

1. The Unseen World: A Biblical Overview

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[0 : 00] Thank you.

And in Kuching in particular. And thank you for your welcome and your hospitality. So it's really wonderful. And it's great to be with you, to be sharing these seminars this morning.

And indeed then to be looking at the apologetic session this evening and to be preaching for the church tomorrow. So wonderful to be with you.

And as Pastor Brian has said, it would help you enormously if you would either have your Bibles open or have it on your app or your phone.

Because what we'll be doing in these three sessions, just to let you know. First session we will be having a Bible overview. Really just broadly and generally speaking, looking at what the Bible says about spiritual warfare and the unseen world.

[1 : 25] Then after our break we'll be looking at Jesus and the unseen world. Jesus and evil, especially from the Gospel of Mark. And then the last session after lunch we will be trying to apply that teaching by looking at that great passage of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians chapter 6.

The whole armor of God. So that's where we're going this morning. As Pastor Brian mentioned, we have a box at the end for Q&A.;

And indeed even in the break or if you'd like to ask a question or sometime after the seminars this morning, please feel very free to come and ask me.

Please don't be shy. Please just come and ask me if you've got a question. So that's really where we're going this morning. So let's now begin.

Again, as Pastor Brian just mentioned. Bit of a noise, isn't it? Oh, aeroplanes. Ah, okay.

[2 : 44] Fighter jets. Oh, yes, yes, yes, the show today. Yes, yes, yes, okay. Right. Right. As Pastor Brian mentioned, there is a lot of interest in this topic of the unseen world and spiritual warfare.

There's a huge amount of interest, not merely here in Southeast Asia, but actually across the world. And there are a number of opposing views.

The views of many people, especially in the Western world and those in Asia who have been influenced by modern values, is to say that there is no such thing as the unseen world.

There is no such thing as the supernatural world. There is no such thing indeed even as evil. Basically, what we have is really just human problems.

Maybe. Maybe. Or indeed, for some philosophies like a Buddhist philosophy, even evil itself or human problems is an illusion. That is one view on one side.

[4 : 05] And even many Christians actually do believe that. They believe in God and Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

But that's all, if you like, of the supernatural world. The rest of the supernatural world doesn't exist. The devil, so to speak, many people would say is just a myth.

Just to put there in the Bible, because they lived in the unscientific age, the pre-modern age, and they wanted to simply have an explanation of all the problems we human beings have.

But there's no such thing, many people would say. That's one view on the one side of the debate. Now, the view on the other side of the debate is actually pretty much the opposite.

That is, there is a very huge spiritual or supernatural world which we cannot see, and that actually our whole world and even the churches are infested with demons and evil spirits.

[5 : 20] That indeed, that is the world we really live in, these people on the other side of the debate would say. And they would also say that we as Christians need to combat this world of evil, by actually, well, doing things.

God is depending on us today to defeat the unseen world of spiritual evil. And so, we need to be intelligent about it, they would say.

We need to understand the evil spirits and the evil powers. We need to understand which territories belong to evil. And we need to actually exercise, is the word many people use, the evil.

So, maybe this place is full of evil spirits and demons. So, we need to do things like spells or incantations to get rid of it. In the name of Christ, we need to take spiritual ground.

And unless we as Christians do that, these people would say, is that evil can't be defeated. God is depending on us. And therefore, we should be scared, but we should be going out there to combat evil every day by doing things, by exercising, by praying for people, by casting out evil spirits out of people, and that evil can manifest itself in many ways.

[6 : 57] And evil spirits, say, of drinking, or of tobacco, or of sexual immorality, or something like that. We need to cast these spirits out. We need to cast it out.

That's one view. A lot of Christians are actually very, very confused between these two views. There's no evil on one side, and there's too much evil on the other side.

And some Christians say, well, actually, there's another point of view. Well, we need all the resources we can get in our personal battle.

So, you know, maybe we need Jesus Christ. We might need the saints. We might need even help from other religions to combat evil. So there's confusion.

