

Dr. Dave Mathewson, New Testament Literature, Session 21, 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 21, Ephesians, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Dave Mathewson's Lecture 21 from his New Testament Literature course explores the book of Ephesians. The lecture examines the structure of Ephesians, dividing it into theological and ethical sections. **Mathewson discusses differing scholarly views on the occasion for Paul's writing, contrasting the idea of a specific crisis, such as magic, with the possibility of Ephesians being a general letter.** He then suggests the primary theme of Ephesians is cosmic reconciliation, emphasizing Christ as the ruler of the universe, drawing from the Old Testament, specifically Psalms 110 and 8. **Finally, the lecture analyzes the spiritual warfare passage in Chapter 6, connecting it to the broader themes of the letter and highlighting the Christian life as participation in Christ's victory over evil powers.**

**2. 27 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 21 – 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
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3. Briefing Document: Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 21, Ephesians

Okay, here is a briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from Dr. Mathewson's lecture on Ephesians:

Briefing Document: Dr. Dave Mathewson, Lecture 21 on Ephesians

Overview:

This lecture focuses on the book of Ephesians, exploring its structure, possible occasion for writing, central themes, and the interpretation of key passages, particularly Ephesians 6 (the "spiritual warfare" passage). Dr. Mathewson presents his view that Ephesians was likely a general letter to Christians in Asia Minor, rather than a response to a specific crisis in Ephesus. He emphasizes the theme of *cosmic reconciliation* and argues that Paul draws on the Old Testament, specifically Psalms 8 and 110, to portray Jesus as the cosmic ruler who has already defeated spiritual powers. He connects the concept of spiritual warfare in chapter 6 to the earlier chapters of Ephesians, emphasizing that living a righteous life is how Christians engage in this cosmic battle.

Key Themes and Ideas:

- **Structure of Ephesians:** The book is divided into two main sections:
- Chapters 1-3: The "indicative" - theological section describing what Christians *have* in Christ and their identity in Him.
- Chapters 4-6: The "imperative" - ethical ramifications, outlining what Christians *should do* as a result of the indicative.
- **Occasion for Writing:** Dr. Mathewson challenges the common view that Ephesians was written in response to a specific problem in Ephesus, like the prevalence of magic (as argued by Clinton Arnold). Instead, he suggests Ephesians was a *circular letter*, a general letter of encouragement to Christians in Asia Minor. He supports this by pointing out that some of the earliest manuscripts lack the phrase "in Ephesus" in the opening verse: *"I am convinced that Paul originally did not write in Ephesus. And probably due to the importance of the city of Ephesus, most likely that would have been added by a later scribe at some point as the book of Ephesians was being copied and spread around. So, I'm convinced that Paul was not writing to the church at Ephesus specifically."*

- **Cosmic Reconciliation:** This is presented as the central theme of Ephesians. It is the idea that God's plan is to reconcile *all things* (in heaven and on earth) to Christ: *"God's will, his intent, is that ultimately everything will find its rightful place in Jesus Christ. That is, all things will be summed up, all things in the cosmos, things on earth, and in the heavens will all be summed up and find their rightful place in Jesus Christ, the rightful relationship to Christ."*
- Dr. Mathewson argues that Paul believes this process has already *begun* through the death and resurrection of Christ and His exaltation to heaven.
- The reconciliation of Jew and Gentile into one body (the church) is presented as evidence that this process of reconciliation has already started on earth.
- Paul's depiction of Jesus as the cosmic ruler subduing all powers is rooted in Old Testament texts like Psalms 8 and 110, not primarily in concerns about magic. Psalm 110 in particular is vital: *"You'll need to know that text just in case it occurred in an exam or something like that. You need to know Psalm 110 has the background for Paul's understanding of Christ's lordship."*
- **Interpreting the "Power Language":** Dr. Mathewson asserts that when Paul refers to "rulers," "authorities," and "powers" in Ephesians, he is generally referring to *spiritual beings* rather than earthly rulers. He draws a parallel to the book of Revelation, where the Roman Empire is portrayed as having spiritual/demonic forces behind it.
- **Ephesians 6 and Spiritual Warfare:**
- Dr. Mathewson rejects the idea that Ephesians 6 is a detached appendix. He sees it as the conclusion of the book, summarizing the themes presented in the earlier chapters through the lens of cosmic warfare.
- The armor described in Ephesians 6 is linked to the Old Testament, particularly Isaiah 59, where God Himself is depicted wearing similar armor when doing battle: *"In Isaiah chapter 59, the author describes God, interestingly, and this becomes important, this is a description of God who does battle with Israel's enemies. And the author says, He, God, put on righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head."*
- He emphasizes that the *primary* way Christians engage in spiritual warfare, according to Paul in Ephesians, is by living righteous lives, characterized by truth, peace, righteousness, and faith. By living out the kind of lifestyle that Paul

