

Dr. Dave Mathewson, New Testament Literature, Lecture 20, Ephesians

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This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his New Testament History and Literature, lecture 20 on the book of Ephesians.

Before we open in prayer, I'd make one announcement and that is on, well actually two, the one is that you have your next exam over Acts through Galatians which will finish up Galatians today, but Acts through Galatians on Monday during this class period.

But the second thing is, there is, as I sent you an email, you should have gotten the email, that there is a review session led by my TA tomorrow night at 8 o'clock in this room. So, I try as much as I can to get this room so you don't have to go hunting around for a different one. So come to this room tomorrow night, 8 o'clock, and there is an optional though extra credit review session for the exam.

And once again, you are, several of you have asked me this and I'll reiterate it, that you will receive extra credit for the number of times you've come. So, if you only show up to one review session, you'll get extra credit for that. Obviously, if you show up to all four, that will help you grade even more, and you'll get more extra credit.

So tomorrow, 8 o'clock in this room. All right, question? The first exams will be up by Friday for sure, you'll get to see them. They're all graded, but as I said, there are a couple of grading issues I'm working out.

But those should be up on Friday so you can see how you did before exam number two. All right, let's open with prayer, and then we'll finish looking at Galatians and maybe move into the next letter that we'll consider.

Father, again, we thank you for so graciously revealing yourself to us in the form of the New Testament. Lord, I pray that we will take advantage of the opportunity to analyze that, think about that, and study that revelation with the desire that our lives would be conformed and molded to your will that has been revealed to us in your word. So, to that end, we apply all our mental and spiritual energy to comprehending your revelation to us, and I pray that this class will, in just a small way, contribute to that end. In Jesus' name, we pray, amen.

All right, we've been looking at the book of Galatians, which I said to you, or which I suggested was Paul's attempt not to sit down and simply talk about a theology of the law or a theology of justification and salvation, although Paul does that, but it's theology in the service of Paul's particular purpose, and that is Paul is addressing a

situation where Jewish Christians that are often labeled Judaizers have infiltrated the churches in Galatia, that is, the southern province of Galatia, churches that Paul himself has planted. Now, Jewish Christians have infiltrated the church and are trying to convince Gentile Christians that faith in Jesus Christ is not enough. They're not saying that faith in Jesus Christ is not necessary.

They're not denying that Jesus is the Messiah or that he existed. They're just saying faith in Jesus isn't enough, but one also must observe the law of Moses as an identity marker, as a sign that you are the true people of God and that you truly belong to God. We said that most of the Jewish Christians that Paul is combating, would have understood that all the promises of salvation go back to Abraham.

You remember Genesis 12 from the Old Testament, that God promised that he would bless Abraham and that ultimately all the nations of the earth would be blessed through Abraham. So, all the promises of salvation, justification, the Holy Spirit, belonging to the people of God, all of that goes back to Abraham. Now, for the Jewish Christians, would have drawn a straight line from the promises to Abraham to obeying and keeping the Mosaic law to fulfillment and faith in Jesus Christ.

So, they would have said that the law of Moses is important and it's not an optional step. It's a necessary step in the fulfillment of the promises of Abraham, the salvation that was promised to Abraham. So, they would have drawn, they would have gotten rid of these brackets and they would have had a straight line from promises to Abraham to Mosaic law and then to faith in Christ.

So, the Mosaic law was an important and necessary component. They were then trying to get the Gentile Christians to understand that if they were to truly be God's people and if they were truly justified, then they would submit to the law of Moses and live life as Judaizers, as the Jews were. But what Paul does in Galatians, especially chapters 3 and 4, is Paul demonstrates, and that's why I've put Mosaic law in parentheses, he tries to argue that the Mosaic law played an important but only a temporary role.

A role where the law only functioned until Jesus Christ came. So now that Christ has come and brought fulfillment, the Mosaic law is no longer necessary. So, Paul kind of takes the scheme of the Judaizers that would have had the law playing an important and necessary and essential role, and he brackets that to say, yes, the law played an important role, but it was only a temporary one until Christ came.

