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[00:00:02] This is a series of studies conducted in the Chapel of the Open Book at the dinner hour meeting, and we are still in the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis. The covering title of this series is a finished work, but what at the beginning of it and the finish is not given us until we get right through into the New Testament. Now we are looking at the closing verse today of chapter three. Chapter three of Genesis. And he drove out the man and he placed at the east of the Garden of Eden Cherubim and a flaming sword, which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life. I looked at those words and I was almost tempted to be like the priest and the Levite to pass by on the other side because to try to speak of 12, 10 or 12 minutes on such a subject as what the cherubim stand for seems almost asking for trouble. But as I've been asking for trouble for the last 50 years and I'll manage to get through so far, I think that we shall devote two, three or more of these little meetings to get some idea of this which is introduced here. First of all, don't put an S on the word because the M is the plural. Cherubim means plural. That doesn't matter, of course, but you might as well know now what and who and why are the cherubim.

[00:01:29] First of all, you will notice if you were to set out the structure of Genesis three, it starts with a serpent and it ends with a cherub. And they are both animal forms, shielding and presenting a spiritual power. The serpent was not merely a snake. We are told in the Book of Revelation that the devil and Satan is that ancient serpent. So that we have now a disguise, or shall I say, a symbolism under which we approached our first parents. We're not saying it's not real. We're only saying that he is likened. You see, I've got my cue in the first verse. Now, the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field. Well, you couldn't. You wouldn't need to say that this mighty fallen spirit was more subtle than any beast of the field. That'd be nonsense, wouldn't it? He was more subtle than any man. So it was. It was using the form of a serpent in order to get the attention of the woman. Now, at the other end, we have cherubim. First of all, let me say that the word placed in verse 24, he placed at the east of the Garden of Eden. Cherubim is the word translated afterwards in the Old Testament by the word tabernacle. It's not merely placing casually. He caused a tabernacle to be put however big it was, or however small it was.

[00:03:03] We're not sure. But there, at the end of the Garden of Eden, just at the gate, after they were driven out and they wouldn't go very far away, you could depend upon it. In those early days they would see something. Now, God has not explained it to us here, but I'm perfectly certain that the God who walked and talked with Adam in the Garden of Eden and then in Pity spoke about the coming Redeemer and also gave this pledge here that there was something going to be done. He wouldn't have allowed all that symbolism to have left and worried him with it. We don't know so much of what he told him, but we've got a whole Bible instead. So we've got to canvass the scriptures to discover has this cherubim any significance that would be valuable for us to know? Well, first of all, you notice that it has to do with guarding the way of the tree of life. I think that's the first essential. Verse 24. So he drove out the man and he caused a tabernacle at the east of the garden of the of Eden Cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep not to keep you away from the tree of life, but to guard the tree of life, because life has already been forfeited. Death has been pronounced. Dust thou art and unto dust. Thou shalt return. Now God says to Adam, You've lost your life.

[00:04:32] But I'm telling you that there is a plan and there is a purpose when this conflict of the ages is over. When that life shall be more than restored. So if you care to turn to the last page in your Bible. Uh, that's very convenient for us, isn't it? The last page in your Bible revelation. You'll discover that the way of life to the tree of life is now once more open. So we've now got the beginning and the end of the story by that fact. Chapter 22. Verse 13, I am Alpha and Omega. The first letter and the last letter of the alphabet. Not only so, he's the valves that fill all the Hebrew words and give them sense, but that's another story. I am the alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. Genesis. Revelation. The first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments. And an alternative reading is blessed are they who have washed their robes. And there's not such a great difference between the two words, as might appear in English, that they may have a right to the tree of life. So the tree of Life, which is forfeited and lost in Genesis three, is now once more open to the nations of the world in Revelation 22. Well, that's an encouraging thought. Well, then another thought that is to bear upon this is found in Romans, the eighth chapter when it speaks about the creature or creation was not subject to vanity willingly.

[00:06:10] You're looking for the verse. I'm sorry. I was trying to dodge that this time. But still, here we are. Romans the eighth chapter. Somebody give me the verse if they

will. 2020. Read it out for me. Then please go lightly. For the creature was made subject to vanity. Not willingly, but by reason of him, who hath subjected the same in hope. Thank you. See? So there was a subjecting of creation to vanity. But it was subjected in hope. Now, here's the hope thing. Already creation has been subject to vanity because in Genesis three, we are told verse 18, thorns also, and thistles shall bring forth to thee and thou shalt eat the herb of the field and so on, the sweat of thy face. There's vanity. I do remember Ecclesiastes looks over the world. He says all things are full of labor. The the mind cannot conceive it. He says it's vanity and vexation of spirit. So it is. But not willingly, not in the sense that it's going to be continued. There's a purpose in it. And God says ultimately the creation is going to be delivered and rejoice in the liberty of the Sons of God. So we've got a little bit of thought there in Genesis three, that this has a very wonderful, inspiring purpose.

[00:07:31] Now, the only thing I can do at the moment is to sketch out for you without giving you, without turning to every passage, and then we'll take it a bit more systematically afterwards. First of all, the Cherubim are explained for us, particularly in the prophecy of Ezekiel when it says that the Cherubim was a composite symbolic finger feeder with marvellous mysterious wheels within wheels which paralyze the mind to describe that which seems to give an index of the complex character of the unfolding of the purpose of the ages. And then it says that these cherubim had four faces. The face of a man, the face of a lion, the face of an ox and the face of an eagle. A man, a lion and an eagle. Now I'm going to put myself for a moment in the position of Adam, who was just outside the Garden of Eden, looking at this cherubim. And he had only just recently been given dominion over the works of God's hands. The beast of the field, the cattle, the fowl of the air and so on. And he used to say to himself, A man. Well, I'm a man. And the lion. And the ox and the eagle. He is creation being symbolized here, which I had dominion over, and I've lost it. And here I stand there connected with the weight of the tree of life, which I forfeited as though God says, But it's coming back.