articulates in the first five chapters of Ephesians Christians join in the cosmic battle that Christ has already won in the heavenly realms.

- **Already But Not Yet:** Dr. Mathewson highlights the tension between the "already" and the "not yet" in Paul's theology. Christ has *already* defeated the spiritual powers, and the process of reconciliation has *already* begun. However, the full realization of God's plan is still in the future. Ephesians 6 is interpreted as a call to actively participate in bringing about that future reality.

Key Quotes:

- "The first three chapters correspond to the indicative, which is a heavily theological section that portrays what we have in Christ and who we are by virtue of being united with Christ."
- "The second section, chapters four through six articulates the ethical ramifications of that, that is the imperative or what should be true as a result of chapters one through three as a result of the indicative of what the imperative then should naturally follow."
- "God has made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ. As a plan, in other words, his will, here's his will. His will is a plan for the fullness of times to gather up or sum up or reconcile all things in him, that is in Christ, the things in heaven and the things on earth. In my opinion, that could be seen as summarizing the entire theme of Ephesians."
- "With the death and the resurrection of Christ, and his exaltation to heaven, this cosmic reconciliation has already begun."
- "Psalm 110 says, the Lord said to my Lord, that is God addressed the Lord, the Messiah, sit at my right hand until I make your enemy my footstool. Well, isn't that exactly what Paul said? He said Jesus Christ has been seated at the right hand, far above every ruler and dominion."
- "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers and authorities and cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil."
- "the primary way that we do spiritual warfare is by living lives characterized, instead of by dissension and division, by living lives that promote peace. Instead of lying, we tell the truth. Instead of living impurely and immorally, we live lives characterized by righteousness."

Implications:

- Understanding the theme of cosmic reconciliation provides a framework for interpreting the various elements of Ephesians.
- Recognizing the Old Testament roots of Paul's language regarding power and authority helps to avoid interpretations focused solely on magic or contemporary spiritual warfare practices.
- Connecting spiritual warfare to everyday righteous living offers a practical application of Ephesians for Christians today.

4. Study Guide: Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 21, Ephesians

Ephesians: Cosmic Reconciliation and Christian Living

Study Guide

This study guide is designed to help you review key concepts and themes from Dr. Mathewson's lecture on Ephesians. It covers the structure, purpose, Christology, and practical implications of the letter.

I. Structure of Ephesians

- **Indicative (Chapters 1-3):** Focuses on *what we have* in Christ and *who we are* by virtue of being united with Christ. This section is heavily theological.
- **Imperative (Chapters 4-6):** Articulates the ethical ramifications of the indicative, that is, *what should be true* as a result of our identity in Christ. This section emphasizes how Christians should live.

