

Dr. Kenneth Mathews, Genesis, Session 3A, The Garden Story, Part 1 (Gen 2:4-3:24) Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Mathews, Genesis, Session 3A, The Garden Story, Part 1, (Gen 2:4-3:24), Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture excerpt from Dr. Kenneth Mathews' Genesis course examines the creation accounts in Genesis chapters 1 and 2, highlighting their complementary nature. **Chapter 1 emphasizes God's cosmic creation through powerful, formal language**, while **chapter 2 offers a more narrative, intimate portrayal of God's creation of Adam and Eve**, focusing on their relationship and the establishment of the Garden of Eden. Mathews contrasts the two accounts' styles and names for God (Elohim and Yahweh), arguing for a literal interpretation of Adam and Eve as historical figures, supported by the biblical genealogies and superscriptions. The lecture concludes by introducing the theme of disobedience and the disruption of harmony within the Garden as a prelude to the following session.

2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Mathews, Genesis, Session 3A – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Pentateuch → Genesis).



**Mathews_Genesis_
Session03A.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Mathews, Genesis, Session 3A, The Garden Story, Part 1 (Gen 2:4-3:24)

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. Kenneth Mathews' lecture on Genesis 2-3:

Briefing Document: Dr. Kenneth Mathews on Genesis 2-3 (The Garden Story)

Introduction: This briefing summarizes Dr. Kenneth Mathews' lecture (Session 3A) focusing on Genesis 2:4-3:24, often referred to as "The Garden Story." Dr. Mathews explores the relationship between the two creation accounts in Genesis (chapters 1 and 2), the creation of humanity, the nature of God's relationship with mankind, and the fall from grace. He emphasizes a complementary understanding of the creation accounts and discusses the historical nature of Adam and Eve.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. Complementary Creation Accounts (Genesis 1 & 2):

- **Relationship:** Chapters 1 and 2 are not contradictory, but complementary. Chapter 1 gives a broad, cosmic overview of creation, while Chapter 2 focuses on the specific creation of humanity and their place in the Garden of Eden.
- **Chapter 1 Emphasis:** Emphasizes God as the powerful designer ("God was a great designer and that he was progressively aiming at a goal that he achieved."), symmetry, a universal cosmic setting, rapid pace, and the name of God as "Elohim" (emphasizing divinity and almighty power). The creation language is technical, using words like "bara" (create) and "image" with specific meanings.
- **Chapter 2-4 Emphasis:** Features an "earthy" narrative style, narrative plot, cause and effect. It is set in a specific local setting (the Garden), has a slower, focused pace on the sixth day, and introduces the name of God as "Yahweh" (the covenant God of Israel). Uses non-technical, common language and word plays.
- **Verse 4 Parallel:** Genesis 2:4 ("This is the account of the heavens and the earth") echoes Genesis 1:1 ("In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"), establishing a link between the accounts. This verse and following parallel the descriptions of the state of the earth before creation in Genesis 1.

1. Pre-Garden Earth:

- Before God created the Garden of Eden, the earth was unproductive and uncultivated ("no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth, and second, no plant of the field had yet sprung up"). There was no rain or gardener. God reverses these circumstances in order to create a garden and a gardener.
- The Earth started "formless and empty" with water and "chaos, it was circumscribed by the presence of the management by the Spirit of God."

1. The Creation of Humanity:

- **Man (Adam):** God forms man from the dust of the ground, described anthropomorphically as a potter shaping clay. He then breathes the "breath of life" into man, making him a "living being" or a "living soul" (Hebrew *nephesh*). *Nephesh* refers to the whole person, not just an immaterial soul, emphasizing a living, mortal being.
- God places man in the garden to "work it and take care of it."
- There is wordplay on Adam's name: Adam is taken from "Adamah" the ground.
- **Woman (Eve):** God creates the woman from the "side" of the man (not necessarily a rib), while the man is in a deep sleep, which ensures the man does not observe her creation. God "builds" the woman, and she is presented to Adam.
- She is a "suitable helper," a "corresponding helper", emphasizing her unique role, but sharing with man the same image of God.
- "It is not good for man to be alone" shows the need for community and procreation.

