

Dr. Dave Mathewson, The Storyline of the Bible, Lecture 4

We've been looking what I call the storyline of the Bible, I suggested that throughout and underneath the diversity of literary types is a unified story that consists of a number of threads. I said the story has its setting back in the creation narratives in Genesis one and two, and then the complication that arises in chapter three, that the rest of the Bible will, in some sense, rectify. But in chapters one and two we saw all the primary setting and the primary story, all the elements of the story beginning. God creates humanity, creates Adam and Eve, in his image to be his representatives to spread his glory and his rule, throughout all creation.

The land which he gives them, the place of blessing, the place where God will reside and dwell with his people as long as they keep their end of the covenant relationship that God establishes, as long as they obey, they will remain in the land of blessing, in the place where God is present, the Garden of Eden being sacred space where God dwells with his people, the temple garden. Adam and Eve are then to reside there with God dwelling in their midst and as his image bearers and representatives they are to spread God's glory and his rule throughout all creation. Yet Adam and Eve fail to establish, or accomplish, the mandate God has given them. Instead, because of sin and disobedience, Adam and Eve are expelled from the temple Garden, the land of blessing, they are exiled from the land of God's presence. So the rest of the Bible after chapter three of Genesis can, in a sense, be seen as God's way of restoring his intention for humanity in Genesis chapters one and two.

After skipping over large parts of the story we looked at Abraham, and how God chooses Abraham, and through him, the nation of Israel to be the means by which God's intention for humanity will be restored. So we see the same elements that God will give them the land as a place of blessing, through the temple God will dwell with his people God enters into a covenant relationship consisting of blessing if they obey and abide by the covenant of blessing in the land where

God's temple is and where God continues to dwell with his people but a curse and exile and removal from the land if they refuse to obey.

Unfortunately that's exactly what happens. There's a parallel between the story of Adam and Eve and the story of Israel. Where Israel does not fair any better than Adam and Eve in accomplishing God's intention for humanity. So Israel also is expelled from the land, or exiled from the land from the Garden and the place of God's presence, because of violating the covenant that God had established with his people. The prophetic texts then anticipate a time when God will indeed restore his intention for humanity, through Israel. God in a sense has two problems to solve. One of them is the broader, global problem or universal problem of the sin of all humanity and the lack of fulfillment for his intention of all creation in Genesis one and two. But also now, Israel was God's chosen means by which he would rectify the situation. Yet Israel has failed as well, so God must, in a sense, save Israel. First he must restore Israel into its land and the covenant relationship with him with God dwelling in their midst and God ruling over them and Israel spreading God's rule and glory so that eventually through Israel's salvation, the entire earth might experience God's salvation and restoration and that God's intentions for all of creation, from Genesis one and two, would be reestablished as well. So the prophetic texts pick up on the story, and all the elements of the story, and end with an expectation, a prophetic expectation, of how that story will be fulfilled and reach its climax. We said last week what remains is to demonstrate how that story and how that expectation gets fulfilled.

So what I want to do is focus on the five main themes, there could be other themes but these are at least the five I've chosen to focus on. We saw the theme of the people of God, as well as all of these themes going back to Genesis one and two and creation, weaving their way through Israel's story and on into the prophetic texts. The themes are: the theme of people of God, the theme of covenant (God making a covenant with his people), the theme of land or creation (new creation), the theme of temple (or God dwelling with his people), and the

theme of kingship. Kingship is God ruling over his people and more importantly the people being a vice-regents of God's rule and spreading God's kingdom. They were to represent his rule throughout all the earth which we saw in the prophetic texts focused in the Davidic king. So you have all of these expectations and these five themes emerging in the prophetic expectation.

Now we'll see how those five themes get carried over into the New Testament. Let me make a couple observations about how these themes are felt in the New Testament. First of all, we've already said that it's virtually impossible to unravel these threads, to pull one out without unraveling all of them. They mesh together into a coherent story so that it's impossible to talk about one theme, say people of God, without talking about covenant. It's impossible to talk about the theme of covenant without talking about land and kingship. It's impossible to talk about kingship and Davidic rule over the people without evoking the notion of land and temple. So they're all inextricably bound together. The first thing I want to say then is when one or two of these themes are mentioned in the New Testament, it assumes the presence of the others. That is, the authors will not pull out one thread and theme and suggest that somehow that gets fulfilled in isolation of all the rest. But as a coherent story, if one facet of the story gets evoked in the New Testament, it assumes that the other facets of the story lie below the surface, and are evoked, as the entire story is evoked.

