

## **Dr. Dave Mathewson, The Storyline of the Bible, Lecture 5**

We've been looking at this, what I call the storyline of the Bible, where the underlying narrative that narrates God's redemptive dealing with humanity and the entire cosmos in fulfillment of his original intention for creation back in Genesis one and two. And we have looked at that in terms of five inter-related themes: the theme of people of God, the theme of covenant, the theme of creation and land, the theme of temple, and the theme of kingship. We looked at how those got developed the Old Testament. The last lecture, we looked at how those themes get climaxed and fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ focusing particularly on how these themes emerge in the Gospels and how Christ brings them to fulfillment. What we want to do today is look beyond the Gospels and see how these themes continue to surface and wind their way through the remainder of the New Testament, finding their ultimate climax and fulfillment in the vision of eschatological salvation in Revelation 21 and 22. Again, I want to remind you that as we think about the story and how the story gets fulfilled, we need to draw two sets of distinctions. The first one is between how these get fulfilled in Christ, how Christ is the key to fulfillment of these promises, of these main themes and elements of the storyline. These themes by extension also get fulfilled in the people, who belong to Christ and who are incorporated into Christ through faith. So, first of all, they get fulfilled in Christ and secondarily they get fulfilled in God's people who belong to him.

The second distinction we need to make is between the inaugurated fulfillment of these promises and of these themes and the consummated fulfillment. We labeled the eschatological tension between what scholars often call the "already but not yet," or "inaugurated eschatology," and "consummated eschatology." This also affects these five themes. So initially they get inaugurated in the "already" part of this tension through Christ and his followers the Church, but in the future at the time of theologians call "the second coming of Christ" at the very end of history, the time when the Christ will inaugurate a brand new creation, then these themes find their consummated fulfillment, the "already" give way to the "not yet" side of these tensions. So today we'll look at both

the “already” aspect, especially focusing on God’s people the church and how these five themes get fulfilled but also ending with “the not yet aspect,” the eschatological consummation and finale in Revelation 21 and 22 where we will see that these five themes all emerge.

Starting then, with the book of Acts, what I want to show you is this story continues through the book of Acts. For Acts I am not going to necessarily isolate the five themes and separation, but just very briefly look at particularly the beginning chapters of Acts, but also looking at Acts as a whole and just to see how the story that began back in creation, in the creation account of Genesis one and two, now continues to exercise influence in Acts. Again, I remind you, I don’t want to say that the main burden of every New Testament author is to explicate these five themes, but at the very least to suggest that they assume the continuation of the story that starts back in Genesis and goes through the New Testament into the life of Christ, and now continues to weave its way through the rest of the New Testament authors. So starting with the book of Acts, the place to begin is with anyways, is Acts chapter 1 and verse 8. It’s intriguing that in verse 6 Jesus’ followers ask the question “Lord is it at this time when you will restore the Kingdom to Israel?” So clearly they were still expecting the ultimate fulfillment of the promises that the prophetic texts end with in the Old Testament. Now in my opinion, Acts 1:8 is response to that question, in a sense, when Jesus says, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and all of Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the Earth.”

Now, what I want to emphasize about this verse is that it’s far more than a missionary strategy for how to do evangelism starting with your home area and spreading out, however true that may be, that’s not primarily what Acts 1:8 is about. Acts 1:8, actually, all those phrases resonate with the texts from the book of Isaiah. Isaiah’s promise of restoration, where God will restore his people and his kingdom under a Davidic King and a new covenant and new creation, Isaiah’s promise of restoration is now seen as beginning to be fulfilled in the book of Acts. This text, which Acts 1:8 in a sense provides the introduction to the entire book, not just the outline from but

theologically in that the rest of Acts is going to, in one sense, be about how Isaiah's promise of restoration, how this Old Testament story that goes all the way back to creation in fact, now is fulfilled in Jesus' followers in the spread of the church and the spread of the gospel. So for example, the mention of receiving the Spirit when Jesus tells them "you will receive the Holy Spirit," that comes out of Isaiah 32:15. The fact that, when Jesus says "you are to be my witnesses," the witness theme, again, comes out of the book of Isaiah, where Israel was to be God's witness; Isaiah 43:10 and verse 12, as well. The fact that eventually this task of the disciples is to reach the end of the earth again reflects Isaiah 49:6, that the kingdom would eventually spread and these witnesses would go out to the ends of the earth, ultimately.

