

Dr. David L. Mathewson, New Testament Theology, Session 4, Creation, Land, Recreation in the New Testament, Part 1

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This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his lecture series on New Testament Theology. This is session 4, Creation, Land, Recreation in the New Testament, Part 1.

We've been looking at the biblical-theological theme of creation, new creation, and land.

And I was looking at the Old Testament evidence. What I want to do now is consider the New Testament's emphasis on creation, new creation, and land. And we've already mentioned that when you look at the Old Testament, especially prophetic anticipations of a fulfillment where God brings his people back to the land, to the creation, in fulfillment of God's intention for creation in Genesis 1 and 2, but also God's promise to Abraham to give him the land, which itself was a fulfillment of or meant to be a restoration of God's promises concerning the first creation.

When we look at that in terms of the prophetic expectations in the New Testament, as I've done already, there is not yet tension. That is, we will see that the promises of the new creation, God's intention for creation to give Israel its land, in my judgment, gets fulfilled in Christ already, although it still awaits the not yet or the final consummation, which I would argue takes place in the new creation, both physically and spiritually. Now, what I want to do as we move through the New Testament is we'll look at the different sections of the New Testament, starting with the Gospels.

We'll look at the Pauline literature, some of the rest of the New Testament, and then climax with the book of Revelation and what it says about a new creation, creation in the land, and promises being fulfilled. Starting with the Gospels, although not as direct, I think that the idea of Jesus as the son of David is still related to the issue of land. Now, in Matthew chapter 1 and verse 1, the author, at the very start, at the very beginning of his gospel, signals how he is going to portray Jesus in the rest of the Gospels, where he portrays him as the son of David and the son of Abraham.

And we've already noted that it was to Abraham that the promises of the land were given. But by calling Jesus the son of David, according to the Old Testament, we've looked at a number of texts where a son of David will sit on the throne, and when he sits on the throne, this will take place at the restoration of the people to the land. So, for example, in one text that we looked at very briefly in Ezekiel 36 and 37, which was an account of the prophet's expectation of God one day restoring his people back to the land that God had promised to Abraham and the patriarchs.

But we also saw Eden language in that as well, where God would return the people from exile back to the land in fulfillment of the promises to Abraham, but in fulfillment of the promises of the original creation. But part of that is found in chapter 37 and verse 24, where we read this: My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees.

They will live in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, a land where your fathers live. They and their children and their children's children will live there forever, and David, my servant, will be their prince forever. That was verse 25.

So, notice how living in the land and being restored to the land is in the context of and is associated with David ruling over the people. So, and I could go, we could go back to Psalm chapter two and Psalm 89, where the Davidic king was to have all the ends of the earth as his inheritance. So, in my judgment, as I read the New Testament, if Christ is ruling as the Davidic king, which a number of New Testament texts say that he is, this suggests that the restoration to the land is already, in some sense, taking place.

That is, the new creation is already being inaugurated. The promises of the land, the promises God made to his people, are already being inaugurated because again, when David sits as king when David sits on his throne, that will take place at the time when God's people are restored to their land. There are a number of texts that clearly indicate that Jesus Christ in the New Testament is now reigning as a messianic king, as the king in the line of David.

We've looked at Matthew chapter one and verse one. All we need to do is trace the theme of the kingdom of God throughout the Gospels or Jesus as the son of David throughout the Gospels. Matthew, that's one of Matthew's favorite designations for Jesus is the son of David.

But even others go outside of the Gospels to corroborate that; for example, in the book of Hebrews and in chapter one, the author clearly sees Jesus as the fulfillment of the Davidic promises from the Psalms and all the way back to 2 Samuel 7, 14. So, Hebrews chapter one starting with verse two, but in these last days, he has spoken to us by his son whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom he made the universe. The son is the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of his being sustaining all things by his powerful word.

After he provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven. That language of sitting at the right hand comes right out of Psalm 110, which is another messianic Psalm or a Psalm referring to the Davidic ruler or the Davidic king. And then later on in the same chapter of Hebrews chapter one and

verses five to four, to which of the angels did God ever say, you are my son today, I've become your father.

Or, again, I will be his father, and he will be my son. You'll notice that these are again, quotations from the second Samuel 7:14, as well as Psalm chapter two, both clearly messianic texts. So, the author of Hebrews clearly sees Jesus as the son of David, as the one who brings the Davidic promises to their fulfillment and to their conclusion.

