

Dr. Kenneth A. Mathews, Genesis, Session 4, The Garden Story, Part 2 (Gen. 2:4-3:24) NotebookLM's 20-min. Podcast Biblicalelearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

Hey everyone, welcome back. We're going deep today on this concept of the image of God in Genesis, and we're looking specifically at session four of Dr. Kenneth A. Mathews' lecture series on Genesis called The Garden Story Part Two. And we're going to be exploring a lot of fascinating things today about what it means to be human, what was lost in the fall, and how that loss might be restored.

So get ready for some mind-blowing stuff, because we're going to be talking about stuff like how there's no actual curse on Adam and Eve in Genesis; there are just consequences. And get this, we'll see how Psalm 8 gives us a glimpse into what humanity lost in the garden, and we might even find some hints of the Trinity way before the New Testament. I'm excited to dive into this.

Okay, so let's start off with the three oracles of judgment in Genesis 2:14-19. Now, Dr. Mathews argues that these aren't actually commands from God, but they're more like descriptions of the struggles that humanity will face as a result of sin. Right. What do you think about that? I think that's a fascinating take, and I think it really highlights the idea that these consequences aren't so much about punishment as they are about the natural outcomes of a broken relationship with God.

Like when you think about the woman's pain in childbirth or the man's toil in the fields, these things were already present in Genesis 1 as part of creation, but now they become sources of frustration and difficulty. It's like the ground is rebelling against us, but it's not just our relationship with nature that's affected. Right, exactly.

Our relationships with each other are also impacted. Dr. Mathews makes this really interesting point about the word desire in Genesis 3:16, where it talks about the woman's desire for her husband. He suggests that it's not really about romantic love, but more like Cain's desire in Genesis 4:7, which is like a desire to control and dominate.

So instead of it being this beautiful, healthy desire for connection, sin has kind of twisted it into something possessive. Yes, precisely. And that raises such an important question: how does sin warp our relationships and turn even love into a power struggle? That's a heavy thought.

If we're meant to reflect God and God is love, how does this distortion of love affect our ability to represent him well? It really makes you wonder how this plays out in our world today. It really does. And it emphasizes how the fall wasn't just about breaking a rule.

It was about fracturing something fundamental in the human experience. And it leads us to this question of the image of God. Now, Dr. Mathews stresses that the fall didn't obliterate the image, but it definitely tarnished it.

Okay. So he uses Psalm 8 to kind of illustrate this point. He does.

Right. Where it talks about humanity being crowned with glory and honor and given dominion over creation. Right.

So we see this connection to the idea of vice regency, where humanity was supposed to reflect God's glory and rule creation on his behalf. Wow. That's a pretty weighty responsibility.

Yeah. And an incredible honor. It's powerful imagery being crowned with glory and honor.

It is. But I think that word vice regent might be a little unfamiliar to some listeners. Could you unpack that a little bit? Of course.

Essentially, it means acting as a representative, someone who governs on behalf of a higher authority. Okay. So we were designed to be God's representatives on earth, embodying his character and caring for his creation.

Wow. I've never thought about it like that before. It makes you realize the magnitude of what we were entrusted with.

It does. And maybe how far we strayed from that original calling. It really makes you question how we're wielding that authority today.

You know, I've always wondered if the concept of the Trinity was just a New Testament thing. Right. But Dr. Mathews suggests that Genesis might actually hint at it.

He points to the plural pronouns in Genesis 1:26. Right. Where God says, let us make humanity in our image. Yeah.

And there's also the appearance of three men to Abraham in Genesis 18, one of whom is identified as Yahweh. Right. So these details, while they're subtle.

Yeah. Could suggest that this idea of plurality within the Godhead was present right from the start. Yeah.

It's fascinating. So the concept of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, could have been woven into the fabric of creation. Right.

From the very beginning. It's a possibility. Yeah.

And it adds another layer of complexity and beauty to the creation narrative. But here's what I find most fascinating. Okay.

Is this implication that love and relationship were inherent in God's nature? Okay. From the very start.

Like God didn't create us out of loneliness, but rather from an overflow of love. Wow. He wanted to share the love that already existed within the Trinity.

That's incredible. I've always thought about God creating us because, well, maybe he needed us in some way. But this idea that it was purely out of love.

