

Dr. Dave Mathewson, Story Line of the Bible, Lecture 1

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Introduction to the Storyline Approach

What I want to do in this series of lectures is go through what I have entitled “The Storyline of the Bible.” What that means is, although the Bible consists of a diversity of books historically and literarily, as far as the literary genre of the books, at the same time, underlying that diversity is, in my opinion, a unified story or unified narrative that attests to God’s redemptive dealing with his people in history. In fact, this story, as we’ll see it unfold and develop throughout the pages of the Old and New Testament, has all the features of stories that we’re familiar with. It has a typical plot, for example, and we’ll look at the setting of the story which we’ll spend most of this first lecture doing. We’ll examine the setting asking: who are the major characters? What are the dominant themes and movements of the story? Then the setting only sets the stage for a conflict. Most good stories have a conflict or a crisis that emerges in the story itself that has to be resolved. The biblical stories are no different. We’ll look at the crisis that is precipitated in the biblical story, narrative or storyline. We’ll see how that story gets resolved, how the crisis or conflict begins to unravel and find its resolution primarily in the New Testament in light of the fulfillment in Christ but also in his people as well.

So what I want to do at the outset is perhaps just say a couple things about what this series of lectures is not. This series of lectures is not a survey of the whole Bible. So there are large sections of the Old and New Testament, entire books that I will skip over because this is not a survey of the main content, structure, and themes and background settings of every major book. I’m simply tracing the story and we’ll be spending time looking at more prominent texts found in the Old Testament and how they contribute to the story. This is not a survey of the entire Old or New Testament. Nor in this series of lectures am I going to answer a number of questions that you might be interested in. For example, in Genesis, that we’ll look at as we examine the setting today, in the early chapters of Genesis I will not answer, nor am I perhaps equipped or qualified to answer

questions like, where did Cain and Abel get their wives? Or, was the cosmos created in seven literal days or ages? I'm not going to answer those questions. Instead, I'm going to focus mainly on the theological themes or the theological storyline as it winds its way through the Old and New Testament. So that's kind of where we're headed. I'll spend time looking at representative texts from the Old and New Testament and we'll spend a little bit of time on Genesis 1-3 which sets the stage and is the setting of the story.

Genesis 1-3

So let's look at that now, the starting point or setting is Genesis chapters 1-3. Chapter 1, in a sense, provides the overarching setting or summary of the rest of the section: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was formless and void and darkness covered the face of the deep." What this suggests about the setting is that Genesis 1-3 begins with the existence of God who is the sovereign Creator of all things that exist. He is the sovereign ruler over his creation. It's in this account of God's creative activity that all the elements of the story are to be found. All the dominant themes that will weave their way through the rest of the Bible as part of the Bible storyline are found here. I want to simply touch on those dominate themes.

People of God in Genesis 1-3

The first one, and I'm not going to present them necessarily in order. At times it is very difficult to separate or bifurcate between some of these themes because they're integrally related as part of the storyline. So sometimes I'll touch on one theme and be talking about some of the others as well. But the first theme is the theme of: "the people of God" in Genesis chapter 1 and 2. As the sovereign creator over his universe, God creates a people with whom he will enter into a relationship with. Adam and Eve are not just meant to be the first human beings but they are the very beginning, or the first people of God. They are the first people that God will enter into a covenant relationship with. That term "covenant" raises another theme, but Adam and Eve are to be seen as the first people of God that God as the sovereign ruler of creation will now create and establish a covenant relationship with. In fact, the mandate for Adam and Eve, or their primary function within this narrative and within creation that God is the sovereign ruler over, is

stipulated in a text like Genesis chapter 1 verses 26 and 27. Here at the climax of his created work God says: “then God said, ‘let us make human beings, or human kind, in our image according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’ So, God created humankind in his image in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” The idea behind the image, I’m convinced although there have been a variety of suggestions, culturally, or theologically, functionally or ontologically of what image might entail, at the very least I think the idea of image suggests that Adam and Eve are to function as God’s representatives. As those created in God’s image they are to represent God in creation and primarily that is worked out by them having dominion over all of creation.

So remember God is the sovereign ruler of creation and now he creates human beings in his image as his representatives. They are to represent God’s rule over his creation. They are to spread God’s kingship and his glory throughout the entire creation as his representatives. I take it that primarily that’s what it means that when it says, “Adam and Eve are created in God’s image.” They are his representatives to spread his rule and his glory throughout all of creation.