So that Acts 1:8 is kind of the programmatic statement for the rest of Acts. It is tied closely to Isaiah's promise of restoration from the Old Testament. But more than that, notice the mention too of Samaria and Jerusalem when Jesus says "you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, all Judea and Samaria." Now, why does the author mention Samaria? Why did Jesus tell them to start from Jerusalem, and then also include Samaria? Because what is going on here is Jerusalem, the capital of the southern kingdom, and now Samaria, the northern kingdom of Israel, are being united and restored in fulfillment of the prophetic expectation. So Israel is now being restored in Acts 1:8, so that salvation can now go to the ends of the earth, in fulfillment of Isaiah's program of restoration, but also in fulfillment of God's original intention for filling the whole earth with his glory, his presence and his rule in Genesis 1:2. So already in chapter 1, the author sounds the notes of the storyline, that we've seen goes all the way back to creation and weaves its way to the New Testament and emerging especially in prophetic literature. In Acts chapter 2, we find more indications of the author's intention to link his story in Acts with the Old Testament story. In Acts chapter 2 for example, when you read Peter's speech, in response to accusations as to what was going on in the day of Pentecost, in the beginning chapter of Acts when the Holy Spirit is poured out to God's people is in response to that, in Peter's speech, read chapter two sometime and notice how many times David's name

is evoked. Notice how many times the situation is formulated with texts linked to the Davidic king. So now the Davidic king has been restored. The promise to God to David found in the Old Testament going all the way back to II Samuel 7 which we said goes all the way back to God's intention for creation in Genesis 1 and 2 is now under way.

So the restoration is under way. But we find more indications of themes of people of God; temple imagery, new covenant imagery in chapter 2. For example, I use to always puzzle why towards the end of Acts chapter 1, why did the church see it necessary to appoint another disciple? It's almost here, suggested incidentally in the story of God's Spirit being poured out on the people on the day of Pentecost and the church's mandate to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth. Why do you have again this story of the church choosing a successor, a disciple, who would be the twelfth one? If you remember Judas defected back in the Gospels and so now the church chooses a twelfth. Why do they do that? Probably because, again, the number twelve is significant. That is, the reason they needed twelve disciples or twelve apostles was because that was emblematic of the twelve tribes of Israel or the people of God. So by choosing apostle number twelve, at the end of chapter 1 of Acts, again, the author is saying the people of God are being restored. The foundation, the restoration, of Israel is under way by choosing the twelfth and establishing the foundation of the new people of God, in the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ. I think that explains why Luke sees it necessary to narrate the event of choosing a twelfth disciple as indicating here's the restoration of God's people. Here's the new people of God, founded on the twelve apostles; this is the true restoration of God's people.

But notice, the other themes found in Acts chapter 2, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at the day of Pentecost, Acts chapter 2 suggests the promise of the new covenant. If you go back to the prophetic texts, even all the way back to Ezekiel chapter 36 and 37, the new covenant was to be accompanied by and signaled by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit is a sign that God's new covenant has come upon his people. Greg Beale in a couple of articles has also argued that the pouring out of the Spirit on the people at the day of Pentecost suggests God's presence coming to reside and

rest in his temple. So you have the temple theme in Acts 2 as well, along with the covenant theme and along with the restoration of Israel. Interestingly too, the fact that you have all these persons making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, in preparation for the day of Pentecost and the pouring out of the Spirit, probably reflects the Old Testament prophetic expectation that we saw in texts like Ezekiel and Isaiah of the pilgrimage of the people or the return from people of the people from exile back to their homeland. Then that is to be accompanied, by the rule of the king and the pouring out of the Spirit, the new covenant, and God's presence with his people. Richard Bauckmann claims in one of his recent books that Pentecost may be not so much the birthday of the church as the beginning of the restoration of the diaspora. That is all of God's people scattered because of exile are now restored. So here's the beginning, "the already stages," of the restoration of Israel, the restoration of God's people.

A couple of other interesting notes is that throughout Acts you'll also find these kind of updates or notices that frequently after certain events are narrated with a little caption that describes how the church grew and increased in number. Many disciples were added to their number. Especially, for example, of Acts chapter 6 and verses 1, and 7. Verse one says, "now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number." Verse seven says, "the word of God continued to spread, the number of the disciples increased greatly," and chapter 9, also in verse 31; "Meanwhile the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and was built up living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit. It increased in number." I think that that phrase that emphasis on growing and increasing is a reflection of God's original intention for humanity back in Genesis 1 and 2, that they would be fruitful and multiply that they would increase and fill the earth with other image-bearing offspring. It probably also picks up the theme of Abraham's offspring being numerous with the Israelites increasing in Exodus chapter 1. So that once again here we find that the intention of God for the restoration of his people where Abraham's seed would be numerous, and they would increase and multiply in fulfillment in God's mandate of creation in Genesis chapter 1 and 2 to be fruitful and multiply, now is being realized and fulfilled in the book of Acts.