We see something similar going on, to give an example, one example from the Pauline literature in Ephesians chapter one, Ephesians chapter one and verses 20, and following in reference to Jesus, his resurrection and exaltation. I'll read the last phrase of verse 19, that power that God exerted, that power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he, which God exerted in Christ when God raised him, Jesus, from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms—another reference to Psalm, Psalm chapter 110, the Davidic Psalm.

So, I'll go on and read far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the age to come. And God placed all things under his feet. A reference to Psalm chapter eight, which is a celebration of ideally God's intention for Adam to rule over all creation.

Now Jesus fulfills that role by having all things placed under his feet to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. So, in Ephesians, chapter one, the author, without quoting the text, clearly alludes to Psalm 110, a Messianic Psalm, but also Psalm eight, which is a Psalm celebrating the original creation in Genesis, where Adam was to rule over and as God's image bearer rule over all of creation. Now, Jesus Christ, having been raised to heaven, having been raised and exalted to heaven and seated on his heavenly throne, now he has entered into his kingly rule and begins, I think, in fulfillment of Psalm 110, Psalm two, et cetera.

Psalm eight now begins to fulfill the intention of the Psalms that the Messiah would extend his rule over all of creation. So, to summarize this, if Christ has been installed as Messianic ruler, in Hebrews 1, Ephesians 1, and a number of other texts, if Christ has been installed as Messianic ruler, then he is already extending his rule and extending the borders beyond just the land of Palestine to encompass the entire earth in fulfillment of the Psalms and in fulfillment of the other Old Testament texts. So, I take it that the purpose of Israel's land was to eventually extend, embrace, and encompass all of creation.

And now that has been fulfilled in David's greater son, who is Jesus Christ. So, I think the theme of Jesus, the son of David, at least implicitly, suggests the fulfillment of the land promises as well. Again, in light of the Psalm text, some of the prophetic texts where the son of David would reign when Israel was restored to its land, where he

would extend his reign over all creation, where he would inherit all creation, not just the land of Palestine, suggests to me that if Jesus is the son of David and has entered into his kingly rule, which Hebrews and the gospel suggest, which Hebrews and the Pauline letters suggest, then the rule of God, the rule of David is now extending to embrace the ends of the earth and not just the land of Palestine.

God's rule, David's rule over Palestine in the Old Testament, was ultimately meant to signify God's intention to extend that rule over the entirety of creation. Another indication that the new creation has already arrived is Greg Beal in his New Testament theology has demonstrated, I think, that Jesus' promise of eternal life in the gospels, probably also, especially in John's gospel, where the phrase eternal life occurs numerous times, Jesus' promise of eternal life, especially in John's gospel, is the inauguration of the new creation, is the inaugurated life of the new creation. For example, go back to Isaiah chapter 65, a text that we already read.

In the context of the new creation, and also going even back further into Genesis chapters 1 and 2, in the context of the tree of life, as emblematic of God's intention to give life to his people, in Isaiah chapter 65, in the context of the new creation, we find that what characterizes that is the lack of premature death or life. We said even the Septuagint in that one phrase in verse 20; I believe it is, where it says like the tree, they will be like a tree; the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, adds, like a tree of life. So, the point is that life is characteristic of new creations.

The life of the new creation is emblematic of belonging to the new heavens and new earth, the new creation of Isaiah 65. Now, through the eternal life that Jesus now offers to his people, especially in John's gospel, this resurrection, this life, this overcoming death, is a sign of the presence of the new creation. So, Jesus' promise of eternal life is principally the promise of life that belongs to the new creation, Isaiah 65, Ezekiel 37, and a number of other texts as well.

In fact, Jesus' own resurrection, as we'll see later, especially in Paul's letters, is the inauguration of the life of the new creation and the inauguration of the new creation itself. So, Jesus' body was the first physical body to pass over from the old creation into the new creation, a body fit for existence in life in the new creation. So, Jesus' own physical body was the physical, literal inauguration, in one sense, of the new creation, in that Jesus' own resurrection was the beginning of what was promised, the life promised under the new creation in the Old Testament.

