what the Bible reveals is the real condition of this human race after the Fall of our first ancestors. It's the key to understanding the rest of the doctrines of salvation. If we don't know or believe what the Bible really teaches about the specific reality of our fallen human condition, we'll constantly underestimate God's grace. We'll be deceived about our own capabilities, about those of all human beings in general, and about God Himself.

So, to avoid this, Scripture reveals the reality of this condition after the Fall. And it's a reality that most Christians either really don't know, or don't believe. It's a reality that the world rejects out of hand.

The reality is this, that as a direct result of the Fall, the entire human race became separated from God, and the key, at the same time, is that man became subject to a trinity of evil powers, namely, Satan, sin, and spiritual death. And what is so important here is that each of these three powers is greater than any human power, and each of the three, in it's own right, gain complete mastery over the entire human race, thereby making the human condition utterly hopeless apart from God's intervention, His gracious intervention.

So that's why understanding the Fall and its real consequences is essential to a true Biblical faith and theology. And, if you know anything about the 80/20 rule, I like to say that this, the 20 per cent of Biblical theology, is what makes 80 per cent of the difference in Bible doctrine. Misunderstanding what the Bible teaches in this area is probably the root cause of most of the bad theology that we hear in the church today.

So we begin with our first title on the headline, **Meeting Our Maker**. The Bible sets the stage brilliantly, with what is perhaps the most famous first sentence in literature. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” so that this one short simple

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sentence introduces us to time and space, to the Person of God the Creator, and to everything He created, that is, everything apart from Himself, visible and invisible. And the Hebrew word for God, as most know, is Elohim. It's a plural noun. It may reflect the royal we, in reference to a great majestic Being. And it is almost surely a hint, early in the Bible, that the Godhead is a plurality of persons, and, as we come to learn later in Scripture, a Trinity of Persons, a mystery of one God in three Persons, who exist together, simultaneously, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each Person being fully God, and yet one God, not three gods.

And in the first chapter, we see another hint to the plurality of the Persons in the Godhead. In verse 26, God appears to consider, in conference with Himself, the decision to make the human race. “And God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.” In the next verse it says, “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” And after this we don't see another description of God the Creator in the initial chapters of Genesis. There is only what we can reason about Him from the creation that He made, and we know that from Romans 1:19-20. We see it in Psalm 19, verses 1-4. Clearly, such an enormous, beautiful, and complex universe, with its great variety of creatures, required vast intelligence, invisible power, true personality, sublime goodness, an unchanging unity, and more for its Creator to sustain and make in the first place. And this great God who made the universe is a far cry from all the lesser, localized deities that we read about that fallen men eventually created themselves and began to worship. Scripture revealed that this is the true God, the only God, the Creator of everything.

So that takes us to our next heading, **Recapping Creation**. Chapter 1 reveals that this invisible God crowned His creation with the human race as the apex of creation, made in His own spiritual image. And prior to this, at each stage of His work, God, who can never lie and is never wrong, said, “It” (His creation) “is good”—good in every sense of the word, and good in the highest sense of the word. And then, completing His work of creation with the first couple, God saw that all that He had made was “very good.” Not good only, not good merely, but good in the superlative. If we had any doubt or question that God wanted us to know with certainty that His creation was good indeed, at that point, there was no sin.

Here then, in this amazing and remarkable environment, our first ancestors lived and moved and had their being. They found themselves fully formed, in a garden of the greatest perfection the earth has ever known. Here Adam and Eve were given dominion over everything that God had made.

And here He placed them on probation. And He would test their obedience. And so we read, for this purpose, in the second chapter of Genesis, that there were two special trees in the garden of Eden. One, the tree of life, held the promise of life everlasting, and the other, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which God commanded them not to eat. The fruit of this one tree remained off limits to them, because God said, “for the day in which you eat of it, you shall surely die.” And everything else in the garden was theirs to enjoy. But, in the starkest of contrasts, the choice of eternal life and eternal death was placed before Adam and Eve.

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And so now we come to our next title, **The Fall of the Human Race**. And, as the story goes, a true story, as we know from multiple passages in the New Testament, the serpent in the garden, possessed by Satan, tempted the woman to eat of the forbidden fruit. Adam followed suit. And immediately, as a result of what they'd done, they fell from their perfect state of innocence. Instantly their eyes were opened to their changed condition, and, overcome by guilt and fear, Adam and Eve hid from God when He came to question what they had done.