When Christ arrived, the primary function of the Old Testament law to guard and to guide and in a sense to have authority and power over God's people is now over. Now, again, we're going to raise the question, does that mean that we don't have to listen to the Mosaic law or pay any attention to it today, or that it has nothing to do with us and we can safely ignore it? I want to raise that question briefly, what should

we do with the law of Moses? But let me talk briefly about chapter 5, the very end of Paul's argument in chapter 5, and this is the well-known section where Paul contrasts, and if we know anything about Galatians, usually this is the text that we're most familiar with, and that is Paul's contrast between the flesh and the Spirit. And so, Paul says, the works of the flesh are these, and he lists vices that he wants his readers to avoid.

And then he says, however, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, and perhaps some of you have memorized that list of fruits of the Spirit. And the question is, what is it doing here? Why does Paul elaborate on this contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit? For two reasons, I think. Number one is, in a sense, Paul is, I think, addressing the question, if as Paul says, the law was only temporary and it no longer plays a crucial role in the lives of God's people now that Christ has come, then does that mean that Christians are free from all law? Does that mean that they have no moral guidance and that they can do as they please? And Paul makes clear, no, the Christian is still bound by love, and the Christian now has and is responsible for walking in the new covenant Spirit that has been poured out.

In other words, Paul's reference to the fruit of the Spirit goes back to the Old Testament, where, do you remember the new covenant in Jeremiah chapter 31? God promised that he would one day write his law on the hearts of the people, and Ezekiel promised that God would pour his Spirit out upon the people in order to transform them. So what Paul is basically saying is, the fact that the Mosaic law is no longer the dominant authority and ruler over God's people does not mean that they're without moral guidance. Now they have the new covenant Holy Spirit that transforms them and enables them to do what the law commanded and expected of God's people in the first place.

So, Paul's very clear, no, God's people are not without moral guidance. Instead, they now have the new covenant Spirit that God promised he would pour out and write his law in their hearts, transform them, and enable them to live the kind of life that the law was pointing to in the first place. So quite the contrary, God's people are not free from moral guidance.

But second, the second thing to understand about this passage is, I'm convinced that Paul is still contrasting the law and the Spirit. He's still talking about the Old Testament law. And, what he's saying is this, is if the Galatians want to live life under the law, they can do so.

But Paul's saying that the law does not ultimately have the power to overcome the sins of the flesh. These kinds of things he lists here, the works of the flesh are these. And what Paul is saying is, ultimately, the law does not have the power to ultimately deal with that and overcome the works of the flesh.

But the Spirit does. That's why Paul says, therefore, if one walks in the Spirit, you have overcome the flesh. Or you will no longer walk according to the flesh.

Why? Because now, through this new covenant Spirit that God has promised and poured out, that promises that God will write his law in their hearts and that will transform them so that they can keep God's requirements, is through the new covenant Spirit, now they are able to overcome the deeds of the flesh. So once again, you can see Paul's argument. Why would the Galatians want to go back to the Mosaic law? Why would they want to give in to the Judaizers and live life under the law when it doesn't have the power? Not only was it temporary, but it didn't ultimately have the power to overcome the sins of the flesh.

Only the new covenant Spirit that comes through faith in Christ ultimately enables them to live the kind of life that the law was pointing to in the first place and to overcome sin. So, what does this mean, then, when we think about the question, well, what does this mean as far as our relationship to the law? What should our response be to the Mosaic law? And by law, I don't mean any law. Paul is speaking specifically of the law of Moses that we read about in the Old Testament.

What should be our relationship to that? Or should we, since Paul says, notice what he says in 5:18. Paul says, but if you are led by the Spirit, you are no longer under the law, or you are not subject to the law. So, if we're no longer subject to the law or under the law, and this is basically what Paul is saying is, is the law played a temporary role in ruling over and containing God's people? If we're no longer under the law and instead were to walk by the Spirit in light of the fulfillment that has come in Christ, then what does that suggest about the relationship of the law to Christians, and to God's people today? Do we have any obligation to it, or can we safely ignore it? Because Paul says we're no longer under the law, and instead we're guided by the Spirit, we're to walk in the Spirit.

So, does that mean that I can safely ignore the bulk of the Old Testament because it addresses issues of the Mosaic law? I think a couple of things. First of all, again, I think Paul is clear that as he says, we are no longer under the law, which means we are no longer under the law's rulership and regime as part of the Mosaic covenant. When Paul's referring to the law, I think he's understanding it in light of the entire covenant that God made with Moses.

Now that the covenant that God made with Moses, the Mosaic covenant, has been fulfilled and is no longer in force, I take it that the Mosaic law is not as well. So, I think Paul is saying that Christians are no longer bound to the Mosaic law, they are no longer under its regime and rulership. However, there are two other things we need to keep in mind, I think.