So we need to actually go back to the Bible. Because as Pastor Brian says, that is where we find the clear and the sufficient Word of God.

[8 : 03] And more than that, we need the clear and sufficient Word of God on this particular subject. So what I want to do in the time we have in our first seven session to do a Bible overview, just very quickly so we get our bearings as to the whole subject so that we can see.

And basically, we need to start with the question of the origin of evil. There was a film made in Hollywood, I think about 10 or 15 years ago, called The Red Dragon.

It was a horror movie about Hannibal Lecter, the American serial killer, fictional character. But one of the posters that was advertising this film, called The Red Dragon, which is, by the way, an allusion to the Book of Revelation and the figure of the Red Dragon, the evil one, who is waiting to deliver the Christ child, this poster had this extraordinary introduction.

If you want to understand the origin of evil, you must go back to the beginning. If you want to understand the origin of evil, you must go back to the beginning.

It's a very good line, isn't it? It's a very good line. So that's what I want to do, to understand the origin of evil and to go back to the beginning.

[9 : 55] And so what better place to start than the beginning of all things in the Book of Genesis. So if you will, please turn with me to Genesis chapter 3.

Now, you will know the story of Genesis 1 and 2.

God, the creator of all things, created a perfect world. And that world was beautiful and holy and righteous and perfect.

And he created a man and a woman, Adam and Eve. And they lived in blessing and joy and perfection in this perfect world.

So that's important for us to remember, isn't it? God created everything perfect and God is good. But we know that the world we live in today is not good and not perfect.

[11 : 07] So what went wrong? What's the big problem? And this is where we get to Genesis chapter 3.

And I just want to read the first seven verses of Genesis chapter 3 for us.

And I'm reading from the NIV. Now, the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made.

He said to the woman, Did God really say, You must not eat from any tree of the garden?

The woman said to the serpent, We may eat fruit from the trees of the garden. But God did say, You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden.

[12 : 13] And you must not touch it or you will die. You will certainly not die, the serpent said to the woman.

For God knows that when you eat from it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

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 of it.

She also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate. And the eyes of both of them were opened and they realized that they were naked.

So they sewed big leaves together and made coverings for themselves. What is going on here?

[13 : 16] What has gone wrong? Well, look at verse 1 with me, please. The serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord had made.

The Satan appears as a serpent. But actually some of the original Hebrew suggests from the description that he is, well, serpent-like.

And indeed from the descriptions we have of other angels, especially the cherubim, in certain parts of the Old Testament, a snake-like body is what the original cherubim would have.

So we're not talking about a normal snake here. Okay? We're not talking about a normal snake. We're talking about a supernatural being. An angelic figure indeed.

But now look what's happened to this serpent, this angelic serpent. He's more crafty than any of the wild animals that the Lord God has made.

[14 : 20] I.e., he's devious. He's deceptive. He lies. He doesn't tell the whole truth. It's very important for us to understand about evil.

And notice how he does his craftiness, his trickery, his deceit. He says to the woman, did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden?

Do you see what he's doing? He's having a debate, a conversation with the woman, Eve, about the nature of the Word of God.

Did God really say? I.e., the Bible's unclear, O Eve, let's have a conversation about it. That's what he's doing. Very important for us to understand when people say to us, the Bible's unclear, it doesn't really mean what it says.

Let's have a conversation, let's have a debate about this, that, and the other. Well, that's the trickery of the evil one. And notice how he twists the Word of God.

[15 : 35] You must not eat from any tree in the garden. God never said that. There's nothing in, nothing in Genesis 1 and 2 to suggest that. And notice that the woman falls for it.

We may, she enters into this debate. She implies that there is some doubt. We need to debate. We may eat fruit from the trees of the garden, but God did say you must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden.

Well, God never mentioned any tree in the middle of the garden. And you must not touch it. God never said that. Or you will die.