The second thing that I want to mention is that two distinctions need to be kept in mind, in the way that these threads are fulfilled. First of all, one must realize that this story in the New Testament, the way the story in the five themes gets fulfilled in the New Testament is, first of all, in the person of Jesus Christ. So Jesus Christ becomes the climax of the story, as we'll see. He is the one that takes up these themes and brings them to fulfillment. So the key to fulfillment is the person of Jesus Christ. However, by extension then, these themes get fulfilled in his people, the church, in that they are incorporated in the Christ, in that they belong to Christ. He is their representative, to use later Pauline language in that

Jesus is their head and they are in Christ. We'll see that in the New Testament in the church, God's people, who also participate in these promises. The promises also get fulfilled in them, but primarily by way of being fulfilled in Christ. So first of all, these promises find fulfillment in Christ and then by extension, they get fulfilled in his people by virtue of the fact that his people belong to him.

The second distinction to make is found in the very well known and popular distinction between the "already but not yet". The fact that the promises made to Israel and the prophetic expectation of a coming kingdom of God and a new creation and restoration of God's people. That expectation gets fulfilled in two stages in the New Testament. First of all it gets inaugurated through Jesus Christ in his people. Yet that inauguration is only a foretaste, or a down payment, of the final consummation. In the future these promises find their consummation. So the end of the story has already begun in Christ, but only partially. God's kingdom has already arrived in its freeness in the Gospels, especially Matthew. God's kingdom was already present in the person of Jesus Christ. God's kingdom is powerfully active in the person, the proclamation and ministry of Christ. By extension, his people then but that's only a down payment of and the presence of the kingdom in advance of its final consummation.

So I would suggest that we'll see that the story in these five themes that we're focusing on, there could be more, but I've chosen to focus on these five major themes of the story, these themes that start all the way back in creation, weave their way through Israel's story and then are found in the prophetic expectations and the conclusion of that story gets fulfilled in these two stages. They are already fulfilled and inaugurated in the person of Christ and his followers, in advance of the final consummation, and then the final conclusion of that story in what we call the second coming of Christ.

So the rest of our discussion of these themes will focus on those distinctions. Today we'll look at how the story and these five themes get focused in and fulfilled in Christ, and his followers, but the rest of the time that we spend

in the New Testament will focus on primarily how the rest of the New Testament documents outside of the gospels also attest to that fulfillment in Christ and his followers, that would be the “already” side. Then the final segment that we’ll do together will focus on the “not yet” aspect. How does the story reach its consummation and its climactic fulfillment in the new creation. There we’ll focus primarily on Revelation chapters twenty-one and twenty-two, where all these five themes come together in the grand finale to the story.

In light of that, let’s focus on Jesus as the climax to this story, and the way I want to handle this is I’m going to focus primarily on the gospel of Matthew, although I’ll bring other texts in discussing these themes to demonstrate that it’s not just in Matthew. The other gospels as well attest to the fulfillment of the story and these themes in the person of Christ. In doing so I hope to demonstrate that the gospels either explicitly depend on, or at least assume, this storyline. Again, I don’t want to suggest that every last verse in the Gospels somehow have to be forced into the story; but again, primarily the gospels’ either assume or explicitly depend on this storyline as it now reaches its climax and fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

In Matthew chapter one through four, we’ll begin by looking at several elements to see how the end of the story is reached there. Then we’ll touch on a couple of other sections outside of the first four chapters of Matthew, and again bring in a few texts from other gospels just to show that this is not unique with Matthew alone.

Let’s begin with Matthew chapters one through four. Matthew chapter one begins like this, “An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham.” Now, those two titles given to Jesus, [son of Abraham and son of David] immediately tie Jesus’ story with the story of the Old Testament, and we’ll look at these two terms later, but the title “Son of David” obviously tying Jesus’ story in with 2 Samuel chapter seven, the covenant made with David and also the prophetic expectation of a king coming in the line of

David who will sit on David's throne. The mention of the "Son of Abraham" ties Jesus into the promises made to Abraham of a great nation, and that all the nations of the earth will ultimately be blessed. Now Matthew clearly signals his intention to demonstrate that Jesus' story, the story he's about to narrate about Jesus, is the climax of and the continuation of the story begun in the Old Testament. And so among other reasons for the inclusion of Matthew first in the New Testament, at least its canonical order is fitting, because Matthew himself clearly announces his intention to link Jesus' story with that of the Old Testament.

