

Dr. Kenneth Mathews, Genesis, Session 4, The Garden Story, Part 2

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This is Dr. Kenneth Mathews and his teaching on the book of Genesis. This is session 4, The Garden Story, Part 2, Genesis 2:4-3:24.

Session four concerns what occurred outside the garden. In session three, parts one and two, we focused on the events in the garden as they are recounted in chapters two and three of Genesis.

In order to appreciate the significance of what occurred in the history of the first human family, we would do well to revisit what we find in chapters two and three briefly to prepare the reader for understanding better the events that take place outside the garden. The first thing we notice is important for us would be the oracles of judgment in verses 14 through 19. What is important for us to gain from it is that what we have in these oracles of judgment is not prescriptive in the sense of command but rather descriptive of what will occur in the future with reference to the battle that will ensue between the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman will eventually result in a victory on the part of the offspring of the woman.

In the intermediate interim period, there will be an ongoing struggle, and we will see how this will work itself out historically through the wicked who oppose the things of God and then the righteous who are in alignment with God's promises and His character. The second oracle of judgment pertains to the woman, and as an aside, this passage has been the source of a good deal of debate about the relationship between men and women in the church, and also in the home. What we can discern from the oracle of judgment regarding the woman is that, in some sense, she will be subject to her husband.

Now, let me quickly say that this does not deal with civil matters. This concerns the church and the family, and firstly, more importantly, the family and then the family of God in the church. But when it comes to society, such as the role of women in government and commerce and many other fields, medicine, that this is not pertaining to it.

When it reads the last part of verse 16, Again, I want to reiterate that this is descriptive. There's no place in the Bible, and when you reflect upon the Apostle Paul, who spoke to the relationship of man and woman in marriage, and also in the church, the relationship of men and women in the church, there is no place you will find an exhortation, a command to the men to exercise rule over women. In fact, what you find is the opposite trend on the part of the Apostle Paul, who urges the

men to treat their wives with love, as we find described in Ephesians chapter 5. And in that same passage, the wife is to show honor toward her husband.

What's really important here is order. Order is something that is understood in terms of the creation ordinance, such as we find it in chapters 1 and 2. And then you remember in chapter 3, there is a reversal, a disorder, and then the judgment oracles reorder, reorganize. God loves organizational structure, balance, and symmetry, because that is what is found within God himself, and we'll return to that idea in a moment.

What we do find is some debate about what is meant by desire and what is meant by rule. We find that these two terms are found again in Genesis chapter 4, verse 7. And the reason why I appeal to it to explain desire and rule is because it occurs in the same context. Many think that this has something to do with their sexual relationship, given that the previous half of verse 16 speaks of childbearing.

However, I find that in chapter 4, we have the same words occurring, which will be very useful in explaining the terminology that is used here. Turning to chapter 4, verse 6, Then the Lord said to Cain, This has to do with the acceptance of Abel's sacrifice and worship, whereas the rejection of Cain's sacrifice and offer of worship. Cain is very angry about it, and the Lord addresses him, Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? And here we come to the importance then of verse 7. If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, Sin is crouching at your door.

Then, there's an image here of how sin would be at the doorway of a residence. And that the animal that is crouching, and it is used metaphorically for an animal, Sin is crouching like an animal at your door. In other words, if you stir up the animal by doing what is wrong, then the animal will attack.

It somewhat reminds me of a dog that hears something outside and then the dog leaps into action and barks. And that's somewhat of a contemporary image of what we find here depicted. So, sin is crouching at your door, ready to pounce upon you.

This is where our language of chapter 3 comes into play. It is sin, desires, the same word, desires to have you. In other words, to control you.

But you must, here rule in the NIV reads, but you must master it, you must control it, in order to avoid the consequences of an unbridled anger that will lead to the murder of your brother, Abel. And, of course, that is what occurs in chapter 4. So, I think what is described in verse 16 will be the future struggle of the sexes, as we say it. There will be a conflict between husbands and wives in their home life, and that's one of the effects of being sinners in the home, related to one another through marriage.

But there is a desire not to order but to control. There will not be a submissive spirit of love, mutual affection, and unity of purpose in achieving the blessing that God has envisioned for men and women. We remember that it was promised in chapter 1, verse 28, the blessing of procreation.