One other interesting text, just to mention, there's a number of other passages we could refer to, but in the context of the gospels and in the context of Jesus' own death and resurrection, you have that very interesting passage at the very end of Matthew, in Matthew chapter 27, verses 51 and 52. This is in the context of Jesus' death in chapter 27, which is then followed by the account of his resurrection in

Matthew 28. But starting with 51 and 52 and into verse 53, a very interesting series of events takes place when Jesus' death occurs, starting with verse 51, at that moment, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, the earth shook, and the rocks split, the tombs broke open, and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life.

They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many people. Now, I'm not interested in getting into all the details of what exactly is taking place and empirically or physically how we understand this, but it seems that at one level, the point of this is that we find here, as a result of Jesus' death and his resurrection, we find the breakup of the old cosmos, this reference to the earth shaking and the rocks splitting, and then the inauguration of the new creation by people actually being raised up. So, this rather strange account at the end of Matthew 27, whatever you make of it, in the context of Jesus' death and resurrection, I think at one level is Matthew's way of demonstrating that Jesus' death and resurrection inaugurate the new creation.

It entails the breakup of the old cosmos and the inauguration of the new creation, as demonstrated by resurrection. In fact, resurrection from the dead and life is one of the key features of the new creation. So, when Jesus rises from the dead, this is not only Jesus overcoming death, yes, it is, but it is also Jesus inaugurating the life of the new creation through his own resurrection.

So, when we look at the Gospels, we see in the Old Testament, first of all, the promises made to Israel of restoring them to the land would be accompanied by a Davidic king who would rule over them, and the Davidic king would extend the rule and extend the boundaries to reach all of creation, which in fact was how it was supposed to be in the Garden of Eden. Adam's task was to extend God's rule over all of creation. So, in the New Testament, then, we find that the promises of the land seem to be fulfilled with Jesus Christ, who, as the son of David, now through his death and resurrection and exaltation to heaven, is now enthroned over all the universe, so that the rule of God is now beginning to extend over the entire cosmos.

But, as we said, there's an already not yet dimension; although Jesus is already reigning as Davidic king and extending his rule over all creation, there is yet a day when this will finally be fulfilled in the new creation of Revelation 21 and 22. Now, there's more that we could probably say about the Gospels, but I think we've sufficiently demonstrated that key elements of the Gospels demonstrate Jesus inaugurating the promises of creation, new creation, and land through his Davidic kingship and through his death and his resurrection. When we jump over to Paul's epistles, again, we often don't find explicit land or new creation language, but we often find Paul appealing to or finding fulfillment in Christ of certain elements that are clearly connected with new creation realities or with the promise of land, or the promise of a coming new creation.

Although, we will look at one text where Paul does use, clearly uses, new creation language in 2 Corinthians, and we'll talk a little bit about how we're supposed to handle that. But Paul's epistles, starting with Romans, again, will be rather selective. I don't want to look at every tidbit and every last little detail in Paul's letters but focus on a couple of what I think are prominent and crucial texts in dealing with the issue of land and new creation and how that gets fulfilled.

Romans 6-8 is the first section I want to pause at, and again; we'll look at a couple of elements of it, but more broadly, how the theme of a new creation may be communicated. First of all, in Romans 6, starting with Romans 6, and I just want to read the first few verses, maybe 6-8 verses of Romans 6. In these verses, I think Paul introduces us to new creation realities that have been fulfilled by virtue of being joined to Christ. So, starting with chapter 6 and verse 1, what shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means did we die of sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized in His death? We were, therefore, buried with Him through baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

If we have been united with Him like this in His death, we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now, if we die with Christ, we believe that we also will live with Him.

For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, He cannot die again. Death no longer has mastery over Him. The death He died; he died once and for all.

But the life He lives, He lives to God. Now, what I want to emphasize in this section is two things. Number one, once more, notice how Christ's own resurrection is associated with newness and with life, which, again, I think is the New Testament's way of saying here is the promise of new creation inaugurated.

You'll notice throughout this as kind of a footnote that I'm not distinguishing sharply between creation, new creation, and land. I see those all as bound together closely. But here Paul seems to be, I think again, referring back to the life of the new creation that has now been inaugurated with the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

But notice that Paul also suggests that we, too, share in that resurrection life, or we share in that new creation by virtue of being joined to Christ. So, we have been raised with Christ so that we might walk in the newness of life. And again, I think that the word newness is not just an interesting qualitative term, but I think it probably reflects new creation language from the Old Testament.