Tragically, their relationship with their Maker had been altered forever. By listening to Satan, and rejecting God's will in what seemed to be a trivial act of disobedience, this couple, which was the fountainhead of the human race, had, number one, irreparably damaged themselves, their future progeny, the entire creation, and, worst of all, their relationship with their Triune Maker. Actually, I should say profoundly, not irreparably. They profoundly damaged their relationship.

And instead, as the Bible reveals, (and this is the heart of this lesson), a trinity of evil powers gained complete and total mastery over the human race in the Fall. Satan, sin, and spiritual death. We could call them death, depravity, and the devil. Each of these powers alone was more powerful than any human power, and together, this trinity of evil powers, apart from divine intervention, now made the human condition hopeless.

We can see Paul reference this in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 12, where he talks about “having no hope, and without God in the world.”

So this is the true picture of the human race that the Bible reveals to us, so that we can have a right understanding of divine grace. It's the bad news, so that we can appreciate and understand the good news.

And so, our next heading is, **Bondage to Satan, the Devil**. The first of the three evil powers to consider, which gained control over the human race in the Fall, is the tempter himself, Satan, the devil. And we deal with him first, because he is the one who got the ball rolling. Satan tempted and deceived Adam and Eve into rebelling against God in the garden. The Bible tells us precious little of his origins. But he was made along with the rest of creation, and before the fall of Adam and Eve. And it's critical to note that, prior to the Fall and the rebellion, this evil entity was God's highest created being, making the devil the most powerful created being in the entire universe. though God created him and limits him, the devil is utterly evil, and the Bible reveals that he has been a liar, a thief, and a murderer since the Fall in the beginning. He is also the tempter, the great serpent, and he goes about roaring like a lion, seeking whom he may devour, to be with him in his own eternal destruction. He wants to be as God, and worshiped as God, and the Bible calls him “the god of this world.” 2 Corinthians 4:4.

In order to deceive people, Satan is able to appear as an angel of light, but his ways are entirely contrary to God. He mixes just enough truth with his lies to deceive the unwary. He is a liar, and evil through and through. Aided by his invisible nature as an angel, the evil one is largely able to deceive much of the modern world into thinking that he doesn't even exist. And we know how wrong he is there. And thankfully, we know that he'll be destroyed by Jesus in the lake of fire by Jesus at the end of time.

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But, in the meantime, the Bible reveals, in multiple places, just how real Satan is, and how terrible the fallen human condition is in relation to him. Would someone read 2 Timothy 2:26? You might have that out. Someone else could look up Ephesians 2:2. That will be our next one, and 1 John 5:9.

Participant: 2 Timothy 2:26. “... that they may come to their senses, and escape the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him, to do his will.”

Jim: Thank you. “Having been taken captive by the devil, to do his will.” The description of the fallen human race. So the next So next, Ephesians 2:2.

Participant: “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live, when you followed the ways of this world, and the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.”

Jim: So there we are told that the devil is at work in the disobedient, in the fallen human race. And 1 John 5:19.

Participant: “We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”

Jim: The whole world is under the control of the evil one. It’s an awesome thought. It’s dreadful to contemplate, to think that the whole world is under the control of the most powerful being that God ever created, and he is entirely evil.

And, as an aside here, for more of a perspective, I’d like to bring up Martin Luther, the father of the Reformation. It would surprise me if more than four or five people would know what Luther said was the central issue of the Reformation. And I won’t put anybody on the spot, unless they really want to be.

Participant: The bishop would like to try. (*Laughter.*)

Bishop Rodgers: I was taught in the military never to volunteer. (*Laughter.*) The bondage of the will.

Jim: Right, right! I knew there were at least four or five here. But, what Luther said was, that the bondage of the human will to Satan and to sin was the central issue of the entire Reformation. And, you know, if you ask the average person what they think it would be, they would say it would be that they were selling indulgences, or the issue of the Pope. And Luther said that those things were mere trifles compared to what the central issue was. It was the bondage of the human will to the most powerful being that God had ever created, and to sin. And, of course, that will be the next topic we’ll come to in a second.

Participant: Hey, Jim?

Jim: Yes?

Participant: Before you go to that, though, the concept that I’m having trouble with is your statement about the 1 John passage, that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. Yet Hebrews tells us that Christ holds all things together.

Jim: Well, He does. And He is sovereign over the devil. The devil is limited by God, and God is able, as we know, from Genesis, that He is able to work what is meant for evil for good. So even the devil, seeking to do the devil’s purposes, ultimately serves God.