So here sin has impacted, in a most serious way, the intention of God for there to be a loving relationship instead of a struggle that is perpetuated by each one's desire, wife and husband, to overwhelm, overcome, or control his or her spouse. Then the second is pertaining, and next, the third actually, is pertaining to the man. And here's a description of what will become of the man's occupation as a cultivator.

And now he will face a painful toil, just like the woman faces a painful toil in childbirth. Notice that it says in verse 17 that cursed is the ground. What is striking in this account is that there is a cursing against the serpent, found in verse 14, and then there is a cursing against the ground.

There is not a curse that God delivers against the woman or against the man. And I think the implication of this is that the man and the woman are redeemable, and God's plan of blessing for the human family is not obsolete, that is still up and running, and that God will take the intervening steps to ensure that it will be realized in the human family that he created and that he did so out of his love for men and women, uniquely created in his image. Now, what we will discover, by contrast, is that in chapter 4, you have a description of how God brings a judgment of curse against Cain because he is an image killer.

He has destroyed the image of God by killing his brother Abel. Also, we will find that there is within each of these three oracles of judgment, a hope, a hope, a glimmer of light, the victory over the serpent, the woman who has children in accord with the intended blessing, and then, although it will be very troubling by the man against his environment and working the ground, there will be productivity, there will be food that will occur. In verse 20, we see that the man, Adam, named his wife Eve because she would become the mother of all living.

There is a wordplay between Eve, meaning living, and then the explanation of why she is called living, and that is literally, she is the mother of all living. You will understand that this is quite an act on the part of the man, Adam, because I think that he has a sense of grave remorse and repentance, and so he does place a revitalized faith in God's promises that from Adam and Eve will come a legacy, a family through procreation. We will then see a second trend on the part of God, who shows his grace by providing much more climate-worthy clothing.

And this clothing is skins, garments of skin, which implies a sacrificial offering, skin being taken from an animal. Now, it doesn't say specifically that there is a sacrifice

here in view of an animal. It may well imply it, and I think that the first readers of the story of Genesis in the context of Moses' career, their reception of how they are to worship the Lord, would have probably understood that this is in Eden, a step taken by God whereby a sacrifice is made to make atonement, a forgiveness of sin, and a reconciliation made possible through the substitutionary sacrifice.

I might also say that we begin to see now a trend of sin, a penalty, and then an active work of God, and that's what grace is, is an active work of God in providing hope and a continuing blessing on the part of God toward those who have experienced the sinfulness and in some cases very egregious wickedness, that there is hope. So we might ask this question: what was lost when it came to the sin that was committed in chapter 3? And we spoke of it last time as original sin, the source of sin, that a man and a woman are sinners. That's their character, their nature, their proclivity in thought and also in action. And with it, of course, comes original guilt.

And I say, of course, because it becomes rather clear that the man and the woman hide from God in the trees of the garden, which is an ironic twist since the trees of the garden were provided by God for their blessing and their enjoyment, and there they are hiding from the Lord. The Lord confronts them, raising questions in order to elicit their confession. And in the midst of that, of course, they show their sense of shame and guilt.

So not only were they practicing a new relationship, a broken relationship with God, but the commune with God in the garden has now broken down, and that loving relationship, which is suggested in the book of Genesis, has been lost. But the question I ask is, was the image lost? What happened, and what would this mean for life outside the garden? Well, the image was not destroyed. When God created the man and the woman, when he created humanity in his image, you'll recall I spoke of the image as including personhood.

So, although they become the source of sin and their progeny also receive that inheritance of original sin and original guilt, as Romans 5 verses 12 through 21 clarifies, we will find that they remain persons. They remain in God's special care and his plan and purpose for those that are created in the image of God. Now there is evidence that the image was not lost within Genesis itself.

For example, in Genesis chapter 9, verse 6, we read, Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed. For in the image of God made mankind or humankind. So, although this occurs even after the flood account in chapters 6 through 8, God still refers to humans in humanity as made in his image. There is another indication in the New Testament, James 3 verse 9, With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it, we curse human beings who have been made in God's likeness.

And so there James argues that the tongue is highly volatile and can be used for the praise of the Lord or could be used to curse others. And how is it that anyone would dare to curse, reject, violate, harm a human being since that human being is made in God's likeness. So, the image has not been lost.