It's just incredibly humbling, isn't it? Yeah. It challenges our egocentric perspective and puts God's love at the forefront of creation. Yeah.

It really does make you rethink things. Thinking about God creating us out of an overflow of love. Right.

It makes those verses about being made in his image even more powerful. Right. But we know that things didn't exactly go according to plan.

Right. Sin entered the picture. Yeah.

And that perfect image was tarnished. But it's interesting, though, when you look closely at Genesis 3, the curse isn't actually directed at Adam and Eve. Oh, really? Who's it directed at then? The serpent and the ground, which is a huge distinction.

Yeah. It suggests that even though humanity messed up, or wasn't irredeemable, God's plan wasn't totally abandoned. So there's this glimmer of hope woven right into the narrative of the fall.

I've always seen those pronouncements of punishment, but seeing them as consequences really changes things. It does. And it makes you appreciate the weight of the curse that is placed on Cain in Genesis 4. Right.

The judgment is specifically against him as a person. Okay. Why the difference though? I mean, Adam and Eve disobeyed God directly.

That's true. But Dr. Mathews points out that Cain committed a truly horrific act, murder. He took the life of his own brother.

Right. A fellow image bearer. Right.

The ultimate act of disrespecting the image of God. So even in judgment, there's this thread of grace running through. Yes.

God doesn't completely abandon Cain either. Right. It's almost like God holds humanity to a different standard, even in our fallen state.

It's definitely something to think about. And it's not just about judgment. It's also about hope.

Okay. There are these beautiful moments of grace. Sprinkled throughout the Genesis narrative.

Like what? Well, think about Adam naming his wife Eve. Okay. Which means mother of all living.

Right. It's an act of faith. Right.

Acknowledging God's promise. Yeah. That their family line will continue.

That's true. In the face of all that loss. Yeah.

Adam still chooses to cling to hope. He trusts God's promise of a future. Right.

And then there's the part where God provides garments of skin for Adam and Eve. Dr. Mathews suggests this could point to a sacrificial offering. Foreshadowing the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus.

That's a fascinating thought. Even in those early chapters of Genesis, we might already be seeing hints of God's plan to redeem humanity. Exactly.

It's like these seeds of redemption are planted right from the start. Wow. But to circle back to the image of God, Dr. Mathews argues that while it's diminished, it's not completely gone.

We still bear that image, though it's definitely been tarnished by sin. So how do we know that the image is still there if it's so tarnished? Well, Dr. Mathews pulls out

some interesting examples from other parts of Scripture. For instance, in Genesis 9.6, the reason given for prohibiting murder is that humans are made in God's image.

And in James 3.9, James warns against using our words to curse others. Yes. Because they bear God's likeness.

Right. These passages make it clear that the image of God isn't just some abstract concept. It's a fundamental part of our identity, something that gives us inherent dignity and worth.

Okay. So the image is still there, but we know something was lost in the fall. Right.

Dr. Mathews uses Psalm 8 to kind of explore that loss, right? Exactly. He points out that it wasn't the image itself that was lost, but the glory and honor that came with it. The psalmist describes humanity as being crowned with glory and honor.

Right. And given dominion over creation. That royal imagery echoes what we see in Genesis 1. Exactly.

This idea of humanity as God's vice regents. Right. So the fall resulted in a loss of status, a diminishing of our original purpose.

It's almost like we were demoted. But the good news is this demotion isn't permanent. Okay.

There's hope for reinstatement. That's where Jesus comes in, right? He does. Dr. Mathews talks about Hebrews 2 and how Jesus, by becoming human, fully realized our potential.

He nailed it. Think about it. Jesus takes on our humanity, overcomes sin and death.

And in doing so, he reclaims that crown that was lost. Wow. And the amazing thing is he invites us to share in his victory.

It's like he's offering us a chance to be co-heirs with him. Right. To regain that lost glory and honor.

And to step back into our role as vice regents. Wow. That's restoration on a cosmic scale.

But let's not forget about those tantalizing hints of the Trinity. Oh, yeah. We're back to that.

I have to admit, I'm still blown away by this idea that the Trinity might be foreshadowed. Right. In the very first book of the Bible.

It's really remarkable, isn't it? Yeah. Those plural pronouns in Genesis 1:26. Right. The appearance of three men to Abraham in Genesis 18.

These details, while subtle, could be hinting at something much deeper. And Dr. Mathews emphasizes how this points to the relational nature of God. It's not like love and relationship were something God created.

