

# Where Are You? And What Have You Done?

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Date: 05 April 2020

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[ 0 : 00 ] But we're going to turn now to the Word of God. We're going to read together this morning right at the very beginning of the Bible in the book of Genesis. And if you'd like to turn with me to Genesis chapter 3, we're going to read some words from that chapter beginning at verse 8.

Genesis 3 and verse 8. And the man and the woman heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called out to the man and said to him, where are you?

And he said, I heard the sound of you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself. God said, who told you that you were naked?

Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat? The man said, the woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree and I ate. And the Lord God said to the woman, what is this that you have done?

[ 1 : 19 ] The woman said, the serpent deceived me and I ate. The Lord God said to the serpent, because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field.

On your belly you shall go and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I'll put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring.

He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel. To the woman he said, I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing.

In pain you shall bring forth children. And your desire shall be for, or for better to read it, your desire shall be against your husband. But he shall rule over you.

And to Adam he said, because you've listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, you shall not eat of it. Cursed is the ground because of you.

[ 2 : 28 ] In pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you. And you shall eat the plants of the field.

By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread. Till you return to the ground. For out of it you were taken. For you are dust.

And to dust you shall return. Amen. And may God bless to us this, his word.

Well, do turn up again Genesis chapter 3 so that you can follow with me this morning. And I think that will help you. And it will certainly help me. If you were with us last week for our online service, you'll recall that I mentioned the title of a book of essays by C.S. Lewis called God in the Dock.

And that was a collection of essays on theology and ethics. But the title came from an analogy that Lewis used about the way that modern human beings tend to relate to God.

[ 3 : 43 ] Instead of seeing themselves facing God's scrutiny and standing under his judgment, rather we have placed God on trial.

God in the dock with ourselves as both the judge and the jury. And scrutinizing and passing judgment on him. And that, I think, surely does describe the attitude of our Western world largely to God.

Because for the most part, people assume that they are like the brilliant formidable barristers. With all the crucial evidence. With all the toughest questions. With all the killer arguments.

To floor our opponent, God. Whereas God, at least the God of the Bible, is like the humiliated and exposed victim in the dock.

Feeling damaged. Desperately, feebly trying to defend the indefensible. And so the outcome, of course, is inevitable. It's a walkover.

[ 4 : 47 ] And the verdict is clear. The Bible and the God of the Bible is bankrupted. Finished and ruined. And discredited forever. Like many of the infamous society characters that we can all think of seeing in our news over the years.

God in the dock. And tried and found wanting. And that's, I think, how our culture has assumed things are for a very long time now.

Man is in charge. Man has all the answers. Man has all the answers. And therefore, it's man who fires all the questions, all the accusations, at a helpless God, defending himself feebly from the razor-sharp wit and the wisdom of his interrogators.

And sadly, I think it has to be said that even many in the Christian church, even many Christian leaders in the church of our day, seem to collude with that idea.

They think they're on the defensive. They tend to think that the church's arguments are rather feeble. And they fear the wit and the wisdom and, of course, the wants of modern society.

[ 5 : 59 ] But in fact, there's really nothing terribly new about that kind of high-handed and arrogant approach to the God of the Bible. If you read the Gospels, you'll see that Jesus Christ faced exactly the same thing, a constant barrage of aggressive questions and cross-examination, especially from the religious lawyers and the philosophical experts of the day, just like the so-called religious experts that we get on our TV programs today, documentaries about Christianity or discussions on Newsnight and programs like that.

I'm sure there'll be some of those this very week on our screens because it's Easter week. And no doubt it will consist of lots of people sitting on the panel answering the questions, people who love to cast doubt, who love to heap scorn and cynicism, especially on anything that is considered orthodox or evangelical.

But was Jesus Christ cowed by that sort of thing? Well, not at all. Jesus Christ was never, ever put on the back foot.

Quite the reverse. Always he turned the tables on people. It was always him that was putting the questions to them, putting them in the dock, facing his cross-examination.

