

Dr. Dave Mathewson, Storyline of the Bible, Session 1 – Genesis 1-3: Creation, Fall, Restoration Podcast Audio Overview

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Welcome back, everyone, to another Deep Dive. This time, we're going to be looking at the beginning of the Bible, Genesis 1-3, and how it sets the stage for the rest of the story. Yeah, the very beginning.

It's actually based on a lecture from a New Testament scholar, Dr. David Mathewson. Oh, interesting. And he really convincingly argues that understanding Genesis 1-3 can unlock deeper meaning throughout the whole biblical narrative.

I mean, it is the beginning. You've got to start at the beginning. So it's kind of exciting.

Yeah, I'm excited. So what did you find interesting about this lecture? Well, he identifies these five key themes: people of God, covenant, land, temple, and kingship. But it's more than just, like, okay, these are the themes.

He explores how understanding them in Genesis shapes how we read the rest of the Bible. Okay, that's pretty cool. Yeah.

Let's start with the people of God. That seems pretty straightforward, I guess. It's Adam and Eve, the first humans chosen for a relationship with God.

Right. But he points out something that I just totally missed. He says that Adam and Eve weren't just like caretakers of the garden.

They were more like priests guarding a sacred space. Priests? I know. It's like, whoa, wait a minute.

That's not how I usually picture it. I know. It really makes you rethink what's going on.

Yeah. So think about it, right? Priests in the Old Testament, they're responsible for maintaining the holiness of the temple. The place where God dwelt.

Well, Mathewson is arguing that the Garden of Eden is kind of functioning in a similar way. Okay. So it's not just a pretty garden.

Yeah. It's a holy space. Exactly.

It's like a precursor to the temple. Okay, wow. Yeah.

And this has huge implications, right? Because it suggests that humanity's original purpose wasn't just to, like, work the land, but to mediate God's presence in creation. Right. To like maintain that connection between the divine and the human.

That's a much richer understanding of what Adam and Eve were supposed to be doing. Right. Okay.

So how does the idea of covenant fit into all this? Well, we don't actually see the word covenant in Genesis 1-3. Right. But Matthewson argues that the concept is there.

Like there's this binding agreement between God and humanity with blessings for obedience and consequences for disobedience. Okay. So, like, the command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Exactly.

But it's more than just a command. It's a covenant stipulation. And this helps us understand the severity of the fall.

It's not just breaking a rule. It's violating a sacred agreement. And that fractures that bond between God and humanity.

That makes the consequences feel way more weighty. The exile, the suffering, death. It's not just punishment.

It's the natural outcome of this broken covenant. Yes. And understanding covenant this way is so important as we move through the Bible.

Because then all these other covenants make more sense. God's interactions with his people, from the covenant with Abraham to the Mosaic law. Yeah.

It's like a thread that runs through everything. Okay. So we're seeing how these early chapters set the stage for what comes later.

What about the theme of land? I mean, God creates this beautiful world. And it seems like it's clearly a gift for his people. Right.

But Matthewson again is like pushing us to think deeper. He points out that land isn't just about physical territory. It represents a place of blessing where God's presence can be experienced and his purposes can be fulfilled.

Okay. So it's more about the quality of the relationship with God than the actual acres. Exactly.

And this theme of land as a place of blessing, a place where God dwells with his people. It just comes up over and over throughout the whole Bible, from the promised land in the Old Testament to the new heavens and new earth in Revelation. Okay.

So far, so good. But now we're getting to the theme that I think really caught my attention. Temple.

Yeah. You're telling me the Garden of Eden was a type of temple. That's what Matthewson suggests.

Whoa. Yeah. So remember we were saying the Garden's like a sacred space where God dwells with his people.

And there are all these details that point to this, like Adam and Eve are like priests guarding the garden, the presence of the tree of life, which we see later in descriptions of the temple in Jerusalem. Wait, are there like architectural parallels between Eden and the temple? I know. It's fascinating, right? And he doesn't stop there.