Do you see? Eve's been deceived already by adding to the Word of God. And then notice what the serpent does.

You will not certainly die. There's some doubt, oh Eve, you might get away with it. Maybe God is not telling you the truth.

[16 : 43] Maybe he's just doing it to make it up, to make you frightened. Maybe God is frightened. So you don't need to listen to the Word of God. That's evil, you see.

You see? And the serpent goes on. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened. I, you're in darkness.

Oh Eve, I'm bringing light. But of course that is deception. Eve was in light and the serpent is bringing darkness. And you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

Well, what does God do? He decides what's right and what's wrong. It's his authority. He says what's right, he says what's wrong. And then he tells us what's right and what's wrong.

We don't have the authority ourselves to tell ourselves that human beings, I think this is right and I think this is wrong. We hear that all the time, don't we, in our culture and society.

[17 : 46] I think this is right, I think this is wrong. But that goes back to the Garden of Eden. Only God has the right to say what's right and what's wrong.

And Eve falls for it. See, it's beautiful, it's pleasant, it creates an inner desire in her.

And so she takes it. Desirable for gaining wisdom, I want to be like God, says Eve. And Adam's there as the silent partner.

He doesn't say, excuse me Eve, sorry, you can't do that, please don't listen to the serpent because he's wrong. Don't please Eve, we need to trust in God.

He doesn't say anything, he's silent. That also means that he's implicated in the evil. We learn from that, don't we?

[18 : 51] To be silent in the face of evil means that we're dragged into it. And so, he himself eats.

So what happens? Do they find out that everything gets better in the world, that we human beings can become better? No. Do you see? The eyes of them both are opened, but they're not open to the light, they're open, so to speak, to the darkness.

They realize they are naked, vulnerable, weak before God. And so they have to hide themselves in shame. Otherwise, they'd lose face before God himself.

that, then, is the origin of evil. Or at least the first origin of evil.

It's an attack on the word of God. That's what we see in Genesis chapter 3. But you might say, Roe, okay, I understand that, that's quite interesting, and I get what it says about people who want to undermine the word of God, but I'm still puzzled as to where this Satan figure, this serpent-like figure, this serpent-like angel, how did he become bad in the first place?

[20 : 25] I can understand from Genesis chapter 3 how the world and the human beings became bad, but how did Satan become bad, and how did the angelic world of evil come to begin?

After all, if everything was created good, then even the angels and the spirits must have been created good by God. So what went wrong, supernaturally speaking?

For that, please, we need to turn to Genesis chapter 6. And I want to read from Genesis chapter 6, verse 1, right down to verse 5.

Genesis 6 now. Genesis 7, when human beings began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them.

The sons of God saw the daughters of humans who were beautiful and they married any of them they chose. Then God said, my spirit will not contend with human beings forever, for they are mortal.

[21 : 45] Their days will be 120 years. the Nephilim were on the earth in those days and also afterwards when the sons of daughters went to the daughters of humans and had children by them.

They were the heroes of old, men of renown. Well, that's difficult to understand, isn't it? Let me put it in some sort of context and then bring the New Testament in as well.

The sons of God is the traditional phrase used in the Bible for angels. Everywhere in the Bible, the Bible mentions sons of God.

It means angelic beings, supernatural beings. And what seems to have happened is that these angels under the authority of Satan, the greatest of all the angels, who is called an angel of light, or at least pretends to be the angel of light, what happens is that these angelic beings, quite astonishingly and surprisingly, they see the daughters of human beings and they go in to them.

They have a relationship with them. and what is so astonishing and amazing and disgusting and evil is that this infringes God's creation order.

[23 : 25] That's basically what happens. God has created everything in order and for a sphere. The angels and the supernatural beings, well, they belong in the supernatural sphere.

We human beings belong in the human and the natural sphere. God has commanded that these two spheres do not interfere. And this is the second origin of evil, that the angelic beings are so corrupted by seeing these human women that they invade the spheres and they bring in all the horrors we see.

you see, if we just had Genesis 3, we would be in serious trouble. There would be pain, there would be horror, there would be death, there would be a breakage between human beings and God.

