

Dr. Dave Mathewson, New Testament Literature, Lecture 21, Ephesians

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This was Lecture 21 on the book of Ephesians by Dr. Dave Mathewson in his New Testament History and Literature course.

All right, let's go ahead and get started. Let's go ahead and begin. What we'll do today is I want to finish up, we began last class period talking about the book of Ephesians and there are a number of other things I want to say about Ephesians.

We'll look at that today, although again I remind you the material on Ephesians is not going to appear on Monday's exam. That will be on exam number three. But I do want to finish up our discussion of Ephesians and I want to again give you the last five minutes or so of class to ask any questions about the exam.

I'll just say a couple of very brief things about it. There's really not much I need to say, but some of you may have questions from the review session last night, something missing in your notes, or something you're not clear on or whatever. So, I'll give you a chance to do that towards the end of class.

But let's open with prayer and then we'll look at the book of Ephesians.

Father, we thank you for sustaining us physically and intellectually and giving us the ability to think about and analyze your communication to us in the form of the New Testament. Lord, I pray that we'll become more aware of the distance that separates us from the original readers and the original context so that we may better understand how that text continues to speak to us today as your continuing revelation to us as your people today.

I pray that we'll have a greater appreciation for and understanding of the book of Ephesians and in light of that, what it means to live as your people today in this world. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

All right. We began talking about the book of Ephesians last class period in terms of we talked briefly about its structure and the fact that Ephesians naturally can be divided into two basically equal segments. The first three chapters correspond to the indicative, which is a heavily theological section that portrays what we have in Christ and who we are by virtue of being united with Christ.

The second section, chapters four through six articulates the ethical ramifications of that, that is the imperative or what should be true as a result of chapters one through three as a result of the indicative of what the imperative then should

naturally follow. We also began to look a little bit at what may have been the occasion that prompted Paul to write the book of Ephesians and we said one of the difficulties is most New Testament students are unsure as to precisely why Paul wrote the book of Ephesians and unsure as to whether there was a precise crisis or difficulty or some kind of deviant teaching as we saw in the book of Galatians where it's a lot easier in Galatians to figure out what the issue may have been. But in Ephesians, there has not been a consensus, and even if those who agree or think that there is some kind of problem, they do not agree as to precisely what that is.

Because of that, a number of people think that Ephesians actually was written to the city of Ephesus but it was meant to be a circular letter, that is a letter that was to be circulated around different churches in Asia Minor and that's why Ephesians doesn't appear to have a specific problem or issue that it's addressing. We said one exception to that was a New Testament scholar named Clinton Arnold who I said teaches at Talbot Theological Seminary in California and he suggested that Ephesians was addressing a specific issue or crisis and that was the issue or problems associated with magic. We looked at magic as I'm convinced in the first century would have been seen in a religious context, not the way we treat it today, although even in the first century some aspects of magic were viewed negatively even in the Greco-Roman world.

But Arnold suggests that magic in terms of magic being an understanding, it starts with the understanding that the entire world behind the empirical world lies a spiritual world dominated by spiritual beings both positive and negative and so that what magic did was a way of controlling or manipulating or supplicating these spiritual beings to act on one's behalf or to harm your enemies, those that you didn't get along with. So, by the proper spells and incantations and uttering the divine names and things like that one could manipulate the spiritual world or hope to control it for your benefit and again sometimes even to harm one's enemies. And so Arnold suggests that magic was actually very prevalent and widespread in the first-century Greco-Roman world, especially in this area of Asia Minor or modern-day Turkey.

He suggests then that Paul was addressing readers who were infatuated with or who perhaps lived in fear of these evil powers that controlled and dominated the world. And so, what Arnold is doing then is writing to assure the readers that they do not need to fear these spiritual powers, these inimical rulers and spiritual beings and they do not need to resort to magic to conquer that but that Jesus Christ has conquered these powers of evils. So, we looked at all the power language in Ephesians, the emphasis on rulers and authorities and powers which Arnold would say were these inimical powers and rulers that magic tried to control and manipulate, these powers and spiritual beings that lie behind the world.

He said that there's no need for the Ephesian readers to resort to magic or to fear these things but instead, Jesus Christ has conquered them. So, references to Jesus Christ seated far above the rulers and authorities and powers as Arnold suggests is Paul's way of showing that combating this tendency towards magic, this preoccupation with the spiritual world. Now while that has become very common, in fact, a number of books I've read on Ephesians have been persuaded by Arnold's approach that Paul is addressing the Ephesian Christians in a very specific problem that is the problem of magic.