He even brings up God resting on the seventh day and ties it to this idea. It's not just about taking a break. It's showing that creation itself has become God's dwelling place, like his temple.

Wow. So the whole world is a sacred space. That's pretty radical.

It is. And it really challenges us to rethink our relationship with creation. Like everything from the smallest creature to the vast expanse of the cosmos is somehow imbued with God's presence.

That's pretty amazing. Okay. One last theme to unpack in this section: kingship.

Adam and Eve were created in God's image. They're meant to represent him, right? Like reflecting God's kingship, his rule and authority over creation.

But Matthewson says this isn't about domination or control. It's about stewardship, about partnering with God to cultivate and care for creation. So less about power, more about responsibility.

Exactly. And the way they're supposed to do this is by being fruitful and multiplying, filling the earth with these image-bearing offspring who'd continue this work. It's such a powerful vision of humanity partnering with God to, like, spread his reign, his blessing throughout the world.

And then of course, everything changes with the fall. Yeah. Sin disrupts that perfect harmony, that ideal partnership between God and humanity.

Okay. So how does this understanding of Genesis 1 to 3 as a blueprint help us understand what happens next in this story? Well, that's where things get really interesting because Matthewson says that everything that follows all the covenants, the Exodus, the establishment of Israel- is part of God's plan to restore what was lost in the garden. Okay.

Now I'm really hooked. We're going to need to pick this up next time. So listeners, stay tuned as we continue our deep dive into the Bible and see how these themes from Genesis echo throughout the entire story.

Okay. So last time we were looking at how Genesis 1 to 3 kind of lays out a blueprint for the whole Bible. Like a foundation.

Yeah, exactly. And those five key themes: people of God, covenant, land, temple, and kingship. Right.

We talked about how those themes play out in the garden story with Adam and Eve. Right. Setting the stage.

Yeah. So now let's see how these themes show up as the story moves on to Abraham. Right.

So Matthewson says that Abraham's story is super important because it marks the beginning of God's plan to restore what was messed up in the fall. So, like, a turning point. We go from creation, then sin enters the picture.

And now with Abraham, God is starting to set things right. Yeah, exactly. And those same five themes are woven into Abraham's story too.

So, like, people of God. With Abraham, God chooses him and promises to make his descendants into a great nation. So it's a fresh start.

After everything that went wrong with Adam and Eve, God is kind of starting over with Abraham and his family. Yeah. And the covenant theme is huge here too.

How so? Well, remember how the first covenant in the garden was broken? But with Abraham, God makes a new covenant, this binding agreement with all these promises and blessings. Okay. So it's not just a repeat of what happened in the garden.

This feels different, like a step forward. Exactly. And this covenant with Abraham becomes the basis for all the other covenants that come later in the Bible.

Wow. So this is really foundational stuff. It is.

And then there's the land theme too. Right. God promises to give Abraham's descendants the land of Canaan, that land flowing with milk and honey.

Yeah, exactly. So again, we're seeing that land is about more than just the physical place. It represents this place of blessing where God's presence can be experienced in a special way.

It's more about God's presence and blessing being poured out on his people. Exactly. And then with kingship, God promises that through Abraham's descendants, all nations will be blessed.

It's like God is hinting that his plan isn't just to rescue one nation, but to bless the whole world. Right. Even in this early part of the story, we're already seeing glimpses of God's plan for all of humanity.

That's amazing. It's like these little details are planting seeds that will grow into something much bigger. Yes.

And Matthewson points out a few specific details that really emphasize the importance of Abraham's story. For instance, the fact that Abraham has so many descendants directly fulfills God's command back in Genesis 1 to be fruitful and multiply. Like God is reaffirming his purpose for humanity, even after the fall.

Yes. And Matthewson even suggests that the blessing God promises to Abraham is actually like a reversal of the curse that sin brought into the world. So God's intention is to undo all the damage from sin and restore humanity to what he originally intended.