Participant: And God created the devil.

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Jim: God created the devil. And, as I started with the first part, everything God created was good, including the devil. Yes?

Participant: This question has been posed so many times. Could you elaborate? Why did God create Satan? He knew that first, even before the Fall. Why did He do that?

Jim: Well, He created him during the days of creation. We know that, because, before that, he didn't exist. And, at the end of creation, He finished His work, and everything was good. So, somewhere in there, the devil was created, but he hadn't yet fallen. Well, God surely foreknew, foresaw, what the devil would do, and it would not be a surprise. He would serve God's purpose. Before the foundation of the earth, Christ was prepared to come to be the Savior. So the devil would be the one ultimately who would help to get Christ crucified. So he had a purpose to serve in the plan. Beyond that? Yes, John?

Bishop Rodgers: St. Augustine said that God was creating hell for people who raise that question. (*Laughter.*)

Jim: Fortunately, there's mercy, right? (*Laughter.*) At any rate, that's why this is so important. All human beings of all nations, races and times, are born in bondage to the devil that they can never hope to escape on their own. That's the point of my explaining all this. The devil is too powerful, and slaves are slaves precisely because they don't have a choice in the matter. Now think about that. They don't have a choice in the matter. Otherwise, they could decide at any time to leave that master and go work for another master. But the Biblical language is clear, precisely so that we get the point, and understand that the fallen nature is in bondage to the most powerful wicked being created by God in the universe. It's one that is totally controlling.

And it's a horrible bondage that the church hardly addresses or makes known in its appeals to the lost. And here is another verse that you can mark down: Acts 26:18. There is an example of Paul talking about being in bondage to Satan, when he is evangelizing a king, King Agrippa. You know, we hardly touch on the subject, and there's Paul using it, as he is talking and seeking to win a king to the Lord.

But it's true. And Satan is just one of three terrible powers that gained full control of humanity at the Fall, which takes us to our next one: **Bondage to Sin, or Total Depravity.**

As Scripture teaches, the second of the three evil powers to gain complete mastery over our race in the Fall was sin. In the story's natural progression, sin followed the temptation in the garden. Adam and Eve chose to rebel against the clear will of God, and they sinned in so doing. Sin is always the act of transgressing the law of God, in thought, in word, or in deed. Sin is falling short of the glory of God, in whose image we are made. Sin is missing the mark. It's doing evil, as opposed to doing good. It's not doing what we should do. It's called wickedness. It's an offense to a holy God, who hates evil in every form.

When human sin began with Adam and Eve, it corrupted their hearts, and as a result of their original corruption and guilt, it was passed on to all their descendants, created in their own image, as a process of natural inheritance. King David could write, “In sin did

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my mother conceive me.” In other words, he was a sinner from birth, even before he’d sinned. Paul could write that, even when he didn’t want to sin, he did, saying that it was no longer he that did it, but sin in him. He sinned because he was a natural born sinner with a natural bent towards evil, and away from God.

As a result of the Fall, the human nature became evil and wicked. And this is so contrary to what almost everybody believes. You know, we just tend to believe that, well, we’re all basically good. You know, we do a few bad things. But this is what the Biblical record really is.

Participant:

Jim: Yes?

Participant: How does that really happen, though? Adam is born good. God calls him good. And then, by his fall, he genetically changed, and his offspring are automatically evil.

Jim: Well, I wouldn’t say “automatically.” It’s “naturally.” In other words, God created us in His image, and in so doing, He gave us the capacity to have children which are created in our own image. Now I don’t have children, but I’m sure that most people in this room do. And you know how many people say, concerning your children, “He looks like you,” or “she looks like your wife,” or “he walks like you,” or “he has the same attributes.” Well, one of the things that gets passed on is a fallen nature. It is the indwelt bent towards sin.

Participant: But isn’t that really powerful, to override God’s—

Jim: Well no, it didn’t override God. God gave them the choice, the free choice to choose. And we’re coming to the implications of that in a second here. Adam and Eve were created with a free will, to make that choice, when God gave them the test and put them on probation, that they could choose either to obey God, or they could choose not to obey God, and to listen to the devil. Yes?

Participant: An issue for us is that the concept of choice is not necessarily a relationship with God, or the presence of God. The concept of choice is whether to be obedient to God. We sometimes confuse free will with regard to whether we’re going to have a relationship with God. We don’t make that decision. God made that decision, and created us to be obedient.

Jim: Right.