But now there is the bondage of evil. They bring in to our world all sorts of things. And do you see what God says?

My spirit will not contend with humans forever because they're mortal. And then, well, what happens? Well, the children of these angelic beings and these human daughters, well, they're called the Nephilim, but they're wiped out in the flood.

[24 : 53] It is precisely because of this evil that God brings destruction and the flood of the world. Now, you might say, well, that's quite a lot, Ro, to get from just one passage of the Bible.

Yes, it is. But you see, by the time of the New Testament, the story I have just outlined from Genesis 6 becomes the most common explanation accepted by all Jews and, indeed, early Christians as to the origin of evil.

There's huge amounts of evidence in Jewish writings and, indeed, the writings of the early church that this is precisely what happens. And that basically, to take the story on, what happens is that when the giants die in the flood, the half-caste beings of angels and human women, when they die, their spirits escape from the body and become evil spirits and demons.

Now, that is very hard for us to understand. And you might say, well, there might be stories and understanding by early Jews and, indeed, early Christians, but does the Bible say so?

Well, actually, it does. turn with me, please, first of all, to 2 Peter, chapter 2. Can you please turn with me to 2 Peter, chapter 2?

[26 : 34] Amen. Look, please, first of all, at 2 Peter, chapter 2, verse 4.

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them into hell, putting them into chains of darkness to be held for the judgment.

That is the original sons of God of Genesis 6. And we know that Peter is referring to that story because look at verse 5. If he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood upon its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others.

Do you see? He goes on to the story of the flood. That's one reference. The other reference is in actually the little letter of Jude, which comes just before the book of Revelation.

If you could turn to Jude. And I want to start by reading at verse 5 of Jude.

[28 : 19] Though you already know all this, I want you to remind you that the Lord at one time delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe, i.e.

the Exodus. But notice verse 6. And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority, but abandoned their proper dwelling.

Notice that. That's the whole thing of Genesis 6. They abandoned the supernatural realm to come to earth. earth. These he has kept bound in darkness, bound with everlasting change for judgment on the great day.

And then notice that. Notice this in verse 7. In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion.

they serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire. Do you see what he's saying? What the angel did is very similar to what happened in Sodom and Gomorrah.

[29 : 24] Just as men went with men in Sodom and Gomorrah, and was strange and perverse, so it is strange and perverse for supernatural beings to be with human women.

And basically, God says that is abhorrent and results in the eternal fire. Now, I know that's quite a lot to take in, so if you've got some questions at the end, please, please do ask me.

But I hope that is clear, and I'm sure you have some questions, but come to me in the break or indeed, we can reserve the questions for the end.

But that is basically the portrait of the origins of evil, Genesis 3 and Genesis 6 together. But you might say, okay, that's where the evil of our world comes from, but what is evil, you might ask?

Is evil really, really what we would call wicked things like murder and killing people on a big scale and hatred and malice and things like that?

[30 : 47] What really is evil? What is the definition of evil? What is evil exactly like? evil? Well, for that, I just want to turn to, first of all, sketch some things from the Old Testaments, which you might want to remember and look up in your own time, and then look at just one verse.

In the Old Testament, in the book of Job, you might remember what happens at the beginning of the book of Job. Job. That is, God in heaven looks at Job on the earth and says to Satan, which means accuser or adversary, and it's actually a legal term.

It means the legal prosecutor, the prosecutor in God's supernatural law court. And Satan says to God, basically, yeah, but Job is only good because you love him, and you've given good things to him.

If you took away the good things, he wouldn't love you anymore. That's what, basically, the whole of Job is about. But for our purposes, understand that.

Satan is the legal accuser of God's people. He is, if you like, and I hope none of you have been in a court of law, but basically, if you have, or if you've seen films about that, you will know that in a court of law, there is a prosecutor whose job it is to bring the evidence that this person is guilty.