So, because we have been united by faith in Christ, that means we have been united to his resurrection. And because of that, we then participate in the life of the new creation. So, in one sense, there is a physical element to the new creation in that Jesus' own resurrection body is physical.

Now, we share in it spiritually by being united to him, but nonetheless, we participate spiritually in the resurrection life of the new creation by virtue of being joined to Christ in his resurrection. So, we've been delivered from the old creation and death by being joined to Christ's death, which brought that to an end. And now we participate in a new creation, that is, the new creation resurrection life, which we also enjoy by virtue of being joined to Christ.

So, Christ's death is seen as bringing to an end the old creation, and especially its mastery. By being raised again, it's not only that Christ defeats death, but he also inaugurates a new creation. And then we join in that, and we participate in that spiritually by being joined to the one who actually has been raised from the dead and who actually has experienced the life of the new creation.

And by virtue of being joined to him, we likewise spiritually participate in that. The other text that probably refers to, I think, also refers to new creation realities, and I think even implicitly evokes the land promises given to Israel, is found in Romans chapter 8. One of the phrases that Paul uses several times in Romans chapter 8 is the language of the spirit of life or the spirit that gives life. Let me just read a few of the verses from chapter 8. I'll start in verses 9 and following of Romans chapter 8. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit.

Most of your Bibles have that capitalized, a reference to the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit of God lives in you, and if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ, but if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who lives in you.

In other words, I think part of what's going on in Romans chapter 8, in this language of spirit and life, and the spirit giving life, is this is probably, especially in chapter 8 verse 11, the spirit who gives life to your mortal bodies. This language, I think, reflects Ezekiel 37. Again, in the context of God restoring his people to the land, we read this interesting account of the valley of dry bones and how the bones come together, and then the spirit enters it and gives them life, and they stand up.

I think Paul is probably alluding to that here with the reference of the spirit of life. So that once more, the spirit that gives life to our mortal bodies is emblematic of the life of the new creation, or once more, the resurrection life that Christ himself has

already experienced, that is now communicated to us through God's spirit. So, the same spirit who raises Christ from the dead is the same spirit who renews us and gives us life, too; that is the life of the new creation.

Therefore, this reverses the effects of the sin of the first creation. In fact, once more, Greg Beal in his New Testament theology says, the spirit, the Holy Spirit, is the promise of and the beginning of the new creation in the life of God's people. And again, even Ezekiel 37 connects that new creation life with return to the land when God restores his people to the land.

Although what is also clear in this passage, especially in Romans chapter 8, is there is a not yet physical aspect. That is, creation, not only our physical bodies await, although they are subject to death now, and they still await the physical resurrection, at the same time, even Paul says creation awaits redemption, as do our physical bodies. So, in chapter 8 and at the start of verse 19, the creation waits in eager expectation for the Son of God to be revealed.

For the creation was subject to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in the hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning, as in pains of childbirth, right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, there's the already, we already experience the life of the new creation, we have the first fruits of the Spirit, but the not yet is we still groan inwardly as we eagerly await for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

So, Romans 8 demonstrates the tension between the already but not yet, and we already experience the life of the new creation. The new creation has already been fulfilled by virtue of the Spirit giving us life, the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead. Yet, we still await the redemption of our bodies. We still groan until the day when we will experience a physical resurrection like Christ.

But not only that, even if creation groans; creation anticipates that day when it will be redeemed as well when the effects of the fall and the curse from Genesis 3 finally are reversed. That process has already begun, but it still awaits the final accomplishment in the new creation, Revelation chapters 21 and 22. Another important text that probably refers to and anticipates a new creation, and in fact also has connections with the first creation in Genesis 1 and 2 and 3, is 1 Corinthians 15.

I don't want to take time to read this whole section, but 1 Corinthians 15, just the topic of the chapter, the resurrection of both Christ and believers, suggests the connection to the new creation of the Old Testament. And that, as we've already seen, resurrection was one of the dominant realities that signaled the arrival of the

new creation. Isaiah 65 and elsewhere, life is the characteristic feature of the new creation when death will be defeated.

And so, 1 Corinthians 15, the resurrection ties it to the inauguration of a new creation. But also notice a specific connection with Adam as well. In chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians and verse 45, so will it be with the resurrection of the dead.

The body that is sown is perishable; it is raised to be imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, and it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.

It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So, it was written that the man Adam became a living being, the last Adam, Jesus Christ, a life-giving spirit.