I want to suggest to you a different way of reading Ephesians and it starts with a likely scenario being that Ephesians lacks a very specific situation for a reason. The reason I think that a lot of students of Ephesians and New Testament scholars have not been able to find a specific purpose or not purpose but a specific problem or issue behind Ephesians such as a false teaching is probably because there wasn't one, any real specific crisis or teaching such as one finds in the book of Galatians. In fact, the lack of a specific situation can probably be seen in the very first verse of the book of Ephesians or the first couple of verses where it begins, it actually begins like any of Paul's other letters, typical letters and that is Paul begins by identifying himself, Paul an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God to the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful to Christ Jesus.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Now you might wonder, well didn't that just identify the readers as the saints in Ephesus? What is interesting is, that this goes back to our discussion back towards the beginning of the semester on how the New Testament has been passed down to us. As you know, we don't possess any of the original documents that the New Testament authors wrote.

For example, we don't have the original text of Ephesians, the original letter that Paul wrote. Instead, we have copies of those letters that were preserved throughout the early centuries of the early church as they copied them before the advent of the printing press and now computers where it's more easy than ever to electronically communicate or pass information on. In the early centuries of the church they simply copied, which was a rather laborious process in many respects.

They copied the New Testament documents as they were transmitted and passed on and began to spread around the early church. Now what is interesting is a number of the earliest and what are considered better manuscripts lack that little phrase in Ephesus. And I'm inclined to follow those manuscripts.

So, I am convinced that Paul originally did not write in Ephesus. And probably due to the importance of the city of Ephesus, most likely that would have been added by a later scribe at some point as the book of Ephesians was being copied and spread

around. So, I'm convinced that Paul was not writing to the church at Ephesus specifically.

In fact, I think that Paul was intentionally writing this letter that we call Ephesians as a general letter to be spread around and read as widely as possible. In other words, I think he was just addressing Christians generally living in the Greco-Roman Empire, living in this part of Asia Minor. Ephesus would have been one of the cities that this letter would have reached.

But it wasn't the only city. Again, Paul was writing a very general letter, not addressing any specific problem or crisis or false teaching. It was just, in my opinion, a suggestion that Paul wrote a general letter to Christians encouraging them to live out their faith in the context of the Roman Empire, in the context of Imperial Rome.

So, Paul is writing a general letter of exhortation to Christians to encourage them in their faith as they attempt to live out their faith in the context of the Greco-Roman Empire. I'm not sure of what the manuscripts that didn't have Ephesus in Ephesus and the ones that did, I'm not sure geographically where they came from. That would be interesting to find out.

I know there are a couple that do not have in Ephesus that do not originate around the region of Ephesus and some that contain it that don't originate either. So, I don't know. That would be interesting to figure out, but I'm not sure if there's any correlation between the manuscripts that have in Ephesus and those that don't, and the region that they come from.

You're right, that would be interesting to track that down, if possible. Is that something that you ever see in any of the other... Yeah, you don't... As far as I know with Paul's letters, all the rest of them, except Romans have a couple of interesting things going on in it as well, as far as that phrase, in Rome. And Romans is often, interestingly, like Ephesians, Romans is another letter that's very difficult to tell exactly why Paul... He doesn't seem to be addressing some specific crisis or problem as he is in Galatia.

So interestingly, the other letter does have some questions about whether in Rome or whatever is included in the book of Romans. In most of the other letters, I don't think that Paul wrote there's any discrepancy or question over whether the identification of the readers in our Bibles was what Paul actually wrote or not. Most of them, I think everyone agrees that they're accurate descriptions.

But Ephesians and Romans, as far as I know, and especially Ephesians, are the only ones that have manuscripts that are divided as to whether the name of the recipient was what Paul actually wrote. And so, with Ephesians, I think you could make a good

case that that phrase in Ephesus was not there. So, in other words, technically, this is not the letter to the Ephesians.