[32 : 32] That's basically what Satan does. He's the prosecutor. His job in Job is to tell God Job is guilty.

But notice, of course, at the end of the book of Job, God acquits Job as innocent. It happens again in the prophecy of Zechariah in chapter 3, where Satan says to Joshua, the high priest, look at that high priest.

He's full of dirty clothes. He's unholy. He's unclean. Again, you see what the prosecutor is doing. He's saying, look at the high priest.

He's meant to be holy. He's disgusting. He's dirty. And God puts on him new robes of holiness and equips him. So that's Satan's role.

That is what evil is actually about. It is not so much about, you know, weird black magic or spells or Satan coming up looking like a horrible monster or something like that or murder or weird witchcraft or spells or superstition.

[33 : 54] It's not that. What Satan wants is to oppose the holy plans of God and to falsely accuse his people.

and ultimately Jesus Christ. Come with me, please, to Mark chapter 8 and I will show you that. Mark chapter 8 now.

You will know this story from Mark chapter 8 and I'll start reading at verse 31 of Mark chapter 8. Mark chapter 8 and I will know this story comes just after Simon Peter, the apostle, has declared for the first time that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the anointed one of God.

And then notice what Jesus says in verse 31. He, that's Jesus, began to teach them that the Son of Man, that's Jesus, must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, the teachers of the law, that he must be killed and that after three days he must rise again.

He, Jesus, spoke plainly about this. And Peter took him, that's Jesus' side, and began to rebuke him. Do you see what Peter's doing? He's saying, no, Jesus, the Messiah cannot die.

[35 : 32] You're wrong about this. I'm going to oppose your plans of you dying and being humiliated and suffering.

And then look at what the Lord says to Peter. Peter. But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked in turn Peter.

Get behind me, Satan. You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns. Now, the Lord does not mean at this point that Peter is possessed by the devil.

He doesn't mean that. What he means is that Peter has turned into an adversary of Jesus' plans to bring redemption by dying for our sins.

You see, Jesus has said, I'm going to go to Jerusalem in order to die for sins. Peter says, no, you can't do that. He becomes his opponent, his adversary, even his legal opponent.

[36 : 42] And Jesus says, you're acting just like Satan. You're trying to hinder and oppose and become my opponent to my plans to bring redemption for the world.

You see, that is evil. I.e., for any opposition to the holy God and his plans to bring redemption to the world by his Lord and by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ is the definition of evil.

Opposition to salvation is the definition of evil. And now, that's very important for us to understand because it means that we do not need to search for something amazingly weird to happen like the devil appear as an evil, disgusting, horrible person.

and we don't need to search for witchcraft and occult and spells and magic and incantations to search for evil. Evil is very simply opposition to the salvation and the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What does the devil, what do the powers of evil actually want? They want to prevent people coming to salvation in Jesus Christ.

[38 : 08] that is their job, that is their purpose. If people do not come to Jesus Christ, Satan is happy, he's done his job.

And that is, you might have read ever the screw tape letters, basically, which C.S. Lewis, the famous English Christian apologist, wrote, actually in the form of a senior devil writing to his nephew.

And basically, what Lewis does in this imaginary fantasy and myth is basically say, you know, actually, your job, oh junior devil, is to prevent this man coming to Jesus.

And if he comes to Jesus, prevent him becoming mature. and if you can, put the world into his mind and heart and will so that he becomes more committed to the world than Jesus Christ.

And then hopefully he'll fall away and be lost. That is Satan's plan. That is evil. To prevent people coming to salvation and redemption in Jesus Christ and indeed to prevent us Christians from becoming mature and actually becoming half-hearted and living according to the world.

[39 : 35] And hopefully, he will say, they might even stop being Christians. If that happens, then we don't get saved. And so, Satan has succeeded.

