

New Testament Literature

Ephesians (and Galatians Conclusion)

Author: Dr. Dave Mathewson

Session 20 | Sponsored by Biblicalelearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

Keywords

Ephesians, Galatians, Mosaic Law, People of God, Indicative and Imperative, Clinton Arnold, Magic, Spiritual Powers, Reconciliation

Abstract

In this lecture, Dr. Dave Mathewson concludes his analysis of Galatians by addressing the temporary function of the Mosaic Law and explaining how the new covenant Holy Spirit empowers true moral transformation. He then leads a theological excursus on the "People of God," demonstrating how membership in God's covenant family expands from ethnic Israel under the law to universal inclusion centered solely on faith in Jesus Christ, the true seed of Abraham. Finally, Mathewson introduces the epistle to the Ephesians, highlighting its central theme of cosmic reconciliation in Christ, its structural balance between indicative theology and imperative ethics, and Clinton Arnold's proposal that Paul's power terminology served to reassure believers against first-century fears of magic and spiritual evil.

Outline

I. Class Announcements and Opening Prayer

- A. Upcoming examination details
 - 1. Exam #2 covers Acts through Galatians, scheduled for Monday during class time.
 - 2. First exam grades to be available by Friday.
- B. Optional review session
 - 1. Led by teaching assistant tomorrow night at 8:00 PM in the regular classroom.
 - 2. Extra credit awarded proportionally based on attendance across review sessions.
- C. Opening prayer focused on spiritual and mental discernment in studying biblical revelation.

II. Concluding Analysis of Galatians: The Role of the Mosaic Law

- A. Contrast between the Judaizers' scheme and Paul's argument
 - 1. The Judaizers posited a mandatory progression from Abrahamic promises to Mosaic Law obedience to Christ.
 - 2. Paul brackets the Mosaic Law as a temporary guardian functioning only until Christ arrived.
- B. The Flesh versus the Spirit (Galatians 5)
 - 1. Life under the law fails to overcome sin and results in vices ("works of the flesh").

2. The "fruit of the Spirit" fulfills new covenant promises (Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 36) of inner heart transformation.

C. Christian relationship to the Old Testament Mosaic Law

1. Believers are no longer subject to the Mosaic covenant's legal regime or jurisdiction.
2. Underlying intent of specific cultural laws (e.g., beard trimming, roof parapets) remains instructive for discernment.
3. Reference to recommended scholarly resources on the Christian and the Law (e.g., Five Views on Law and Gospel).

III. Excursus: The People of God Across Salvation History

A. Old Testament foundation and the covenant family

1. Adam and Eve created as the original covenant people of God.
2. Human sin leads to God choosing Abraham and Israel to mediate divine blessing to all nations (Genesis 12).

B. Jesus Christ as the True Israel and Seed of Abraham

1. Jesus succeeds where Adam and Israel failed, resisting Satanic temptation in the wilderness (Matthew 4).
2. Galatians 3:16 identifies Christ as the singular "seed" (offspring) of Abraham.

C. Universal redefinition and expansion of covenant membership

1. Faith in Christ incorporates both Jews and Gentiles into Abraham's true lineage (Galatians 3:29).
2. Membership is determined by personal faith in Jesus rather than ethnic heritage or Mosaic Law observance.
3. The Church represents the redefined, expanded Israel centered on Jesus Christ.

IV. Introduction to the Epistle to the Ephesians

A. Epistolary background and classification

1. Grouped with Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon as one of Paul's Prison Epistles.
2. Written during Paul's imprisonment, traditionally localized to Rome.
3. General/circular letter characteristics (Ephesians title as a likely later designation).

B. Core theological theme: Cosmic Reconciliation in Christ

1. Key text: Ephesians 1:9–10 (the plan to sum up or reconcile all things in heaven and earth in Christ).
2. Reconciliation of Jew and Gentile into one new corporate body.

C. Structural framework: Indicative and Imperative

1. Chapters 1–3 (Indicative): Theological declaration of believers' position and spiritual reality in Christ.
2. Chapters 4–6 (Imperative): Practical ethical exhortations and commands for Christian living.

D. Clinton Arnold's proposal regarding magic and spiritual powers

1. Heavy concentration of power language (e.g., strength, might, authority in Eph 1:19–21, 3:7).
2. First-century Ephesian context characterized by pervasive fear of spiritual beings, fate, and magic.
3. Paul's pastoral intent: Proclaiming Christ's supreme exaltation and victory over spiritual powers to liberate believers from fear.