So that Acts chapter 28 ends at the heel of a series of lengthy missionaries journeys of Paul that broaden out so that Paul ends up in Rome. The missionaries journeys of Paul and Acts chapter 28 end with the gospel reaching Rome and you have Paul still preaching the kingdom of God. So what's going on in Acts again, is in the first couple chapters with the people of God, Israel is being restored, the temple is being restored with God dwelling with his people, a new covenant is realized, and King David is ruling over his people. Now that that has taken place, salvation can go to the ends of the earth. In fulfillment of Acts 1:8 in fulfillment of the story that we looked at, so that Acts ends with the story on it's way to realization with the gospel reaching out, in a sense, to the ends of the earth, the Roman Empire, in Acts chapter 28. So now that this has taken place now that Israel has been restored and that part of the story has now begun to reach a resolution. Now a broader resolution of the gospel going out and God's kingdom and rule encompassing the whole entire earth can now take place as well.

There are a number of other things in Acts that we could probably look at, but again I just wanted to give you a flavor of how even Acts is a continuation of the storyline. It's far more than just the establishment of the early church and how the early church began to spread the gospel. Yes that's true, but it's to be seen as the continuing stages that begin in Luke and the other Gospels, the continuing stages of the fulfillment of the story that goes all the way back to creation.

One of the most significant figures in Acts is the apostle Paul. So in the sense, Acts provides a fitting introduction to the rest of the New Testament, because some of the main figures in Acts now feature their letters and their writings feature in the rest of the New Testament. One of the dominant figures since the early chapters of Acts, who soon, comes in a sense, dominate the rest of the scene is Paul. So I want to look at Paul's writings and to demonstrate how particularly these five themes of this story surface in Paul. Again, we are primarily looking at "the already," the inaugurated aspect. We'll primarily look at how these themes are fulfilled in the people themselves in the church, but also we'll continue to see how, for even Paul, they continue to be fulfilled in Jesus

Christ himself.

So let's start with the people of God. The theme of people of God in Paul is obviously going to be found in places far beyond where he just mentions, "people of God," or "church," or something like that. And what I have in mind is the number of times throughout Paul's letters where the church, God's people, is seen to participate in the promises that are made to Israel, particularly the promises of the new covenant. As we're going to see, all of the promises of salvation that God's people enjoy, that Christians participate in, are linked inextricably to the new covenant. There is no salvation outside of the new covenant that God makes with this people, so Jesus, we saw in the Gospels, inaugurates a new covenant. Paul now will continue to assume and articulate the presence of a new covenant and the blessings of salvation that flow from that to God's people. So that over and over the church seems to participate in the promises that were made to Israel particularly connected with the new covenant; all the promises of salvation, the promises of the Holy Spirit, when we read about the reference of the Spirit, being filled with the Spirit, being sealed with the Spirit, all that language connected with the Holy Spirit relates to the new covenant. We'll return to that in a moment.

But a couple of other texts to focus on; one of the clearest ones is found in Ephesians chapter two. In Ephesians chapter 2 and verses 11 through 22 in particular. What I want you notice is much of this language that we're going to read near and far, the language of preaching peace, this all comes out of Isaiah. So now even Paul sees the promise program of restoration of Isaiah as now being fulfilled in the church, which is made up of Jews and Gentiles. So Paul says, "Therefore then", starting at verse 11 Ephesians chapter 2, "Therefore then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth called the uncircumcision by those who are called the circumcision, that is the Jews, a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands. Remember that you were, at that time, without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you, who were once far off [language from Isaiah] you have been brought near by

the blood of Christ.” So even for Paul, Christ is the key to fulfilling the promises of Israel. Christ is the climax of the story. “For he is our peace in his flesh has made both groups Jew and Gentile into one and has broken down the dividing wall that is the hostility between them by abolishing the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity.” That creation, the new creation comes straight out of Isaiah. So that now he creates one humanity in place of these two making peace. That he might reconcile both groups, Jew and gentile, to God in one body through the cross. “Thus putting to death the hostility between through it [through the cross]. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access to the one Spirit, [or in the one Spirit] to the Father.” I’ll stop right there because I’ll return to the remaining two or three verses of this text later on. But what you see here is clearly, Paul assumes that the uniting of Jew and Gentile into one new humanity, into one new body, the church, is seen as the fulfillment of God’s promises given to Isaiah, to Isaiah’s promises of restoration. So clearly for Paul, now we see God expressing his intention to establish, reestablish and restore, his people, a new humanity consisting of Jew and Gentile.

