

Dr. Kenneth A. Mathews, Genesis, Session 4, The Garden Story, Part 2 (Gen. 2:4-3:24) NotebookLM's 6-min. Video Overview

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Welcome to The Explainer. Today, we're going to look past a story many of us think we know pretty well and uncover a really profound theological argument that happens right at the dawn of humanity. It's one that completely shapes how we understand sin and redemption.

So let's just dive right in with this one verse from Genesis 3. It has been the source of just endless debate about the relationship between men and women. For centuries, a lot of people have read this and thought, okay, that's it. It's a divine command for male authority.

But is that really what the text is saying? You know, to really get this passage, we have to understand a crucial distinction that theologian Kenneth Matthews pointed out. The things God says here aren't prescriptive commands. They're not like the Ten Commandments of thou shalt.

No, they're descriptive oracles of judgment. God isn't setting up a new ideal. He's describing the tragic broken consequences that now exist in a world that's been fractured by sin.

And what's amazing is the text kind of gives us its own decoder ring. If you look at the exact same Hebrew words for desire and rule, they pop up just one chapter later. God warns Cain that sin desires to have him.

It wants to control him, but he must rule over it. This parallel is absolutely the key to unlocking what's happening between the man and the woman. So when you see that, it becomes crystal clear.

This isn't about a God-ordained hierarchy. It's describing a tragic new reality, a painful power struggle. The desire is a desire to control, and the rule is the counter move to dominate.

The judgment is a diagnosis of the conflict that has now invaded the home. And it's a far cry from the unity God originally intended. But even in this really dark moment of judgment, there is this profound hope.

I mean, notice what God actually curses. He curses the serpent, and he curses the ground, but he never, ever curses the man or the woman. This is huge.

It implies they're redeemable, that God's plan to bless humanity isn't over, not by a long shot. Okay, so this leads us to an even bigger question about who we are at our core. If humanity is now fallen, what in the world happened to that foundational idea from Genesis 1 that we are made in the image of God? Was it just completely lost, wiped out? Well, the answer you see echoed throughout the rest of the Bible is a clear and really emphatic no.

The image was stained for sure. It was fractured and deeply damaged, but it was not erased. Even after the fall, humanity is still talked about as being made in God's likeness.

And here's the key distinction. We kept the image of God. That's our fundamental personhood, our inherent dignity.

That stayed, but we forfeited the glory and honor that we were crowned with. We lost our royal status, that job of exercising righteous rule over creation. You see this idea reflected so beautifully in the Psalms.

The psalmist is looking at creation, and he's just in awe, describing humanity's intended royal status. He says we were crowned with glory and honor, which is a direct callback to the authority God gave us in the garden. That's what was lost.

And the loss of this crown, while it sets up the central drama for the entire rest of the biblical story, what was broken couldn't be fixed by us. An outside rescue mission was now desperately needed to get back what we had forfeited. So let's jump way forward into the New Testament.

The writer of Hebrews picks up this exact theme, even quoting directly from Psalm 8. He says, look, we know that right now we don't see humanity ruling the way we were meant to. But, he says, we do see Jesus. And right there, that's the resolution.

Jesus, as the perfect human, sometimes called the second Adam, succeeds where the first one failed. Through his perfect obedience, all the way to suffering and death, he regains that lost crown of glory and honor. He restores that royal status for anyone who is united with him.

Okay, but this whole incredible story- creation, fall, redemption- it kind of makes you step back and ask a really basic question. Why? Why would God go to all this trouble? What was the ultimate motivation behind all of this? Well, believe it or not, the text gives us clues right from the very beginning. From the first chapter, you get these hints that God isn't just a solitary being.

You see it in the plural language: let us make humanity in our image. You see the spirit of God mentioned specifically. And later on, Abraham gets a visit from three people, and one of them is called the Lord.

All these little things point to a plurality within the one God. And this idea of a plurality is the absolute key to understanding God's motivation. Think about it.

If God is eternally Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, it means that before anything was ever created, love already existed perfectly and completely within God. God didn't have to create something in order to love. God is love.

So this means creation wasn't an act of a lonely God who needed something to love. It was the total opposite. It was an outgoing, overflowing expression of the perfect self-giving love that has eternally existed at the core of his being.

The plan for creation, and even the plan for rescue, is just God's own character put on display for us. And so we'll end on this thought. Understanding it this way completely reframes the Genesis story, doesn't it? It's not just an account of rules and failure.

It's the beginning of a grand story of rescue. A story that flows not from some arbitrary command, but from the very nature of a loving, relational God who wants to share his own life and his glory with his creation.