The image has not been destroyed. What I think we want to do is look at how in the Bible, when we look at the Old Testament anew, then I think we will have a better idea of what was lost. Not only was the relationship with God broken down, but we also see that what God had given men and women, and this would be honor and glory, has been lost.

And so, when it comes to the image, you recall that the image is used of royal figures who are ruling figures. And in chapter 1 where it described how all men and women are created in the image of God, it speaks to what I call the democratization of honor and glory, all equal in their being. And this would include gender and age.

This would include those who have mental struggles or physical disadvantages. And ethnicity, that is, all men and women, regardless of their background, ethnicity, or education. In other words, there's really not a class system when it comes to creating men and women as human beings.

Now, it's important that within that unity of all men and women created in the image of God, there is a diversity necessary, I commented, of different sexual roles, the male and the female. And by the way, chapter 1, verses 26 and 27, uses the language male and female as opposed to husband and wife so male and female, regardless of whether there is a marriage in view or not, that the persons individually are created in the image of God.

Now, it is in context helpful to recognize that the male and female have a critical, each has a critical role in achieving the blessing that God has in mind for the human family because reproduction and procreation, in chapter 1, verse 28, is a part of that blessing. And so male and female are mentioned in verses 26 and 27 and that they, by virtue of their diversity of role in procreation, both are necessary, both are essential. Now, where we are especially helped is to reflect for a few moments on Psalm 8. The psalmist thinks and meditates upon the creation account.

In doing so, he will mention the glory and honor that God bestowed upon humanity initially in the garden. He contrasts in Psalm 8 the magnitude, the immensity, the marvel of the whole created order and then speaks of how humanity seems so insignificant. So, the psalmist says in verses 5 through 8, you, that is God, have made human beings a little lower than the angels.

And what I think he has in mind here, of course, is that there are two spheres in mind. There's a terrestrial sphere, and then the angels are celestial. And in that

sense, are they human beings a little lower, still having, of course, great dignity as human beings, but a little lower than the celestial, heavenly sphere of the angels?

And it says, crown them, the man and the woman. See, that echoes, doesn't it, what we have said already about royal figures, ruling figures, and that the man and woman are said, a part of the blessing in verse 28, will exercise a measure of dominion over all of creation, since they have received from God his derivative authority and are accountable to him, but also to be, as a result, empowered by God to rule effectively. With glory and honor, we are said.

So, in verse 6, you made them rulers over the works of your hands. You put everything under their feet. And again, this is a depiction of a ruling authority sitting on a crown, a throne, crowned and enthroned, and exercising rule beneath the feet in a picture of exercising dominion.

Verse 7, all flocks and herds and the animals of the wild, the birds in the sky and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. Quite clearly, a meditation on the part of the psalmist for Genesis chapter 1. Notice that it does not say image. It, I think, presumes it, assuming that you know Genesis chapter 1. Now, this is what has been lost.

Not the image, but rather the high standard, the high position that God has for men and women when they were created and given the assignment of procreation and also dominion. This was what was lost. When we come to understanding the possibility of regaining that which was lost, we have to rely, as we find through Genesis, in the remainder of Scripture, that it is God who acts in behalf of what was lost by the human family in their rebellion.

And this is picked up in Hebrews chapter 2. And if you turn with me to Hebrews chapter 2, there the writer of the Hebrews draws on Psalm 8 to elaborate on how this was a being, notice the progressive being, realized, I say, in Jesus Christ. So turn with me to Hebrews chapter 2, and we will pick it up in verse 5. Here in chapter 2, the writer of the Hebrews is speaking of how his brothers, that is, Jesus, have been, that is, human beings, have fulfilled the promise of the Lord Jesus in contrast to the angels who could not accomplish for fallen humanity what Jesus as a totally human person and a totally obedient servant to the Lord accomplished. So, verse 5, it is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, but which we are speaking.

But there is a place, and of course, at that time, there is no chapter and verse, and so when it comes to somewhere, he has in mind our Psalm 8. What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man, that you care for him, you have made him a little lower than the angels, and you crowned him with glory and honor and put everything under his feet. Now, here is the commentary by the writer of the

Hebrews. In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him.

