

Dr. Dave Mathewson, Storyline of the Bible – Prophets

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Abstract

This lecture examines how the Old Testament prophets articulate the ultimate resolution to the biblical narrative following the dual failures of Adam in Eden and Israel in the Promised Land. Dr. Dave Mathewson demonstrates that prophetic hope centers on five interconnected themes originating in Genesis 1–3: the restoration of God's people, a new covenant, return to the land as a new creation, a restored temple sanctuary, and the re-establishment of the Davidic kingship. Rather than merely foretelling isolated historical events, the prophets depict Israel's return from exile as the catalyst for reversing the cosmic curse and re-establishing Edenic conditions across the entire created order. Ultimately, the prophetic corpus serves as a crucial bridge within the storyline of Scripture, setting up the expectation for God to fulfill His creation purposes through a Davidic vice-regent, a promise awaiting complete realization in the New Testament.

Outline

I. Introduction to the Prophetic Storyline

A. The overarching narrative framework of Scripture

1. Diversity of Old and New Testament genres unified by a single core storyline
2. Genesis 1–3 as the foundation: creation, sanctuary, human mandate, and Edenic covenant

B. The pattern of human and national failure

1. Adam and Eve's sin leading to exile from God's presence and garden sanctuary
2. Israel's historical parallel: breaking the Mosaic covenant and exile from the Promised Land

C. The core problem and prophetic function

1. Resolving how all creation can become God's eternal dwelling place
2. Prophetic expectation of a two-fold restoration: renewing Israel to restore the cosmos

II. Theme 1: Restoration of God's People

A. Gathering the scattered house of Israel

1. Gathering scattered remnants from exile back to Jerusalem (Isaiah 60:1–4)
2. Re-creating a unified, multiplying population (Ezekiel 36:9–11)

B. Re-creation imagery and the breath of life

1. The vision of dry bones receiving sinew, flesh, and divine breath (Ezekiel 37:7–10)
2. Echoes of Genesis 2: God breathing life into lifeless humanity to form a new creation

C. Re-establishment of covenant relationship

1. Divine rescue from the east and west countries (Zechariah 8:7–8)
2. Re-affirming the core covenant formula: "They shall be my people, and I will be their God"

III. Theme 2: The New Covenant

A. Failure of the Mosaic covenant and human heart condition

1. Inability of Israel to maintain covenant faithfulness under the Mosaic law
2. Need for divine intervention to solve human sinfulness

B. Characteristics of the Jeremiah New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31–34)

1. Distinction from the broken Mosaic covenant made at Sinai
2. Internal transformation: God's law written directly upon human hearts
3. Universal personal knowledge of God and full forgiveness of iniquity

C. Heart transformation and cleansing in Ezekiel

1. Covenant of peace and removal of land threats (Ezekiel 34:25)
2. Cleansing from idolatry, replacement of heart of stone with heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:24–27)
3. Sanctuary placed in their midst forever (Ezekiel 37:26–27)

IV. Theme 3: Return to the Land and New Creation

A. Exile as de-creation and return to primordial chaos

1. Jeremiah's vision of exile as a "waste and void" pre-creation state (Jeremiah 4:23–26)
2. Absence of light, fruitfulness, and order prior to divine restoration

B. Land restoration modeled on the Abrahamic covenant and Eden

1. Comforting Zion by transforming her wilderness into Eden (Isaiah 51:1–3)
2. Mountain fruitfulness and land inheritance for descendants (Ezekiel 36:4, 8–12, 28–30)
3. Life as a watered, flourishing garden (Jeremiah 31:12)

C. The ultimate horizon: New Heavens and New Earth (Isaiah 65:17–25)

1. Re-creation of cosmic order transcending local Palestinian restoration
2. Reversal of the curse: long life, removal of infant mortality, and fruitful labor
3. Connection to the Septuagint rendering of "tree of life" (Isaiah 65:22 / Genesis 2)

V. Theme 4: The Restored Temple and Divine Sanctuary

A. The Garden of Eden as the original temple sanctuary

1. Microcosmic nature of the tabernacle and temple representing God's presence
2. Divine intention for God's glory to fill the whole earth

B. Ezekiel's vision of the restored temple (Ezekiel 40–48)

1. Detailed visionary tour of the new architectural structure and holy spaces
2. Return of God's glory from the east gate (Ezekiel 43:1–5)
3. Reversal of Adam's east-gate expulsion from Eden (Genesis 3:24)

C. Life-giving river flowing from the sanctuary (Ezekiel 47:1–12)

1. River expanding into deep waters, bringing life and freshness to stagnant seas

2. Fruit-bearing trees along banks providing continuous food and leaves for healing

VI. Theme 5: The Davidic Kingship and Universal Dominion

A. The Davidic covenant as the instrument of divine rule

1. Unending throne promised in 2 Samuel 7 as the bedrock for prophetic hope
2. The king as God's vice-regent spreading divine sovereignty over creation

B. Prophetic promises of the restored Davidic monarch

1. Re-affirming the steadfast covenant love for David (Isaiah 55:1–3)
2. Raising up a Righteous Branch to execute justice in the land (Jeremiah 33:14–15)
3. Servant David ruling as prince and single shepherd forever (Ezekiel 37:24–25)

C. Expansion to universal cosmic rule

1. Son of Man receiving everlasting dominion over all peoples, nations, and languages (Daniel 7:13–14)
2. Triumphant king riding on a donkey, commanding peace from sea to sea (Zechariah 9:9–10)
3. Reclaiming the world from the power of evil to make the Lord King over all the earth (Zechariah 14:9)

VII. Conclusion and Transition to the New Testament

A. Synthesis of the five prophetic themes

1. Interwoven matrix: restored people, new covenant, new Eden, renewed temple, Davidic king
2. Reclaiming creation from sin, death, and satanic dominion

B. The unresolved climax of the Old Testament storyline

1. Prophetic expectations established but historically unrealized at the close of the Old Testament
2. Tension setting the stage for the New Testament fulfillment in Jesus Christ