Why are there so many huge numbers of non-Christians in our world? That is the work of Satan because he doesn't want them to be saved. He knows he's going to hell and he wants to take as many people with him.

If that is so, then what do we know and understand about Jesus?

The place where evil is defeated is the cross. The cross is where we have the victory over evil. Now, I'm going to say much more about that after our break, so I'll only very quickly go to one verse in Colossians, chapter 2.

If you would please turn to that. Don't worry, after the break, we'll just be focusing on one book of the Bible, but for the moment, we're trying to do Bible overview. I want you to look at verse 14 to 17.

- [40 : 55] Paul here is talking about the cross of Jesus Christ and he says that Jesus on the cross, having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness which stood against us and condemned us, he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.
- All our debts and we've heard a lot in recent years, haven't we, about the whole debt crisis of the banking world throughout it? Huge, huge debts, trillions of debts, isn't it?
- And Paul's saying it's the same with sin. We've got an unpayable, vast, trillion, infinity debt against God, but it's been paid for on the cross.
- And what's the consequence? Well, look at verse 15. And having disarmed the powers and the authorities, that's the powers and the authorities of evil, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.
- You see, by freeing us from the debt of our sin, Satan has lost. The powers of evil have lost.
- [42 : 03] He triumphs over that. So Satan is a defeated enemy. Evil is a defeated enemy. But you might say, well, Ro, that's very interesting, but look at the world today.
- Look at even churches today. I just have to open the internet or read my newspaper to realize there is evil in the world, even stories about pain and strife and dissension in the churches.
- So there's evil even in the churches. I can see evil in my own heart as well. So how can you say that Jesus has defeated evil? Jesus has defeated evil in the cross because the punishment of sin has been taken away by the cross.
- And one day Jesus will come back to make the world a perfect evil-free place. And so this is my last point before we finish.
- Number four, a world without evil or a perfect world. A world without evil or a perfect world. Please come with me.
- [43 : 23] We started in the first book of the Bible, Genesis. We're now going to finish in the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation, in chapter 20 of the book of Revelation.
- And I want to start reading at the judgment of Satan in verse 10 of chapter 20. And the devil, which actually means the slanderer or liar, who deceived them, notice the reference back to Genesis chapter 3, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet, his allies, had been thrown.
- And they will be tormented day and night, forever and ever. So do you see, justice will catch up with Satan. Satan.
- He is a defeated enemy at the moment. He is the snake whose head has been cut off by Jesus on the cross. His head has been bruised, but the body still curls around.
- But even the body will be destroyed. Justice will come. And what we need to understand is that justice and judgment are good things.
- [44 : 54] because a world without justice is a world of evil. For God to be just and good and holy and loving and kind, he must defeat and destroy and judge all evil.
- And praise God that at the end evil will be judged and evil will be destroyed in the lake of fire. But even better is coming.
- Look please at chapter 21 verse 1. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and there was no longer any sea.
- Chaos and evil have gone in this world. I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband, who is Jesus Christ.
- The Bible ends with a wedding. We will be that bride, the holy bride of Jesus Christ, the church, and the bride will be extraordinarily beautiful and radiant.

[46 : 16] Isn't that wonderful, the joy of a perfect wedding? And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, look, God's dwelling place is now with his people and he will be with them.

The best of heaven is we are going to be in the personal, direct, immediate presence of God. They will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God.

And then notice this in verse 4. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

What causes us more pain and more hurt and more suffering than anything else? It is, of course, illness and death.

we have all lost loved ones and we all know the sadness and the pain and the hurt and the tears that death causes.

[47 : 30] And we also know from our own lives about our own illnesses and we all know as well that one day we too all will die.

death. And yet the amazing goodness and love and the kindness of God is this, that even our greatest and last enemy, death, will be defeated.

Evil will go. As Paul says, where, oh, death, is your sting? Where, oh, death, is your victory? victory. Thanks be to God, we have the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, work for your labor is not in vain. God, let's pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[48 : 41] Amen. Amen.

Amen.