Right. It's all connected. Abraham's story isn't just some random event.

It's directly tied to what came before in Genesis 1 to 3, and it sets the stage for everything that comes after. Okay. So we've got creation, fall, and the promise of restoration in Genesis 1 to 3. And now with Abraham, we see that promise starting to take shape.

Right. It's all part of the same big story. So where do we go from here? Well, Matthewson says the next big development in the story is the Exodus, when God rescues the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

Oh, yeah. That's a pretty dramatic event. How does that fit into the whole Genesis blueprint? It's a continuation of what we've already been talking about.

Think about the people of God theme. Through the Exodus, God is forming his people Israel into a nation set apart for his purposes. So they're being delivered from slavery so they can become the people God always intended them to be.

Exactly. And then there's covenant. God makes a covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai.

He gives them the law and calls them to be his treasured possession. Right. Another covenant, another binding agreement.

But this time, it's not just with one man and his family. It's with a whole nation. And this covenant includes a whole system of laws and commandments.

Yeah, that's right. Matthewson points out that the Mosaic law, with all its rules and regulations, ultimately serves a purpose. It's meant to guide and protect God's people as they journey to the promised land.

Like a roadmap or a set of guardrails to help them stay on the right track. Exactly. And remember how we talked about land being about more than just the physical territory? Well, the promised land that Israel is going to is a really concrete picture of that.

It's the place where God wants to dwell with his people in a special way. So the Exodus isn't just about escaping slavery. It's about moving toward a place where they can fully experience God's presence and blessing.

Exactly. The giving of the law at Sinai is all part of preparing them for that. Right.

All those rules and rituals are about helping them live. It is. And finally, let's not forget kingship.

Through the Exodus and the giving of the law, God is setting up Israel as a kingdom of priests, a nation set apart to represent him to the rest of the world. So the Exodus isn't just about freedom from slavery. It's about fulfilling God's original purpose for humanity: to be his representatives, reflecting his glory and spreading his blessing to the world.

Exactly. And the story of Israel, with all its ups and downs, continues to unfold along these lines, always pointing back to that blueprint we see in Genesis 1 through 3. It's amazing how

those themes just keep popping up, how they connect the dots between all these different parts of the Bible. I know.

And as we move into the rest of the Old Testament, we'll see these themes develop in even more profound ways. Ultimately, they all point towards their fulfillment in Jesus. OK, now I'm even more curious to see how this all comes together.

Listeners, don't go anywhere. We'll be back in just a minute to explore the climax of this grand narrative, the coming of Jesus and the fulfillment of God's promises. Welcome back to our deep dive, everybody.

We've been looking at Dr. Mathewson's idea that Genesis 1 to 3 is like a blueprint for the whole Bible. Right. It introduces these big themes that just echo throughout the entire story.

Yeah, exactly. Those five themes: people of God, covenant land, temple, and kingship. We've seen how those themes play out in the stories of Adam and Eve, Abraham, Moses, and throughout the Old Testament.

It's amazing how it all connects together. Yeah, it is. And now we've reached the climax, the story, the coming of Jesus.

The big moment. Yeah. So how does he fit into all of this? This is where it gets really exciting.

Mathewson argues that Jesus, he doesn't just continue the story; he fulfills it. He's like the culmination of everything God's been doing since Genesis 1. OK, I'm ready. How does Jesus fulfill those themes we've been talking about? Well, let's start with people of God.

Jesus comes as the Messiah, the promised king of Israel. Right. But his mission is much bigger than just one nation.

He gathers a new people for himself from every corner of the world. So it's like the people of God are expanding. It's becoming more inclusive than it was in the Old Testament.

Yes. In Christ, all the old divisions are broken down. There's no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female.

All are one in him. Wow, that's a radical change. It is.