And Jesus faced people with God's questions, with God's accusations, with God's challenges to their lives. And when he did that, of course, they didn't like it one bit.

[ 7 : 32 ] Remember old Corporal Jones in David's Army? They didn't like it up him. Well, no, they didn't. But Matthew records this in his gospel in chapter 22, verse 46.

No one was able to answer Jesus a word. Nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

What we saw last week, just one of the many questions that Jesus put very pointedly to the people of his day. Why do you not know how to interpret the present time?

He said, Luke chapter 12, verse 56. You know so much about trivial things, everyday things, the material matters of this world. But why do you seem to be so ignorant about God's timetable for this world and his timetable for your own life?

But friends, if you just start reading the Bible, you'll find that from the beginning to the very end, it is full of these kind of questions. Questions which put mankind firmly in the dock.

[ 8 : 42 ] And you'll find, when you read the Bible, that God is, in fact, a far more fearsome advocate than any that you might find in any courtroom in this world.

And I want to look today, this morning, at this very first question that God puts to man. Right back at the beginning of the human story. Right here in Genesis chapter 3.

It's the first iteration of this question of God in human history. But in fact, it's a question that's repeated many times, all through history, all through the Bible. And still today, it's a question that God is asking men and women all over the world.

Where are you? He says. And what have you done? Now, you've asked that question, I'm sure, plenty of times of your own children. I certainly have. Where are you? What have you done?

But God is asking it of every single one of us. Every human being on earth. Look at it here the first time in Genesis 3 at verse 9.

[ 9 : 44 ] And then at verse 13. Genesis 3 verse 8. They heard the sound of the Lord walking in the garden in the cool of the day. And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, where are you? And look at verse 13. And the Lord God said to the woman, what is this that you have done?

Where are you? God says to mankind. And what have you done? Now, immediately, of course, you might think, well, that's wrong. That's the opposite of how our world thinks today.

Our Western man, postmodern man, postmodern society. We think that we are asking that question to God, if there is a God at all.

Where is God? Where are you? Maybe that's your question. Where is this God? Why isn't he doing anything if he is there? To sort out this world, all of its mess.

[ 10 : 49 ] To sort out its wars. To sort out its famine and its floods. To sort out its climate change and so on. To sort out this coronavirus. Where is God? God seems to be lost.

God seems to be hidden or hiding himself if he is there. Or much more likely, we think he's dead. He's powerless. And if he does exist, well, then actually he is the one who's to blame, surely, for the state of our world.

That's what people think, isn't it? Look where religion gets you. Many, many people think that's the great problem in our world today. Bertrand Russell, the great philosopher, said this.

Religion is a disease born of fear. A source of untold misery to the human race. And I think many people would agree with that today.

Especially that religion they call fundamentalism. I mean, that's what causes terror attacks. That's what causes suicide bombs. So there you are. Surely any religion that gets too serious, too fundamentalist, it's going to lead to disaster.

[ 11 : 56 ] So come on, God, people say. If you're there, defend yourself. Show yourself. Come out into the open. Stand up for yourself because you have got a lot to answer for.

That's what people say, isn't it? Regularly. Oh, it's what people think in our secular world today. It's God who's in the dock as our other feeble defendant.

And it's us who are putting the questions, the accuser and the judge and indeed the jury in charge of the whole show. But wait a minute.

Just for a second. Stop. And listen to what the Bible says in answer to that. Because the Bible says, no, things are entirely the other way around.

And you see that right here in Genesis chapter 3. It's God, isn't it, who's asking the questions. Verse 9. The Lord God. By the way, that means not just any old God, but the unique and only God, the true and living God.

[ 12 : 59 ] The God who created the whole world that Genesis 1 and 2 has just spoken of. The God who reveals himself as the Lord, Jehovah, Yahweh, the personal name of the God of the Bible.

This is the unique and only God of all the universe. And he is asking the question, where are you? He says to man.