Now, starting with Matthew chapter two, we'll begin to see where all these threads come together. One of the things that Matthew does in chapter two is portrays Jesus as a deliverer or as a savior who leads his people Israel out of exile in a new exodus. So you'll see the exodus theme that goes all the way back to God first delivering his people as he begins to fulfill his story and his intention to restore for humanity and creation. We'll see now that that exodus theme gets picked up, again as if Matthew wants to say Jesus is the continuation of the Old Testament story. What God intended from creation now is going to get fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ who comes to rescue these people in a new exodus. As we start looking at some of the five themes and the story in more detail, you'll notice connections with the exodus.

So, let's start with the theme of people of God, and remember it's impossible to pull these themes apart, they're integrally related to each other, so in talking about one we'll often overstep the boundary pulling on into another theme as well. In chapter one, verses one through seventeen, in this genealogy, what is interesting is the way Matthew structures this genealogy to mention the exile no less than four times. So, for example, in chapter one verse eleven, he says in his genealogy he comes to "and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon, [or the exile to Babylon]." And then verse twelve, "And after the deportation to Babylon." In the very next verse he mentions that again. And then verse seventeen where he mentions it twice, "so all the

generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon.” So notice how many times Matthew emphasizes the exile or the deportation to Babylon. It is as if to say now that Jesus is the ultimate end of the exile. Jesus will now accomplish what Adam and Eve failed to do that resulted in their exile and what the people of Israel failed to do that resulted in their exile. Now Jesus is going to accomplish by ultimately and finally leading his people out of exile in a new exodus and establishing, and bringing to completion, his intention for Israel and eventually all of creation from Genesis chapters one and two.

Now one thing, before we look at what Matthew does with the theme of “people of God” which is announced already in Jesus’ intention to restore Israel, We’re to read chapter one in the mention of exile, we’re to read that as here’s the restoration of God’s people anticipated in the prophetic texts. We looked at all those texts that anticipate a return and a restoration of the people of God, now Jesus will bring that about. But, one interesting anticipatory note, in chapter three verses nine and ten, we get a hint of what that restoration will entail. Starting in verse eight, this is Matthew 3: 8-10, “Jesus says, ‘bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to save yourselves, we have Abraham as our ancestor.’” Now, interestingly Matthew just claimed Jesus is the son of Abraham. So part of the question is: Who belongs to Abraham? Who are Abraham’s children? Who participates in the promises made to Abraham back in Genesis? Jesus says as he’s speaking to the Jewish leaders, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, “Do not presume to say to yourselves we have Abraham as our ancestor [which they did, physically] for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham, even now the axe is lying at the root of the tree. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” So interestingly at the very beginning of Jesus’ ministry here, there is a hint of how Jesus will restore the people of God. That will entail more than just physical ancestry. Jesus says don’t

presume that just because you can trace your ancestry back to Abraham that somehow that automatically designates you as a people of God. What is necessary, Jesus says, is repentance and bearing the fruit of the kingdom that Jesus Christ himself is now going to bring. So already early in Jesus ministry we get a hint that the people of God are going to entail more than just physically those who are of Israel.

In fact, even before that, this is anticipated in Matthew chapter two, by having the wise men, the Magi, come and visit Jesus. The Magi being foreign Gentiles, astrologers that came from a foreign land to visit Jesus when the Jewish authorities and leaders didn't even go out their back door to Bethlehem to worship Jesus at the news of the arrival of the prophet promised Davidic king. But instead Gentiles do come, and they do worship Jesus and bear fruit fitting for repentance. So already Matthew is beginning to anticipate who these people of God are, and what it means to be God's people, Jesus is restoring the people of God.