So that we already saw back in the Gospels with the coming of Christ, who fulfills with the destiny of Israel in God’s people and is the key to fulfilling their story, now membership in the people of God is no longer defined ethnically, but is now is defined solely in terms of relationship to Jesus Christ. So because Jesus Christ has come and through his death on the cross has accomplished peace now membership, or belonging to the people of God depends on one’s response to Jesus Christ. The people of God constituted of Jew and Gentile now revolves around faith in Jesus Christ. So in chapter 2 of Ephesians, the new people of God are clearly being restored that are no longer defined along ethnic lines, but defined solely based on Jesus Christ and his work on the cross.

Another key, there are other texts that we could point to, but another key to understanding the church as the people of God in continuity with the Old Testament people of God, the Old Testament Israel, is found also in the application in the new Exodus theme, or motif, to the church. So for example, back in 1 Corinthians 5:7, not to



mention 1 Corinthians 10 and 11 where we see the church compared to Israel, but in chapter five in verse seven of 1 Corinthians; I'll back up I'll read verse seven. "Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, as you really are unleavened. For our pascal lamb, Christ [our Passover lamb Christ] has been sacrificed. Therefore let us," verse eight, "Therefore let us celebrate the festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice or evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Notice how much of that language comes out of the Exodus narrative. So in a sense what Paul is saying is a new Exodus has begun with Jesus Christ now rescuing and delivering his people from sin and death and evil and restoring them as his people, and delivering them as he did his people in the days of Exodus.

You also find, the Exodus language in two other texts: Colossians chapter 1 verse 13 and 14, "He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in which we have the redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Again that language of rescuing and redemption and purchase is reflective of the Exodus. So Paul clearly expresses here God's intention of a new Exodus to rescue his people, to restore his people and bring them salvation in fulfillment of the Exodus motif.

Galatians chapter four in verses one through seven also resonates with this Exodus language in terms of redemption and rescue from slavery and son-ship, Israel being God's son from the book of Exodus. So the first seven verses of chapter four of Galatians, "My point is this; heirs, as long as they are minors are no better than slaves, though they are the owners of all the property; but they remain under guardians and trustees until the date set by the Father. So with us while we were minors, we were enslaved to the elemental spirits of the world. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law that we might receive adoption as Sons. And because you are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts crying "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer slaves," [as the people in the days of the Exodus were] but now you are sons, and if a son, then also an heir, through God." So clearly Paul is assuming the Exodus story and the Exodus language indicates in this text and the other text that God in the new Exodus is now

restoring and saving and reconstituting his people, which is now this transcultural group, that we read about in Ephesians two, made up of both Jew and Gentile based on their relationship to Jesus Christ. So people of God, an important theme throughout Paul's writings is he sees the people as the climax, the church made of both Jew and Gentile who are now recipients and participate in the promises of God from the Old Testament. They are now the true people of God in fulfillment of God's intention that goes all the way back to creation to establish a people that He would enter into a relationship and to dwell with.

This brings us to the next theme, the theme of covenant, or new covenant. We saw in the Old Testament that prophetic texts ended with an anticipation of a new covenant that God would establish with his people that we read about in texts such as we see in Ezekiel 36 and 37 or Jeremiah chapter 31. Now Paul either clearly mentions new covenant, or also includes and highlights important or new covenant themes. So for example, as I've already said, the mention of the Holy Spirit all throughout Paul's letters, I am convinced whenever he mentions the Holy Spirit underlying that is the assumption of the establishment of the new covenant. The Holy Spirit was one of the promises back in Ezekiel 36 and 37. The Holy Spirit was a new covenant promise. The pouring out of the Spirit in Acts two in fulfillment of Joel chapter two, is clearly linked with God's establishment of a new covenant with his people. So by emphasizing the covenant, and the Holy Spirit, that we've again, in Paul's language we've been filled with the Spirit, or baptized in the Spirit, or sealed with the Spirit (Ephesians 1), or other language of Christians sharing in the Spirit, receiving the Spirit; that's not just new Christian terminology pulled in from the Old Testament. That is new covenant terminology. So the presence of the Spirit with his people, the possession of the Holy Spirit by the people clearly evokes the new covenant idea from the Old Testament.

