

Genesis, Session 4: The Garden Story, Part 2

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Abstract

This source features Dr. Kenneth Mathews' theological lecture on the aftermath of the Fall of Man in Genesis, focusing on the oracles of judgment and the concepts of sin, grace, and redemption outside the garden. Mathews explains that while humanity inherited original sin and original guilt, the image of God was not destroyed, though their original honor and glory were lost. He traces how this lost honor is ultimately restored in Jesus Christ, and explores the theological significance of the Triune God's perfect love as the motivating force behind creation and redemption.

Outline

I. Introduction and Context of Session 4

- A. Focus on what occurred outside the garden.
- B. Revisit chapters 2 and 3 briefly to prepare for understanding events outside the garden.

II. The Oracles of Judgment (Genesis 3:14-19)

- A. Oracles are descriptive of future occurrences, not prescriptive commands.
- B. The battle between the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman:
 - 1. There will be an ongoing struggle in the intermediate period between the wicked (who oppose God) and the righteous (who align with God's character).
 - 2. This struggle will eventually result in a victory on the part of the offspring of the woman.
- C. The second oracle of judgment pertains to the woman and her husband's relationship:
 - 1. The woman will be subject to her husband in some sense in the family and the church, but this does not apply to civil matters like government, commerce, or medicine.
 - 2. The passage is descriptive of sin's consequences, not prescriptive; there is no command in the Bible or from Paul for men to rule over women.

3. The Apostle Paul instead urges husbands to love their wives and wives to show honor toward their husbands (Ephesians 5).

D. Order, reversal, and reordering:

1. The creation ordinances in chapters 1 and 2 established an orderly structure.
2. Chapter 3 represents a reversal or disorder of that structure.
3. The judgment oracles serve to reorder and reorganize, reflecting God's inherent love for organizational structure, balance, and symmetry.

III. Understanding 'Desire' and 'Rule' in Genesis

A. Debates surround the meaning of 'desire' and 'rule' in Genesis 3:16.

1. Many scholars associate these terms with sexual relations given the childbearing context.

B. Contextual explanation through parallel terms in Genesis 4:6-7 (Cain and Abel):

1. God addresses Cain's anger over the rejection of his sacrifice and acceptance of Abel's.
2. Sin is personified metaphorically as an animal 'crouching' at the door, ready to pounce and attack if stirred up.
3. Sin's 'desire' is to have, control, or master Cain.
4. Cain is told he must 'master' or 'rule' over sin to prevent unbridled anger from leading to violence.

C. Application to the marriage dynamic:

1. Genesis 3:16 describes the future struggle of the sexes resulting from sin.
2. Rather than submissive love, mutual affection, and unity, there is a conflict where each spouse desires to overwhelm, overcome, or control the other.
3. This power struggle seriously impacts God's intended blessing of procreation and loving unity.

IV. The Curse, Grace, and the Response of Faith

A. The oracle concerning the man as a cultivator:

1. Man faces painful toil and sweat to farm the ground, matching the woman's painful toil in childbirth.
2. Cursing is directed against the serpent (Gen 3:14) and the ground (Gen 3:17), but God does not deliver a curse against the man or the woman.
3. Implication: Humanity is redeemable, and God's plan of blessing remains active.
4. Contrast with Cain in Chapter 4, who receives a personal curse because he is an 'image killer' who murdered his brother.

B. Glimmers of hope and grace in the midst of judgment:

1. Every oracle contains hope: victory over the serpent, continued childbearing, and agricultural productivity.

2. Adam names his wife Eve ('living') because she would become the mother of all living.
3. This naming is an act of remorse, repentance, and revitalized faith in God's procreative promises.
4. God demonstrates grace by providing climate-worthy garments of skin.
5. The skins imply an animal was killed, suggesting to early readers a sacrificial offering making atonement, forgiveness, and reconciliation possible.

V. Original Sin, the Image of God, and Lost Glory

A. What was lost in the Fall:

1. Communion with God in the garden broke down, and their loving relationship was fractured.
2. Humanity inherited original sin (sinful nature, character, and proclivity) and original guilt, as evidenced by hiding from God in shame.
3. Romans 5:12-21 clarifies that this inheritance of sin and guilt propagated to all progeny.