But there's another slight twist that takes place in Matthew. Matthew is also convinced that primarily, the history and destiny of Israel, are now fulfilled and focused in the person of Jesus Christ. In a couple of different ways, Matthew has Jesus rehearsing and kind of recapitulating the story of Israel. So, for example, we've already suggested in chapter two of Matthew, Jesus rehearses and repeats the history of Israel in terms of a new exodus. Notice verse fifteen, for example, back up and read fourteen, this is Matthew chapter two. This is the story of Jesus' birth and the story of his early childhood in chapters one and two. "Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night and went to Egypt and remained there until the death of Hared. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, 'out of Egypt I've call my son.'" If you go back and look at this text, "out of Egypt I've call my son," spoken by Hosea the prophet, clearly in that context of Hosea chapter eleven, it refers to Israel, it's not a prophecy about Jesus at all. Clearly, it is a historical reminiscence of Israel as God's son being in Egypt. So now how does Matthew apply it to Jesus? Well, he

understands Jesus as fulfilling the true intention and true destiny of Israel. So he's rehearsing, recapitulating their history, in a sense. The pattern of God dealing with his people, his son Israel, is now repeated with God rescuing and delivering his greater son, Jesus Christ. So Jesus is seen as the true Israel. Jesus' story intersects with the story of Israel by demonstrating that Jesus, now in a new exodus, is delivered from Egypt as Israel, God's son was. Jesus is now inaugurating a new exodus, to restore and deliver his people.

In addition to that, skip over to chapter three, the end of chapter three and the beginning of chapter four. In the baptism of Jesus, that is narrated for near the end of chapter three and chapter four. What is significant about this? I want you to notice is that the story and the parallels with Israel continue, so that Jesus, like Israel, is found being baptized in the Jordan river, much like Israel was delivered through and baptized into the Red Sea. They have been rescued and delivered through the red sea, entered the wilderness to be tested and to be tempted. Yet you remember the story; Israel of course ultimately failed and were exiled from their land. So notice what happens in chapter four, in chapter three then Jesus is baptized after being delivered from Egypt. He goes in a sense to the Red Sea in his baptism. Now he is now led into the wilderness like Israel to be tempted. Intriguingly, as Jesus is tempted by Satan, Jesus uses as a retort to Satan's temptation are all texts that come from Deuteronomy, and refer to Israel. "Do not tempt the Lord your God," that was a reference to what Israel was not supposed to do. Furthermore, not only do you find parallels with the nation of Israel, so that Jesus is seen as Israel, he is led out of Egypt into the wilderness where he is tested and tempted just as Israel was. Yet it's hard not to see the parallels with Genesis and the creation narrative as well, where Jesus is, like Adam and Eve, tempted by Satan himself in the desert. The very first temptation is in relationship to food as in a sense as Adam and Eve were. So you have this interesting picture and a number of commentaries have recognized both the connection of Israel and the connection with Adam and Eve. And I think that is significant. What is happening is, in a

sense, Jesus is repeating both stories. He's repeating, and recapitulating, and rehearsing the story of Israel, but in doing so, also with reference to the broader story of creation.

So you have this pattern developing in the Old Testament that now gets picked up here. As we said, Adam and Eve are created in God's image to fulfill God's intention for creation; they are tempted and they failed the test. They're exiled into the wilderness, exiled from the land, from God's presence, into the wilderness. Then God chooses Israel as his means to fulfill his intention for humanity and for creation. They too are brought into the land of blessing with God dwelling in their midst. They too are tempted and tested, and like Adam and Eve, they fail, and so they are exiled from the Garden of Eden and from the place of God's blessing. Now Jesus comes, like Adam and Eve, and like Israel. Jesus is also taken into the wilderness to be tested. Yet Jesus passes the test. As the true Israel, Jesus is the one who not only rehearses Israel's story, but brings it to completion. Jesus is the one who fulfills the destiny of Israel, and of all humanity. Remember this story primarily repeats that of Israel but perhaps we're to hear echoes of the creation, the temptation in the garden as well from Genesis. So Jesus fulfills the destiny and intention of God for Israel, but also for all of humanity.

So, what that means is, what we're beginning to see is, Jesus is starting to redefine what it means to be the people of God. How are the people of God going to be restored from the prophetic expectation? What does it mean to be truly God's people? By rehearsing Israel's history, by bringing it to completion, by bringing the people of God to their true destiny, now, "membership in the people of God, belonging to the people of God" is no longer ethnically or nationally defined, but now is defined solely in light of one's relationship to Jesus Christ who fulfills Israel's destiny, who fulfills the people of God. So already Jesus is beginning to, in a sense, redefine: "What does it mean to be the people of God?". The one who rehearses and recapitulates and brings to fulfillment, Israel's story and destiny, is now the focal point of what it means to be God's people. And so, true membership

in God's people, like Jesus told the Pharisees: don't suppose because you are descendants of Abraham, or to claim Abraham is your ancestor, don't think that that gets you by. But now it revolves around relationship to Jesus Christ and obedience to him.

