

Dr. Dave Mathewson, Storyline of the Bible,

Session 3 - Prophets,

Podcast Audio Overview

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Welcome back, everybody, to another deep dive, and today we're going to be tackling something pretty epic. Yeah, we're going to be talking about the prophets in the Bible, absolutely, but we're not just going prophecy by prophecy. We're trying to see the bigger picture here, right? How do these prophets, in their writings? Fit into the entire story of the Bible- the grand narrative starting way back in Genesis.

That's right, and to help us with this. We've got some incredible material from Dr. Dave Mathewson.

He's a great scholar. Yeah, he's in this really fascinating lecture where he traces these huge themes, you know, like People and covenant and land and temple and kingship big ones. He traces these through all the prophets. It's a great lecture series. It is, and what you're going to unpack all of that together, looking for those aha moments that help us see the Bible in a new light, absolutely. And I think a helpful way to start thinking about this is to remember that the Bible begins with this picture of this ideal Relationship right between God and humanity; creation is in perfect harmony. But then things go wrong; of course, the fall happens, and then the rest of the story is really about putting the pieces back together. That's good.

That's really, and that fall in Genesis, it's not just a one-off event, right? It really does set the stage for everything that follows. Yeah, it establishes this pattern, a pattern that we see repeated over and over: Israel, God's chosen people. They're given this incredible covenant, their promise, this land. Yeah, but then what happens? They don't hold up their end of the bargain. They don't; it all falls apart. It's like Adam and Eve all over again. Yeah, and it leads to exile from the promised land.

So enter the prophets, right? They show up during this time of crisis, yeah, you know, when exile is either looming, or It's already happening. Yeah, you would kind of expect fire and brimstone. Yeah, you'd think so, right, but that's not really what we get. No, it's actually quite hopeful. It is; it's really fascinating to me that their message is actually one of hope. Yeah, it's not about wallowing in the mess, but it's about what God is going to do about it, right? The prophets envision a future where Israel is not only back in the land.

Okay, but they're also fundamentally transformed. What does that even mean? That's a big question. Transformed. What does that look like? That's a great question.

We're not talking about a makeover. No, no, it's far more radical than that. It's like going back to the very beginning: a new creation. Okay, Ezekiel, for example, has this wild vision in chapter 37. I love Ezekiel's dry bones coming together, being breathed into life by God, and it's not just individuals being resurrected. Right, it's the nation itself being reborn. Wow, it's

like hitting the reset button on the whole people, almost like that moment in Genesis when God breathes life into Adam. That's the image. Yeah, there's this deliberate echo of Genesis, but it's not just a copy and paste.

It's a new creation. Okay, it's building on what came before but going even deeper. So it's not just about Israel then, right? You're exactly right because I remember in Isaiah. Yes, it talks about how this restored Israel becomes like a beacon, a light that draws other nations to the one true God. So there's like this ripple effect on the whole world. That's a crucial point. Yeah, this vision of restoration, right? It starts with Israel, but it doesn't end there. Okay, God's plan has always been much bigger, right, encompassing all of creation. So we've got this image of a people remade.

Yes, but what about that broken relationship with God, right? The prophets don't just brush that aside. Don't they? I mean, how do they deal with that? The idea of a new covenant, okay, is central to their message. Okay, it's about a deeper connection with God than ever before- deeper than the old covenant, which obviously failed, right? Jeremiah and Ezekiel particularly emphasize this, so it's not just okay. Let's try that covenant thing again.

Hopefully we'll get it, right? No, no, no, it goes way beyond that. Okay, the Old Covenant was external laws written on stone tablets. The New Covenant is internal, God's law written on people's hearts. Wow. It's about a fundamental change, not just outward actions, right, but a transformation from the inside out. Okay, hold on. What would it even look like to have God's law written on our hearts? That's the question, isn't it? I mean, not like a literal tattoo, right? No, but what are the implications of this? Well, it's about aligning our desires with God's will, not just conforming to a set of rules, but genuinely reflecting God's character and how we live.