Paul's mentioned whenever he talks about the forgiveness of sins through Christ's death on the cross, we have forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness of sins is tied with the new covenant. Ezekiel's language of God purifying us or giving us a new heart or removing our uncleanness, the fact that our sins have been forgiven is one of the blessings of the

new covenant. So whenever Paul talks about our sins being cleansed, removed, or forgiven, it's because of the new covenant. It assumes the establishment of the new covenant.

One of the places where Paul clearly discusses new covenant and relies on new covenant language, and covenant language more generally, is found in 2 Corinthians chapter 3. In 2 Corinthians chapter 3, and again I will just read parts of this, I will not read the whole thing, but all throughout here notice the covenant language, notice the language from Ezekiel 36 and 37. So Paul says, "Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Surely we do not need as some do letters of recommendation to you or from you, do we? You yourselves are a letter written on our hearts, to be known and read by all; and you show that you are a letter of Christ prepared by us written not by with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, [the new covenant spirit] not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human heart." This reflects the language from Ezekiel chapter 36 and 37. "Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, our competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of the new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the spirit." The new covenant spirit from Ezekiel, gives life.

So clearly, Paul uses the language of new covenant, but again his language assumes the covenant language, in particularly the new covenant as found in Jeremiah and particularly in Ezekiel is at the heart of Paul's ministry. His is the minister of, and dispenser of this new covenant promised in the Old Testament.

So Paul envisions the restoration of God's people, a people that transcends cultural or national barriers to include all peoples by virtue of their relationship with Jesus Christ. Paul understands, therefore, the promise of restoration of people that goes all the way back to the Old Testament story and to the book of Genesis, ultimately is now underway. Along with that is the theme of covenant. If the people have been restored, the covenant must be enforced as well, and we again we see hints in the language of Paul and in the theological concepts of the presence and the inauguration of the new covenant.

The Davidic kingdom, or kingship, likewise Paul assumes and at times clearly

articulates the promises of a Davidic kingdom in fulfillment of God's intention to rule over creation through his vice-regent that goes back to Genesis. Paul sees that as being fulfilled again in the person of Jesus Christ, but also in his people. So, for example, there are places where Paul clearly understands Jesus as the fulfillment of the promises made to David. Romans chapter 1 in verse 3, "The gospel concerning his son, who was descended from David according to the flesh." So clearly Paul links Jesus Christ with the physical lineage of David in fulfillment of 2 Samuel 7 and the prophetic expectation of a coming Davidic king.

There is some debate as to what extent, whenever Jesus is referred to as Christ, some English translations might have Messiah but most of our tradition will say Jesus Christ or the Christ or something like that. Even in Paul's letters and other New Testament authors when they refer to Jesus as the Christ, how many of those instances are titles as opposed to just Jesus's name, or a proper name? There's some agreement that at least a lot of them that we've traditionally thought of, that's just Jesus Christ, that Christ still carried some of its titular force as Messiah, as king in fulfillment of the Davidic promises. But at the very least Paul himself tells us in Romans 1:3 that Jesus is the descendent of David.

Elsewhere, even where Paul does not clearly call Jesus the Christ or the son of David or something like that and link him with the Davidic promises, there are places where Paul clearly applies Davidic texts to the person of Christ. So, for example, in Ephesians chapter 1, and I know I'm drawing on a number of texts, without talking much about the books as a whole or the context, again, my point is simply to show you how pervasive these themes are in Paul's own articulation of his message to his different churches. But Ephesians chapter 1 in verses 20 through 23 says, "God put this power to work in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority, and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but in the age to come. And has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all." What I want you to focus on is this

language of Jesus's exultation to the right hand of God and his dominion over all things and all his enemies being put under his feet. This language comes right out of Psalm 110 and Psalm 8. Psalm 110, what is often labeled a royal or a messianic psalm describes the Messianic King at the right hand of God, a position of power, a position of authority granted him. Now Jesus Christ is seen in his heavenly exultation. Jesus's Davidic reign, his reign as King David on David's throne has now begun by Jesus ascending to the right hand of God in fulfillment of Psalm 110.

But intriguingly as well, to go back beyond Psalm 110, you remember Psalm chapter 8, probably most of us know that even better that Psalm 110, but in Psalm chapter 8 we read this, "O Lord our Sovereign Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth," is how it begins. Then you skip down a couple of verses, "when I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars you've established, what are human beings that you are mindful of them?" This clearly evokes Genesis one and two, the creation. "What are mortals that you care for them?" Now listen to this, "You made them a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor," that is, humanity is the climax of creation. "You have given them dominion over the works of your hands. [Genesis 1] You have put all things under their feet."

