

Dr. Dave Mathewson, New Testament Literature, Session 20, Ephesians Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 20, Ephesians, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Mathewson's lecture centers on the New Testament book of Ephesians. He plans to show students how **Ephesians' name may be inaccurate** and that the **main theme is reconciliation in Christ**. The lecture will explore the structure of Ephesians, dividing it into indicative (who we are in Christ) and imperative (how to live in light of that). The lecture considers potential purposes behind the writing of Ephesians, including **Clinton Arnold's idea that Paul addresses the problem of magic**. The lecture will cover the book of Galatians, too, addressing Paul's intention to **dissuade the Galatians from the Mosaic law**.

**2. 22 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 20 – 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 → Major Prophets → Daniel).**



**Mathewson_NTLit_S
ession20.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 20, Ephesians

Okay, here is a briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. Dave Mathewson's lecture on Ephesians and related topics:

Briefing Document: Dr. Dave Mathewson's New Testament Literature Lecture 20 - Ephesians, Galatians, and the People of God

Overview:

This lecture covers several key areas: logistical announcements about exams and review sessions, a review of Paul's letter to the Galatians (particularly concerning Judaizers and the Law), an excursus on the concept of the "People of God" in the Old and New Testaments, and an introduction to the letter to the Ephesians.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. Announcements and Logistics:

- An exam covering Acts through Galatians will be held the following Monday.
- A review session, led by the TA, will be held the evening before the exam.
- Extra credit will be awarded for attendance at review sessions.
- *"So tomorrow, 8 o'clock in this room... you will receive extra credit for the number of times you've come."*

2. Galatians: Judaizers and the Law:

- **Context:** Paul wrote Galatians to address a situation where Jewish Christians ("Judaizers") were infiltrating churches in Galatia, insisting that Gentile Christians must observe the Mosaic Law to be truly part of God's people.
- **Judaizer Theology:** The Judaizers believed obedience to the Mosaic Law was a *necessary* step in fulfilling the promises made to Abraham.
- **Paul's Argument:** Paul argues the Mosaic Law played an important but *temporary* role, only until the coming of Christ. With Christ's arrival, the Law is no longer a necessary component of salvation or membership in God's covenant people.
- **Flesh vs. Spirit:** Paul contrasts the "works of the flesh" with the "fruit of the Spirit" to emphasize that Christians are not free from moral guidance. The Holy

Spirit transforms believers, enabling them to live a life that fulfills the *intent* of the law.

- **Law's Limitations:** Paul argues that the Law does not have the power to overcome sin, but the Spirit does.
- *"But Paul's saying that the law does not ultimately have the power to overcome the sins of the flesh... But the Spirit does."*
- **Relationship to the Mosaic Law Today:** Mathewson poses the question of how Christians should view the Mosaic Law today, since Paul says they are no longer "under the law". He suggests two approaches:
- **Fulfillment in Christ:** Interpret the Law through the lens of how it has been fulfilled in Jesus. Example: Animal sacrifices are fulfilled in Christ's ultimate sacrifice.
- *"Jesus' own life and teaching was what the law was pointing to."*
- **Intention of the Law:** Identify the underlying intention or principle behind a specific law and seek to embody that principle in a contemporary context. Examples: The laws against tattoos and trimming hair are interpreted as avoiding pagan religious practices; the law requiring a parapet on a roof is interpreted as demonstrating care for one's neighbor's well-being.

3. Excursus: The People of God:

- **Genesis Foundation:** The concept of God's people originates with Adam and Eve, who were the first people God entered a covenant with.
- **Old Testament Narrative:** The Old Testament narrative focuses on God's attempts to re-establish and recreate his people after the fall. This begins with Abraham and culminates in the nation of Israel.
- **Israel's Failure:** Like Adam and Eve, Israel fails a test and is exiled.
- **Jesus as True Israel:** Jesus is presented as the true Israel who fulfills God's intention for his people. Through faith in Christ, believers become part of the true People of God.
- **Shift in Criteria for Membership:** In the Old Testament, membership in the people of God was largely determined by national identity and obedience to the Mosaic Law. In the New Testament, membership is based solely on faith in Jesus Christ. This allows Gentiles to be included equally with Jews.