And where is proud, autonomous humanity to be found? Well, not, in fact, standing tall with the upper hand against God. Look at verse 8.

Skulking in the bushes. Hiding from God's presence. The man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Man and woman are on lockdown.

They're afraid to show their faces outside, even in public. Look at verse 10. I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked.

[ 13 : 59 ] So I hid myself. We're feeling a bit exposed at the moment, God. We're not too keen on a face-to-face right now. In fact, not even on Zoom. It's really rather a pathetic picture, isn't it?

For self-assured, autonomous humanity. Cowering in fig leaf bikinis. Look at verse 7. They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

Well, I suppose at least they had the decency to be ashamed and to hide themselves. I'm sure we've all seen folks on the beach bursting out of their bikinis that really ought to have been hiding in the bushes. But look at verse 10.

Perfectly encapsulates, doesn't it, the state of humankind estranged from their creator. I heard the sound of you, and I was afraid, and I hid myself.

And that's where human beings have actually been ever since that first rebellion, hiding from God. But God hasn't finished his interrogation.

[ 15 : 07 ] He's got more questions, as you'll see there in verse 11. And then he sums it up, really, in verse 13 with that question to the woman. Do you see, what is this that you have done? What have you human beings done to this world?

And friends, the answer that the Bible gives is as clear as it is terrible. You humankind, you have wrecked this universe.

There may be many contradictions, many absurdities, even in today's very vocal green movement with their prophetess Greta.

But perhaps, in amongst it all, this central fact is just beginning to catch our attention at last. And maybe this pandemic also is facing us up to some real questions about this world.

A world which is far from the world that we would long for it to be. Isn't that right? But mankind, says God, has made it this way.

[ 16 : 20 ] How has mankind wrecked this world? Well, look at verse 11. Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat? Have you so quickly abandoned my rule?

Have you so quickly set yourselves up as the autonomous rulers in this world, pleasing yourself in my world, says God? And the answer is yes.

That is exactly what human beings have done. Of course, they're quick to deny their responsibility. Neither the man nor the woman, you'll see, will accept the blame. It's not my fault, says Adam in verse 12.

It's the woman who, by the way, God, you gave to me. Oh, it's not my fault either, she says immediately in verse 13. It was the serpent. There's nothing new under the sun, is there? That's what Ecclesiastes tells us.

It's just the same today. It's not our fault. It's our upbringing, people say when they're accused of something. Well, I suppose that one at least wouldn't have worked for Adam and Eve, would it?

[ 17 : 19 ] But it's our genes. We're made that way. We can't help it. Or it's our circumstances. We couldn't help it. Human beings are naturals when it comes to denial, aren't we?

It was me. Glasgow's most famous expression, perhaps. But that came first from Adam and Eve.

It's been there since the very beginning. Human beings have denied everything. But it was their doing. Because they had snatched from God the authority to decide for themselves what is good and what is evil.

We will have our own moral autonomy, human beings have said. We don't want to listen to God. We'll decide what's right and wrong for us. We have the right to decide.

We have the right to decide what we do with our bodies, they said. Well, that's very familiar, isn't it? Don't tell anyone how I should live my life.

[ 18 : 28 ] It's not even up to you, God. And that's what human beings have been saying all through history. It's plain and obvious.

But the consequences, friends, of that are so terrible. God says to us, you have wrecked the world.

And it began right here. A wrecked world, notice, through wrecked relationships. Look at verse 16. Wrecked relationships between men and women.

Her desire, says God, shall be for her husband. That is, as the footnote says, they're better translated against him. That is, her desire is to dominate him and to control him.

There's an identical phrase in the next chapter, in chapter 4, verse 7. Where sin's desire is to dominate and control Cain. God says sin is crouching at the door.

[ 19 : 29 ] His desire is for you. But you must rule over it. And so it is here. He's saying the woman's desire will be to dominate and control the man. Well, there's the root of secular feminism for you.