Now Jesus Christ is seen as being exalted to heaven, in Ephesians 1 verse 22, "God has put all things under Jesus's feet," in fulfillment of Psalm 8. So what's going on? Basically Paul is saying with the resurrection of Christ and his exultation to heaven, at the right hand of God where he rules over all things and all things are under his feet, Jesus Christ has now entered into not only the Davidic rule and reign, but in fulfillment of Genesis 1 and 2, a reign that will spread God's rule over all creation in fulfillment of God's original intention for humanity. That worldwide rule from Genesis 1 and 2 that was intended for Adam and Eve but they failed. Then it was to be fulfilled through the king, has now been inaugurated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and his exultation to heaven.

There are other indications too of not only the Davidic kingship motif but also the kingship motif in general that goes back to creation. What about the notion of God's

image? That he created human beings in his own image as reflecting God, as representing God's glory and rule throughout all of creation.

In a couple books later, in the book of Colossians, in the very first chapter, Jesus is described as follows: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For in him all things in heaven and on earth, [notice that motif of heavens and earth] were created visible and invisible, whether thrones, dominions, authorities, all things created for him by him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together." There are probably a number of things going on in this part of section of Colossians; there's perhaps a wisdom motif going on here. But clearly it's hard not to catch the possible connections with Genesis chapter 1. That humanity was originally to be created in God's image to rule over all creation. Now Jesus Christ is portrayed as the true image of God, as the one who himself is God. He now is the true image and reflection and representative of God who rules over all creation as its creator. Unlike Adam and Eve who were part of the created order, now Jesus Christ rules over creation. He is sovereign over creation as its creator. So the theme of the image of God emerges here as well.

Romans chapter 5, and verses 18 and 19 to further connect Jesus with Adam and the original intention of God for his humanity. In chapter 5 and starting at verse 12 through 18, I won't read the whole section, but we find an extended comparison between Adam and Christ. What Adam failed to do and in fact, the effects of his sin in creation now Jesus, as the new Adam and the new head of humanity and creation comes to fix and reverse in a sense. So verse 12, "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man [Adam] and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned--sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who is to come [Jesus Christ]." The rest of the section then compares the effects of Adam's one sin, with the effects of Jesus' act of righteousness, probably his death on the cross. So that Jesus is clearly seen as a new Adam fulfilling God's intention for humanity that Adam failed to do now is carried out through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross and the new humanity

and the righteousness that he will establish over all things.

Notice, too, within that description in Romans chapter 5, even within the description of what Christ does we've noticed a couple times you have this theme of dominion or rulings. So verse 17, "If, because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ." So there's several facets of that comparison between Christ and Adam that clearly take you back to Genesis chapters 1 and 2. Jesus Christ now is the true Adam, to bring in the text from Colossians as well, who in the image of God now restores the rule of God and God's glory and now restores his people in a new creation, in a new humanity, reversing what Adam did, bringing to fulfillment God's intention for humanity which Adam failed at.

But, not only is this realized in Christ, but it's also realized in God's people. So for example, in the same book of Colossians following the mention of Jesus as the image of God, intriguingly, later on, in Colossians chapter 3 and verse 10. Paul describes this and we've clothed, "you've clothed yourselves with a new self," literally the new man or new humanity that replaces the original humanity going back to Adam. "You have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in the knowledge according to the image of its creator," which clearly evokes Genesis chapter 1 and 2. So, notice what I think partly is going on is by virtue of belonging to Christ, the true image of God, now God's people also are being renewed in God's image, restoring God's original intention for humanity, that God's image bearers would fill the earth with his glory and with his rules by representing God's rule throughout all creation. That is now beginning to be fulfilled as God's people put off the old self and put on the new self. That is who they are in Christ a new humanity, which is being renewed in the image of its creator, Genesis 1 and 2.

In Ephesians 2, one other text related to the kingship theme, the author is also clear that following on the heels of chapter 1, the text we just looked at where Jesus Christ is raised and seated at the right hand of God and has dominion over all things, now

notice what Paul says in chapter two of Ephesians, if I can skip down to verse 5 and 6, “Even when you were dead through our trespasses and sins, he made us alive together with Christ—[God made us alive together with Christ] by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” What Paul is saying, is basically what has happened to Christ in chapter one by virtue of his exaltation in fulfillment of the intention for creation of subjecting all things under his feet and at the right hand of God fulfilling God’s intention for a vice-regent to rule over all creation in fulfillment of Genesis 1 and 2. Now God’s people participate in that. By virtue of being in Christ, who is exalted to heaven and who reigns over all things, Christians also begin to fulfill the original mandate of creation for God’s people to rule, to reflect God’s image and to rule over all creation.

