

Dr. Dave Mathewson, The Storyline of the Bible – Genesis 1–3

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Sponsored by Biblicalelearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

Keywords

Storyline, Genesis, Creation, Covenant, Temple, Vice-regents, Garden of Eden, Image of God, Exile, Abraham

Abstract

In this introductory lecture, Dr. David Mathewson explores the overarching theological narrative of the Bible, asserting that scripture presents a single unified story of God's redemptive dealings with humanity despite its literary diversity. Focusing on Genesis 1–3 as the primary setting, Mathewson establishes how God created humans in His image to serve as vice-regents and priests within the sacred space of creation to spread His sovereign rule and glory. When human sin ruptures the covenant relationship and results in exile from Eden, the stage is set for divine resolution, beginning with God's call of Abraham and Israel to restore creation to its original purpose.

Outline

I. Introduction to the Storyline of the Bible

A. Background and Credentials of Dr. David Mathewson

1. Former New Testament and Greek faculty at Gordon College and Denver Seminary
2. Pastoral ministry experience and doctoral studies at University of Aberdeen
3. Key publications on Revelation (Old Testament in Revelation, Verbal Aspect)

B. Nature and Scope of the Lecture Series

1. Underneath biblical literary diversity lies a unified redemptive story
2. Narrative structure with typical plot elements: setting, conflict/crisis, and resolution
3. Series focuses on core theological themes rather than a comprehensive survey of all biblical books
4. Avoids peripheral speculative questions (e.g., origins of Cain's wife, length of creation days)

C. Five Major Interrelated Themes

1. The people of God
2. The covenant
3. The temple / sacred space
4. Kingship / God's sovereign rule
5. The land / creation

II. The Setting: Genesis Chapters 1–3

A. God as Sovereign Creator and Ruler

1. Creation begins with the eternal existence and sovereign authority of God
2. Chapters 1–3 establish all primary themes and foundational elements for the biblical narrative

B. The People of God and the Image of God

1. Adam and Eve as the initial people of God and covenant partners
2. Genesis 1:26–27 and human mandate as image-bearers
3. Image of God as functional representation: acting as God's vice-regents to spread His rule and glory
4. Genesis 1:28 mandate: producing image-bearing offspring to fill the earth and exercise dominion

C. The Concept of Covenant

1. God depicted as a Suzerain entering into a covenant with humanity
2. Structure of covenant: divine blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience
3. Specific covenant stipulation: prohibition from eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

D. Land and Creation

1. Creation as the provision of a suitable, inhabitable environment for humanity and God's presence
2. Land as a place of divine gift, fruitfulness, and blessing

E. The Garden of Eden as Sacred Space (Temple)

1. Garden of Eden portrayed as the original sanctuary where God dwells with humanity
2. Function of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:15 ("till it and keep it"): priestly duty to guard sacred space
3. Connections between Eden and later biblical/apocalyptic temple imagery (e.g., Shekinah glory, lampstand, light)
4. Divine rest on the seventh day signifying God taking up residence in His creation-temple
5. Mandate to expand the boundaries of the Edenic sanctuary to encompass the entire earth

III. The Crisis: The Fall and Exile (Genesis 3)

A. Introduction of Sin and Covenant Breakdown

1. Serpent tempts Adam and Eve to violate the covenant prohibition
2. Human sin thwarts original divine design for image-bearers and divine indwelling

B. Consequences of Disobedience

1. Expulsion and exile from the Garden of Eden and the sacred space
2. Placement of two cherubim and a flaming sword at the eastern entrance to guard the sanctuary

C. Early Glimmer of Hope and Resolution

1. Genesis 3:15 (Protoevangelium): promise of conflict between the offspring of the woman and the serpent
2. Subsequent scripture traces God's redemptive work to restore creation and humanity to their original purpose

IV. The Resolution Begins: Abraham and Israel (Genesis 12 onward)

A. Narrowing Focus to One Person and Nation

1. Transition from macro-level creation focus to Abraham as God's instrument for global restoration
2. Call of Abraham in Genesis 12:1–3 to leave his home for the promised land

B. Re-emergence of Creation Themes in the Abrahamic Covenant

1. Land: Restoration of the gift of land as a place of blessing and divine presence
2. Covenant: Suzerain covenant ceremony (Genesis 15) promising land and blessing to descendants
3. Reversal of the Curse: Divine promises of blessing counteracting the Genesis 3 curses
4. Seed and Multiplication: Promises of abundant offspring (Genesis 22:17–18) fulfilling the Genesis 1 creation mandate

C. Role of Israel in the Divine Plot

1. Israel chosen to succeed where Adam failed, serving as the vehicle to extend God's rule and glory
2. Mosaic Covenant (Exodus) as the legal framework enforcing and working out the Abrahamic promises
3. Exodus and Sinai narrative setting the stage for restoring humanity to God's presence and land