The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that, the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. Now, there are a number of things we could say about this, obviously, but the point I simply want to make is to notice that the first creation and the effect of sin on it is now overcome in a new creative act through the life-giving spirit that comes through Jesus Christ.

So, by giving life through his resurrection, Jesus Christ restores the pre-fall state. He overcomes the effect and reverses the effect of death that was brought about by Adam's sin in the first creation. And now Jesus Christ himself inaugurates a new creation.

So again, resurrection and life, probably also going back to the promise of eternal life, especially in John and anywhere else, the promise of life ultimately is connected with the life of the new creation and demonstrates that the new creation has already been inaugurated, first of all by Christ's resurrection, but also for us by virtue of being joined to Christ and his resurrection. One text, the text that clearly refers to a new creation itself, is found in 2nd Corinthians, chapter 5, and verse 17. 2nd Corinthians 5 and 17 says this: if I can back up and just read 16 as well, so from now on, we regard no one from a worldly point of view, though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.

And here's the verse I want you to pay attention to: therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come. Now, that's a fairly standard translation: if anyone is in Christ, he or she is a new creation. The difficulty with this is that when we read this, we're often prone to interpret it and read it exclusively in individualistic terms.

So, we read it like this: well I am a new creature in Christ, I am a new creation in Jesus Christ, Christ has created me anew and made me a new creature, etc. etc., And I certainly would not want to deny any of that, but I want to return and ask what the

intention of this passage is? What is Paul saying? First of all, I want you to note that there seems to be a very clear allusion back to Isaiah chapter 65 and the reference of the new creation, where the prophet says, behold, I am going to make a new heavens and a new earth.

He says that in the context of forgetting the former things, not remembering the former things, the former things have passed away, and behold, I am creating a new heaven and a new earth. Notice how in verse 17, you find that same contrast; therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, and then he immediately says, the old has gone, the new has come. That contrast comes right out of Isaiah chapter 65.

You also find this in Revelation 21:1, where John says, I saw a new heavens and a new earth, for the first heaven and earth had passed away. And now Paul has that same contrast, a new creation, for the old is gone, the new has come. In other words, I am convinced Paul is alluding to Isaiah chapter 65.

This leads me to think that if you read further in chapter 5 and into chapter 6, Paul does begin to quote a number of Old Testament texts, especially towards the end of chapter 6. He will quote a number of texts, a couple of them from Isaiah and elsewhere, suggesting that even though Paul does not quote word for word from Isaiah 65, he intends for you to go back and read this in light of Isaiah 65. I also want you to notice that Isaiah 65 does not refer to, and so Paul probably does not refer to a new creature or a new being, but a new creation. I'll come back to that in just a moment.

To be in Christ, therefore, is to be part of a new creation inaugurated by Jesus Christ. Why is Paul convinced that if anyone is in Christ, he or she is a new creation? Go back to verse 15 of chapter 5. And he, Christ, died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again. So once more, I think Paul is saying Jesus Christ's resurrection has inaugurated a new creation, and we are part of that new creation by virtue of being joined to Jesus Christ, whose resurrection inaugurated the life of the new creation, and hence the new creation itself.

Therefore, Paul can say if anyone is in Christ, he or she is a new creation. Now, this brings me to that phrase: he or she is a new creation. I'm reading from the original NIV version, but the 2011 version of the NIV has actually updated this, and it reads something like this: if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation.

In fact, if you know Greek, and you turn to the Greek text of this, it literally says this: if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. That's all it says. It does not say he or she is a new creation, although that could be true or could be implied, but all it says is if anyone is in Christ, new creation.

So, I take it that, again, what Paul is saying is that if anyone is in Christ, if I can paraphrase, they now belong to or participate in a new creation. If anyone is in Christ, they are part of the new creation. Why? Because if they belong to Christ, verse 15, Christ has been raised from the dead, which means he has inaugurated the life of the new creation.

So, if I'm in Christ, then I, too, belong to and participate in the new creation. So, this is not an individualistic statement. I am a new creature, or Christ has made me new, or something like that.

Though, again, I don't want to dispute that theologically those are correct. But at least here, Paul is making a cosmological statement. If I am in Christ, I belong to the inaugurated new creation, as the 2011 NIV says.