Participant: (*Unclear.*)

Jim: And they were given the test in the garden right there. Would they obey, or not? And they chose not to. Yes?

Participant: But in His plan, God already knew what choice they were going to make.

Jim: Of course He knew. And the whole point of this is so that we’re leading to a place here, that we understand grace. If we won’t understand how serious the condition is, we really won’t appreciate what happens with grace. Yes?

Participant: If Adam and Eve were created without a sin nature, and they were indirect communication, and a direct relationship with God, and they were under the most

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ideal circumstances, what makes me or anyone else think that if I were in their place, that I would choose—

Jim: Yes, you wouldn't. None of us would. Right, you wouldn't. But even then, that's beside the point, because the reality is, they were the two original people. And, as I have already mentioned, the Scripture says, in multiple places in the New Testament, this is not mythology. This is reality. Yes?

Participant: Would it be fair to say that Adam and Eve were the last ones to have free will?

Jim: We're coming right to that. You're right there. So let me express a few more things, and we'll get there.

So human nature was no longer “very good,” as we know God had assessed all that He had made in the beginning. Only five chapters later, we read in Genesis 6:5 that God saw that “the wickedness of man was great in the earth, “—great!—“and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” In this verse, the wickedness of fallen human nature is expressed with a triple absolute, so that we get it. To make it clear. Every, only, continually. The prophet Jeremiah wrote, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” Jeremiah 17:9. Speaking to His hearers with a divine perspective, Jesus said, “If you then, who are evil.” Matthew 7:11.

The Biblical perspective is so helpful because, again, human nature doesn't want to believe this. You can talk to 90 per cent of the people you know. They wouldn't believe this. But that's why the light of Scripture is so key.

Jesus further taught that whoever sins “is a slave of sin.” John 8:34. Sin was the master of the human heart. Jesus told the ultra-religious Pharisees that they were in bondage to sin, and they refused to believe Him. They were living in total denial of their true state, and they said that they had always been free. But they were like all human beings everywhere. As Paul wrote in Romans, “Both Jews and Greeks, all are under sin.” Romans 3:9. Paul continued, “No one does good, no, not even one.” And the Reformers wrote that while fallen humans are not utterly depraved, being as bad as they possibly could be, they are totally depraved, in that their sinful depravity colors everything that they do, and is a controlling power in them. Working in the human heart, sin is also an indwelling ally of the devil, whom we've already said is a master.

And so, this kind of gets to what you were saying, Ted. After the Fall, the so-called human free will still existed. But as a consequence of the Fall, it was so corrupted that it had come into total bondage to the power of both Satan and sin, and, as such, the members of the fallen human race no longer had a truly free will, but a fallen will. And how contrary that is to almost everybody that you talk to, because everybody's first reaction is this, “Well, we all have a free will.” Yes, we do. But today, it's a fallen free will, a corrupted free will. And the only choices that it is now free to make, from the time of the Fall, are fallen choices—to reject God and His will, and to blindly serve the devil and sin, all those verses that we had read about the evil one being at work in the sons of disobedience. For this reason, left to ourselves, in bondage to Satan and sin, without the grace of God to help us, the truth is that no one ever would, and no one ever could choose to turn to God and accept the Gospel. No one! And that's why Luther could write that

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the doctrine of the bondage of the will was the hinge on which the entire Reformation turned.

And if we doubt this reality, in Romans Paul refers to the fallen nature as “the flesh.” Teaching about the flesh, he wrote, “Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” Romans 8:8. Not a little bit, not somewhat. Not at all. This means that, beyond not choosing to do God’s will, our fallen nature is so corrupt that it cannot even have faith, because Scripture says elsewhere that “it is impossible to please God without faith.” And since our fallen nature cannot please God, how can it have faith, or exercise spiritual faith in even the smallest degree? How can it turn to God and be saved? How can it do good works?

So, how awful is the power of sin! And yet sin is only the second of the three evil powers that gained control of the human race in the Fall. And that’s why I like to point out that the concept of total depravity is only one of the three powers to consider, and by itself, it gives an incomplete picture of our condition.

Participant: Don’t you think that part of the problem of understanding this is that we tend to think that sin is what we do, rather than who we are?

Jim: Yes.

Participant: Everything in us is sin.

Jim: And that’s why we go back to the Fall, because then we realize that sin is now a part of the human race. It’s something that we pass on. We’re guilty under original sin, and then we pass on the nature, so that we actually sin.