So what about covenant? How does Jesus fulfill that theme? Well, the New Testament calls Jesus the new covenant: his death and resurrection. They create this brand new relationship between God and humanity. So it's not about perfectly obeying the law to earn God's favor? No.

This covenant, it's based on grace and forgiveness. It's about receiving God's mercy through Jesus. Exactly.

And it's available to anyone who believes. And because it's based on God's grace, it can never be broken. Wow.

So it's like a reset button on humanity's relationship with God. I like that. OK, it's huge.

What about land? Does that still apply to Jesus? We're not talking about physical territory anymore. Yeah. Right.

The land theme takes on a whole new meaning in the New Testament. It's not about a specific place anymore. It's about God's kingdom, his reign and rule being established in the hearts of his people.

So it becomes like an internal spiritual reality instead of an external physical one? Exactly. Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is within you." So those who follow him, they become citizens of God's kingdom, no matter where they live in the world.

So the promised land becomes more like a symbol of God's presence dwelling within us. Yeah. It's almost like the Garden of Eden is restored, but now it's inside each believer.

That's beautiful. And this leads us to the temple theme. Remember how we talked about the Garden of Eden and the temple in Jerusalem as places where God dwelled? Right.

They were those sacred spaces set apart for God. But didn't we say that the whole world was considered God's temple after creation? Yes. But now in the New Testament, things develop even further.

Jesus himself becomes the new temple. Wait, hold on. Jesus is the temple.

How does that work? Well, in John 2, Jesus says, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." And he was talking about his own body. Oh, wow.

Yeah. He's saying that he is the ultimate meeting place between God and humanity. Okay.

So instead of going to a building to encounter God, now we encounter him through Jesus. Exactly. And here's the amazing part.

Through the Holy Spirit, believers become temples of God too. God's presence actually lives inside us. That's pretty mind-blowing.

The temple theme has really come full circle. We started with a garden, then a building, and now it's God dwelling within his people. It's incredible.

And finally, we come to kingship. Jesus is the ultimate king, the one who rules over all creation. But his kingship is different from any earthly king.

He's not forcing people to obey or anything like that. No. His role is all about love, service, and sacrifice.

He gave up his life for his people, showing us a kind of leadership that no one had ever seen before. So it's like a totally different definition of what it means to be a king. Yeah.

And those who follow Jesus, they're called to share in his kingship, to reign with him by living out his values and spreading his kingdom of love and justice in the world. That's a

pretty tall order. So we've come a long way from Adam and Eve failing to represent God to Jesus perfectly embodying God's kingship and inviting us to participate in it.

It's an incredible journey. It really is. And it shows us that the Bible isn't just a bunch of random stories.

It's one big unified story, a story of God's plan of redemption unfolding throughout history. And it all leads to Jesus. Yeah.

And it all starts with those five key themes in Genesis 1-3. It's like those chapters are the little seed that grows into this massive tree with Jesus as the fruit. That's a great way to put it.

And Matthewson leaves us with one final thought to chew on. Remember how Adam and Eve were exiled from the garden to the east? And we talked about how east became associated with separation from God. Right.

But Matthewson points out that if east represents being away from God, moving west often signifies a return to God, a restoration of that relationship. Well, that's interesting. Like the Israelites entering the promised land from the east, or the wise men traveling from the east to worship Jesus.

Yeah. And in Revelation, the new Jerusalem, God's ultimate dwelling place, it comes down out of heaven from the west. It's like the whole story is moving westward back towards God, back to that original harmony we see in the garden.

It's this beautiful picture of restoration, coming full circle. Wow. Yeah.

So as you keep reading the Bible, pay attention to those directional symbols. They might be saying more than you think. This has been such an eye-opening deep dive.

It's amazing how much depth there is to these Bible stories that we might think we already know. It's amazing what we can find when we take the time to really dig in. Absolutely.

We hope this has inspired you to keep exploring the Bible, and be sure to check out our website for more deep dives, show notes, and other resources. Until next time, happy exploring.