Technically, it's a general letter that Paul wrote to a number of churches and Christians and cities in Asia Minor, of which Ephesus, no doubt, would have been one of those cities. So again, what that means is Ephesians is one of the books where Paul and I've changed my mind on this over the last three years, but Ephesians then, I think, is one of the letters that Paul was not addressing any particular crisis. But again, he's simply aware of the struggles that Christians in general face as they try to live out their lives in the hostile environment of pagan Rome and the Roman Empire.

And so, he writes a very general letter of encouragement to those Christians to help establish their identity, to help them cope with living under the pressure of living in pagan Rome. And probably nothing more specific than that. In my opinion, that would account for why a lot of scholars have found it difficult to figure out a specific purpose for Ephesians, unlike Galatians, where we can easily determine one, I think.

All right, so what that means then is we probably need to find a different reason for why all this emphasis on power and strength and authority, and why this emphasis on Jesus' rulership over all the authorities and rulers and powers and these spiritual beings in the earth, if it's not mainly magic, then what's Paul doing? Why does he talk like that? And one very interesting thing is the Christology of Ephesians, or what Ephesians says about Jesus Christ, is in many respects different from what you find in Paul's other letters, where you don't find as much emphasis on Jesus as Messiah, as Savior, who has given up his life as an atonement for the sins of humanity, and therefore justifies them. You don't find the language of justification or that kind of language that you find, Jesus as the Son of David, Messiah. You don't find that language as much in Ephesians.

Instead, Christ is portrayed more as the ruler, as the cosmic ruler of the entire universe. Again, this is a little bit different from how he's portrayed, for example, back in the four Gospels, where Jesus was portrayed as Son of David, Son of Abraham, as Suffering Servant in Mark, etc., etc. Here, Jesus is portrayed as the ruler over the entire universe, as the Lord of the entire cosmos.

And so, we have to ask, why did Paul portray Jesus that way? If it wasn't magic that caused Paul to portray Jesus as the ruler over all the universe and over these powers and authorities, these spiritual beings, then where did Paul get that idea? What is he trying to do? So, let's go back to this idea of cosmic reconciliation. I said to you that the primary theme of Ephesians, I think, is cosmic reconciliation. That is, all things are reconciled, and all things in the entire universe are reconciled to Christ Jesus, which seems to be the primary theme.

For example, that theme, I think, begins in chapter 1 and verses 9 and 10. Now, again, I read this last class period, but listen closely. Paul says, that, 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, in other words, his will, here's his will. His will is a plan for the fullness of times to gather up or sum up or reconcile all things in him, that is in Christ, the things in heaven and the things on earth. In my opinion, that could be seen as summarizing the entire theme of Ephesians.

That is, God's will, his intent, is that ultimately everything will find its rightful place in Jesus Christ. That is, all things will be summed up, all things in the cosmos, things on earth, and in the heavens will all be summed up and find their rightful place in Jesus Christ, the rightful relationship to Christ. Now, what is interesting, is that, later on in chapter 1, Paul is convinced that that plan has already been put into effect.

Now, again, this is going to be Paul's version. Remember we talked about the already but not yet, that Jesus said the kingdom was already here but it has not yet come? This is kind of Paul's version of that. Paul is convinced that that day in the future when God would reconcile all things to Christ, the entire cosmos would be reconciled and put into a right relationship with Christ, Paul is convinced that that has already been set in motion.

Because here's what he says, I just read for you chapter 1 verses 9 and 10. Here are a few verses later. This starts with chapter 1 and verses 19 and the next section, 19 through 21 in your notes.

And he wants his readers to understand what is the immeasurable greatness of his power, there's that power language again, of his power for us who believe. According to the working of his great power, that is referring to God. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised Christ from the dead, and I want you to listen to this carefully, and seated him at the right hand in the heavenly places, far above every 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.

So, what has Paul just said? He said, with the death and the resurrection of Christ, and his exaltation to heaven, this cosmic reconciliation has already begun. That is because Jesus is now, by virtue of being exalted to heaven at the right hand of God, notice Paul said he's been exalted far above every ruler and authority and dominion. So this reconciliation that God's, Paul's thinks will be reconciled to Christ.

Paul is convinced that has already taken place through the death and resurrection of Christ, and seating him in heaven as the Lord over the entire universe. Now, so where does, where does Paul get this language then of Jesus being this power

language and Jesus being the Lord of the universe, and all these powers and rulers and dominions and authorities subject to Jesus Christ? Where does he get that? And by the way, let me just say, I'm convinced all through Ephesians when Paul talks about rulers and dominion and authorities, he's talking about the, he's not referring to physical authorities and rulers, such as the Roman Empire. I think he's always referring to these spiritual powers and beings that in a sense rule the universe.