But, verse 16, he shall rule over you, being stronger than you. There's the sad reality of male chauvinism and the abuse of women all throughout history.

But it's just describing life, isn't it? As we know it to be. Not harmony, but battles between the sexes. It's constantly, first one and then the other in the ascendancy.

Just think of the news. Just think of the issues that have been in our papers in recent times. The Harvey Weinstein affair. The Me Too movement. Or the Jeffrey Epstein affair.

And all of those tentacles and spreading right across the Atlantic. Even to, well, even to the royal household, perhaps. And then the Alex Salmon trial.

[ 20 : 31 ] And all the bitter fallout that's yet to come from that sort of business. Wrecked relationships between men and women. They are at the root, aren't they, of so much of this world's misery.

But that's not all. Look at verse 17. Wrecked relationships between man and nature. Cursed is the ground because of you. Yes, there's mercy.

There's God's promise of blessing. Yes, you will eat of it all the days of your life. There will be food. There'll be work. There'll be a rewarding life to live. But there is curse in pain.

You shall eat of it. There'll be toil and labor and strife also all your days. Well, who can deny the reality of that? It's true for most of us, isn't it?

That our work, our job, our career, it's both. On the one hand, our fulfilling joy. But also, at the same time, the bane of our lives. And perhaps just now, we're more conscious of that than ever.

[ 21 : 34 ] That we live in a world of thorns and thistles and viruses. To be battled against, just to live. And look at verse 19, too.

There's now a wrecked relationship between mankind and his very own being. Life itself. To dust you shall return. And that's true, isn't it?

Life is what brings us our greatest joys and gladness. Especially new life. Think of the birth of a baby. Think of life's loves. Life's relationships. And yet, it ends always and inevitably for all in death.

Death is the greatest foe that we all face. Death is the great thief that steals from every one of us our most precious possessions of all.

And that's the lives of our loved ones. And often, these days, there is real pain. Long in advance, even of death itself.

[ 22 : 43 ] In the diminished lives of our loved ones. As we watch them ebbing away. With ill health. With dementia, perhaps. And then there is that inevitable death.

And so, it will be for our own lives, too. Every single one of us. And perhaps this COVID, coronavirus plague is bringing that reality home.

In a way, we've perhaps pushed out for a long time. What is this that you have done? Says God to human beings.

And that's the question he puts to us persistently throughout the Bible. As he holds us in the dock of his perfect justice.

And if we look at our world and we're honest. I think we have to admit that, yes, we have destroyed relationships right across the universe.

[ 23 : 41 ] And that all the greatest causes of misery in our world come from those damaged relationships. Whether it's at the international level. The causes of trade wars. Currency wars.

Real fighting wars. And at the social level. And at the family level. And at the marriage level. And it's all at its root, says God.

Because you've rebelled against me. Your maker. And your true Lord. Of course, that's what we've failed to see. We see the consequences all around.

But we've ignored the real origin of it all. Which is human rebellion against God. But according to the Bible, that is the very essence of what's called sin.

That's what sin means. Sin is not some peccadillo skeletons in our closet. It's not sex and drugs and drinking and swearing as it is for some people. Or carbon guzzling.

[ 24 : 40 ] Or eating meat. Or using plastic bags. As sin seems to be for other people today. It's not these things at all. But it's a systematic destruction of God's created order for life.

By rebellion against his sovereign rule. That's what sin is for the Bible. And so God's questions to us.

To human beings. Forces us onto the back foot. Who are you? Where are you? He says. What is this that you have done? And the real answer, of course, is that we're lost.

We're estranged. And we're afraid. Afraid of God. And we've wrecked the world. And all its best relationships. Through our selfish rebellion.

Because that's what it is. Now, of course, our world can't accept that diagnosis. No, no, no. It says. The wisdom of our world.

[ 25 : 39 ] The scientists. The philosophers. The opinion formers. They'll say, no, no. We can explain the world. Look, we've sent people into space. We haven't found God there. Remember that was what Yuri Gagarin said.