II. Purpose and Authorship

- **Traditional View:** Ephesians was written to the church in Ephesus to address a specific issue. However, there is no consensus as to the exact problem.
- **Clinton Arnold's View:** Ephesians addresses the issue of magic and the fear of spiritual powers prevalent in the first-century Greco-Roman world, especially in Asia Minor. Paul assures readers that Christ has conquered these powers.
- **Mathewson's View:** Ephesians is a general letter written to encourage Christians living in the Greco-Roman Empire, particularly in Asia Minor. He believes the phrase "in Ephesus" was a later addition. Paul's aim is to help them establish their identity and cope with living under the pressure of pagan Rome.

III. Key Themes

- **Cosmic Reconciliation:** The central theme of Ephesians, emphasizing that God's plan is to reconcile all things in heaven and on earth to Christ (Ephesians 1:9-10).
- **Christ's Lordship:** Ephesians portrays Christ as the cosmic ruler of the entire universe, seated far above all rulers, authorities, powers, and dominions (Ephesians 1:19-21). This understanding comes from the Old Testament, particularly Psalms 8 and 110.

- **The Church as a Reconciled Community:** Paul highlights the reconciliation of Jew and Gentile into one new humanity, the church, as a demonstration that cosmic reconciliation has already begun (Ephesians 2:11-22). The church's unity demonstrates God's wisdom to spiritual powers (Ephesians 3:10).
- **Spiritual Warfare:** In Ephesians 6, Paul describes the Christian life using warfare imagery, emphasizing the need to "put on the whole armor of God" to stand against the spiritual forces of evil. This armor imagery draws from the Old Testament (Isaiah 52:7, 59:17). Spiritual warfare is primarily lived out by embodying the qualities of truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation.

IV. Connections to the Old Testament

- **Psalms 110:** Provides the background for Paul's understanding of Christ's lordship, with Jesus seated at God's right hand until his enemies are made his footstool.
- **Psalms 8:** Speaks of humanity being given dominion over creation, which is applied to Jesus Christ in Ephesians.
- **Isaiah 52:7, 59:17:** Provides the imagery for the armor of God, describing God himself putting on righteousness, salvation, and peace.

V. Key Points Regarding Paul's Audience

- Paul's audience is dealing with life under a pagan (Roman) empire.
- Paul addresses the spiritual power dynamic to encourage believers to trust in Christ rather than fear earthly powers.
- The gospel is not meant to physically overthrow the Roman Empire, but to act as the impetus for spiritual change in those who believe.

Quiz: Short-Answer Questions

1. Explain the difference between the indicative and imperative sections of Ephesians.
2. Summarize Clinton Arnold's view on the purpose of Ephesians.
3. What is the central theme of Ephesians, according to Dr. Mathewson?
4. How does Paul portray Jesus Christ in Ephesians, and how does this differ from other Pauline letters?

5. Explain the significance of Psalm 110 in understanding Paul's Christology in Ephesians.
6. What does Paul mean when he says that the church is a reconciled community?
7. According to Dr. Mathewson, where does Paul get his armor imagery in Ephesians 6?
8. How does Ephesians 6 function within the overall structure and themes of the book?
9. What does it mean to "do spiritual warfare" according to Paul in Ephesians?
10. How does Paul address living in the Roman Empire?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The indicative (Chapters 1-3) focuses on *what we have* in Christ and *who we are* by virtue of being united with Christ, presenting theological truths. The imperative (Chapters 4-6) then articulates the ethical implications of those truths, focusing on *how we should live* as a result of our identity in Christ.
2. Clinton Arnold argues that Ephesians addresses the issue of magic and the fear of spiritual powers prevalent in the first century. Paul assures readers that Jesus Christ has conquered these powers, so they do not need to resort to magic or fear the evil forces of the spiritual realm.
3. The central theme of Ephesians, according to Dr. Mathewson, is cosmic reconciliation. This means that God's ultimate plan and intention is to reconcile all things in heaven and on earth to Christ Jesus, restoring the entire universe to a right relationship with God.
4. In Ephesians, Jesus Christ is primarily portrayed as the cosmic ruler of the entire universe, seated far above all rulers, authorities, and powers. This differs from other Pauline letters that often emphasize Jesus as Messiah, Savior, or the Son of David, focusing more on his atoning sacrifice.
5. Psalm 110 provides the background for Paul's understanding of Christ's lordship in Ephesians because it speaks of the Messiah sitting at God's right hand until his enemies are made his footstool. Paul applies this to Jesus, asserting that Christ has been exalted to heaven and now rules over all spiritual powers.
6. When Paul says that the church is a reconciled community, he is referring to the fact that through Christ's death, Jew and Gentile have been brought together into

one new body. This unity signifies that cosmic reconciliation has already begun in the earthly realm, demonstrating God's power to overcome division.