And so this takes us into our third one. **Death: Physical, Spiritual and Eternal.** When Adam fell, the third great power to capture our race was death. As Paul tells us, sin entered the world through Adam, and with sin came death, because “the wages of sin is death.” Before this, there was no sin in the world, and there was no death. But God had warned Adam that in the day he transgressed His command, he would die. And Adam did die that day—a spiritual death,—and eventually, he died physically. And, as the Bible later reveals, it’s now appointed once that every person should die, and then comes judgment, after which all the lost will ultimately die eternally, in punishment forever.

Spiritual death, however, is first, and it is the natural spiritual condition of all human beings, even as they are born and live physically in this world. Paul referred to this spiritual state twice in his letter to the Ephesians. “And you who were dead in trespasses and sins.” And again, “even when you were dead in trespasses.” Ephesians 2, 1 and 5. Paul taught that, though we are living, breathing human beings, physically alive, we had been dead spiritually until God made us alive in Christ.

That’s why Jesus said to Nicodemus, “You must be born again.” Nicodemus thought that Jesus talked in physical terms, and that he needed to go back into his mother’s womb and be born again. But Jesus corrected him. He meant a spiritual rebirth that only the Holy Spirit could bring about. Without this spiritual rebirth, neither Nicodemus nor anyone could so much as see the kingdom of God, let alone ever hope to enter it.

So, even if they were free to respond to the gospel, and were willing to respond, which their double bondage to sin and Satan prevented, no one who is dead spiritually would have the power to respond. The spiritually dead sinner was helpless, and unable to

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respond to God’s spiritual call, because he was dead in spirit. The dead don’t respond. That’s what the biblical language of “being dead” means. There was no living spirit with which to respond and hear God’s call. And, apart from God’s grace in spiritual rebirth, spiritual death would lead inevitably to eternal death and destruction in the lake of fire with Satan forever, in every case, without exception.

So spiritual death, leading to physical death, was the third of the terrible consequences of the Fall in the garden.

And so that takes us to the last title, **The Trinity of Evil Powers**. As God’s word pictures it, the unvarnished truth of the fallen human condition is almost too awful to take in or comprehend. A trinity of evil powers had overcome the fallen human race. It’s so bad that the flesh just shrinks from accepting it, and facing the Biblical reality.

What’s the answer? Is there an answer? Surely the answer isn’t in denial, or seeking some alternative of our own devising, for just one of the tragic consequences of the Fall, its sole result, that one power would be sufficient, in and of itself, to make the human condition completely untenable and hopeless. No natural human ability could overcome it. But there was not just one consequence to overcome. There were three evil powers, each more powerful than any human power. So this is the true Biblical condition of fallen humanity, and of every person born. We are born spiritually dead and willing slaves, in bondage to sin and Satan. We are completely helpless to help ourselves, or give ourselves life. As willing slaves, we neither want to be free, nor can choose to be free, even if we did want to be. And so, for this reason, the idea of fallen human beings still having the free will to choose God is an utter fallacy.

By putting all these together, the Bible leaves us absolutely no wiggle room, where we can possibly do anything to help ourselves of our own choosing, or our own power, because we are powerless. And it is only when we honestly face the reality of the Fall and its Biblical consequences, that we’re in a place to really understand and appreciate what the Bible teaches is the only solution to the problem. God alone has the power to deliver fallen sinners, to help them escape the snare of the evil one, and the power of sin and death. Only the power of the Triune God can defeat the trinity of evil powers that took control of our race in the Fall. And though God was under no obligation to do so, the good news is that He did choose to do so, of His own infinite love and mercy and grace, even while we were dead in our sin and rebellion, with no means at all of escape, and no desire to escape. And the way God would do this would be through what the bible calls election, *election* and *the elect* being terms used in 27 places in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Election would be followed by what are called *the means of salvation*. But in election, due to the consequences of the Fall, God had only three options to consider.

Option one. He could elect no one, choosing not to intervene, thus leaving everyone to eternal punishment. And He could do so with perfect justice and righteousness. But this choice would prevent Him from exercising any of His infinite love or mercy.

Option two. He could elect to save everyone, leaving no one to eternal punishment. But this option would fail to exercise any of His infinite justice and righteousness. And when you look in the Old Testament, you see all the thundering about God’s justice and

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righteousness. To imagine, then, that He would just never do anything to hold anybody to account is also hard to imagine. And worse, it might convey a false sense of obligation, rather than mercy, as if the Creator owed it to His creatures, and couldn't really hold anybody to account, like it was entitlement.