1. The Garden of Eden:

- **Location:** The garden was planted in the east, in Eden. A specific region is described moving from earth to land to Eden to the garden, including rivers, some of which are known and some unknown. The Tigris and Euphrates are mentioned locating the area in Southern Iraq/Mesopotamia.
- **Features:** The garden contained beautiful and nourishing trees, including two prominent ones:

- **Tree of Life:** Represents the life principle and God's presence, sustaining life in the garden.
- **Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil:** Represents wisdom, and the pursuit of it. God allows humans to make choices within God's will and desires. Desires should be directed by God's will.
- God's intent was to promote "what is good for the man and the woman"

1. **God's Relationship with Humanity:**

- **Personhood:** God is a personal being, not just a principle or force, and He created man and woman in His image, with the capacity to relate to Him. Although the nature of God is beyond human comprehension, by analogy we can come to know him. ("God makes known the most essential things about Himself so that we will be able to enjoy that special relationship we have with our Creator.")
- **Covenant Commitment:** God is committed to humanity. He has the capacity to enjoy His gifts of creation.
- **Harmony:** In chapter 2, there is a harmony in the relationship between God and humanity, between man and woman, and between humanity and the creatures of the garden.

1. **The Fall (foreshadowed):**

- The harmony of chapter 2 is disrupted by the disobedience of man and woman in chapter 3.
- "All of creation obeys the word of the Lord in chapter one...But in chapter three, we find that humanity chooses to disobey the Lord, and so there is a broken relationship."
- This disobedience breaks the relationship between God and humanity, and also creates strife within the human family and between humanity and the animal world (referenced in the future battle between the woman's offspring and the serpent's offspring).

1. **Historicity of Adam and Eve:**

- Dr. Mathews argues that the best reason to interpret Adam and Eve as real, historical figures is found within Genesis itself.
- **Superscriptions:** The eleven superscriptions in Genesis bridge the primeval history (chapters 1-11) and the patriarchal history (chapters 12-50). These superscriptions indicate the author viewed Adam and Eve as real figures, comparable to Abraham and his family. ("the author would have us also to understand chapters 1 through 11 as real historical events.")
- **Genealogies:** The genealogies in chapters 5 and 11 link Adam to Noah and then to Abraham, suggesting a historical lineage.
- These accounts are written in a manner that is more portrayable and understandable for humanity, rather than technical, scientific or historical.

1. **Human Body and Sexuality:**

- The body is a blessing from God, not evil.
- The physical is as important as the spiritual
- The body is honored by God, and believers will experience a resurrected body.
- Sexuality within God's will is a blessing.

Conclusion: Dr. Mathews' analysis provides a nuanced understanding of the early chapters of Genesis. He emphasizes the complementary nature of the creation accounts, the unique creation of humanity in God's image, and the significance of the Garden of Eden. His discussion also foreshadows the fall and the subsequent broken relationships that are central to the narrative, and the need for a redemptive relationship through Christ, which surpasses even the relationship broken in the Garden. Finally, he argues for understanding Adam and Eve as historical figures based on the internal evidence of Genesis.

4. Study Guide: Mathews, Genesis, Session 3A, The Garden Story, Part 1 (Gen 2:4-3:24)

Genesis: The Garden Story Study Guide

Quiz

1. How does the account of creation in Genesis chapter 2 relate to the creation account in Genesis chapter 1?
2. What are the three circumstances described in Genesis 2:5-6 that precede God forming the man, and why are they significant?
3. What are some of the key differences in emphasis between the creation accounts in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2-4?
4. What is the significance of the name Yahweh (LORD) in the Old Testament and how does its use in Genesis 2 differ from the name Elohim (God) in Genesis 1?
5. Describe the anthropomorphic language used to portray God when creating man in Genesis 2:7. What does the word "nephesh" mean in this context?
6. Why is it important that the man is asleep during the creation of the woman in Genesis 2:21-22, and what does it suggest about her significance?
7. What is meant by the description of the woman as the man's "helper" in Genesis 2:18 and how does the Hebrew language enhance its meaning?
8. What is the significance of the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the garden of Eden, and what do they represent?
9. How do our desires relate to the will of God, and what does it mean to act according to God's will rather than simply acting on our desires?
10. What two reasons does Mathews give for believing that Adam and Eve were real, historical figures rather than just symbolic representations?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The two accounts are complementary, with the general creation described in chapter 1 being specified in chapter 2, particularly with reference to the sixth day and the creation of humanity. Chapter 2 provides a more detailed account of the creation of man and woman than what is given in chapter 1.