Kingship in Genesis 1-3

This introduces the next dominate theme and that is “kingship.” This is related to the notion of God’s image, that is, Adam and Eve as created in God’s image are primarily to function as God’s vice-regents in his creation. So again they are to represent God’s rule over all creation. They are to establish and spread God’s rule in his glory throughout the entire created universe. They are God’s vice-regents. As God’s vice-regent this is probably also how we are to understand the mandate given to them. I just read verses 26 and 27 of Genesis 1 but verse 28: “God blessed them and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” In other words, I think what this is suggesting, and notice the mandate to “be fruitful and multiply,” is once again connected with the idea of dominion or ruling over all creation as

God's representatives. What I think God is saying is that the way they are to fulfill their mandate to be God's image bearers and to represent God's rule over creation is by producing image bearing offspring who will fill the earth, and by that means establish and spread God's rule and glory throughout the entire creation. Putting this together Adam and Eve are created in God's image as representatives of God's rule. God is the sovereign ruler of his creation, but he creates Adam and Eve in his image to represent his rule throughout creation. They, likewise, are to produce image bearing offspring by being fruitful and multiplying and filling the earth. It is through other image-bearing offspring that God's rule and his glory will eventually spread throughout the entire creation.

The Covenant in Genesis 1-3

That brings us to another theme, and that is the theme of covenant. This goes along with people of God. Although the word "covenant" is not mentioned in Genesis chapters one and two, all of the elements of a covenant are there. God is depicted as a suzerain, a ruler, over all creation. Now he will create and elect a people that he will bless and enter a relationship with. This covenant will also include blessing and cursing. God will bless them, and notice back in verse 28 of chapter 1: "God blessed them and said 'Be fruitful and multiply.'" So creation is a place of blessing for the people of God. Yet, we will see later that there are also curses that will be fulfilled if they refuse to live up to their side of the covenant.

The main heart of the covenant is the formula, "I will be their God, and you will be my people," which you find repeated throughout the Old Testament. Again, the formula itself is not here and the word "covenant" is not here, but it is clear that God as the suzerain ruler over creation now intends to enter into a covenant relationship with his people by creating a people and blessing them if they obey their side of the covenant stipulations. The stipulation is found in God's command of them in chapter 2 that they are not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Again, I'm not interested at this point in explaining what that might be, but instead to raise the issue of this is the stipulation. If they are to fulfill their mandate: to be fruitful and multiply, and represent God's rule over all creation in part of this covenant relationship, they will obey God by

not eating from this tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Conversely, to disobey this command will bring about a cursing. Much like the theme of blessing and cursing that you will find with the Mosaic covenant later on in the Old Testament.

So, if God establishes a covenant relationship with Adam and Eve, his newly created people, they will be his people and they will fulfill their mandate. They are to keep their end of the covenant. If they do God will bless them, but if they disobey God will curse them and expel them from the garden, from the land that he had given them.

Land in Genesis 1-3

This brings us to the next theme, and that is the theme of “land.” Genesis 1 and 2, gives a rather detailed account of the seven days of creation. Again, I’m not interested in how we understand those, whether it is a literal twenty-four hour day or a longer period of time, is not my point right now. The point is theological that contributes to the setting in the beginning of the story. What I think is going on in chapters 1 and 2 is not just the origin of the earth, although it does talk about the beginnings of the earth and creation, but this is not anywhere close to a scientific explanation of the origin of the earth, nor does it rule out scientific explanations at all.

What is going on, is more important than that. This is not about the origin of the earth but more about God creating a land or an environment that is suitable for his people. God is creating an environment that is inhabitable by his people, and an environment in which he can take up residence and dwell with his people. So the land in chapters 1 and 2 is a place of blessing, a place of fruitfulness. It is in God's creation that his humanity, his new people, Adam and Eve, can enjoy life if they keep their end of the covenant. If not, they will be expelled from this land. So what is going on in chapters 1 and 2 is that this is the land that God is providing as a gracious gift to his people, to Adam and Eve. It’s a place of blessing where God will dwell with and take up residence with his people.