Number one is Paul is equally convinced that the law has not just been removed and set aside and done away with. Rather, the law has been brought to fulfillment in Christ Jesus. What Paul seems to be saying in Galatians 5, this fruit of the spirit passage, is if one lives life under the spirit, if one follows the fruits of the spirit, love, joy, peace, and the other things, is you are actually living the kind of life that the law was pointing to in the first place.

So, the law is not simply done away with and thrown out or removed, it's brought to fulfillment. So, the kind of life that the law pointed to is ultimately fulfilled now in Jesus Christ and in living life in the new covenant Holy Spirit. So, the first question, what I would suggest to you when it comes to thinking about the law of Moses and whether it applies to us, is the first question you should ask is, how has the law been fulfilled in Jesus Christ? If you go back to Matthew, remember Matthew chapter 5, the Sermon on the Mount? Very early on in the sermon in Matthew 5, Jesus said, I've not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it.

And I suggested what he meant was that Jesus' own life and teaching was what the law was pointing to. And so, I'm suggesting then, and I think what Paul is saying in Galatians 5, one of the implications is, that we should look at the law through the lenses of how it has been brought to fulfillment in Christ. For example, the easiest example, and this isn't always easy to discern because the New Testament does not go through every law and show how it's been fulfilled in Christ.

But one of the easier examples is, what about all the laws of sacrifice? What about all the animal sacrifices that were offered up in the Old Testament? That's one of the easiest examples, is instead of saying, well that no longer applies, that's been thrown out, is instead we have to ask, how do we keep that law or how do we observe that? How do we relate to the Old Testament sacrificial laws where they sacrificed animals in light of the coming of Christ? Well, in that Jesus is the final ultimate sacrifice, we fulfill the law of sacrifices now by trusting in Jesus Christ for our salvation, not by offering up animal sacrifices any longer. So that's one, I think, easier example of how reading the law through the lenses of fulfillment of Christ helps us to understand how we are, and what our responsibility is towards the law. So, I'm suggesting as true, the entire law is the first thing we should ask is, how has the law been brought to fulfillment in Christ? How do we understand it in light of the lens, how do we read it through the lens of the fulfillment that Jesus Christ has brought? The second thing I would suggest to you is that when it comes to reading the law to ask yourself, what's, and when we look at the law as, first of all, let me back up.

I'm assuming that the law, even though Paul says we're no longer under the law, the Mosaic law is no longer the regime that we now live under. But Paul says you're no longer under the law, you're no longer under its authority, its regime. Yet the law still, the law still is an expression, even though it was a specific expression for Israel

and at a specific point in time until fulfillment came in Christ, it's still an expression of God's will for his people.

And so, the second thing, in addition to asking how the law has been fulfilled in Christ, the next question we should ask is, what's, in any given law, what seems to be the intention of this law? What seemed to be the true intention? What was the law driving at? And then asking how that might apply to God's people today as an expression of God's character and an expression of God's will. Let me give you an example or a couple of them. This is, this is found in Leviticus chapter 19.

Let's see, here it is. This is Leviticus chapter 19 and verses 27 and 28. This is out of the Old Testament law.

You shall not round off the hair of your temple or mar the edges of your beard. You shall not make any gashes in your flesh for the dead or have any tattoo marks upon you. I am the Lord.

All right, so no trimming your hair and no tattoos. Most of us probably wouldn't gash our flesh intentionally, but how do we read that? I mean, if you go get a haircut, have you disobeyed the Mosaic law? If you have a tattoo, have you disobeyed the Mosaic law? I mean, that's what it says. Don't tattoo yourself.

Don't trim the edges of your hair or the edges of your beard. Have you violated the Mosaic law? Well, that's one way to handle it. Or what if we ask in light of fulfillment in Christ and in light of what was the true intention, what seemed to be the intention of this law, at least many commentaries think that these laws were aimed at pagan religious practices.

That is the tattooing and trimming of one's beard or hair. These were aimed at specific pagan religious practices. So, the intention of this law is not just plain outright no tattoos and no trimming hair.

It's avoiding practices that are associated with pagan religions. And so, then one would want to ask oneself today what kinds of practices and activities would be associated with pagan religious types of activities that I want to avoid. Very seldom today does anyone tattoo for religious practices.