- **Expansion, Not Replacement:** The New Testament view is that the Church expands Israel to include Gentiles, redefining it based on faith in Christ, not that the Church replaces Israel.
- *"Now the church is the new Israel, the new people of God that consist of Jews and Gentiles, now focused on and centered on Jesus Christ, the true Israelite."*

4. Introduction to Ephesians:

- **Prison Epistle:** Ephesians is grouped with Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon as "prison epistles" because Paul indicates he is in prison while writing them. The location of the imprisonment is debated (Rome is most common), but it doesn't significantly affect interpretation.
- **Misnomer?:** Mathewson notes that the letter to the "Ephesians" might be a misnomer and that Paul might not have been explicitly addressing the church in Ephesus.
- **Overarching Theme: Reconciliation:** The dominant theme of Ephesians is the complete reconciliation of all things in Christ. Ephesians 1:9-10 serves as a summary.
- *"The dominant theme that weaves its way throughout all of Ephesians... is the reconciliation of all things in Christ."*
- **Structure: Indicative and Imperative:** Ephesians divides naturally into two parts:
 - Chapters 1-3 (Indicative): Focus on who believers *are* in Christ (the "already").
 - Chapters 4-6 (Imperative): Focus on how believers should live in light of their identity in Christ (the "not yet").
- **Purpose:** Paul's general purpose is to encourage Christians to live a life worthy of their calling in Christ.
- *"The main purpose Paul is writing this letter is to encourage Christians to live a life worthy of who they are in Jesus Christ."*
- **Clinton Arnold's Proposal (Magic):** Clinton Arnold proposes that the frequent references to power in Ephesians indicate that Paul was addressing the issue of magic and fear of demonic powers prevalent in Ephesian society. Arnold argues that Paul wants the Ephesians to know they have nothing to fear because Jesus has already conquered these powers.

Next Steps (from the lecture):

- The next lecture will further examine Ephesians and critique Clinton Arnold's proposal, offering an alternative interpretation.

4. Study Guide: Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 20, Ephesians

Ephesians & Galatians Study Guide

Quiz: Short Answer Questions

1. **What is the primary issue Paul addresses in Galatians, and who are the main opponents he is combating?** Paul is combating the influence of Judaizers, Jewish Christians who were infiltrating the churches in Galatia and convincing Gentile Christians that faith in Jesus alone was not sufficient for salvation.
2. **How do the Judaizers view the Mosaic Law in relation to the promises made to Abraham?** The Judaizers view the Mosaic law as a necessary step in fulfilling the promises made to Abraham. They believe it is essential for Gentile Christians to observe the law as a sign of belonging to God's people.
3. **What are the two primary reasons Paul contrasts the "works of the flesh" and the "fruit of the Spirit" in Galatians 5?** First, he aims to clarify that freedom from the Mosaic Law does not mean freedom from moral guidance. Second, he argues that the law does not ultimately have the power to overcome the sins of the flesh, only the Spirit does.
4. **How does Paul argue that Christians should relate to the Mosaic Law today, given that they are "no longer under the law"?** Paul argues that Christians should read the Mosaic Law through the lens of its fulfillment in Christ and as an expression of God's will and intention for his people.
5. **According to the lecture, what are the two questions to ask when reading the law?** We should ask, "How has the law been fulfilled in Jesus Christ?" and "What seems to be the intention of this law? What seemed to be the true intention? What was the law driving at?"
6. **Explain how the Old Testament concept of the "people of God" is transformed in the New Testament, particularly in relation to Jesus Christ.** In the Old Testament, the people of God were primarily identified as the nation of Israel through the covenant with Abraham and the Mosaic Law. In the New Testament, Jesus is portrayed as the true Israel, and membership in the people of God is now based on faith in Jesus Christ.