So Jesus clearly intends to restore the people of God. With the coming of Jesus, with the arrival of Jesus, the prophetic expectation of a restoration of God's people, but also a people who will ultimately fill the destiny of all humanity from Genesis one and two is now being fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ and by implication those who respond with faith and obedience.

That brings us to the next theme. Again I've focused on Mathew chapters one through four, but now I'll start to broaden out beyond that with the theme of Kingship. In chapter one, we already saw that Jesus was designated the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of David. And in fact, this is only the first of a number of instances where Jesus is referred to as the Son of David throughout Matthew's gospel. I don't have time to go through them all, but even notice how Joseph himself is called the Son of David in chapter one, verse twenty. Elsewhere people recognize Jesus as the Son of David. So this is a key motif describing Jesus. And again, it all goes back to and recalls Old Testament expectations, starting with 2 Samuel chapter seven, and the covenant that God makes with David that there would always be someone sitting on his throne. It then extends into the prophetic expectation, that when God restored his people and brought them to the land that would include the restoration of the throne of David and a king in the line of David ruling over them. So by calling Jesus the son of David, Matthew clearly evokes this entire story. We said the importance of this too is that the Davidic kingship theme goes all the back, ultimately, to creation. The Davidic King was to be God's vice-regent, the way that God's rule would be established. Eventually God's rule would be established throughout all creation.

Now Jesus as the Son of David is here to fulfill that expectation. Furthermore, this can be seen in Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God. All

the gospels agree, the synoptic gospels especially agree, that the primary and characteristic feature of Jesus' preaching is the arrival of God's kingdom; the kingdom of God is at hand. This again, is part of the restoration of the expectation of a worldwide kingdom that comes through God's vice-regent, the king who will sit on David's throne. So now Jesus brings that kingdom, that rule of God over all creation. But again, ultimately it's through this kingdom and through the Davidic king that God's intention for all humanity, that his glory, his sovereignty and rule would spread through all creation. Now that is being inaugurated through the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of David who comes to offer that kingdom.

A classic text that demonstrates that is Matthew chapter 12:27-28. What is interesting here is you can see what is at the heart of God's rule and the establishment of God's kingdom. Jesus has just cast out a demon and now is being accused by the Pharisees of casting them out in the name of Satan. And so now here's what Jesus says. Verse 27: "If I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your exorcists cast them out? Therefore, they will be your judges. But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, [if I cast out demons not by the name of Beelzebub, but if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God] then the kingdom of God has come upon you." In other words, by casting out demons this is a sign that God's universal kingdom has now arrived, in fulfillment of Genesis 1 and 2. That is, God's rule that is to spread throughout all creation that has been usurped by Satan, is now being established. That is, the world is now Satan's kingdom, and now that is being turned over, its being taken from Satan, and being turned over to God himself. So through Jesus Christ's defeating the powers of evil and invading the realm and the kingdom of Satan, now God's kingdom is beginning to be established, through the Davidic king, in fulfillment of God's intention for his rule to spread throughout all of creation. Again, other gospels include the Davidic theme of the Son of David and Davidic king. Luke 1:31 is an example in the very beginning of Luke. It's the promise made to Mary when Mary finds out she's going to have a son. It says "He [her son] will be great and will be

called the Son of the Most High and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David.” So Luke also has a strong “Son of David” or “Davidic promise” theme running throughout it. So the theme of kingship is a very important one that again we saw is linked back to the Old Testament story of Israel and the prophetic expectation of the Davidic king. But the Davidic king was to be God’s vice-regent and the means through which God’s worldwide kingdom would ultimately be established in fulfillment of God’s intention in Genesis one and two.