Most of us don't. There may be other reasons why you might or might not tattoo, but certainly, the command in Leviticus would not be one of them because it's, again, aimed at probably pagan religious practices that God wants the Israelites to avoid. So, when we understand that intention, then we ask ourselves in our context what kinds of activities or even manners of dress might, and I know that still doesn't solve all the problems and you get into a debate, well, what are those things? But when we start thinking about applying these texts, then I understand that the intention is to

get God's people to avoid those kinds of activities that are associated with pagan religious-type practices.

Then one would want to ask what kinds of things or activities would be those things that would associate me with a pagan religious activity, whatever that might be. So, do you see the difference in asking the question of intention? What seems to be the intention of this law rather than just reading them straight across the board and not asking why God seems to give them in the first place? What does that reflect about his intention for his people and his will for his people, and then what might that look like today? Another example is one of the laws, and I might have to ask Ted to help me with this. I can't remember where it is.

The law commands the Israelites to build a parapet or a fence around their roof. I think it is in Deuteronomy somewhere. Exodus. So, Exodus commands the Israelites to build a parapet or a fence around the roof of their house.

Now, if you came to my house and looked at the roof, you would be stupid to try to get up on it. It's so pitched. But have I violated the Mosaic Law because I don't have a parapet or fence around my roof? And I bet that most of your houses don't either.

So, are you in violation of the Mosaic Law because you don't have a parapet or a fence built around the roof of your house? Well, it's important again to remember what seems to be the intention of this law. Well, at least during that time, the roof of a house was used for different functions. And there were people up on the roof.

I would guess they were more flat during that time. So, the intention was, in telling the Israelites to build a fence around the roof, the intention seemed to be to protect the welfare and well-being of their neighbors, to make sure that they were showing concern for life and demonstrating the value of life of their neighbors. So basically, so that someone wouldn't fall off the roof and get killed or suffer bodily injury.

So that seems to be the true intention. So, then I have to ask today, in what ways can I embody that intention? Well, it's probably not going to be by building a roof around my house or a fence around the roof of my house, I'm sorry, because no one goes up there and no one could go up there anyway unless they're putting new shingles on. So then I have to ask, in what ways do I need to demonstrate care and concern for the well-being and the safety of my neighbor? Again, it's probably not going to be building a fence around my house, but I can start thinking of other ways where I can embody that intention and that principle.

So, do you see, by looking at the laws from the standpoint of what seemed to be the true intention, how are they a reflection of God's intention for his people and his will for his people? Then one can start understanding ways in which the law of Moses does apply. So then I would suggest, on the one hand, while we are no longer under

the law of Moses, we're not bound to it as a list of legislation, we're not under its regime and authority, at the same time, number one, we do need to read it in light of how it's been fulfilled in Christ to understand how we relate to it, and we need to read it as an expression of God's will and intention for his people, and to ask what seems to be the intention behind the laws and how can I live that out under the power of the new covenant spirit that Paul talks about, by walking in the spirit, how can I continue to live out God's will and intention for his people today? I've actually, if you're interested, I've given you a couple of resources at the bottom of your notes. There's a very interesting book, I think I've mentioned this before, but Zondervan Publishing Company has a series, they're not all equally good, but they've been cranking out books on different views, on different issues, and what they do is they take different issues like the millennium, or women in ministry, or whether Christians should go to war, or what kind of government should exist in the church, or how should the church be governed, not what kind of government, how should the church be run, what should be our relationship to government, etc., etc., a number of issues, and it basically presents different views, and has different persons presenting their views and then responding to each other.

One of those books is called *The Law and the Christian*, and there are five different approaches to what should be the Christian's relationship to the law, and they respond to each other, so if you're interested in pursuing that more, that might be a starting point. All right, that's all I want to say about Galatians, but the main thing you should understand is Paul's whole intention in writing is to try to dissuade the Galatians from submitting to the Mosaic Law and giving in to the Judaizers, but at the same time persuading them and convincing them that they have everything they need in Christ and in the New Covenant spirit that they possess, not only to be justified for their salvation, but also for their ongoing lifestyle, that in neither case do they need to return to the Mosaic Law as the Judaizers were demanding of them. Good.