So, Paul is clearly aware of both Davidic kingdom, and Jesus as the fulfillment of the promises of David, of a vice-regent ruling over Israel and eventually ruling over creation. Paul also goes all the way back to creation and sees both Christ and his people as ultimately fulfilling God’s intention for his people to subdue and have dominion over all of creation, and they do that through the vice-regent Jesus Christ the son of David, and by being united with him, being incorporated into Christ.

The fourth theme, a temple dwelling of God, as Paul also draws on the Old Testament theme of the restoration and rebuilding of God’s temple as the place where God dwells with his people. Although the caveat is, Paul does not see this realized in the physical building of a stone structure or any other kind of structure. Instead, consistently in Paul, temple language gets applied to the people themselves. The people themselves make up this temple where God through his Holy Spirit, his new covenant spirit, now takes up residence. His presence comes to rest on the people of God.

Perhaps this is how we should understand language such as this. In Ephesians chapter 5, Paul says in verse 18, a text that most of us are aware of, Paul says “Do not get drunk with wine for that is debauchery but be filled with the Spirit.” Perhaps, we are to understand this in terms of God’s presence filling the temple. The language here resembles the Old Testament notion of God’s presence now through his Spirit coming to



fill his temple. Now God's people are seen as a temple that God's presence fills, and therefore they are to live appropriately as the commands and the rest of this section of Ephesians 5 spell out.

But to suggest that that may be the way we should read it, go back to chapter 2 and we cut off the last couple of verses but I want to return to them. Starting with verse 19 through 22 of Ephesians chapter 2 "So then you [Gentiles] are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, [along with Israel]." So notice the building household imagery that Paul applies to the people. But notice how he is going to shift and merge subtly in to temple imagery. "Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets," again there's the foundation, the twelve apostles, the foundation of the true people of God "with Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone. In him [Christ] the whole structure is joined together and grows in to a holy temple in the Lord, in whom, [in this temple] you also are built together spiritually in to a dwelling place for God." I think that's better interpreted, "you are being built together in to a dwelling place where God lives by His Spirit."

So clearly, Paul sees the church as the temple of God, the temple in the fulfillment of Ezekiel and other Old Testament texts. Yes, the temple has been restored. Israel has been restored, a Davidic king ruling over them in a new covenant relationship, and now God's temple has also been restored through God dwelling in the midst of his people. First Corinthians chapter three verse sixteen is the other classic text where Paul says to the Corinthians "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you." This is the same concept that we just read in Ephesians chapter two. This may also be reflected back in verse 12, "Now, if anyone builds a foundation of gold silver and precious stones," which are suggestive of the restoration of the temple from the Old Testament. So clearly, Paul conceives of the people of God as the rebuilt and restored temple, the place where God now takes up residence with his people, but now the building blocks of the stones that make up the temple are no longer made out of granite or whatever, but now they consist of the people themselves; the people are the true temple where God now dwells. This may now express why in the rest of 1 Corinthians

Paul is so keen on the purity of the people because they are the temple. So Paul takes the purity concept and the language from Old Testament and now applies it to the people more broadly to the church, because it is now the true temple.

The last theme is creation and land. I would suggest that this language or the theme of land and creation, including new creation extends beyond the return to the promised land. Remember we said that Isaiah anticipates that the final restoration of Israel to the land will take place in terms of a new creation, something that transcends just Israel returning to the promised land. But we see a lot of language that is reminiscent of the land so that I think, again, Paul sees, ultimately, the promise of a land creation fulfilled initially in the blessings of salvation that now God provides for his people.

We saw in the Gospels that the land could be seen in terms of entering the kingdom. Its interesting, Jesus himself talks about inheriting the kingdom of God. Inheritance was a term used in the Old Testament of Israel inheriting the land. Now Jesus conceives of them inheriting the kingdom of God. That inheritance language gets picked up with Paul as well. So, for example, to give you one example in Galatians chapter 3 and verse 29 he says “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring and heirs according to the promise.” Notice that language of heir and then chapter 4 verse 1. My point is this “heirs,” as long as they’re minors they’re no better than slaves, but then Paul’s point is they’re no longer slaves. So that because they are in Christ they are heirs according to the promise interestingly that inheritance language in Galatians 3:29 is tied in with the promise made to Abraham “You are Abraham’s offspring.” What was promised to Abraham’s offspring? They were promised the land. God will give them the land forever, they will inherit the land. Now God’s people are seen as inheriting the promise of salvation, the Holy Spirit in Galatians so that I take it that inheriting the kingdom, inheriting the blessings of salvation, are seen as the initial fulfillment of the land that was promised to Israel. Though, again, we’re going to see this isn’t all the New Testament has to say about the theme of land and creation.