Now connected with the theme of land and creation, I want you to pay attention to chapter 1 verse 1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." We’ll see later on in one of the lectures where this concept crops up again and is important. But, in

connection with this theme of the creation of a land, is the producing of a land as a place of blessing and a gracious gift to the people. It is an environment that is suitable for his people to live in and for God to dwell in their midst.

Notice the mention in chapter 1 and 2, especially chapter 2 with the mention of a "garden." In chapter 2 verse 8 and 9, we'll read more of this later, but it begins, "And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life also is in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Later on, Adam and Eve, as a part of the covenant stipulation, are told they are not permitted to eat. But what I want to say about the garden is primarily what is going on here, and I owe this observation to an Old Testament Professor John Walton and a couple of others as well. What is going on here I think, is the garden is being portrayed, and in some respects the rest of creation, as sacred space.

The Garden of Eden is the place where God will dwell with his people, Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve's role is to guard it and keep it. Notice in chapter 2 verse 15, it says "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it." Now that phrase "to till it and keep it," I'm convinced, is not so much portraying Adam and Eve as the first gardeners or the first landscapers of the first creation, but instead their sole role is to guard the sacred space. Their role is similar to the role of the priests later on in the temple. So Adam and Eve in a sense function as the first "priests" of the Garden of Eden.

Now later on in Jewish literature, especially later in the Old Testament it clearly indicates that the Old Testament temple was basically meant to be a miniature garden of Eden because that was the first sacred space where God dwelled with his people. The Old Testament, as does much Jewish literature, especially some of the apocalyptic literature, portrays the Garden of Eden as a temple and Adam is the first priest who functioned in the temple. For example, one book entitled "Third Enoch" portrays Eden as a place where the brilliance of God's *shekinah* glory flashed from one end of the garden to the other, and there are other references. So clearly, the Garden of Eden is to be seen a

sacred space where God will dwell with his people as he did in the temple. Adam and Eve are there to guard it, to keep it, not as the first landscapers, but as, in a sense, the first priests who are to guard the sacred space and to take care of the sacred space where God dwells with his people.

Initially, we will return to this later on in another lecture when we talk more specifically about the temple. But just initially, notice a number of features that clearly connect this with the temple. Going back to chapters 1 and 2 the mention of luminaries and lights recall the light produced by the lamp stand within the temple. The very lamp stand itself that was located in the Old Testament temple probably recalls the tree. The lamp stand was meant to resemble a tree, probably the tree of life that existed in the Garden of Eden. Interestingly another observation, again that I owe to John Walton, is that the very fact that God rests on the seventh day is not just only a sign of God's recreation, or obviously not a sign of the fact that he was exhausted and needed to stop from this rigorous activity of creating but the notion of God resting seems to resonate with temple imagery. Later on in the Old Testament in several places, in Chronicles, in Isaiah chapter 66 there are mentions of the temple as the resting place of God, as the resting place of God's presence. God's presence came to rest in the temple itself. So when God rests at the conclusion of his creation it's signifying that this is now sacred space. This is God's temple in which he now rests or takes up residence as he dwells in the midst of his people. And again we'll see that when we return later on to the theme of temple.

Now geographically just let me make a comment on what's going on in chapter 1, 2 and 3 especially with this account of the Garden of Eden. Notice how verse 8 begins, "and the Lord God planted the garden in Eden in the east." The question is geographical, how are we to envision this is the Garden of Eden coextensive with chapters 1 and 2 so that the Garden of Eden encompasses the entire creation? Is Eden and maybe perhaps the garden within it a separate location within creation? Kind of the cosmology or even the geography depicted in Genesis 1-3 is a little bit difficult. But perhaps, and I owe this observation to Gregory Beale, he suggests that perhaps the garden of Eden is a place

within creation, the place where God's presence dwells, and Adam and Eve's main task as image bearers are as representatives of his rule and glory. By producing image bearing offspring who are also to spread God's rule and glory throughout creation that is the main mandate of Adam and Eve who are to expand the Garden of Eden to eventually encompass the entire earth and the entire world so that the garden of Eden becomes eventually coextensive with the entirety of creation.

So the stage then is set, the setting is now in place; man and woman are created as God's people and are created to enter into a covenant relationship with God. God has given them the gracious gift of the land that he has created for them. As his image bearers and representatives they are to represent the rule and the kingship of the sovereign ruler, the suzerain, over all creation. They are to represent and spread his rule and glory throughout the entirety of creation. They are to be fruitful and fill the earth in doing this presumably with other image bearing offspring. They are to care for and guard this sacred space that God has given them. The climax of all this is God now takes up residence and lives with his people in the creation that he had so graciously given them.