But where does he get this language? Paul is actually going all the way back to the Old Testament and drawing on the Psalms to demonstrate that Jesus is the cosmic ruler of the universe. Notice that Paul just said, in those verses I just read, that Jesus has been exalted and seated at the right hand of God. Where does he get that idea of being seated at the right hand of God? It comes from Psalm 110, which is a Psalm that actually refers to the king, the son of David, who would rule eventually over the entire world.

And so, Psalm 110 says, the Lord said to my Lord, that is God addressed the Lord, the Messiah, sit at my right hand until I make your enemy my footstool. Well, isn't that exactly what Paul said? He said Jesus Christ has been seated at the right hand, far above every ruler and dominion. The enemies that are now his footstool are the spiritual rulers, authorities, and powers in the heavenly realms.

So basically, Paul is drawing, I think where he's getting this notion of rulers and authorities and powers, and this idea of Jesus as the cosmic ruler of the universe is not for magic. I think he's going back to the Old Testament and drawing on a text like Psalm 110 that portrays the Messiah, the king that God would appoint as sitting at God's right hand, which is a symbol of power and authority and ruling over his enemies, which Paul identifies as these spiritual rulers and powers and authorities that are hostile and evil and hostile to God's people. So, you need to know that.

You'll need to know that text just in case it occurred in an exam or something like that. You need to know Psalm 110 has the background for Paul's understanding of Christ's lordship. Another text, Psalm 8, you probably realize this one, but this is a psalm that actually goes back to creation.

And, O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. You have made them, that is Adam and Eve, humanity. It's referring to Genesis 1 and 2. You have made them, humanity, a little lower than the angels.

You have crowned them with glory and honor. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands. And you have put all things under their feet.

Interestingly, the author of Hebrews applies this psalm to Jesus Christ. And I think Paul is doing the same thing. So again, what is Paul saying is, in fulfillment of the Old Testament, Jesus has now entered into his cosmic rule.

He's entered into his rule as the Lord over the entire universe. He's already defeated his enemies, which is not Rome, but the powers and the rulers and the spiritual powers that lie behind Rome. Jesus has now defeated them.

He's now been raised to heaven, seated at the right hand, and rules over the entire universe, including these spiritual powers. Now, you might ask, well, what does that have to do with the Christians living out their lives in the Roman Empire? I mean, let me ask you, why didn't Paul come right out and say, Jesus is the Lord over Caesar and over the Roman Empire? Why didn't he say that? Why instead does he say, Jesus is the ruler of the universe and his enemies that he has defeated, that now are under his feet? Being under the feet was a sign of subduing and conquering. Now these enemies are the spiritual rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.

Why didn't Paul say that Jesus had now placed Rome and Caesar under his feet? Why does Paul... Again, if I'm right in saying, that Paul is addressing Christians who are... He's trying to encourage them as they live out their lives in the hostile environment of Roman rule and Roman authority. If Paul's addressing those Christians, what good is it going to do for him to talk in terms of Jesus has been exalted to heaven and rules over his enemies, which are these spiritual rulers and authorities and powers? Why doesn't Paul say, Jesus rules over Rome and Caesar now is under his feet? Caesar is alive with him when Jesus is not and is God himself. Okay.

So, you're suggesting then what Paul is trying to... Paul is trying to focus on a much bigger picture than just what... They look out the world and they see Caesar on the throne. Just in the act. Okay.

Good. I think that's good. Any other ideas? Why might Paul talk this way? Again, you would think Paul would come out and say, Christians, don't be upset.

Don't worry and be encouraged because Jesus has defeated Caesar and defeated the Roman Empire and Jesus is seated far above Rome and he has subjected them under his feet and now Jesus rules over all things. Why does Paul... And I think that's a good suggestion. Anything else is why Paul might talk that way.

Why instead does Paul say, Jesus Christ has been exalted far above these spiritual rulers and authorities? Again, whenever he talks in Ephesians about rulers and authorities and powers, I think he's talking about these evil spiritual beings that rule the universe. It goes back to the idea that since the fall since Satan tempts Adam and Eve in the garden, the world becomes the kingdom of Satan. He is now its king and its ruler.