2. The three circumstances were: no shrub of the field had yet appeared, no plant had sprung up, and streams came up from the earth. These circumstances highlight the earth's initial unsuitability for human life and the need for a cultivator, setting the stage for the creation of the man and the garden.
3. Genesis 1 emphasizes symmetry, cosmic scope, rapid pace, and the all-powerful nature of God using the name Elohim, while Genesis 2-4 offers a familiar, narrative style, local setting, and slower pace, highlighting God's covenantal relationship with humanity. Genesis 2-4 uses the name Yahweh, which is understood as the covenant God of Israel.
4. Yahweh is the covenant name for God, specifically the God of Israel, while Elohim is a more general term for God, often emphasized as the powerful creator. The use of Yahweh in Genesis 2 emphasizes God's personal, covenantal relationship with humanity.
5. God is described as forming man from the dust of the ground and breathing into him the breath of life, which are actions typically associated with human actions. The word "nephesh" means "living being," emphasizing that it is the whole person, both body and spirit, not just the immaterial soul.
6. The man is asleep so he cannot observe the creation of the woman, preserving a sense of mystery and highlighting her distinct importance as his helper. It ensures she will not be understood simply as another creature.
7. The term "helper" in Hebrew means a "corresponding helper," highlighting the woman's unique suitability and equality alongside the man, suggesting both partnership and complementarity.
8. The Tree of Life represents the principle of life and God's presence, while the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil signifies the pursuit of wisdom. This pursuit, and ultimately, the choice between obedience and disobedience, is where human free will enters the creation account.
9. Our desires are good gifts from God, but they must be controlled by His will in order to find true satisfaction and avoid destructive obsessions. God's will is the standard by which our desires should be measured, which leads to true satisfaction and purpose.

10. Mathews cites the superscriptions and the genealogies within Genesis as reasons to take Adam and Eve as historical figures. The superscriptions bridge the primeval history to the patriarchal history, and the genealogies link Adam through Noah to Abraham.

Essay Questions

1. Compare and contrast the creation accounts in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, analyzing how their differences contribute to a deeper understanding of God and humanity.
2. Explore the significance of the anthropomorphic language used in Genesis 2, particularly in the creation of man and woman, and discuss its implications for understanding God's relationship with humanity.
3. Analyze the roles and meanings of the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and how they illuminate the choices and consequences presented in the garden of Eden narrative.
4. Discuss the implications of the use of "nephesh" as "living being" rather than "soul" in the Genesis 2 creation account for our understanding of human nature and its relation to the divine.
5. Evaluate the arguments for the historicity of Adam and Eve as presented in the source material, considering both the textual and theological implications of accepting or rejecting their historical reality.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Anthropomorphic:** Describing God in human terms or with human characteristics; attributing human form or characteristics to non-human things or beings.
- **Complementary:** Combining in such a way as to enhance or emphasize the qualities of each other.
- **Covenant:** A sacred agreement or commitment between God and humanity, or between two parties.
- **Elohim:** A Hebrew name for God, emphasizing his power and divinity as creator; often translated simply as "God."
- **Genealogy:** A list or history of a family's lineage; a record of descent from an ancestor.
- **Historicity:** The historical actuality or reality of an event or person.
- **Image of God:** The concept that humans are created in God's likeness, sharing in attributes such as personhood, relationality, and creativity.
- **Nephesh:** A Hebrew word often translated as "soul" or "being," but it more accurately denotes the whole person, both physical and spiritual, not just the immaterial.
- **Superscription:** A heading or title at the beginning of a section of text; used here as a literary device to structure the narrative.
- **Yahweh:** The Hebrew name for the covenant God of Israel; often translated as "LORD" (in small caps); emphasizing his personal and relational nature.