Galatians 5:22-23, which I don’t want to read the whole thing, but verses 22-25 is the fruits of the Spirit text, but most likely when Paul says, “The fruits of the spirit are

these things,” again, I wonder if the language of fruitfulness is not meant to indicate the fruits of the new creation. This theme of fruitfulness back in Genesis one and two that crops up again in the prophets when God’s people are restored in new creation, you find all this language of fruitfulness cropping up, no pun intended. But perhaps that is what lies behind Paul’s thought here. When he’s talking about Christians who produce the fruit of the spirit. They’re producing the fruit of the new creation. The promise of land and new creation and Israel’s restoration to the land is now fulfilled in God’s people bearing the fruit of the new creation; which is pursuing things like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, and most of the other things as well.

But note though how many times Paul specifically alludes to new creation text in 2 Corinthians 5:17. Paul says, “So if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Behold everything has passed away, and see that everything has become new.” That language comes right out of Isaiah chapter 65, so that, in a couple other different places in Isaiah as well anticipate new creation. So again, what Paul is saying is if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation, the emphasis is not so much that you have been created anew, and you have a new heart, and you’re a new human compared to what you were, but I wonder if we shouldn’t so much understand this in personal terms, which is part of it, but more wide spread in terms of the fulfillment of the broader new creation. In Christ the new creation has arrived. By being in Christ we participate in this new creation, so that Isaiah’s new creation, that is the ultimate fulfillment of God’s intention for the land back in Genesis 1 and 2, has arrived and been inaugurated in the person of Jesus Christ.

The creation language is probably to be understood as lying behind text that most of us were familiar with in Ephesians chapter 2, when Paul says “For by grace you’ve been saved through faith, and this is not of your own doing. It is the gift of God, not in the result of works so that no one may boast.” That’s Ephesians 2:8-9. Now look at verse 10 “For we are his workmanship,” or what he has made, “created in Christ Jesus for good works.” Notice again the creation language. So what I think Paul, again, is saying is the

promise of a new creation is now fulfilled in God's people, who are a new creation and enabled to produce the fruits of the new creation. I think if we explored more clearly Paul links, he clearly ties the new creation with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. So the new creation has been inaugurated. The promise to the land given to Israel, in fulfillment of the creation, now is fulfilled in the promises of salvation that we inherit, and the new creation has now been inaugurated in the person of Jesus Christ.

Now most of these, all of these, virtually that we've looked at have focused on the realized aspect of eschatology, or the realized aspect of the story. There are also several hints of unrealized aspects or the "not yet," the consummation, the consummated eschatology. Let me just touch on one of those in conclusion. In chapter 1 verse 10 of Ephesians, and I'll back up and read verse 9 as well, "He has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure he set forth in Christ." Here's the mystery he's revealed of this God's will, "as a plan for the fullness of time to sum up [or gather up] all things in Christ; things in heaven and things on earth." Again, the heavens and the earth reflect creation language. So that chapter 1 and verse 10 is Paul's articulation of the ultimate purpose of God for the "not yet," to which the rest of Ephesians is pointing to that one day, all things in the entire cosmos in heaven and earth will find their rightful place under Christ. All things will be reconciled and restored to God's original intention for creation in Genesis chapters one and two. But as Paul demonstrates, that purpose has already been inaugurated, in God reconciling Jew and Gentile into one new humanity, in Christ entering into his Davidic rule and subduing all things in creation, and God's people sharing in that rule by virtue of belonging to Christ, and in the foundation of the new covenant, the restoration of the people of God, God dwelling with his people, and God establishing the new creation. God's ultimate intention that will be fulfilled in the realization of all things being summed up in Christ and finding their proper relationship to Christ, in fulfillment of Genesis one and two, is now already under way in the person of Christ and those who belong to Christ through faith.

Transcribed by: Monika Kim, Katie Percuoco, Micaela Slaeker, Sarah Salcone, Elizabeth Shipman, Mary Bethke, and edited by Kristyn Steele  
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