You see that idea in the New Testament in several places. And so, it's Satan and his evil beings who rule the universe. So, Jesus... It's interesting in Ephesians, Jesus talks

about... Or Paul talks about Jesus being exalted and defeating these evil spiritual beings.

Why doesn't he talk about Jesus ruling over Rome? I mean, certainly, if I'm a Christian living in Rome, in the Roman Empire, and struggling to live out my faith in this hostile environment where Rome rules, wondering whether I should give allegiance to the Roman Empire or to Jesus, why would Paul talk like this? The Savior, Jesus, everyone started thinking that he was going to overthrow Rome. So, he's told them to live in Rome. Okay, good.

Yeah. You've drawn on a very important point. If you heard what she said, she suggested just as... Do you remember the Gospel of Mark, where Jesus did not go about proclaiming that he was the king and the Messiah? Because people might misunderstand him and think that he came to wipe out Rome and unseat Caesar.

But interestingly too, when you look at Jesus' life, what Jesus did was he came to... And it's interesting, that the enemy that he comes to defeat in the Gospels is casting out demons. He goes after... In other words, he seems to go after the spiritual powers that lie behind the physical powers on earth. And I wonder if that's what he's doing in Ephesians as well.

As you said, he doesn't want the readers to think that he's come to unseat Rome and that as the Messiah, he's defeated Rome. In fact, they can look around and see that's not true. But that doesn't mean that Jesus has not won the victory.

It's because what Paul is saying, Jesus has won the victory by defeating... In other words, as they look out at the world, the empirical world, and see Rome in control, what Paul has said is, that doesn't matter though, because Jesus has already won the victory by defeating the powers that lie behind Rome. That is, these inimical spiritual rulers. In fact, that idea was... You might say, well, that sounds a lot like Clinton Arnold's proposal for magic, these spiritual powers.

But that idea was present in books like Revelation. When you get to Revelation, we'll see that what it was doing is showing that the Roman world had already been defeated. Jesus had already won the victory, but he did so by defeating the powers of evil.

Another way of putting it is often, in a book like Revelation, the Roman Empire is portrayed as these spiritual demonic beings that lie behind it. So, what I think Paul is doing is trying to demonstrate to his readers, look, when you look out in the world and you see Rome in control and Caesar still on the throne, that doesn't mean that Jesus has been defeated or that you've been defeated. In fact, Jesus has won the victory.

He has ascended to heaven and is seated on his throne ruling over the cosmos. He has defeated his enemies, but the enemies he's defeated are these spiritual rulers and authorities that lie behind the physical powers. So, in other words, yes, Rome is still in control and Caesar's on the throne, but their days are numbered because Jesus has already defeated the powers of evil.

So, what this assumes is the physical world that one sees, Paul is saying, that behind the physical world is a spiritual world that somehow determines what goes on. Jesus has already won the victory in the spiritual world and has already defeated those enemies in fulfillment of Psalm 8 and Psalm 110. So, what have they to fear as they try to live out their lives in the Roman Empire? They do not need to shrink back from the claims of Rome.

They can live their lives as God's people and with boldness because they know that Christ has already won the victory in the spiritual world and the physical will soon follow. Now, two other important passages in relationship to cosmic reconciliation. Chapter 2:11-21.

Paul wants to also say, though, that not only has Jesus won a victory in the spiritual world, in other words, not only has the spiritual world begun to be reconciled, but the physical world as well. Remember, back in Ephesians 1, 10, Paul said, God's plan is to reconcile all things in heaven and on earth. Well, he's already told us Jesus has already defeated the spiritual rulers and authorities, so heaven has begun to be reconciled.

But what about Earth? In chapter 2, verses 11-22, Paul narrates this rather lengthy section that shows that through the death of Jesus Christ, and here we return to a theme we've seen several times in Paul's letters and in Acts, Jew and Gentile have been reconciled, and Paul uses that language, reconciled, to each other in one new person, in one new humanity, in one body. So why does he say that? He's simply demonstrating this process of reconciliation has already taken place in the earthly realm by God reconciling two contrasting or previous peoples that were previously at enmity with each other, Jew and Gentile. He's now reconciled them and brought them together in the earthly realm as a sign that this reconciliation has already taken place.