Or **option three**. God could choose to elect some. And God chose this as the highest good. This would allow for mercy and justice. His election would be gracious, rational and mysterious. But due to the Fall, if God didn't act in election, no one would be saved, even if Christ came and died for sin.

That's one of the reasons, having said all this, why I really don't like to get into discussions about election or predestination with people until they understand the consequences of the Fall, because unless people really grasp that, the grace of God can sound arbitrary. But it's never arbitrary.

The bottom line is this. Because of Satan, sin and death, if God didn't choose us, no one would ever choose God, or the gospel. And that's the biblical reality.

Participant: Could you touch on and elaborate on the promise in the Fall?

Jim: Yes, that's wonderful! Rich asked if I would elaborate on the promise in the Fall. That's a whole other subject, which I absolutely love, and I like to say that Genesis 3:15 is the key verse in the Bible, because it's a promise. It's not only a prophecy. It's not only kind of the first glimpse of the gospel. It is actually a promise, because it starts with God saying, “And I will put,” so that God initiates the action. God is saying what he is going to do, and in that verse He promises ultimately to send a Redeemer into the human race, the Seed of the woman. And so, if you look at the whole rest of your Bible, it's the story of God's work in human history, to fulfill that single promise He made in the garden.

I read a tremendous article just this past week by Dr. John Mateaa, and he was saying that Christians today have lost sight of the Old Testament. They don't read the Old Testament. They don't understand it, because of what the liberal scholars have done to the Bible. They've destroyed the Bible, the Old Testament in particular, as a unified story. You know, it was created by committee, and people revised it, and so forth. When you understand Genesis 3:15, and you see that God made a promise that He then keeps through forty different authors, through fifteen hundred years of writing, through thousands of years of human history, you absolutely know that this is a supernatural thing. This is not humanly possible. And it gives the bible a supernatural unity. And it is the hope that we have that would otherwise be a totally hopeless situation. And I believe that's why God gave it right at that moment also, because the situation, without that promise, would be utterly, totally, completely, without question, hopeless.

Dick Johnson: Could I just take two minutes? Jim has been working on this for twenty or twenty-five years, and the book that he mentioned—I don't know where it is)—*Why Did Jesus Die?* Was a book that they gave out, and we've read it. If you have not read this book, you need to read this book, because it contains maybe what? Fifty per cent or seventy per cent of what you just shared this morning. One of the issues that Jim, and Holly Campbell, and myself and Bruce Bickel are looking at, and our concern is, that many of us have sat in churches for forty years, twenty years, five years, and we don't

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understand the full context of the word of God. So we have sermons, we have devotionals, we have Bible studies, and they are like a thousand pieces to a puzzle. And we never see the picture of where to hang all these pieces on the story that Jim just revealed. So we're trying, if God so allows us, to put together kind of a three- or four-part series on what Jim is talking about, that really gives the context to our faith. And I was talking with Bruce, and, of course, you never want to ask Bruce a question like this, because you come back embarrassed. I said, “Bruce, why, over these eighteen years, haven't we laid out this scenario?”

He said, “Dick, that's what we have been doing for the last eighteen years.” (*Laughter.*) So the reality of what he was saying is, that everything that we're talking about is the gospel—the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the Person and work of Christ, or repent and believe. And all those pieces come together, but it's in this context of the creation, God conferring with Himself as to what He is going to do in creation, the Fall, redemption, and then the new creation. But for dimwits like myself, who have been sitting in the church for all these years, I could never see how all these pieces work together, so that every gospel presentation, or every sermon that's preached, or every devotional fits into this context. And so we're trying to understand, from a lay standpoint, how to share this information, to make it much more relevant to each of us, as we grow in our faith. So Jim is kind of the center of that. But is what Jim is sharing helpful to us?

Men: Yes.

Participant: Good.

Second Participant: (*Unclear.*)

Participant: Actually, we passed out copies of this book a while back. Anybody who is new today, who hasn't been here before, if you would like a copy, there is a bunch of copies here. You can come up and get a copy.

Men: thank you, Jim. (*Applause.*)

Participant: May I ask you to close us in prayer?

Bishop Rodgers: The Lord be with you.

Men: And also with you.

Bishop Rodgers: We thank You, Lord, for Your grace extended toward us, and toward the human race. We are thankful that we can put ourselves, or at least recognize ourselves to be in Your hands. And we give You all the praise and the glory. Amen.

Men: Amen. (*Applause.*)