Any other questions on Galatians? All right, you'll notice next in your syllabus is one of the excursus, and that is I want to talk a little bit about one of the themes that emerges from Galatians but is also important in the rest of the New Testament, and that is the theme of the people of God. In order to understand this theme, we need to go all the way back to the Old Testament, and in fact all the way back to Genesis 1 and 2, where, in my opinion, the creation of Adam and Eve was not just the creation of the first human beings, but they were the first people of God with whom God entered into a covenant relationship. So again, Adam and Eve are not just the first human beings, they are, but they're the first people of God, the first created people that God will enter into a relationship with.

Now, after the fall of Adam and Eve, after their sin in Genesis 3, in one sense the rest of the Old Testament narrative, and into the New Testament as well, but we'll wait on that for a moment, the rest of the Old Testament narrative can be seen as God's

intention to reestablish and recreate his people. God is looking for a people that he can enter into a covenant relationship with, and it starts with God's command to Abraham. So, you can see why it was so important that Paul talked about Abraham and Galatians because with Abraham, God will now begin to restore his covenant relationship with his people that started back in the Garden of Eden but was disrupted because of sin.

So, in Genesis chapter 12, God chooses Abraham and tells him that he will not only bless him, but he will make his name great and make him a great nation, and from that nation eventually all the nations of the earth would be blessed. So, Abraham, and the covenant God makes with Abraham, is the first stage in God establishing humanity, as he had back in the Garden of Eden, with whom he will enter into a covenant relationship. He will be their God, and they will be his people.

Now ultimately, as we follow the rest of the Old Testament, ultimately that emerges in the nation of Israel, with whom God establishes a covenant relationship. And so, you can see again why the Judaizers that Paul confronted in Galatians were so keen to get the Gentiles to identify with Judaism and to submit to the law of Moses because according to the Old Testament, they were the true sons of Abraham. They were the true people of God.

However, a shift begins to take place when you get to the New Testament. What you find taking place is, again, if you follow this pattern, Adam and Eve are the first to humanity that God enters into a covenant relationship, but because of sin, God will now act to restore his people and recreate his people, so he chooses Abraham and promises to make him a great nation, and that is the nation of Israel. However, as we saw, the prophetic literature, if you remember, actually there's an interesting parallel going on.

Adam and Eve are tempted, and they give in to temptation and they sin, and if you remember, they are exiled from the Garden of Eden. Now what happens with Israel is God chooses the nation of Israel, brings them to the land, and tests them, yet they also fail the test, and they are exiled as well, so if you remember your Old Testament history, Israel goes into exile, Babylon and Assyria cart the nation of Israel and Judah off into exile, and so the prophets anticipate a time when, once again, God will restore his people. God still must restore his people into a covenant relationship that he intended all the way back in Genesis 1 and 2. Now, how that gets fulfilled in the New Testament is, first of all, Jesus is portrayed as the true Israel.

Jesus is the one who ultimately fulfills God's intention for his people, Israel. If you remember Jesus' temptation, we talked a little bit about his temptation back in Matthew 3 and 4, when Jesus was tempted by Satan. He takes him up to a high mountain and shows him all the kingdoms.

He takes him out of the temple and tells him to jump off. He tells him to turn stones into bread. Not in that order, but you remember that.

Basically, what's going on is Jesus is repeating both the temptation of Israel and the temptation of Adam and Eve. They failed, but Jesus passed the test. He is the true Israel that brings the intention of God for humanity to its intended purpose.

So, Jesus, then, becomes the true Israel, and then by virtue of faith in Christ, by virtue of belonging to Christ, we then become the true people of God as well. So that's why I have this line of starting with Adam and Eve, and then after sin, Abraham and Israel are meant to bring God's intention, that is his intention to create a people that he will enter into a relationship with. But Israel fails because of sin, but then Jesus comes and he brings to fulfillment God's true intention for his people, and then all of those who have faith in Christ also become the true people of God.

So that is why, remember, we talked, actually before I make a comment on the criteria for membership in God's people, this helps explain something very interesting going on in Galatians. In chapter 3, and remember, the main question is, who are the children of Abraham? Who gets to participate in the blessings that God promised to Abraham? The blessings of salvation, the promise of the Holy Spirit. Who are the true children of Abraham? Who participates in the promises to Abraham? Now notice what Paul says in Galatians, starting with chapter 3, if I can find it, he says, now the promises were made to Abraham.

That's this, Genesis chapter 12. The promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. And then Paul says, it does not say, and to offsprings, plural, as to many, but it says, and to your offspring, that is to one person who is Christ.