The very first man in space. I went there. And there was no God. God. Oh, we've explored maths and physics and astronomy. We've looked everywhere for evidence of God. But we can't find any.

God's not there. So clever professors like Richard Dawkins. Has declared God to be a delusion. There is no God. There's nothing. There's only DNA, he says.

There's no design, no purpose, no evil, no good. Nothing but blind, pitiless indifference. DNA just is. And we dance to its music.

Says Professor Dawkins. Well, I suppose if that's so, we shouldn't really care, should we? How many people die in a virus pandemic? It's probably just very good for the gene pool. It's just poor DNA, isn't it?

[ 26 : 36 ] Being flushed out. Or I guess if somebody knifes you in the street or tries to rob you. Just remember there's no evil. There's no good. He's just dancing to his DNA. Well.

But we're surrounded, aren't we, by that kind of aggressive secular thinking today. Let's banish God. God is a delusion. And it can be easy even for people inside the professing church, therefore, to lose faith in the Bible's clear diagnosis of the truth.

And that's happened all around us so much in the church, in our country, and indeed in the whole Western world. The church often has tried to accommodate, tried to make its message more acceptable to our secularized world with all its wisdom, with all its sociology, with all its science, with all its humanism.

But friends, listen carefully to this because this is important. This analysis right at the beginning of the Bible, way back here in Genesis, if this is wrong, then clearly we're going to have to rewrite a whole lot of the rest of the Bible, too, aren't we?

I mean, Jesus himself must have been very mixed up. Obviously, when he told that story about the shepherd and the lost sheep, clearly it was a mistake.

[ 28 : 00 ] It was Dick Lucas who pointed that out to some of us many years ago. We'll have to rewrite that story of Jesus, won't we, if the Bible's wrong. It'll have to go like this. Well, once there was a shepherd with a hundred sheep, and the poor shepherd got lost.

And the ninety-nine sheep said to the one, well, you stay here and hold the fort. We'll all go out looking for our lost shepherd. And when they found him, they brought him back, and they had a great party in the sheepfold.

There were lots of extra grass and hay for everybody. And they all shouted and laughed for joy. We found our shepherd who was lost. You see, if secular thinking is right, poor Jesus was all wrong, wasn't he?

It wasn't him who came to seek and to save the lost. It was him who was lost. He was the one who didn't know why he'd come. That's why some modern scholars want us to think like that.

Poor Jesus had an identity crisis. It all went horribly wrong for him. He ended up with a disastrous early death that was quite unforeseen and put everything in his ministry to pieces.

[ 29 : 07 ] So we'll have to rewrite, won't we, lots of the Gospels. John 14, 6, where Jesus says, I am the way, the truth, and the life is obviously quite wrong. What it should read is, Jesus said, who can tell me the way?

Where is the truth? What is life really all about? Because Jesus is lost, isn't he? Until clever modern man, with his science and his scholarship, can give him the real answers.

You know, the people who are on the quest about the real historical Jesus, as they think on these TV documentaries and so on. And so Jesus then says, oh, at last, thanks to modern man, who knows so much about how to make this world so perfect, at last, he can help me find myself.

And so, of course, in the light of all that modern wisdom, we'll have to rewrite most of our hymns too, won't we? I will sing the wondrous story of the God now saved by me. And God sings, I was lost, but man has found me, this poor God who had gone so astray.

See, it is preposterous, isn't it, to think that way. And yet that's what we're left with if we say that the Bible's assessment of reality is all wrong in the light of modern clever thinking.

[ 30 : 30 ] If it's God who in fact is lost and helpless and hidden and can't be found, and if he were found, would need life support, not sinful man.

But friends, of course, Jesus Christ is not wrong. Because the fact is, this account way back in Genesis just describes exactly the way things are in our world and have been since the very beginning.

Human beings hiding. Hiding. Hiding from the accusing presence of God. Lost. And afraid. And exposed.