If anyone is in Christ, it actually says a new creation has come. So, the key is, once more, union with Christ in his resurrection, which inaugurates the new creation. So, to wrap up this text then, I take it that the new creation in 2 Corinthians 5:17 is the inauguration of Isaiah's new creation in Isaiah chapter 65.

Paul is convinced that it has been inaugurated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and that we participate in that new creation; we belong to that new creation if we belong to Christ. So, the new creation probably has both spiritual and physical dimensions. This is in the context of the reconciliation of God and each other.

So, we are reconciled to God, and we are reconciled to each other. So spiritually, we are part of a new creation reality, but physically, the new creation has been inaugurated by Christ's own physical resurrection. So, I think we find both spiritual and physical dimensions of the new creation in 2 Corinthians 5:17. To skip to another text that I think clearly portrays the inauguration of the new creation, and again, I connect the new creation with the intention of the land, which connects back to the original creation.

I see those all working together. But in Ephesians chapter 2 and verses 1 through 7, I want you to listen again for the new creation language, and then after verse 7, I'll skip ahead and read a couple of other verses as well that you'll hopefully recognize, but I think are crucial for this theme of new creation. As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in the sons of disobedience.

All of us who lived among them at one time gratified the cravings of our sinful nature and followed its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of

wrath, but because of his great love, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our transgressions. It is by grace you have been saved.

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus so that in the coming ages, he might show the incomparable riches of his grace expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. So once again, note the language of being brought to life although we were dead, which is characteristic of this present world under the effects of sin in the fall from Genesis 3. Although we were dead, God has made us alive, and once more, he has done that by raising us with Christ or causing us to share in his resurrection, which we've already seen in the inauguration of the new creation. And if that doesn't convince you itself, look at verse 10.

I think we've read this in a certain way, so much that we've missed the import of verse 10, for we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works that God prepared in advance for us to do. So, we have been created for good works; that is, good works are now connected with the renewal of the likeness of God, which is created in righteousness and holiness.

Chapter 4 and verses 22 and 24 of Ephesians as well. Notice the connections between the original creation and the new creation. Verse 22, you were taught with regard to your former way of life to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires, the old self probably being who we are in Adam, to be made new, notice that language of newness, to be made new in the attitude of your mind and to put on the new self, that is who I am now in Christ, the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

In other words, part of the new creation now is God has created us, and God has now created us to live out the life of the new creation in righteousness and holiness, to live out the life that he intended for God's people to live in the first creation. Now, he is renewing us to live out that life in a newly created act. So, in chapter 2 and verse 10, for we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus, is probably again not just God has made us simply to do good works, but this is probably to be understood in the context of creation.

We are to produce the fruitfulness of the new creation by living lives according to chapter 4 and verses 22 through 24, by living lives of righteousness and holiness, which is how God has created us to be. In the same vein, notice Colossians chapter 1, and I want you once more to notice; I just want to read a couple of sections in Colossians 1 and also Colossians 3; I want you to notice a handful of texts once more or a handful of sections dealing with the language of new creation. So, Colossians chapter 1 and verse 15.

We are going to return to some of these texts that deal with other themes. As we have said several times, it is impossible to pull these themes apart, or else the whole thing will unravel, kind of like taking threads off a piece of fabric and the whole thing falling apart. These are so inextricably combined together and united together a lot of these themes.

So, some of these texts, as we have already mentioned, we will deal with again, and particularly this one. But verse 15 of chapter 1, He, that is Jesus Christ, is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him, all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible.

I will stop there, but notice the creation language. Jesus Christ now is the image of God. Adam was an evil created in God's image, but now Christ is the very image and likeness of God and the firstborn overall creation.

That is, He is the true image of God in creation. But He is also the one who is responsible for creation. He is the agent that God works through to bring about the first creation.

Notice the echo of Genesis 1:1. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now, Paul says that all things in heaven and on earth were created by Him or in Him. So, Jesus is involved in the first creative act, but notice verse 18.

And He is the head of His body, the church. He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead. Notice that resurrection language again.

In other words, Paul is saying that Jesus is not only part of the first creation as the image of God, the one who is the true image of God, as the firstborn over all creation, the first creation, but in verse 18, He is also responsible for inaugurating a new creation once more by His resurrection. He is the firstborn from the dead. His resurrection inaugurates a new creation.