Yet, at present, we do not see everything subject to him, but we see Jesus, and that is such an important expression on the part of the Hebrews writer, but the contrast. So ultimately, the resolution is found in Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He has received in his humanity, the resurrected humanity, the glory, and the honor, and it has been restored for all those who are in Christ Jesus, who have received and accepted his life, his resurrection life, and that in doing so, God shares through Christ Jesus, again, his glory and his honor.

Reading on, we find in verse 9 because he suffered death, what an amazing observation that instead of coming as a ruling figure, that Jesus Christ was rewarded by God because of his willingness, his voluntary surrender to the will of God, his father, in suffering death, for what purpose? So that by the grace of God, he might taste death for everyone and bring many sons to glory, it was appropriate that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfected through suffering. And here, we have a clear reference to the atonement work of Christ on the cross. And this is what's at work in terms of how the future is now a part of our life in Christ Jesus.

It will be consummated with the coming of our Lord Jesus at the second coming. And in the meantime, we are enjoying and experiencing the advent. The offer of the kingdom has been made.

Those who receive and enter into the kingdom provided for through our Lord Jesus Christ are in the process of being honored. We are in the process of being glorified. In Jesus' prayer in John chapter 17 to the Father, he does pray to the Father to restore to him the manifestation of honor and glory that he once had with the Father before becoming a human being and suffering the trials and difficulties of this present evil age, as Paul refers to it.

And all the sin and the depravity and all of that is swirling around Jesus in every way. And yet he remains steadfast in his obedience, carrying out what the first Adam failed to do. And so, what we discover is, again reiterating this, is that what is available to all of us who will hear this great gospel, this gospel of liberation from sins and enslavement, and how God has for us his own life, his own honor, and glory.

Jesus prays about his disciples in John 17 and says, and give them, that is the disciples, my glory that we share, Father and Son, and also my joy. So, what has been lost, the honor and the glory, and underway is God's, again, plan of rescue. Since we find in verse 22 of chapter 3, the man has now become like one of us, we run again into the plural where God is speaking with reference to himself as plural.

The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. I would like to pause and address a question having to do with the triune God, the whole question of how is it there is one God and yet there appears to be a plurality within God. And if we'll turn back to Genesis chapter 1, we will see how this is brought forward in verses 26 and 27.

In 26, it does read, let us make humanity in our image. There is the plural idea. And then, when we turn 27, we see the singular and the plural at work.

So, God created humanity in his own image. So, there we have the singular. In the image of God, he created their humanity.

Male and female, he created them. So, in verse 26, we have the plurality. In verse 27, we have the oneness of God.

This is also indicated in humanity, where it speaks in verse 27, he created him, that is a unified humanity, and then the diversity, male and female, he created them. Now, let's reflect a little bit about what the Bible is teaching, first in the context of Genesis. In the context of Genesis, there is, from the very beginning, a sentence that there is one God, and yet there is a plurality within God.

I would suggest that we look at verse 2 again and find that at least we can say that the Spirit of God hovering over the waters would be indicating that the Spirit of God makes for a plurality within the single unity of God. It does not say tri-unity, but I think that we can be safe in saying that there is indicated here a plurality. Now, is this the case elsewhere in Genesis? For certainly, this is the Christian position toward God.

And in his being, there is a oneness, and also within his being, we have a plurality of persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. But can we find anything in Genesis itself that would be further indicative, suggestive, of a plurality? And what we want to do then is turn to Genesis chapter 18, and this is in the life of Abraham. And this is a very fascinating account of three visitors, and this is at Abraham's campsite.

And these three visitors are coming in their travels, and as Abraham should, he offers to them hospitality by providing for them a place to rest and also a provision of food. But notice with me, if you turn to Genesis 18, verse 1, Then the Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre, while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw the three, it says, men.

Keep that in mind when it speaks of the three men. And then, go to verse 10. Then the Lord and I want you to notice that the Lord here probably refers to Yahweh.

I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah, your wife, will have a son. So, one of the three men is, in fact, the Lord God. Notice it says in verse 13, Then the Lord, now this is certainly the divine name Yahweh, The Lord said to Abraham, so again, one of the three men is speaking, and the narrative identifies one of the three men as the Lord.