And pretending to themselves that they can protect themselves from him by, well, a few fig leaves. As if that was possible. But people still do hide constantly from reality about God and the world and life and everything.

The Times columnist, Matthew Paris, gives a very clear instance of this in an article that he wrote. He includes this in his autobiography, which I've been reading. And he tells of a time when he wakes up in the night and he can't sleep.

[ 31 : 48 ] And he speaks about the eerie and the awesome experience of sitting in the dark at night in utter silence. And he becomes acutely conscious of the noise of his breathing and of his heartbeat and of his blood flow.

And he's amazed at the sheer complexity of the human organism. What a piece of work man is, he says. Man is an almost miraculous combination of fragility with resilience.

It doesn't bear thinking about. You better not look down if you want to keep on flying, B.B. King. used to sing. It seems to me that human viability is an impossibility sustained by inattention.

We mustn't eavesdrop on those noises too often or for too long. That singing in the wires should stay mostly a secret. I switched on the light and it fled.

You see what he's saying? Don't let reality intrude on your thoughts. It doesn't bear thinking about. Put the light back on. Put the noise of the fig leaves back on to protect yourself because the truth doesn't bear thinking about.

[ 33 : 03 ] You've got to keep it suppressed. And that's what people do. For some, it's hiding behind the fig leaves of materialism.

Money to insulate you or a career to absorb you or leisure and sport to fill up your consciousness to keep these difficult thoughts about God and about your own mortality at bay.

Don't look down if you want to keep on flying. For some, it's the fig leaves of mysticism, some sort of spirituality, seeking experiences to find the meaning of life as if it were God who was hiding and you who's seeking him and to find enlightenment.

But actually, those who think that way are very careful usually to keep the real God of the Bible, the awkward God, the holy God, the demanding God, the challenging God, to keep that idea of God right out of mind and look for something quite, quite different.

For others, it's the fig leaves of moralism, seeking the protection of a good life, of being moral and upright and proper in your eyes and in others, doing everything to impress God and others.

[ 34 : 15 ] That was the virtue-signaling Pharisees of Jesus' day and there are plenty of those still today, aren't there? Sanctimoniously virtue-signaling whatever the latest virtues thought to be.

But actually, just the same as then, keeping the real challenge of Jesus' moral questions, his awkward questions, right at bay. And there are thousands, thousands more, endless fig leaves that we hide behind as human beings.

But all of them are doing the same thing. They're seeking to hide us from the truth, to keep us from the truth. The truth about ourselves and the truth about God.

In the Apostle Paul's letter to the church at Rome, he begins very starkly describing exactly this same thing. Listen to Romans chapter 1.

I'll read from verse 18. The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

[ 35 : 21 ] For what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, they've been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made.

So they're without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him. But they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of their mortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

You see mankind suppressing the truth, hiding from reality. Reality is so clear, says the apostle. The only way you don't see it is if you won't see it. And that leads to totally distorted thinking.

Thinking they're wise, he says, they've become fools. Think of Bernard Bertrand Russell that I quoted from earlier.

[ 36 : 31 ] A man with a brilliant mind but an utterly wrecked life. He destroyed his family by his reckless behavior. He destroyed several marriages because of his multiple affairs.

Actually, he left his followers thoroughly disillusioned. Well, the Bible says, suppress the truth and that leads to distorted thinking. And distorted thinking leads to distorted affections and behavior.

Darkened hearts leads to misuse of the bodies, says the apostle. Verse 24. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves.

They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served created things rather than the creator who is forever blessed. Think of another hugely influential modern hero, Alfred Kinsey.

It was his studies of human sexuality that were so very influential from the 1960s on. The so-called sex expert who would liberate us into happy, joyful sexuality in our lives.

[ 37 : 45 ] But he was shown up later on, wasn't he, to be nothing but a complete pervert. He engaged in gratuitous sex with children, even with animals. That's exactly the sort of thing that the apostle of Christ is speaking about here in Romans 1.