5. FAQs on Mathews, Genesis, Session 3A, The Garden Story, Part 1 (Gen 2:4-3:24), Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ: The Garden Story in Genesis

- **What is the relationship between the two creation accounts in Genesis chapters 1 and 2?**
- Genesis 1 and 2 provide complementary accounts of creation. Chapter 1 presents a broad, cosmic view of creation, emphasizing God's power and design, while Chapter 2 specifies and focuses on the creation of humanity and the environment in which they live. Chapter 2 zooms in on the events of the sixth day, detailing the creation of man and the preparation of the garden. The accounts are not contradictory but provide different perspectives on the same divine act.
- **How does the description of the earth in Genesis 2:5-6 contrast with Genesis 1?**
- In Genesis 1, the earth is described as initially formless and empty. Chapter 2 describes the earth as lacking vegetation and cultivators. In Chapter 2, the earth is depicted as not having plants due to a lack of rain and a gardener, thus it is an "unproductive" land that needs cultivation in order to support human life. This is not a chaotic state but a state of lacking the conditions required to sustain human life.
- **What are the main differences in literary style between Genesis 1 and chapters 2-4?**
- Genesis 1 employs elevated, technical language, focusing on symmetry and the cosmic scale of creation with a universal setting. The narrative pace is rapid and structured around the recurring formula of "evening and morning." Chapters 2-4 use more familiar, conversational language, resembling a narrative with a plot, character interactions, cause and effect relationships, and a focus on a local setting (the Garden of Eden). It's a slower-paced, more process-oriented account.

- **What is the significance of the different names used for God in Genesis 1 and 2?**
- In Genesis 1, the name "Elohim" (God) is used, which emphasizes God's power and divinity as the almighty creator. In Genesis 2, the name "LORD God" (Yahweh Elohim) is used, where "Yahweh" is the covenant name of God, emphasizing his personal relationship and commitment to his people. This combination introduces a more intimate, relational aspect of God's nature. The name Yahweh, while not unknown, is further explained and clarified in later books like Exodus, highlighting God's covenant relationship with Israel.
- **How does Genesis describe the creation of man and woman?**
- The creation of man is depicted in a very anthropomorphic way with God forming man from the dust of the ground, like a potter shaping clay, and breathing life into him, making him a living being (nephesh), a whole person, not just a soul. Woman is created from the side (traditionally understood as a rib) of the man, emphasizing her unity with and dependence on the man, and presented as a "suitable helper", corresponding to the man as a social being, not to be alone. The creation of both man and woman highlight their unique personhood and their social nature as beings designed for relationship with God and with each other.
- **What is the meaning and significance of the "Tree of Life" and the "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil"?**
- The Tree of Life represents the principle of life and God's presence, offering sustained life within the garden. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is associated with wisdom. These trees represent desires. The desire for life, the desire for wisdom, and they show that our desires need to be curved by the will of God. They offer a choice for humans to receive life and wisdom from God or to choose their own path and try to define good and evil themselves.
- **How does the text portray the concept of "helper" with regard to the woman's creation?**
- The term "helper" in the context of the woman's creation isn't intended to imply subservience but rather partnership. The Hebrew conveys the idea of a "corresponding helper," someone who complements and corresponds to the man, which is essential for community, procreation, and fulfilling God's blessing and good plan for the human family. It underscores the social nature of humans as designed to be in community, not isolation.

- **Does the text intend for Adam and Eve to be understood as real, historical figures?**
- According to the text itself and its superscriptions, and in the genealogies linking Adam to Noah and Noah to Abraham, the author presents Adam and Eve as real historical figures and not just symbolic representatives of humanity. The text's narrative approach, using familiar, process-oriented language, alongside its genealogical connections, suggests a historical grounding for the events described, even though those events are expressed in ways that make them understandable to humanity.