Genesis 3

Genesis 3 then raises a conflict, or the complication, that in a sense provides the main division in the rest of the Old and New Testament. You could actually, after chapter 3, put a main division between Genesis 1-3 and the rest of the Old and New Testament. The rest of the Old and New Testament will be the resolution to the complication that emerges in Genesis chapter 3. So the complication in chapter 3 is that the serpent tempts Adam and Eve to sin. He does so by getting them to violate the covenant stipulation, the covenant relationship with God. Adam and Eve were told that they were not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and Satan tempts them to do that. So now sin enters God's creation and sin now thwarts God's original intention for humanity to be God's image bearers, to reflect his rule, to spread his rule and glory throughout all creation.

Now with God dwelling in their midst, sin enters the scene and thwarts that intention so that now interestingly, Adam and Eve are exiled from the Garden of Eden. I

use that term “exiled” intentionally and you’ll see why as this story continues on. But Adam and Eve are exiled from the Garden of Eden. Interestingly in chapter 3 we also read that not only are they expelled from the garden but then in verse 24 it says, I’ll back up and read verse 23, of Genesis 3, “but therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the Garden of Eden he placed a cherubim and sword flaming and turning to guard the way of the tree of life.” So you get this picture of Adam and Eve expelled from, or exiled from the land, the place of blessing that God had given them, where they were to function as God’s image bearing representatives to spread God’s glory and rule throughout all creation. Instead now they are, because of sin and because of disobedience having broken the covenant relationship, they are expelled from the garden and from the sacred space that they were meant to keep. Now God places two cherubim, two angelic beings, at the east entrance to guard it. I want you to pay attention to those two things that we’ll return to later on, the fact that there are two angelic beings guarding the entrance to the garden. The writer makes a point of identifying it as the place “the east of the garden of Eden” the directional notion of the theme of the east.

So that’s the complication that arises. But chapter 3 verse 15, although again I don’t want to elaborate on this, but verse 15, that is often seen as the initial stages of the gospel, or the gospel *en nous* seems to indicate God’s gracious provision of a solution to the complication that has now arisen. Verse 15 says, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers. He will strike your head and you will strike his heel.” Now again nothing more is said than that, except that this is the beginning of a conflict that will eventually find a resolution. Although the narrative at this point does not tell us exactly what that will look like.

But the rest of the Bible, in my opinion, the rest of Genesis, all the way through into the New Testament, is the story of how God is going to restore his original intention for humanity and for his entire creation. That is, God’s creation of men and women in a covenant relationship with him, in the land that God has graciously provided for his people and with God dwelling in their midst and humanity functioning as God’s image

bearers, God's representatives, who are responsible to spread God's rule and his glory throughout the entire creation. The rest of the Old and New Testament will narrate how this complication, that has been introduced in chapter 3, gets resolved. How will God restore his original intention for humanity?

Genesis 12: Abraham

So that brings us to the end of the setting, and the complication that has been introduced. Now what I want to do again is I'll skip over rather large section of material, particularly in the Old Testament. I will only touchdown on major themes and major texts and major movements in the story of the outworking of God's purposes to restore his original intention for humanity and creation as articulated in Genesis chapters 1 and 2. And I want to skip all the way ahead to Genesis chapter 12 where the story of Israel becomes God's primary means of establishing or restoring God's intention for all of creation. So again Genesis 1 and 2 is on the macro level of God's dealing with all creation, now through a narrowing effect, God will now focus on one person, but also one nation, as the means by which God will establish his intention to restore creation to its original function with God's people living in the land, the gift of God's land, that he's given them, with God dwelling in their midst and God's people spreading God's glory and rule through the entire creation.

The story starts again in Genesis chapter 12. Genesis 12 begins, "Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one that curses you I will curse, and in you, all the families and all the nations of all the earth will be blessed.'" So this is the beginning of God's intent to restore Genesis 1 and 2 in the conditions that were in his original intention for creation. Now why do I say that? Well notice, how again all the dominant themes from Genesis 1, 2 and 3 crop up again in God's selection and choice of Abraham, and the nation of Israel and the story of Israel as his means of solving the conflict and the dilemma introduced in chapter 3 of Genesis. First of all, notice the clear reference to God giving Israel the land, or God giving

Abraham the land. So in verse 1 when it says “Go from your country and your kindred and to your father’s house into the land that I will show you” in other words, this is the initial stage of the restoration of God’s intention to give the land to the people from Genesis 1 and 2.