Because humans have exchanged the truth of God for a lie. What is God's judgment upon that? The apostle tells us that God didn't have to do anything.

He says that God just gave up human beings to do the very things that they wanted to do. God gave them up to dishonorable passions.

Now, women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature. And the men, likewise, gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another. Men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

and just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

[ 38 : 56 ] They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They're full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They're gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

See, God gave up humankind to be the rulers that they so badly wanted to be. And that, friends, is the simple fact that explains the world that we live in.

So we say, oh, where's God when you need him? But God says, where are you? This world's your responsibility now. Isn't that what you wanted?

And so quietly but persistently all through the scriptures, God questions us. Where are you? And what is this that you have done?

[ 40 : 14 ] It's not God who is lost or helpless or both. It's us. It's not us who can search and find him. It's he who must search and find and rescue us.

He's the finder. We are the lost sheep, friends. And that's the real truth that we will see when we do look down, when we're forced to, to put away the noise and the millions of fig leaves that we're hiding in to keep us from facing reality.

But friends, the message of the Bible forces us to face reality but it does so in order to help us to find redemption. Because right from the very first episode, God has been and still is calling out to man.

He hasn't left us completely and utterly to ourselves. If he had, this whole world would have been destroyed utterly long, long ago. But all through history, God has been calling out to man in grace and in mercy.

Yes, it's a call of accusation. What have you done? And it demands confession. That's what the Bible calls repentance. But at the same time, it is a call of mercy and grace.

[ 41 : 32 ] Where are you? He says that's an offer for fellowship to be restored through the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hebrews chapter 1 puts it majestically.

Since long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke. He's called out to our fathers through the prophets. But in these last days, he says, he has spoken to us in his Son who is the very radiance of the glory of God.

We today have received the utmost privilege of God's call of salvation. A call to turn back from the folly of our autonomy that so wrecked this world and to find again in him through what Jesus Christ has done to find the way back to our true home.

That poses another great question to our world, doesn't it? Are we listening? Are we listening? Let me conclude by reading God's call again.

This time, not from the beginning of the Bible, but from the very end, the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation. This time, it's on the lips of the risen Lord Jesus Christ. And he's speaking to a church gathering in the first century in a wealthy, complacent society just like ours.

[ 42 : 55 ] And this is what Jesus says. You say, I'm rich, I've prospered, I need nothing, not realizing that you're wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

I cancel you to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may be rich and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen and salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.

Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with him and he with me.

The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne as I also conquered and sat down with my father on his throne. He was an ear to hear.

Let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. God's still calling out to our churches and to our society.

[ 44 : 04 ] Where are you? And that's the message, friends, that God has given us as Christians to carry to this world. We are his ambassadors of the Lord of all authority and glory.

We are not on the back foot as though our master were actually the one cowering in the dock. No, we herald the challenge of the judge of all the earth himself.

Our message is not, oh, what do you think of God? Wouldn't you accept the God of the Bible? No, it's the opposite. Our message is this. You think, what does God think of you?

Will God accept you on the day when he comes to judge this whole earth? That's the question that our world has to confront and come to terms with.

where are you? And what have you done? And our task is to urge people to stop hiding. To come out, to face up to God through Jesus Christ before it's too late.

[ 45 : 06 ] And to find the only way back to truth and to true life. that's the gospel that we are called to proclaim.

And that's the gospel, friends, that God offers to you today. Well, let's pray.

Gracious God, we thank you that you are a God who speaks, who has not been silent in the face of our heinous rebellion against you, our ignoring of you, and our hiding from you in so many ways.

Thank you for the grace of your penetrating word. And may that word, Lord, touch us and change us.

Draw us out from our hiding place and bring us to our knees before you that we might find in you our great shepherd, our savior, our leader, and our king to lead us in the way everlasting.

[ 46 : 21 ] For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, we're going to end our time this morning together by singing once again.

We have a gospel to proclaim. Good news for all throughout the earth. In Jesus' name. Thank you.