Since we’ve roved a little bit outside of Matthew one and four, let me look at some of the other themes. First of all, let me just return back to the theme of people of God for just a moment. Two other clear indications in the gospels demonstrate the theme that Jesus is restoring the people of God in fulfillment of the Old Testament story. One of those is Jesus choosing twelve disciples. The fact that he chooses twelve is not because that’s the ideal small group or Jesus was into small groups, but the number twelve was a reflection of the twelve tribes of Israel. So Jesus by choosing twelve apostles is establishing the people of God, he’s restoring Israel, he’s restoring the people of God in fulfillment of the prophetic expectations. Interestingly, in Matthew we find Jesus using the word “church.” Matthew describes or explains Jesus as referring to Jesus establishing his church and the gates of hell will not overcome it. The word “church” needs to be divested of all the things that we might read into it from our modern day structures with elders and deacons and everything that we do at our churches in worship, etc. The word that we translate “church” is actually a word that was used in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament, to describe the nation of Israel, the gathering or the assembly of the nation of Israel. So now Jesus says, “I have come to build my church,” that is, based on the twelve apostles. Jesus is now reconstituting, restoring and reestablishing the true people of God, in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophetic expectations of restoration.

But let's move on to the other themes in addition to that. We'll return to that later on, especially when we get to other sections of the New Testament.

But what about the theme of covenant, which is inextricably bound with the theme of people? If God has restored his people and if Jesus as the Son of David is ruling over them, they must now be in a covenant relationship. God must have restored his new covenant with them. Especially go back to Ezekiel 36 and 37, where the theme of Davidic rule is tied closely to the theme of the new covenant, and the restoration of God's covenant with his people. Now we find that's exactly what happens. The clearest indication of Jesus establishing a new covenant with his people is found in Luke chapter twenty-two, and in the midst of Jesus inaugurating and instituting what we call the Lord's Supper, which would have been again a fulfillment of the Passover meal. Jesus says in verse twenty: "He did the same with the cup after the supper, saying 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.'" So connected with the Gospels' references to Jesus' death is clearly then, Jesus is seen, through his death as inaugurating the new covenant. Whereas we read in Ezekiel and in Jeremiah that God would accomplish complete forgiveness of sins, he would wipe away sin and remove uncleanness. He would give them a new heart and the ability to respond in obedience, as part of this covenant relationship. So clearly Jesus is seen as inaugurating this new covenant with the new people that he now restores that are founded on the twelve apostles and centered around Jesus Christ and one's response to Christ.

Let's move on to the theme of temple. We said that all the way back in Genesis one and two, the Garden of Eden was seen as sacred space, as a sanctuary, as a temple. Even the description then of the tabernacle as Israel wandered through the wilderness and then settled in the land and built a more permanent structure, the temple, those had all kind of resonances with the Garden of Eden. I suggested that the tabernacle and the temple were meant to be a miniature Garden

of Eden, as a place where God dwelled, and resided, and his presence rested with his people.

Now the temple theme also gets picked up in the gospels, as we would expect. If Jesus has come to restore the people and now as the Davidic king to rule over them and established a covenant relationship with them. It follows then that the temple would be restored as the Old Testament's prophets expected. God's presence would now come to rest with his people. Again that's exactly what we find. We find that already in a sense in Matthew, in that intriguingly, Matthew is bounded by it at the beginning and the end. Matthew in the first few chapters has described the restoration of God's people, Jesus himself is to be seen as the true Israel, the one who fulfills Israel's destiny. We see Jesus described as a messianic king ruling over them. In the context of that, in the very beginning and end of Matthew, we also find this note of God's presence with his people through the person of Jesus Christ. So, for example, Matthew chapter one, which is the most familiar and well known of these two texts, in Matthew 1:23, when the angel tells Joseph and Mary what they are to name the baby, it says in verse twenty-one, "She will bear a son and you are to name him "Jesus," for he will save his people from their sins." I take in the context, this is primarily Jesus restoring Israel, saving them from their sins. "All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord. Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall name him Emmanuel, meaning, 'God is with us.'"

So you have this strong indication now of God's presence, with his people, in the person of Jesus Christ. Yet when you go to the very end of the gospel, in the so-called "Great Commission" text, which we will look at again briefly, is that Matthew ends with Jesus saying, "All authority in heaven and in earth has been given to me. So therefore make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Teaching them to obey everything that I command you, and remember I am with you, always, to the end of the age." So the book of Matthew was bounded by this note of God's presence, his temple

tabernacling presence with his people in the person of Jesus Christ.