7. According to Dr. Mathewson, Paul draws his armor imagery in Ephesians 6 primarily from the Old Testament, specifically Isaiah 59:17 and Isaiah 52:7, rather than directly from observing a Roman soldier. These verses describe God himself putting on armor to do battle, and Paul applies this imagery to Christians.
8. Ephesians 6 functions as a conclusion to the book, summarizing the themes of the first five chapters through the lens of cosmic warfare. It is not a separate appendix, but rather a call to put into practice the principles of truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation that have been discussed throughout the letter.
9. To "do spiritual warfare" according to Paul in Ephesians primarily involves living a lifestyle characterized by truth, righteousness, peace, and faith. It means embodying the qualities that stand in opposition to the powers of darkness, thereby joining in the cosmic battle that Christ has already won in the heavenly realms.
10. Paul addresses living in the Roman Empire indirectly by emphasizing Christ's cosmic lordship over spiritual powers. He encourages believers to focus on the spiritual battle and trust in Christ's victory rather than fearing earthly rulers, thus empowering them to live boldly for God in a hostile environment.

Essay Questions

1. Compare and contrast Clinton Arnold's and Dr. Mathewson's interpretations of the purpose of Ephesians. Which argument do you find more persuasive, and why?
2. Discuss the significance of cosmic reconciliation in Ephesians. How does this theme shape Paul's understanding of Christ, the church, and Christian living?
3. Explore the connections between Ephesians and the Old Testament. How do specific Old Testament passages inform Paul's theology and imagery in Ephesians?
4. Analyze the role of spiritual warfare in Ephesians. How does Paul's discussion of the armor of God (Ephesians 6) relate to the overall themes of the letter?
5. How does Paul attempt to encourage believers to live for Christ while living under the rule of the Roman Empire?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Cosmic Reconciliation:** The theological concept in Ephesians that God's plan is to reconcile all things in heaven and on earth to Christ, restoring the entire universe to its rightful relationship with God.
- **Indicative:** The theological declaration of *what is true* in Christ, particularly in Ephesians 1-3, focusing on our identity and blessings in him.
- **Imperative:** The ethical call to action based on the indicative, outlining *how we should live* in light of what is true in Christ, particularly in Ephesians 4-6.
- **Greco-Roman World:** The cultural and historical context of the first century, characterized by a blend of Greek and Roman influences, including religious practices, social structures, and political systems.
- **Spiritual Powers/Authorities/Rulers/Dominions:** Terms used in Ephesians to refer to the spiritual forces of evil that oppose God and his people, often understood as lying behind earthly powers and influencing the world.
- **Magic:** In the context of Ephesians, the attempt to control or manipulate spiritual powers through spells, incantations, and other rituals, which Clinton Arnold argues was a prevalent concern among the Ephesian Christians.
- **Christology:** The study of the person and work of Jesus Christ, including his nature, identity, and role in salvation.
- **Already but not yet:** The theological tension between the present reality of God's kingdom and the future fulfillment of his promises, reflected in Ephesians' emphasis on cosmic reconciliation as both initiated and still to be fully realized.
- **Church:** In Ephesians, refers to the community of believers, both Jew and Gentile, who are united in Christ and serve as a demonstration of God's reconciling work in the world.
- **Spiritual Warfare:** The ongoing struggle between Christians and the spiritual forces of evil, which Paul addresses in Ephesians 6, emphasizing the need to "put on the whole armor of God."