Land – Genesis 12

Remember in Genesis 1 and 2, God created the land as a suitable environment for his people. It was the gracious gift he gave to his people as a place of blessing, the place where God dwelt with his people. But Adam and Eve were exiled from that because of sin and now God chooses Abraham and the people of Israel to bring them back to the land as the place of God’s blessing, the place where God will once again dwell with his people. The land is the gracious gift of God to his people in fulfillment of Genesis chapters 1 and 2. So taking Abraham to the land and the nation of Israel that will come from him reestablishes the conditions of God’s original intention for his creation and for humanity and Adam and Eve his people, in Genesis chapters 1 and 2.

Notice also the theme of covenant, God is clearly portrayed in this chapter and in subsequent chapters of Genesis, as a suzerain, as the ruler over creation who now will choose, elect and call Abraham. He chooses to bless him. Notice too that the language of blessing and cursing, in chapter 12 verses 2 and 3. But in subsequent sections of the Abraham story, it’s clear that God enters into a relationship with Abraham. So here we see the theme of “covenant” as the way God will enter into a relationship with, and bless his people. It was found already in Genesis 1 and 2, now becomes the dominant way God will enter into a relationship with his people, restore them to the land, and bless them, as was his original intention for creation back in Genesis chapters 1 and 2. So for example, God enters into a covenant relationship not only with Abraham but also the rest of his offspring. Notice chapters 15 and 18. Chapter 15 clearly relates a covenant ceremony where God enters into a covenant relationship with Abraham. Notice how verse 18 ends. It says “on that day, the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘to your descendants I give this land.’” Notice the connection of the land, that the gift of the land with the covenant that God makes with Abraham and with his descendants as well.

Furthermore, notice the intention to bless Abraham, clearly back in chapters 12 but repeated through the Abrahamic narrative. The intention to bless Abraham is clearly a reversal of the curse that happens back in Genesis chapter 3 as a result of the sin of Adam and Eve. The end of chapter 3 results in God cursing the serpent. It ends with God cursing creation and now as a reversal of that Abraham is promised blessing and the return to the land a place of blessing again in fulfillment of God's intention for his people in Genesis chapters 1 and 2.

People of God – Genesis 12

Notice the theme also of people of God, that the intention for God choosing and entering into a covenant relationship with him is ultimately that out of Abraham will arise a people, a nation, through whom or with whom God will enter into a covenant relationship. We have already mentioned that the covenant that God established with Abraham is ultimately for his descendants as well. But out of Abraham will arise this people that will be God's people and God will be their God. Israel now is going to be God's means for restoring his original intention for creation from Genesis 1 and 2. So what Adam and Eve failed to do because of sin, and what got them exiled from the land, now God intends to take Israel back to the land as a place of blessing, to give them rest in the land and to enter into a covenant relationship so that ultimately God's glory and his rule will be established throughout the entire earth. So Israel now is God's intention to restore God's original purpose for creation from Genesis chapters 1 and 2.

Notice too, the emphasis on Abraham's seed and descendants, which over and over again you get this picture in Genesis that Abraham's seed is eventually to be more numerous than the stars of the sky or the sands of the sea. God uses different metaphors, but several times he tells Abraham that this offspring, remember back at the end of chapter 12, he told him that a great nation would come from him. In chapter fifteen he said this covenant with Abraham was so that his descendants would possess the land. Over and over again God promises Abraham that his descendants and seed will be more numerous than even the stars of the sky or the sands of the sea.