So again, what he's saying is that the true seed of Abraham, the true people of Abraham, the true children of Abraham is the person of Jesus Christ. However, if you skip to the end of chapter 3 and verse 29, notice what Paul says, and if you belong to Christ, you readers, the Galatians, if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise. So how can Jesus be Abraham's offspring and the Galatian Christians, and I would include us as well? Well, it's because Jesus, first of all, brings the promise of Abraham to fulfillment, and then we participate in that by virtue of faith in Christ and belonging to Christ.

Therefore, Paul can say, Jesus is the true seed of Abraham, but if we are in Christ, we are the seed of Abraham as well. Now, what that means is the criteria for membership in the people of God. Remember, up until this time, and especially Paul's opponents in this book, the Judaizers would have answered the question, the true criteria to belong to the people of God is living life under the Mosaic law, is physically being the children of Abraham.

However, Paul says, that with the coming of Jesus Christ, the criteria have changed. Now, membership in the people of God is not restricted physically to Israel, or to God's children of Abraham, but now membership in the people of God revolves solely around the person of Jesus Christ. That's why Paul can say Gentiles as well as Jews are equally God's people.

Why? Because now it's not national identity, it's no longer living under the law, but now faith in Jesus Christ is the sole criterion. So, Paul can say, if you're in Christ, who is the seed of Abraham? If you are in Christ, then you too are the true seed of Abraham. You too are the true children of God.

I think I mentioned this before, did I mention that we used to sing this song, I always thought it was kind of quirky and silly, but it's probably one of the most theologically accurate ones that Father Abraham had many sons, many sons of Father Abraham. That couldn't be truer. Again, whatever you think of the song, it communicates a profound theological truth found in Galatians, that in Christ we participate in the promises made to Abraham.

And that's what Paul's arguing in Galatians. The Gentiles do not need to submit to the law or live life as a Jew because membership in the people of God is no longer restricted to national identity. Now, because of the fulfillment in Christ, because of this scheme, because Jesus has brought the true people of God to their destiny and goal, membership in the people of God is determined solely by faith in Jesus Christ.

Therefore, Gentiles and Jews equally make up the true people of God. So, what Paul sees happening then, I think what the New Testament sees, is not that the church replaces Israel or gets rid of it, but that Israel is expanded now to include the Gentiles and then redefined on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ. So that's why you'll see in a number of other New Testament books, you will often find New Testament authors taking Old Testament texts that refer to Israel and now applying them to the church.

Now the church is the new Israel, the new people of God that consist of Jews and Gentiles, now focused on and centered on Jesus Christ, the true Israelite. All right. Any questions about people of God? Well, I don't want to go into it in a lot of detail.

I mean, this, I think, has a very profound effect on how we think about our relationship to the nation of Israel today and what goes on in the Middle East and things like that is what we read in Galatians, I think, should profoundly affect the way we think about that. All right. Well, let's open another piece of the early church's mail.

In a sense, this is a cutoff point for what I'm going to say from now on will not be on the exam Monday, but what I'm going to say from now on will be in exam number three which will come later. So, the discussion of Galatians and people of God that

we just talked about is the limit. So, Acts through Galatians, including this excursus on the people of God, is fair game for the exam.

But let's open another piece of the early church's mail and let's look at a book that we call the Epistle to the Ephesians. Now, the first thing to recognize is that along with Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, Ephesians belongs to a collection of Paul's letters often termed the prison epistles. So along with Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, Ephesians belongs to this fourfold group of writings often referred to as the prison epistles.

And the reason is fairly obvious because Paul clearly indicates in these four letters that he is in prison as he is writing these letters. Now, the difficulty is determining where he's in prison. The most common view today is that Paul is in Rome.

Paul is in prison in Rome, and it's from his imprisonment in Rome that he writes these letters. However, there are other suggestions. Some suggest that some of these letters may have been written when Paul was in prison in Ephesus, the city of Ephesus.

Some have suggested Corinth, and Caesarea. So, there are other options. I'm not interested right now in arguing a case.

I don't think it makes a lot of difference as far as how we actually read the letters. It may be as far as how we construct the timeline of Paul's life. But other than that, nothing really crucial hangs on where Paul is imprisoned as far as how we interpret some of these letters, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

But it's enough for you right now to know that Paul was in prison as he wrote these letters, and the most common theory is that he was in prison in Rome at this time. The book of Ephesians, just a little bit later on, I wish to argue and try to demonstrate that Ephesians, the name of this book is Ephesians, is probably a misnomer, that it probably should not be named the letter to the Ephesians. And I'll tell you why a little bit later.