Right. They were already present within the Godhead from the beginning. Exactly.

That flips the script on how we usually think about creation. We often assume God created us because he needed something. Right.

Like companionship. Yeah. Companionship, worship, whatever.

Yeah. But this idea that he created us out of an overflow of love. Yeah.

It changes everything. It paints a much more beautiful picture of God, don't you think? Absolutely. Makes you realize that we were desired not out of need, but out of pure overflowing love.

And if God is inherently relational. Right. If love is at the core of his being.

Right. Then how does that inform our understanding of the Trinity? That's where things get really interesting. Okay.

So Dr. Mathews goes on to explore the dynamic of love within the Trinity. Okay. And it's pretty mind-blowing.

He suggests that God the Father is the lover. Jesus Christ is the beloved. And the Holy Spirit is the one who connects them.

It's a beautiful way to visualize the interrelationship. It is. Of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

It is. But if the Spirit is the connector of love within the Trinity. Yeah.

I can't help but wonder, what does that mean for us? That's the million-dollar question, isn't it? Yeah. And that's what we're going to explore next. So we've been talking about this idea of the Trinity and how love is at the heart of it.

Right. It's not something that God needs to get from us. It's already a part of who he is.

It is. But how does that love actually work within the Trinity? Well, Dr. Mathews dives into this by talking about the Holy Spirit. Okay.

As the connector of love. He says that just as the Spirit unites the Father and the Son. Okay.

In this perfect love, the Spirit also empowers us to connect with God. And to experience his love. So it's not just about knowing God in our heads.

Right. But it's like feeling his love in our hearts. Yes.

It's about letting his love transform us. Okay. Affecting how we think and act and even who we are at our core.

And Dr. Mathews connects this back to the creation story, right? He does. Didn't he mention something about the Spirit's role in Genesis? He did. He points back to Genesis 1.2. Okay.

Where the Spirit is hovering over the waters. Bringing order and life out of the chaos. Okay.

And he suggests that the Spirit is still doing that same work in us today. Wow. Bringing order to our messy lives.

And helping us to experience new life in Christ. So the Spirit isn't just this like abstract force. Right.

But like an active presence. Yes. Working in our lives.

Exactly. And that connects back to this whole idea of being made in God's image. Remember how we talked about humanity being called to reflect God's glory.

Yeah. And to rule creation as his representatives. Yeah, that vice regent idea.

Right. So even though sin messed things up, we're still called to be image bearers. That's right.

Yeah. And Dr. Mathews says the potential for that original purpose is still within us. Just waiting to be unlocked through our relationship with Christ.

That's really encouraging. It means that even though we're constantly falling short. Yeah.

God still sees us as his image bearers. He does. But if Jesus is the perfect example of what it means to bear God's image.

Right. How can we possibly live up to that? Well, Dr. Mathews points to John 17. Okay.

Where Jesus prays that his followers would share in his glory. Wow. Isn't that incredible? We're invited to participate in the very glory of God.

It's like we're being adopted into this royal family. Right. And given access to everything that comes with it.

Exactly. But I'm guessing it's not just about basking in God's glory, right? Not sharing. It's about reflecting his glory.

Okay. To the world around us. This restoration of God's image isn't just for our benefit.

Right. It's about joining God in his mission to redeem the whole world. This has been an amazing deep dive.

It has. It's given me so much to think about in terms of what it truly means to be human. Me too.

Yeah. It's a great reminder that our lives have incredible value and purpose. Yes.

We're not just cosmic accidents. Yeah. But God's beloved children created to reflect his glory and to share in his love.

And even though we've messed things up, there's hope for restoration through Christ. There is. He's the ultimate image bearer.

He is. And through him, we can experience the fullness of life. Yes.

That God intended for us. But we can't just leave it at that. Right.

If the Holy Spirit is the one who connects us to God's love. Right. How can we actually cooperate with him? Yeah.

In our daily lives? That's a great question to ponder. Yeah. And it's one that we encourage you to wrestle with.

Okay. As you continue to explore this topic. Thanks for joining us on this journey.

Yes, thank you. We hope it sparked your curiosity and inspired you to dive deeper. Absolutely.

Into God's word. Yes. Until next time, keep exploring, keep learning, and keep seeking the truth.

Amen to that.