So again, what Ephesians is showing is that this day that, back in chapter 1, this day that God promised that according to His will, all things in heaven and on earth would be reconciled to God, or to Jesus Christ, has already begun. By Jesus being raised above these rulers and authorities, and also by creating one new humanity, by reconciling humanity into one body, this process of cosmic reconciliation has already started. So, this is kind of Paul's version of the already but not yet.

Now, obviously, it has not yet reached its climax and its pinnacle, which it will do so in the future, but it's already started. In the same way, the kingdom was already advancing and at work in Jesus' ministry, although it had not yet arrived in its perfection and its fullness. So, in the same way, Paul is convinced this reconciling of all things to Christ in heaven and earth has already begun through Christ defeating these powers, the cosmic spiritual powers, and by Christ reconciling humanity in this church, this one body, the process of reconciling all things has already started and been set in motion.

This helps us to understand another interesting verse, chapter 3 and verse 10, where Paul again is describing the reconciling of Jew and Gentile into one body, and he says, to make everyone see what the plan of God, the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that through the church, this is interesting, through the church, which Paul has just told us is consisted or consists of Jews and Gentiles reconciled to each other in one body so that through the church, the wisdom of God in its rich variety might be made known to the rulers and authorities and powers in the heavenly places. Why does Paul say that? I mean, what's he saying? I mean, to summarize, he's saying through this church that God has created by bringing Jew and Gentile, by reconciling them to each other into one body, through the church, God's wisdom now is shown to these rulers and authorities in the heavenlies. Again, I take, that whenever Paul, in Ephesians, mentions rulers, powers, authorities, he's speaking of these spiritual evil beings that lie behind the world, like we read about in books like Revelation.

What's Paul saying when he says the church, consisting of Jews and Gentiles reconciled to each other, through the church, the spiritual powers can see God's wisdom? Why does Paul say that? I mean, why would that be of interest? Why would the church, which is a reconciled humanity, be part of this process of reconciliation, why would be of any interest to these rulers and authorities and powers in the heavenly realms, these spiritual evil beings that are inimical to God's people, that Christ is now seated far above? Why would the church be of any interest to them? What are they supposed to see? Yeah, it says God's wisdom, but are they just supposed to say, oh, look how wise God is by putting these Jews and Gentiles into this one church? What's this supposed to do to these evil powers? When they see this new humanity, this church, consisting of reconciled Jews and Gentiles into this one new humanity, into this one body, what does that do for these evil, inimical, hostile powers in the spiritual world? That's right. It's a demonstration that their time is up. God has defeated them.

This process of cosmic reconciliation, which for these evil powers means their defeat, when they see the church consisting of Jew and Gentile reconciled into one body, it's a sign that their defeat has already taken place, and their time is up. So, to summarize, what is going on in Ephesians in this theme of cosmic reconciliation is, first, the assumption that you see hints of this in Ephesians, but Paul doesn't come

right out and state it. The assumption is that the entire universe, the physical and heavenly part of the universe, the entire universe that God has created, has suffered a dislocation or a disruption because of sin.

And therefore, because of sin, the entire universe is now under the control of these evil, hostile powers. Which is why Jesus came and cast out demons. That was a sign that the rule of the powers, these hostile powers, over the world was now being broken, and God's kingdom was now invading.

But Paul's assumption is that the entire world has suffered a dislocation because of sin, and because of this sin, the entire universe, physical and non-physical, is under the rule of these evil spiritual powers. Which would be Satan and his demons would be another way we might say it. So then, God's intention though, is that ultimately the entire universe must be put back to right.

The problem of number one must be fixed. That the entire cosmos, the entire universe, must be rescued from its bondage to sin and the powers of evil. And it must be restored.

And so, God's intention is this will happen through Jesus Christ. Again, back to chapter 1, verse 10. God's plan is that all things will be reconciled to Christ.

All things will be summed up in Christ. Paul is likewise convinced that through the death of Christ on the cross, and through his resurrection and being exalted to heaven, is that Christ has already begun and inaugurated this process of reconciling all things in heaven and earth, in the entire cosmos to himself. Jesus has already defeated these evil powers.

He's already been raised to the right hand of God, far above these rulers and authorities and powers. He's already begun the process of reconciling the whole cosmos, the whole universe to himself. But Paul also says the church, this new humanity, this new entity, this body, consisting of Jew and Gentile that have been reconciled together, the church is the first installment of and the means by which this reconciliation will take place on earth.