But starting with what, I'll still call it the letter to the Ephesians because that's the way it's referred to in our Bibles, and to do anything else would just invite too much confusion. But let's start with, what seems to be the overarching theme of this letter? We'll also talk a little bit, is there a purpose? Why does Paul seem to be writing this? We just looked at Galatians and saw that Paul was combating a type of false teaching, that is Judaizers, who had infiltrated the church and were trying to get Gentile Christians to submit to the law of Moses. Is there some similar issue or problem or crisis in this book that caused Paul to write it? We'll ask that.

But first of all, what seems to be the overarching theme? I would suggest to you that the primary theme of Ephesians, and I'll defend it as we kind of work through part of Ephesians, is the overarching theme is the complete reconciliation of all things in Christ. So, Paul, the dominant theme that weaves its way throughout all of Ephesians, and I've changed my mind on this since the last time I taught this class, but the dominant theme is the reconciliation of all things in Christ. In fact, chapter 1 and verse 9 of Ephesians could, in a sense, be seen as a summary of what much of the rest of Ephesians is about.

In chapter 1 and verse, actually verse 10, I'll back up and read verse 9, it says, "...he, God, has made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of times to gather up or sum up all things or reconcile all things in Christ, the things in heaven and the things on earth." And I would suggest to you that the rest of Ephesians is about how that now is taking place and how it will take place. So therefore, in the book of Ephesians, the main theme is the reconciliation of all things, heaven, and earth, all things in Christ Jesus. Now, the letter of Ephesians, actually, although I'm going to argue, I don't know why I have these pictures up because I'm going to argue that Paul was not explicitly addressing the church at Ephesus, although in the book of Acts, in the book of Acts, you do read much about Paul's, it tells us a lot about the time he did spend in Ephesus.

This is a picture, these are simply pictures of modern-day pictures of ancient Ephesus, the amphitheater. I believe that's part of the temple to Domitian. I think that's part of the temple to Artemis.

Now, Ephesians has a rather straightforward plan or outline as far as the way it's developed. First of all, the first three chapters of Ephesians could be seen as indicative. Remember a couple of weeks ago in our introduction to Paul, we talked about, it's kind of Paul's version of the already, but not yet version of the already.

In relationship to Jesus' teaching of the kingdom, scholars call it, with reference to Paul, the indicative imperative. The indicative is what has already taken place by virtue of fulfillment in Christ, by virtue of belonging to Christ. The imperative expresses what has not yet come about.

The fact that the kingdom has not arrived at its perfection and its fullness means that the imperative, the commands are still necessary. Ephesians breaks down rather naturally, and there are other structural and grammatical indicators that this is the case, but Ephesians breaks down naturally into two fairly even sections. The first three chapters are the indicative, where Paul discusses kind of the already, that is who we are in Christ, who we are by virtue of being incorporated into Christ, and then chapters four through six shift to more the imperative, that is the commands

that indicate how God's people are to live and respond in light of chapters one through three.

So, chapters one through three provide the basis for four through six, and four through six grow naturally out of chapters one through three. So, four through six is the kind of lifestyle that is made possible by but should naturally reflect the reality of the indicative in chapters one through three. So, if Paul says we're raised with Christ, we're seated with Christ, if anyone is in Christ, that a person has died to their sins in Christ, that's the indicative.

The imperative then is Paul's injunctions as to how that should work out, and how one should live life in light of that. And so, Ephesians, there are other ways to divide it up, but Ephesians rather naturally can be divided into these two sections. In fact, there's one two-volume commentary in Ephesians that the two volumes are almost identical in size, one of them is on chapters one through three, and one is on four through six.

So, there's always been a sense that Ephesians could easily be divided in this way. Now, why was Ephesians written? Again, we've asked this question with most of all Paul's letters. Why did he write Galatians? Why did he have to sit down and write First and Second Corinthians? Why did he write Romans? And we've been able to come up with rather plausible suggestions.

It's not as easy with Ephesians. New Testament students have had a lot harder time determining a specific reason why Paul wrote Ephesians. So, let's start just generally by asking if we read Ephesians on its own, can we summarize generally what Paul appears to be doing? And then we'll ask if we can be more specific, we'll ask, is there a major problem? Is there a major teaching of some deviant or false teaching that Paul is responding to? Is there some crisis in the church that Paul's reacting to? But first of all, generally, I think Paul's purpose is basically summarized in the transition between these two sections, the indicative and the imperative.