7. **What does Paul mean when he says, "if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29)?** Paul is emphasizing that faith in Christ makes believers, both Jews and Gentiles, heirs to the promises made to Abraham, regardless of their ethnic or national background.
8. **What are the "prison epistles," and why are they called that?** The prison epistles are a group of letters traditionally attributed to Paul: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. They are called this because Paul indicates in these letters that he is writing from prison.
9. **According to the lecture, what is the overarching theme of Ephesians?** The overarching theme of Ephesians is the complete reconciliation of all things in Christ.
10. **What does it mean that Ephesians can be divided into two sections: the indicative and the imperative?** The indicative (Chapters 1-3) describes who believers are "in Christ" and what God has already done for them, while the imperative (Chapters 4-6) outlines how believers should live in response to this reality.

Quiz Answer Key

1. Paul is combating the influence of Judaizers, Jewish Christians who were infiltrating the churches in Galatia and convincing Gentile Christians that faith in Jesus alone was not sufficient for salvation.
2. The Judaizers view the Mosaic law as a necessary step in fulfilling the promises made to Abraham. They believe it is essential for Gentile Christians to observe the law as a sign of belonging to God's people.
3. First, he aims to clarify that freedom from the Mosaic Law does not mean freedom from moral guidance. Second, he argues that the law does not ultimately have the power to overcome the sins of the flesh, only the Spirit does.
4. Paul argues that Christians should read the Mosaic Law through the lens of its fulfillment in Christ and as an expression of God's will and intention for his people.
5. We should ask, "How has the law been fulfilled in Jesus Christ?" and "What seems to be the intention of this law? What seemed to be the true intention? What was the law driving at?"

6. In the Old Testament, the people of God were primarily identified as the nation of Israel through the covenant with Abraham and the Mosaic Law. In the New Testament, Jesus is portrayed as the true Israel, and membership in the people of God is now based on faith in Jesus Christ.
7. Paul is emphasizing that faith in Christ makes believers, both Jews and Gentiles, heirs to the promises made to Abraham, regardless of their ethnic or national background.
8. The prison epistles are a group of letters traditionally attributed to Paul: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. They are called this because Paul indicates in these letters that he is writing from prison.
9. The overarching theme of Ephesians is the complete reconciliation of all things in Christ.
10. The indicative (Chapters 1-3) describes who believers are "in Christ" and what God has already done for them, while the imperative (Chapters 4-6) outlines how believers should live in response to this reality.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the challenges Paul faced from the Judaizers in Galatia and how his response reshaped the understanding of salvation and covenant membership in the early church.
2. Explain Paul's concept of the "fruit of the Spirit" in Galatians 5 and analyze how it serves as an alternative ethic to the Mosaic Law for Christian living.
3. Analyze how Paul uses the figure of Abraham in Galatians to support his argument for justification by faith and redefine the criteria for belonging to the people of God.
4. Discuss the overarching theme of reconciliation in Ephesians and how it informs Paul's understanding of the church's role in God's plan for the cosmos.
5. Critically evaluate Clinton Arnold's proposal that Ephesians addresses the problem of magic and the fear of spiritual powers. How compelling is this argument, and what alternative interpretations might explain the power language in the letter?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Judaizers:** Jewish Christians who believed that Gentile converts needed to follow Mosaic Law, including circumcision, to be truly saved.
- **Mosaic Law:** The law of Moses, as found in the Old Testament, particularly in the first five books (the Pentateuch).
- **Justification:** Being declared righteous in God's sight, typically understood in Protestant theology as being achieved through faith in Jesus Christ, apart from works of the law.
- **Flesh (in Galatians):** Not simply the physical body but the human nature oriented away from God, prone to sin, and under the influence of earthly desires.
- **Spirit (in Galatians):** The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, who empowers believers to live a life pleasing to God and demonstrates God's love through them.
- **New Covenant:** The covenant established by God through Jesus Christ, based on grace and faith rather than adherence to the law. It includes the promise of the Holy Spirit's indwelling and transforming power.
- **People of God:** A term used to describe those who are in a covenant relationship with God. In the Old Testament, it primarily referred to the nation of Israel; in the New Testament, it encompasses all who believe in Jesus Christ.
- **Prison Epistles:** The letters of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, traditionally attributed to Paul and believed to have been written during one of his imprisonments.
- **Indicative:** In Paul's letters, statements of fact or reality concerning what God has already done for believers in Christ.
- **Imperative:** In Paul's letters, commands or exhortations telling believers how they ought to live in response to the indicative.
- **Reconciliation:** The act of restoring broken relationships, particularly between God and humanity through the work of Jesus Christ.
- **Magic (in the first century context):** The belief that one could evoke the gods to act or ward off evil through incantations, spells, or rituals.