5. FAQs on Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 21, Ephesians, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions About Ephesians

1. What is the primary theme of Ephesians, according to the lecture?

The primary theme of Ephesians is cosmic reconciliation. This refers to God's plan to reconcile all things, both in heaven and on earth, to Jesus Christ. It suggests that the entire universe, due to sin, is in a state of dislocation and under the control of evil spiritual powers, and God's will is to restore it to its rightful place in Christ.

2. What is the significance of Paul's emphasis on power, rulers, and authorities in Ephesians?

Paul's emphasis on power, rulers, and authorities likely refers to spiritual beings and forces rather than earthly rulers like the Roman Empire. He uses this language to highlight that Jesus Christ, through his death and resurrection, has been exalted far above these spiritual powers, signifying the beginning of cosmic reconciliation. Christ's victory over these powers means that Christians need not fear them or shrink back from the claims of earthly powers.

3. How does the lecture interpret the phrase "in Ephesus" in Ephesians 1:1?

The lecture suggests that the phrase "in Ephesus" may not have been in the original manuscript written by Paul. Some early and reliable manuscripts lack this phrase. Instead, the letter may have been intended as a general letter to Christians in Asia Minor, with Ephesus being one of the cities it reached, rather than being specifically addressed to the church in Ephesus.

4. What Old Testament passages influence Paul's understanding of Christ's lordship in Ephesians?

Psalm 110 is a key Old Testament passage that informs Paul's understanding of Christ's lordship. This psalm depicts the Messiah as seated at God's right hand, ruling over his enemies. Another relevant text is Psalm 8 which speaks of humanity having dominion over creation, a concept that the author of Hebrews applies to Jesus Christ. These passages provide a framework for Paul's portrayal of Jesus as the cosmic ruler who has defeated spiritual enemies.

5. What is the significance of the church in the context of cosmic reconciliation, according to Ephesians?

The church, consisting of both Jews and Gentiles reconciled into one body, is a demonstration of God's wisdom to the spiritual powers. This reconciliation serves as a sign that their defeat has already taken place and their time is limited. The church is the first installment and the means by which this reconciliation will take place on earth. The unity and reconciliation within the church demonstrate that God has already begun the process of restoring the entire universe.

6. How does the lecture address the idea that Paul was writing to combat the problem of magic in Ephesus?

While some scholars, like Clinton Arnold, argue that Ephesians was written to address the problem of magic and the fear of spiritual powers, the lecture suggests an alternative interpretation. It proposes that Paul's emphasis on power and Christ's victory over spiritual forces is not primarily a response to magic, but rather a broader affirmation of Christ's cosmic rule rooted in the Old Testament. Paul's focus is on encouraging Christians to live out their faith despite the hostile environment of the Roman Empire by assuring them that Christ has already won the ultimate victory.

7. What is the source of Paul's armor imagery in Ephesians 6, and how should this chapter be understood in relation to the rest of the book?

The lecture suggests that Paul's armor imagery in Ephesians 6 is likely drawn from the Old Testament, specifically Isaiah 59 and 62 which describes God using armor to do battle with Israel's enemies. The armor imagery, therefore, represents the means by which God defeats His enemies. Chapter 6 is not a separate appendix but a conclusion to the book, summarizing the themes of the previous chapters through the lens of cosmic warfare. The pieces of armor (truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation) are representative of the kind of lifestyle that Paul articulates in the first five chapters of Ephesians.

8. What does Ephesians teach about living as a Christian in a hostile environment like the Roman Empire?

Ephesians encourages Christians to live boldly and righteously, knowing that Christ has already defeated the spiritual powers behind earthly authorities. By living lives characterized by truth, peace, righteousness, and faith, Christians participate in the cosmic battle and contribute to the ongoing process of reconciliation. They do not need to shrink back from the claims of earthly powers because Christ has already won the victory in the spiritual realm.