We find more, I think, more creation language associated with Christ in Colossians chapter 3 and verses 9 and 10. So do not lie to each other since you have taken off your old self with its practices. Again, without going into a lot of detail, the old self is probably who I am in Adam.

The old self is not some ontological part of my being or, as some translations may say, my sinful nature or the part of me that sins or something like that. I think the old self is my entire being as belonging to Adam, as under the control of sin, under the authority of Adam, under bondage to sin, my entire self in Adam. That old self, Paul says in chapter 3 and verse 9, you have taken off, and verse 10, and you have put on the new self.

Now, the new self is everything that I am in Christ, belonging to Christ and being under the rule and authority of Christ. You have put on the new self, but notice what Paul says, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its creator. So, notice again the creation language.

So what Paul is saying once more is, by virtue of Jesus' death and resurrection, Jesus, as the true image of God, has now accomplished what God's intention was for humanity in the first place, in Genesis 1 and 2, but was thwarted because of sin. Now, Jesus Christ, as the true image of God, has come to renew and restore creation, and now, by virtue of belonging to Christ, the image is also renewed in us. Again, verse 10 says to put on the new self, which is renewed in knowledge in the image of its creator.

I think it is a direct allusion back to Genesis chapter 1. So once more, we are being renewed in the image of the creator, which is God, which first and foremost is now reflected in the person of Jesus Christ, so that the new creation, whereas image bearers, we fulfill the mandate of the first creation, now in an inaugurated new creation. And we do that by virtue of belonging to Christ. And once more, the assumption seems to be that only by union with Christ, who is the true image of God, back in chapter 1 verse 15, can the image be renewed in us.

Only by virtue of the true image bearer of God, Jesus Christ, can Adam's mandate and the purpose of God for the first creation now be fulfilled in us. So, what is important for Paul as well, and I want to draw attention to, is this is not just theoretical for Paul. This is not just Paul theologizing about new creation and fulfillment and how the new creation gets fulfilled in Christ.

But I want you to notice, especially in Colossians, but also in the Ephesians text and the Romans text that we read, that new creation notions are placed in an ethical context. The new creation reality of Christ's resurrection life provides enablement for living out the life of the new creation. That is, living out lives of righteousness and holiness according to Ephesians chapter 4. So, the new creation reality, the inauguration of the new creation, is precisely so that we might not live according to the values and attitudes of the old creation, but instead, we might live out the values and attitudes in the life of the new creation.

Remember, back in Romans chapter 6, we have been raised to walk in the newness of life. We saw in Ephesians chapter 4 and now in Colossians chapter 3, the whole purpose of the new creation is that we would live out the life of the new creation. That we would live out lives that demonstrate the fruitfulness of the new creation.

In fact, in a number of contexts, Greg Beal has connected the language of fruitfulness in the New Testament, the language of fruitfulness as far as ethics, like the fruit of the spirit in Galatians 5. He has connected that back with the fruitfulness of the new

creation. Whether that is intentional on Paul's part or not, in those specific texts, at the very least, Paul does place new creation realities in an ethical context. When we read the vice and virtue lists in Colossians and Ephesians, when Paul has these long lists of avoid this and this and this, so in Colossians 3, he says, put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature, sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, greed, which is idolatry.

And then later on, he says, as God's chosen people put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience. What is Paul doing? This is not simply a list of do's and don'ts for his people. He is not simply borrowing the common vice and virtue list of the day.

But these are placed in the context of the new creation. That is, it's only in light of the new creation that we are enabled to live these things out. In fact, if the new creation arrives, we cannot help but produce the fruits of the new creation.

And I cannot think of a better reason to pursue these, to avoid these sorts of vices, and to pursue these virtues. I cannot think of a better reason than for the fact that it is a demonstration of the reality of the fact that the new creation has already arrived in the person of Jesus Christ, but also in his people who belong to him. So far, we've seen that in the Gospels and in the Pauline literature that the new creation has in one sense, already been inaugurated through Jesus' own ministry, his offer of life, his own resurrection, and then by us sharing in the resurrection of Christ and in the resurrection life of Christ, we then participate in the new creation.

But that has ethical implications and consequences. It's not just a theological reality that we bask in or that we claim, but it is something that motivates us to live out the life, to produce the fruitfulness of the new creation that has already been inaugurated in Jesus Christ.

This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his lecture series on New Testament Theology. This is session 4, Creation, Land, Recreation in the New Testament, Part 1.