B. The Image of God was NOT lost or destroyed:

1. Humans remain persons under God's care and purpose; their personhood and image were not destroyed.
2. Genesis 9:6 confirms the post-flood image: the prohibition against shedding human blood is grounded in humanity still being made in God's image.
3. James 3:9 in the New Testament similarly warns against cursing human beings because they are made in God's likeness.

C. The democratization of honor and glory:

1. The image of God initially represented royal, ruling figures crowned with glory.
2. Creation in God's image represents a democratization of honor and glory where all humans are equal in being.
3. This equality transcends gender, age, ethnicity, education, and physical or mental disadvantages, leaving no room for a class system.
4. Individual male and female identities are both necessary and essential for achieving the blessing of procreation.

D. Psalm 8 as a meditation on Genesis 1:

1. The psalmist contrasts human insignificance with the immensity of the created order.
2. Humans are made 'a little lower than the angels' (terrestrial vs. celestial spheres) but are crowned and enthroned with glory and honor.
3. Humanity is given derivative authority to exercise dominion and rule over all creation.
4. This high position of royal rule, honor, and glory is what was lost in the Fall, not the image itself.

VI. Restoration of Lost Glory in Jesus Christ (Hebrews 2)

A. God's rescue plan to restore what was lost:

1. The author of Hebrews 2 uses Psalm 8 to show how this restoration is realized in Jesus Christ.
2. The future world is subjected to humanity, not angels, and this is fulfilled by Jesus as a totally human and fully obedient servant.
3. At present, we do not see everything subject to humanity, but we see Jesus.
4. Jesus was made a little lower than the angels and suffered death on the cross, making a substitutionary atonement.
5. Through his resurrection, Jesus was crowned with glory and honor, restoring it for all those who are in Christ and receive his resurrected life.

B. Jesus as the Second Adam:

1. Jesus remained steadfast in obedience, carrying out what the first Adam failed to do in the face of sin and depravity.
2. In John 17, Jesus prays for the Father to restore his eternal glory and requests that his disciples share in his glory and joy.

VII. Plurality Within God and the Divine Mediation of Creation

A. Plurality in the Genesis text:

1. Genesis 3:22: 'The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil.'
2. Genesis 1:26-27 demonstrates the oneness and plurality of God side-by-side:
 - a. Verse 26 uses plural terms ('Let us make... in our image').
 - b. Verse 27 uses singular terms ('God created... in his own image').
 - c. This is mirrored in humanity: the unity of humankind ('created him') and the diversity of sexes ('male and female he created them').
3. Genesis 1:2: The Spirit of God hovering over the waters indicates plurality within the single unity of God.

B. The Three Visitors in Genesis 18:

1. Three visitors appear as men at Abraham's campsite near the trees of Mamre.
2. One visitor is identified in the narrative as the Lord Yahweh, while the other two are identified in Chapter 19 as angels.
3. Their appearance as men (though not incarnate like Jesus) suggests that the unity of God involves a mystery of diversity.

C. Jesus Christ's role in Creation:

1. God's creation is mediated by the spoken word, which represents the role of the Son.
2. John 1:1-5: Reflects on Genesis, identifying Jesus as the eternal Word who was with God, was God, and through whom all things were made.

3. Colossians 1:15-16: Jesus is the image of the invisible God and the 'firstborn' (a legal term for heir/successor) over all creation, through whom and for whom all things were created.

D. Theological contrast: Polytheism, Mono-personhood, and Triune Love:

1. Ancient Near Eastern polytheistic religions were crude representations of human imagination.
2. Religions with a mono-person deity require a creation in order to express love.
3. In the Christian faith, God has eternally, perfectly, and completely shared love within himself as a plurality of persons.
4. 1 John 4:8 ('God is love'): The Father is the Lover, the Son is the Beloved receiving love, and the Holy Spirit is the loving connector bringing them into perfect harmony.
5. This perfect, self-contained love is what motivated God to create and to initiate the plan of rescue and loving reconciliation.