5. FAQs on Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 20, Ephesians, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Galatians and Ephesians (Based on Dr. Mathewson's Lecture)

Exam Prep & Review

1. When is the next exam and what material will it cover?

The next exam covers the book of Acts through Galatians, including the excursus on the people of God. The exam will be held during the regular class period on Monday.

2. Is there a review session for the upcoming exam?

Yes, there is an optional review session led by the TA tomorrow night at 8 PM in this room. Extra credit will be given based on the number of review sessions attended.

Galatians

3. What was Paul's primary purpose in writing the book of Galatians?

Paul's primary purpose was to combat the influence of Jewish Christians, often called "Judaizers," who were infiltrating churches in Galatia. These Judaizers were teaching Gentile Christians that faith in Jesus Christ was *not enough* for salvation and belonging to God; they also needed to observe the Mosaic law as a sign of true allegiance to God. Paul argues that the Mosaic Law played a temporary role until the coming of Christ.

4. How does Paul address the relationship between the Law and the Spirit in Galatians?

Paul argues that while the Mosaic Law had a temporary role, it doesn't have the power to overcome sin. He contrasts the "works of the flesh" with the "fruit of the Spirit." He suggests that the Holy Spirit, given in the New Covenant, enables Christians to live a life that fulfills the intention of the Law by transforming them and writing God's law on their hearts. Christians are not without moral guidance, but that guidance comes from the Spirit, not primarily from the Law.

5. If Christians are "no longer under the law," how should they relate to the Mosaic Law today?

While Christians are not under the Mosaic Law's regime or authority, the Law hasn't simply been discarded. Paul suggests that we need to consider a couple of things. First, we should read the Law through the lens of how it's been fulfilled in Jesus Christ (e.g., sacrificial laws are fulfilled in Christ's ultimate sacrifice). Second, we should discern the *intention* behind specific laws as expressions of God's character and will, and then consider how to embody that intention in our current context (e.g., the law about building a parapet around the roof was intended to ensure your neighbor's safety so we should find other ways to care for our neighbor's safety).

6. What does Paul argue about the "people of God" in Galatians?

Paul argues that membership in the people of God is no longer determined by national identity or adherence to the Mosaic Law, but solely by faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the true "seed of Abraham," and through belonging to Christ, both Jews and Gentiles become Abraham's offspring and heirs to the promises.

Ephesians

7. What is the overarching theme of Ephesians?

The overarching theme of Ephesians is the complete reconciliation of all things in Christ. This includes both "things in heaven and things on earth."

8. What is the general purpose of Paul writing Ephesians?

Generally, Paul wrote Ephesians to encourage Christians to live a life worthy of who they are in Jesus Christ, based on the "indicative" (who they are in Christ) leading to the "imperative" (how they should live). A more specific argument says Paul is addressing the infatuation with magic, and trying to get the Ephesians to see they have nothing to fear because Jesus Christ has already conquered all powers.