[00:09:02] So I am the alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending, said Christ at that very juncture. Well, that gives us a little hope, doesn't it, that the creation is groaning, waiting for something that God has promised. It may be inarticulate, but it's there. And the next thing is this. That in the Prophet Ezekiel, I'm still talking to it without turning to it because our time is so go so rapidly. I'm leaving that for some of you to do to supplement. You will find in the first ten chapters all about these cherubim and they're

called Cherubim in chapter ten. So you'll find the right grounds and they are associated with the failure of Israel and the gradual reluctant moving of the glory of God from the temple to the gate, from the gate to the valley to the valley to the end, and gone completely. And then after a long interval, it comes back in the closing chapters of Ezekiel coming right in where they went, the glory of God returning step by step until the temple is filled. That's the cherubim. They are associated with the failure and the restoration of man in connection with the glory of God. So that's a thought, isn't it? The next is this. That. These cherubim are next found in the tabernacle that Moses was instructed to build. You see, there's the Garden of Eden, or now years go by and now God concentrates his attention upon the people of Israel and they are given a tabernacle.

[00:10:37] And in that tabernacle there are the cherubim inside the very holiest of all and embroidered on the veil and the curtains. So you can't avoid the cherubim in connection with the tabernacle made in the days of Moses. Now, in this case, we take a stage further in our thoughts the cab, the ark and the mercy seat. Made of gold. The mercy seat particularly rested upon unbroken tables of stone. You remember Moses was given the law of Moses, given the law by God to himself. But when he came down from the mountain, he smashed the stones because they had already broken it. And what they had broken was not to do with thieving or telling lies, but worship. All that's involved all the way through. And if you break the first commandment of the ten, it doesn't matter much about the rest you'll discover. So that opens the door to a flood. And so we have resting on the mercy seat, which was always sprinkled with a blood of atonement, the cherubim. And there face to face, looking at that central feature, that's the next thing. So this great purpose of God, which is symbolized by Cherubim, is also emphasized to have a relationship to the atoning work of Christ, which alone makes it possible. We then come to the temple built by Solomon, and he has a cherubim of a huge size cut out of olive wood and their wings stretching from one side to the other.

[00:12:06] But they are still there in the holiest of all. And ended the book with the revelation. It's a pity that in our verse, should we read a four Beasts? Now, please make a distinction between the beast, which is the anti-Christian monster. The theory on which means a wild beast. And the Zohar, the living ones. It's a very word that we have everlasting life. So it's a pity to get the very word which we call life by a beast. No, it's the living ones. And it's really lifted out of Ezekiel. When he said these, I saw the living

creature, which I saw, I now know as the cherubim. So the book of the revelation is only saying what Ezekiel says, that these four living ones. Now they're there in chapter four, where we have the throne of God and they give glory to him, was created all things for his purpose. They are there in the announcing of certain prophetic movements in the book of the Revelation. So now we've got from Genesis to Revelation these strange beings which may not have any personal existence, but they are symbols. Of course, I'm speaking without knowledge. There may be possibly these curious animals with four heads in glory.

[00:13:22] I don't know. But I do know that some people have entertained a peculiar idea of heaven. And there was one lady who used to come to our meetings and she wouldn't mind me saying this when I told her that. Well, I said, You may never see a cherubim when you get to heaven. Oh, she said, I am disappointed. So I said, Look, whenever you come to the meeting, I said, I'll try to slip in the word cherubim for your benefit. And once or twice the congregation have not known why I said it. And I looked at her, you see, that was a little bit between us, too. Well, now, whether you're going to be disappointed as not seeing a four headed monster, I don't know. But this is my last word today because our time is almost up. The Lord Jesus Christ fills the bill and every symbol of the redeeming work of God that goes through the Bible until the end will always focus upon him. So I'm going to ask you now to consider the next step we have to take in the New Testament. We have a four fold picture of the Son of God. There are not five gospels or three. There are four. And right back to the earliest days, we learn those who spoke about it that there were four always and four and no more or less. The diatessaron, if you know the word means four, is one of the ancient books on the four gospels.

[00:14:36] Now, these four gospels are not made just a copy of one another. They diverge, you know, got plenty of divergence. And the first one is the gospel of the king. And in the Bible, a lion is the king. And in the second gospel we have the gospel of the servant. It differs from Matthew because Matthew has a genealogy and the servant has none. Simply straight off, we service the ox. Then Luke comes along, the one that takes you back to Adam. The only gospel that does. There's the man. And in the gospel, according to John gives you the Son of God. There's the flying upward looking eagle. Now, is it fantastic to think that that symbolism in Genesis left? If a serpent can symbolize the God of this age, Satan, the prince of this world, then cannot. God at the

other end of the story symbolize his beloved son who is ultimately going to reign in righteousness, to destroy the works of the devil and bring about everlasting peace. So I'm suggesting to you that we look at this a little bit more intimately so that instead of saying, Oh, well, we've had ten minutes on the cherubim, we know all about it. I think we'll say we've had ten minutes of an introduction and we'll get a little bit more about it when we meet together next time.