So again, not only has Christ begun to reconcile the heavens to himself by defeating the powers of evil, but by uniting humanity, by rescuing humanity from the powers of evil, and uniting them into one body, the church, he's also begun the process of reconciling all things on earth. Again, this is the already part. It's already begun.

Obviously, it has yet to take place in its perfection and its fullness. In the same way that Christ, with the coming of Jesus Christ, the kingdom was already present. Men and women could enter the kingdom, and experience its rule and its power, in advance of its full manifestation in the future.

In the same way, Paul is convinced that this process of reconciling all things to Christ has already begun in heaven and on earth, in advance of its full and final working out someday in the future. And again, why Paul talks like this, he wants his readers to place the Roman Empire and their situation in this context. Now they can see that they have nothing to fear, and they do not need to shrink back from Rome, and they have the courage to live out their lives in this hostile Roman environment and Roman world, because they know that behind the scenes, what they see empirically, is there's a whole different picture.

There's a process of reconciliation, where Christ has already defeated the powers that lie behind any physical authority or any power that they will have to face on earth in the Roman Empire. So personally, that's where I think Paul gets the notion of all this power language and the notion of Jesus defeating these spiritual rulers and authorities. I don't think it comes from magic, I think it comes from the Old Testament, and Paul's understanding, such as one finds in the book of Revelation, that behind the physical world lies a spiritual world that affects it and determines it, and he wants to demonstrate Jesus has already conquered that spiritual world.

All that is left to do is work that out on earth, which has already begun with Jesus reconciling Jew and Gentile into one body as his agent of creating, bringing about reconciliation in the world. Any questions about that? I want to look very briefly at the very last chapter of Ephesians, which, if you know anything about Ephesians, is probably the text that your mind automatically skips to. The other would be chapter 2, in chapter 2, right about the middle of chapter 2, where Paul says, by grace, we are saved through faith, and this is not of yourself.

It's a gift of God, not of works that no one will boast. A lot of us are familiar with that text, which, interestingly, comes in the context of God rescuing us from bondage to sin and the powers of evil. Any questions so far about Ephesians? What about Ephesians chapter 6, the so-called spiritual warfare passage, where, towards the end of the book in chapter 6, Paul now describes the Christian life using battle or warfare imagery, and even depicts Christians as needing to put on, metaphorically, certain parts or pieces of armor.

So he begins, starting in verse 10, And finally, There's that power language again. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers and authorities and cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil.

There's that idea again that you find in Revelation, of the fact that behind the physical world lies this spiritual world ruled by these evil powers. In other words, it

goes back to number one. Because of sin, the entire universe is now subject to and under the rulership of the powers of evil.

And now Paul says, therefore, you need to be prepared to stand against that. And then he goes on and says, therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on the evil day. Stand, therefore, and fasten your belt of truth.

So that's the first piece of armor, the belt of truth around your waist. And put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet, put on what makes you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace.

With all of these, take up the shield of faith, so that you can quench the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take up the helmet of salvation. Now, one of the questions, there's actually two questions, is where does Paul get this armor language and this warfare language? Again, Paul does this quite a bit in his letters.

He'll compare the Christian life to different, he'll use different metaphors. He'll compare it to athletic events at times. He'll compare it to farming and building.

Here he uses warfare language to describe and depict the Christian life. And he describes Christians as needing, as they live in this kind of a situation, in a world dominated by these spiritual powers, Paul now describes Christians as needing to put on these different pieces of armor, that metaphorically he identifies as truth and faith and righteousness and peace and salvation. Now, what are we to make of this? And then second is the question of how chapter six functions in the book? Is this just kind of an appendix? Or in other words, does Paul get to chapter six and decide, you know, I haven't said anything about spiritual warfare, so I think I'll talk about it.

I've said everything else I need to say about Christians living righteous lives and living holy lives and following Jesus Christ, and now I should say something about spiritual warfare because I really haven't addressed that. Or how should we understand chapter six? First of all, where does Paul get his armor imagery from? At least when I was growing up, I was always taught this, and I had this picture in my mind that Paul was somewhere in prison. It is one of the prison epistles, so that would make sense.