In chapter four in verse one, Paul says, I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you were called. The calling refers back to chapters one through three. The command to live their life refers now to chapters four through six.

So, I would say generally, the main purpose Paul is writing this letter is to encourage Christians to live a life worthy of who they are in Jesus Christ. So again, based on the indicative, based on who they are in Christ, their calling, now they are to live a life consistently and worthy of that calling. So generally, Paul writes to encourage Christians to live a life worthy of the gospel or worthy of who they are in Christ.

Now, can we be more specific than that? The problem is, again, as I said before, if all of us took time to read Galatians, even before I said anything about it, I'm convinced that most of us would be able to come up with a rather plausible description of why Paul had to write the letter. I think you'd have a lot more difficult time with Ephesians. And the question is, is there some problem or crisis that Paul seems to be addressing? Is there some issue or is there some false teaching that may be along the lines of Galatians, or were there Judaizers or something else that had infiltrated the church that had Paul upset and caused him to write this letter? And there's actually been a number of suggestions, but I want to focus on one of them.

There's been one suggestion as to the specific purpose, and the key is to notice all the power language that occurs in Ephesians, references to strength and might and power, etc. I've given you a list of some of the most prominent verses, and I'm not going to read all of them, but chapter 1 in verse 19, listen to this, referring to what God has done for his people, and he says, what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe according to the working of the might of his strength or his mighty power? Notice that piling up of terms of strength and power. Chapter 1 verse 21, just a couple of verses later, far above every rule and authority and power and dominion.

Again, notice the piling up of language in the semantic domain of power and strength. Chapter 3 in verse 7, just to give you one more example, of this gospel, I, Paul, have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given to me by the working of his power. And so, for the size of the book of Ephesians, there's a disproportionate amount of this language of strength and power.

And the question is, could that be a clue as to what Paul was, something that Paul was addressing, or some issue or problem that he was going after? There is one person, you'll notice the next section in your notes, the proposal of Clinton Arnold. Now, you may not know who Clinton Arnold is, and you may not care, but he's one of the most well-known advocates of the position that Paul was addressing a very specific problem. Clinton Arnold is a professor of New Testament at Talbot Theological Seminary.

It's the theological seminary of Biola University in California. Clinton Arnold suggested that all of this power language is a reflection of Paul addressing the situation of magic. Remember we talked, and not magic, like pulling rabbits out of hats and making things disappear, not that kind of magic.

But we talked about magic back early in the semester as a first-century religious philosophical belief. Magic is that through incantations, one could evoke the gods to act, or one could ward off the powers of evil. So basically, what Arnold does is through examining a number of early sources, and documents from around the first century, Arnold proposes that the Ephesian Christians were infatuated with magic,

and infatuated with this idea that the spiritual demonic beings controlled their destiny and controlled the world.

And magic provided an answer to that. That one could evoke the gods to act or ward off the powers of evil through incantations, correct prayers and sayings, and things like that. And so that's why Arnold says, that's why Paul uses all this power language, is he wants to show you don't have to fear these spiritual powers, these inimical beings.

Instead, Jesus Christ has already defeated them. Jesus is the true power. So when Paul talks about how God raised Christ through the power of his might, he talks about the fact that we now can participate in that power that was exemplified when God raised Jesus from the dead through his mighty power.

All this power language is a way of combating this problem of magic, and this fear of the spiritual world and demonic beings. And that's one, I'm not sure yet if he thinks that's the main purpose, but certainly, he sees that as one of the main purposes. So, he would say, yes, Paul is combating a false teaching.

That is this notion of magic and the spiritual evil beings, and the fear of those, and he's trying to get the Ephesians to see they have nothing to fear. Jesus Christ has already conquered them. The power that raised Jesus from the dead that God worked in him is far greater and has subjected all these other powers, so they have nothing to fear.

That's Clinton Arnold's proposal, and it's a very common one. A number of people have followed him and have read Ephesians as Paul's response to magic and the problem of demonic evil beings. On Friday, we'll talk more about Ephesians.

I'm going to take issue with that, and I'm going to suggest to you a very different proposal of what I think is going on in Ephesians.

This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his New Testament History and Literature, lecture 20 on the book of Ephesians.