Let's look again at verse 16. When the men got up to leave, verse 17, Then the Lord said, You see this back and forth, back and forth indicates that their appearance is as though they are men. But in fact, they are not.

They are not men, but rather that they are, as we will see, God and angels. Notice chapter 19, where it says the two angels. So, there is a plurality, the three, appearing as men, but not incarnated as men.

Not what we find with the Lord Jesus Christ, who became, not just appearance as a man, but became wholly and fully a human being. And we have the Lord, and then we have two angels, who also appear to be men. So, there is in Genesis chapter 18, some indication that the unity of God involves a mystery of God's also diversity.

This can be helpful in explaining what is taking place in the creation of the account itself. Now, if we have God and we have the Spirit, what do we say about Jesus Christ? Do we have any indication that there is Jesus Christ that is involved in the creation account? Well, we are not surprised that his name is not found here in the Genesis account. Rather, what we find is his role because there is an intermediate step involved in God's superintendence of creation.

And that is the mediation of God by the spoken word. When it comes to Jesus Christ, we have in the New Testament an explanation of this. There is two passages particularly that speak of the presence of the Son of God involved in the creative word at creation.

And John 1 verses 1-5 is clearly a reflex of what we find in creation as John, the Gospel writer, reflects on the identity of Jesus. So, just keep reading that first chapter and it becomes increasingly clear, not in any way disputable, that he is speaking of Jesus as the Word. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.

And then it says, and the Word was God. So, it doesn't say he became God, but rather, he was, in his being, identified as divine. He was with God in the beginning.

Through him all things were made, without him nothing was made that has been made. And he was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

And then in Colossians 1 verse 15, the Son is the image of the invisible God, the chief, the firstborn over all creation. The language firstborn is legal language, not biological language. As you know, there's a drawing on the custom of the firstborn in Hebrew life where the firstborn is the successor to his father.

And so firstborn means that he is, in effect, playing the role of the father who, as firstborn, inherits what the father bestows upon him. For in him, verse 16, all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things have been created through him and strikingly for him. He is before all things, and in him, all things hold together.

So, we can conclude from these two verses that Jesus Christ was as much involved in the creation as was the Father and the Spirit. I want to indicate why this is so important in our understanding before we proceed in life outside the garden. And that is when it comes to the difference between polytheism, characteristic of the ancient Near Eastern gods and goddesses, and what the Hebrew scriptures in the New Testament continue and confirm is that within God you have persons.

And so, what this means is that if you go to the religions of today, God, even though it's not polytheistic, God is a mono-person, one person. There's no other person for God to love. Love then comes after creation.

So, in the ancient Near East, with polytheism, it is a crude representation of human imagination. When it comes to the religions, for example, of Islam, there is but one person he must create in order to exercise a love toward his creation. But within God, you have eternally and perfectly and completely and wholly a love between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Let me reflect on this in 1 John 4, verse 8. Whoever does not love does not know God because God is characterized by love. God is a lover, and Jesus Christ is the beloved, he's the recipient of God. This is how God showed his love among us.

In other words, in the Christian faith, we don't speak of love and knowledge in an abstract way, just in terms of thought and ideas, but rather in a very practical, concrete expression of that love. So, if we were to say, well, what is this love that God characteristically manifests? This is how God showed his love among us. He sent his Son, an only Son, into the world that we might live through him.

This is love. Not that we instigated love, but that he, God, loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. So, God's love is of such a nature that it is overflowing, it is outgoing, it's directed within himself, a perfect, complete love.

And God's character, his nature, is there. It might be an outflow. And it is by the Spirit within God that is bringing together. You might think of him as the connector. I hesitate to say love itself, because that sounds like an it when he is a person.

But taking that into account, we have God the Father who is the Lover, Jesus Christ who is the one receiving the love, the Beloved, and it is by the Spirit who is loving that brings together a perfect harmony, the love of God. It is the love of God, then, that motivated God to create. And that is the purpose and plan that God has for humanity because of his benevolence toward his creatures and his love.

And he will set about in his almighty and powerful ways to ensure that love relationship will be fully and completely restored. And it can only be accomplished through the instigation, the beginning of love on the part of God himself. And that through the Beloved, through his Son, Jesus Christ, that loving reconciliation is accomplished on our behalf.

In our next session, we will continue to think about life outside the garden.

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