Paul was in prison, and he was chained to a Roman soldier. And as he was writing this, he would look up and see the helmet and write the helmet of salvation, look up and see his breastplate, breastplate of righteousness. And he's basically describing this Roman soldier that was perhaps standing by him or that he had observed.

And that's where he gets his armor imagery. And that would make sense. No doubt Paul was very well aware of the garb and the battle attire of a Roman soldier.

But I'm not convinced that's where Paul gets it. Instead, I am once again convinced that Paul is drawing on the Old Testament. In Isaiah chapter 59, the author describes God, interestingly, and this becomes important, this is a description of God who does battle with Israel's enemies.

And the author says, He, God, put on righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head. He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing. Here's another one.

Isaiah 52.7, How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace. Didn't Paul just say to prepare your feet with the gospel of peace? So, what I think Paul is doing is drawing on the Old Testament and knowing what he does. Especially in light of this verse, this verse is saying the same armor that God has used to defeat His enemies is now the same armor that Paul calls upon Christians to take up.

It's almost as if he's saying, This armor is available to you, and by the way, it works. It's already been tried out in Isaiah chapter 59, and it works. So again, I think Paul is not so much dependent on a Roman soldier, but once again he's demonstrating that the very means by which God defeats His enemies is the means by which the people of God will now conquer these evil spirits and authorities in the heavenly world.

Notice the already-but-not-yet tension. Back in chapter 1, Jesus Christ has already defeated these enemies. Remember back in chapter 1, by being raised and exalted to heaven, He has already defeated these spiritual rulers and powers.

But because of the not-yet, we are now commanded to defeat the powers of evil and bring about this cosmic reconciliation. So, this is the already-but-not-yet, or the indicative and the imperative. The indicative is, it's already been inaugurated, this cosmic reconciliation, this defeat of the powers has already taken place through Christ's death and resurrection.

But now, because of the not-yet, the imperative is, we still need to put that into practice. So, because of that, I do not think that chapter 6 is different... This is not a separate chapter. It's not as if Paul says everything he wants to say by chapter 6 and verse 9, and then, oh, let's talk about spiritual warfare.

Instead, this is the conclusion of the book. This is Paul's way of saying everything he's already said in the first five chapters. In fact, all of those pieces of armor, the faith and peace and righteousness and truth and gospel, have already been discussed numerous times throughout Ephesians.

So, chapter 6 is a summary of the entire book. It simply looks at chapters 1 through 5 through a different lens, through the lens of the cosmic warfare that now Christians

are part of. But again, the only reason they can be part of that is because Christ has already, in chapter 1, begun this universal reconciliation by defeating the powers of evil.

Now we're supposed to do that as well. The other interesting thing about this, though, is when we think about what it means to do spiritual warfare, I don't want to say that it doesn't involve things like casting out demons and binding the powers of darkness that are hostile to us, and things that we often think of when we think of spiritual warfare. We think of satanic assaults on us spiritually, and sometimes we even think of things like demon possession and demon influence and the need to break that through various means.

But it's interesting if what I've said is correct, Paul ties chapter 6 back into Ephesians, chapters 1 through 5, so that, at least for Paul, in Ephesians, the primary way that we do spiritual warfare is by living lives characterized, instead of by dissension and division, by living lives that promote peace. Instead of lying, we tell the truth. Instead of living impurely and immorally, we live lives characterized by righteousness.

When we do that, we deal a blow and a defeat to these powers of darkness that Christ has already defeated. So, I find it interesting that all those pieces of armor are things that Paul actually mentioned early on in Ephesians. So, another way of putting it is the way we do spiritual warfare is by living out the kind of lifestyle that Paul articulates in the first five chapters of Ephesians.

And when we do that, we join in, Paul says, we're part of this cosmic battle that Christ has already won in the heavenly realms, but that we continue to wage until the not yet arrives in the future, when all things are eventually perfectly and completely reconciled to Christ. All right, questions. All right, we have a couple of minutes left, but any questions about the exam? Just let me say the exam will look just like the previous one as far as its length and the type of exam.

It's on different material. It's not in the Gospels or the historical material. We talked about it at the beginning of the semester.

It's on Acts through Galatians. And everyone should have a study guide. It's on Blackboard, but I emailed it to you as well.

So please look at the study guide. If you have any questions, please ask me before Monday.

This was Lecture 21 on the book of Ephesians by Dr. Dave Mathewson in his New Testament History and Literature course.