Abraham as next step

Notice chapter 22 in verses 17-18. Starting with verse 17, God speaking to Abraham, "I will indeed bless you and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the heaven and as the sand that is on the sea shore. Your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your offspring shall the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves because you have obeyed my voice." Now what I want you to notice is this mention of the numerous offspring that comes from Abraham is most likely intended to be a reflection of the mandate given to Adam and Eve back in Genesis chapter 1. Remember where God tells Adam and Eve, "you are to be fruitful and multiply and fill the entire earth and subdue it." Now Abraham is told that he will have offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky and the sand of the seashore, I think in fulfillment of God's original intention for Adam and Eve to produce image-bearing offspring to be fruitful and multiply and eventually fill the entire earth. So the mandate is now beginning to be fulfilled with God's choice of Abraham who will produce numerous offspring, who will be fruitful and multiply, who will possess the land. He will be restored to the land, the gracious gift of God's provision, the place of blessing that he intended for Adam and Eve to live with God living in their midst, and representing God's rule and spreading his glory throughout all creation.

So Abraham then is seen as the first step, the first stage, of God restoring his original intention for creation and for humanity. Remember God is not just restoring his people and saving his people, although that is perhaps the most significant element, but eventually God must restore all of creation. But Abraham was the first step for God restoring the condition of Genesis 1 and 2 that were ruined by sin and ruined by the fall in Genesis chapter 3. Again God will create and choose the people, he will be their God, and they will be his people in a covenant relationship with him. He will graciously give them the land as the place of blessing, as the place of his presence, They will spread his rule and his glory as his image-bearers. They will spread his rule and his glory as his representatives throughout all of creation and fill the earth with God's glory and his sovereign rule.

So, again this is just one major stage in the story, and how the story begins to unravel, how their story begins to develop, and as I said I'm skipping over large sections of material. If you go back and look at the flood narrative, Genesis 6 through 9 has all kinds of resonances with Genesis chapters 1 and 2. God is reaffirming his intent to restore creation, restore humanity, though now Genesis chapter 12 is more specific in how God begins to do that. Let me also say that I don't want to necessarily suggest that every single detail of the Old and New Testament can be forced into or fit into this storyline as well, but my main intent is to trace the dominant threads of the biblical story of God's redemptive dealing with his people and God's intent to restore his original intention that is reflected in his initial creative act as the sovereign creator of the universe with his people as the climax. This demonstrates how God is now acting in history to restore that, to its original intention from Genesis chapter 1 and 2.

Moses--Israel

Alright, the next stopping point is God's dealing with his people is through Moses and the covenant that God makes with Moses. The story starts in Exodus, again we have skipped over a lot of material, but the next stage of the story starts in the book of Exodus where God will call Moses to rescue his people out of the land of Egypt and again to take them to the land that God promised to Abraham. We said that was part of God's intention, to restore his intention for humanity to live in the land as God's gracious gift from Genesis chapters 1 and 2. So the story of Abraham continues with the covenant that God makes through Moses with the people of Israel, his rescuing them from Egypt and his intention to restore them to the land. Now this is very important. We'll see how this begins to work out in the rest of the Old Testament and even into the New Testament.

The nation of Israel then, we've already seen this in Genesis chapter 12, but through the covenant that God establishes ultimately with Abraham, the nation of Israel is going to be God's means by which he will restore his intention for all creation and for his people from Genesis chapters 1 and 2. So what I want to emphasize that hopefully many of you listening to this don't have to be reminded of, but for some of you, you may, that this is not simply a new twist in their story, or a new phase of God's dealing with his

people, what God is going to do with the nation of Israel through Moses is integrally and inextricably connected back to the creation narrative back in Genesis chapters 1 to 3. The election of Israel as the people of God is to be seen as the means by which God will restore his intention for creation from Genesis 1 and 2. Remember Adam and Eve failed. They sinned and therefore were exiled from the garden, from the land, the place of blessing, the place where God resided with his people in sacred space. Now Israel is called as the nation. God intends to rescue them from Egypt to bring them to the land where now they will be God's means of fulfilling God's original intention for creation from Genesis 1 and 2.

The Mosaic Covenant and the giving of the law is actually the means by which God will keep and fulfill the promise he made to Abraham. Again, through Abraham, he has promised a great nation. He is going to bring them to the land. Now the Mosaic covenant is the way that that will take place. The covenant that God makes with Moses in the giving the law is kind of the legal means and the way that the covenant made with Abraham will now be enforced and will now get worked out.

So what I want to do next then is look in a little bit more detail at the story of Israel and how it fulfills and continues, not only the story of the covenant made with Abraham, but going all the way back to creation, how the story of Israel is the fulfillment of and the means of God keeping and fulfilling his original intention for Adam and Eve and for all creation in Genesis chapters 1 and 2.

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