The gospel of John, the fourth gospel is even more explicit. At the very beginning of John chapter one, we read this of Jesus. This is a text that we usually hear quoted or alluded to at Christmas time but we sometimes don't stop to think what that entails. Verse fourteen, "And the word," [which clearly is referring to Jesus] "The word became flesh, and lived or dwelled among us and we have beheld his glory." What I want to focus on are those two words "dwelled or lived" and "glory." Some people have recognized that the idea of dwell is "to tabernacle" or "to pitch a tent." The idea is not that Jesus comes to take up temporary residence with his people or to tabernacle for a while. These two words are far more profound. Both words are utilized in the Old Testament in reference to God's presence in his tabernacle or in his temple. In fact, in Ezekiel chapter forty-three, in verses one through seven, these two words glory and the verb "to dwell" are both found in reference to God taking up his presence in the eschatological temple, that Ezekiel sees. We looked at that text and we suggested that the first three chapters of Ezekiel 40, 41, and 42, the first three chapters record Ezekiel's vision toward the eschatological temple that is rebuilt when Israel is restored with the Davidic king ruling over them are set in the context of new covenant relationship. Then chapter forty-three records how God's presence comes to finally fill that temple. So then in chapter forty-three of Ezekiel, we find that God's glory. Several times it says God's glory entered the temple, but it also says it came to reside or live there. This is a similar form of the verb that we find John using now in chapter 1:1-14 of John's gospel. So that what John is saying when he says that the word became flesh and lived among us, through Jesus Christ God's temple tabernacle presence, was now with the people. The eschatological presence of God that was to fill the temple in Ezekiel and other Old Testament prophets now resided in the person of Jesus Christ. So clearly the temple theme is present.

Again, Jesus comes now to restore his people, to call them to a relationship with him, Jesus Christ who himself rehearses Israel's destiny. Now he comes to restore his people and to establish a new covenant, as the son of David to rule over them in fulfillment of God's intention, to establish his world-wide rule. Now also with the restored temple, that is, God's presence now coming to rest with the people and to abide with the people through the person of Jesus Christ, through whom God's glory now takes up residence and dwells.

The last theme that I want to look at is the theme of land and creation. This is a little more difficult because there is not as much said about it as you find with people of God, and as you find with Davidic king theme and the messiah theme. You don't find explicit references to the land but again, I would suggest to you that as part of this complex story, all these other elements suggest that the restoration of God's people to the land, is also taking place. If Israel is restored and if the Messiah, the king in the line of David is now ruling over them and brings in the long awaited world-wide kingdom, if God has established a new covenant, if his temple presence is now been restored, then the land must be present as well. But how? Well, at the very least I think there's simply some hints in the Gospels. I think we will see explicated in a little bit more detail in some of the rest of the New Testament, but I would argue that already in the Gospels, we are beginning to see that the promise of the land is ultimately fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ in the kingdom and the salvation, the redemption that he now brings to the people.

A couple of interesting texts that I'm intrigued with are, first of all, John chapter fifteen and the first seventeen verses. I don't want to spend a lot of time on this text, but just to mention in relationship to the land, and I am dependent on Gary Burge, professor of the New Testament at Wheaton College for some of his observations on John chapter fifteen, but John chapter fifteen uses the imagery of a vine and branches to compare the relationship of God's people to Jesus Christ. This is even relevant to the theme of the people of God. The vine that was used to

refer to Israel in the Old Testament, now Jesus applies that to himself. He is the true vine, similar to what we saw in Matthew. Jesus fulfills the intention and destiny of the people of Israel. But now Jesus is the vine and intriguingly notice the language in John chapter fifteen of calling for the people to abide in him and the mention of producing fruitfulness. So Jesus begins by saying, “I am the true vine,” John 15, starting of verse one, “I am the true vine and my father is the vine grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you, abide or remain in me, as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.”

What I want to emphasize is two motifs in that section, and one of them is the language of abiding, probably against suggesting the notion of abiding in or living in the land, dwelling in the land. But what makes that more important is the theme of fruitfulness. We saw how, especially the old prophets, depicted a time when Israel returned would be restored to their land. It would be a time of blossoming and fruitfulness. As Israel was restored to their land, much like the first creation of the Garden of Eden abounded in fruitfulness. So by referring to the people as producing fruitfulness, I think, partly, John is evoking the imagery of the creation and the return to the land from the prophetic expectation. So by abiding in Christ and by dwelling in Christ and producing the fruitfulness of the creation and the land, I think is John’s way of suggesting the ultimate promise of the land now is the blessing and the presence of God that was associated with the land. Now ultimately that is fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. It’s by abiding in him that we produce the fruitfulness of the land. Furthermore, it is interesting in Jesus’ teaching that people now enter not the land, but they enter the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of Heaven. Later on, when we look at the New Testament, in subsequent lectures, I’m going to argue that the land functions primarily to typify what now gets fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The land and the blessings of the

land function to typify the blessings that the New Testament authors now find are being offered and fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. Those ultimately, however, find their fulfillment in the new creation. So the New Testament does not strip the land promises completely of physicality. It ultimately finds the promise of the land fulfilled first of all, in Jesus Christ and entering the Kingdom and producing the fruit of the Kingdom, but then ultimately in the new creation, which is where the book of revelation ends up, but we're jumping ahead of ourselves.

A couple of other indications are related more to new creation. Jesus' death and resurrection are probably to be seen as inaugurating the new creation, especially Jesus' resurrection. Remember one of the texts we looked at in Ezekiel thirty-seven, the Valley of the Dry Bones, where Israel is restored to the land in a covenant relationship. They are restored to their land with a king in David's line ruling over them symbolized giving life to a dead body. The dry bones come to life when God breathes life into them. That provides the background partially for Jesus' resurrection. So, again, it's Jesus' resurrection, it's his death and resurrection, that inaugurates the new creation. It's in Jesus Christ himself that the promises of the land find their ultimate fulfillment. The fact that Jesus healed and raised the dead throughout the gospels, I think is tied back to new creation text, such as Isaiah sixty-five, where, in other texts, death is going to be done away with. Death had entered the first creation because of sin, now it will not be characterized by the new creation. So by healing and by even other miracles, even miracles of nature, but particularly healing and even the times when Jesus raised the dead, is to be seen as inaugurating the life of the new creation which Jesus' death itself, inaugurates.

So, in my opinion, I think in the "already" part of the fulfillment, we have the promise of Israel's return to the land and the blessings of the land that ultimately get focused in the book like Isaiah in the new creation. We find that already fulfilled in Jesus Christ. It's by abiding in Christ, by producing

fruitfulness, the fruit of the new creation in Christ through obedience, through Jesus' death and resurrection that the life of the new creation, the blessing of the land, is now inaugurated in the person of Jesus Christ. Again, all of this is still pointing to and awaiting the ultimate fulfillment that will take place in the new creation like Revelation in chapter 21 and 22, which we'll get to later.

To bring us back to Matthew, Matthew's story then understandably ends in the so-called "Great Commission," at the very end of Matthew. In Matthew chapter 28, "And Jesus came and said to them, his disciples, 'all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and teaching them [that is the all nations] to obey what I have commanded you.'" In other words, what is going on is, if what we've seen in the earlier parts of Matthew are true, if Jesus has now restored Israel, if he is now the Davidic King ruling over them, if he has now brought them back to the land, inaugurated the new creation and given them the blessings of the land, if he's entered into a new covenant relationship, if God's temple presence is through Christ, so he is now resting with his people, then the blessings of redemption and salvation can flow into the entire earth. So that's why Matthew ends with what I think is a fulfillment of God's original intention for humanity. That the blessing of salvation, that his glory and his rule would fill the whole Earth. So now that Israel has been restored and God has reestablished his people, now the blessings of salvation can flow to the ends of the earth. So Matthew ends by saying, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations." In fact, notice in the mention of 'all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me,' that language goes back to Daniel chapter 7. Again, Jesus has entered his universal rule over all creation. So now the blessings of salvation in fulfillment of God's intention for Genesis one and two, for humanity and for the entire earth, now the blessings of salvation can go out into the entire earth.

So we see all the main themes of the story, beginning with creation, the theme of people of God, the new covenant, of return to the land and creation, of the theme of God's temple and ruling over his people, the theme of Kingship, all of those get fulfilled and climaxed in the person of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, by now restoring Israel, by now dealing with the story of Israel, and now the story of all creation going back to Genesis one and two, is now being resolved as well.

Now the question is, do we find this story continuing into the New Testament, into Acts, and into Paul's letters and the other apostles? How do these five main things, this story, continue to get fulfilled and developed in the rest of the New Testament in terms of fulfillment in Christ and his people who belong to him? The next time we are together, we'll talk about how, in the rest of the New Testament, the story continues to get developed and fulfilled.

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