Yeah, it's a level of intimacy and obedience That's hard to even grasp. So the prophets are not just saying Shape up, Israel No, they're pointing to something much deeper, more profound: a whole new way of relating to God. Absolutely, and this transformation isn't just theoretical, right? It has real-world implications. The prophets talk about a physical return to the land, too. Yeah, not just a spiritual homecoming, right? It's like that longing for home that runs deep within us.

Absolutely, but there's got to be more to it than just getting back to the old real estate. Oh, there is what's the deeper meaning? Well in Jeremiah 4, okay The exile itself is described as a decreation the creation a return to the chaos before Genesis 1. Oh, wow. So this return isn't just going back to the way things were, right? It's a new creation, a reversal of that cosmic unmaking. Whoa, that's heavy. It is.

So the prophets are tying this return to the land. Yes, to the very act of creation itself. They are that's amazing. They're weaving together these different threads of the biblical story, right, showing how everything is connected. Yeah, okay.

I'm starting to see how these themes are all interlocking. Yeah, like pieces of a puzzle. That's a good way to put it. But what about the temple? Yes, the temple was destroyed during the exile. How does that fit into this picture of restoration? Well, the prophets see a restored temple even grander than before. Really, Ezekiel in chapters 40 through 48.

Okay, it gives this incredibly detailed vision of it, like blueprints, almost like an architectural blueprint. Wow, and it's not just a building. It's loaded with symbolic meaning. Give us the highlights. Give us those details that make you go.

Hmm. There's something deeper going on here. One thing that jumps out is that God's glory enters this new temple. Uh-huh, through the East Gate. Okay, think about that for a moment.

Isn't that the same direction Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden? It is; that's got to be intentional. It is; it's highlighting the connection between the temple and Eden, showing that the temple is a microcosm of God's intention for the whole world. Wow. It's not just about a building. It's about God dwelling among his people, right, restoring that intimate connection that was lost in the garden. So it's like a mini Eden, a glimpse of what God ultimately desires for the whole creation. That's a great way to put it. But hold on.

There's one more piece to this puzzle: the Davidic King. Ah, yes, the prophets weren't just content with a restored land and temple, right? They wanted a king back on the throne. They wanted the dynasty restored. Yes, and not just any king- no, a descendant of David, of course. Remember, God made this promise to David back in Samuel 7: an everlasting dynasty. The prophets are latching on to that promise.

They are seeing it as central to God's plan of restoration. Absolutely, but the Davidic King They're more than just a political figurehead, right? They are much more. There's something more cosmic going on Yes, they're meant to represent God's rule Okay, extending over all creation Wow fulfilling that mandate from Genesis 1 where humanity is given dominion So it's about more than just who sits on the throne in Jerusalem It is it's about God's rule being established over the whole over the whole world A king who reflects God's justice and righteousness and this idea is reinforced throughout the prophets Yeah, Isaiah, for example talks about God reaffirming his covenant with David right at the time of this restoration So it's clear that this kingship is integral to God's larger plan absolutely Okay, so we've got this incredible vision a big vision people remade new covenant returned to the land temple restored It's quite a vision Davidic king on the throne but The prophets don't just drop this vision and walk away, do they? No, they don't. They're not just going to leave us hanging. Well, they do leave us with some questions. Yeah, how does it all work out? How will all this come about, right? They point us towards a future where God's plan comes to a climax, but they don't give us all the details, right? And that, my friend, is where things get really interesting.

I like where this is going. Yeah, on the edge of your seat, stay tuned. All right, we'll be back. Okay, so we've laid the groundwork with the prophets: people remade, new covenant, the land, the temple, the king. It's a stunning vision it is, but it leaves us with this huge question mark.

It does. How does it all actually happen? Yeah, enter the New Testament. That's right.

This is where things get really mind-blowing, I think, so the New Testament picks up those threads from the prophets. It does and weaves them into something even more incredible. Yeah, and at the center of it all is Jesus. Of course, hold on you're saying Jesus is the answer to all those prophetic riddles. He is. I'm not sure I see the connection.

It's all there, but it's not always obvious at first glance. Okay, think back to what we've discussed: the restored people, the renewed covenant, the return to the land, the Davidic king, God dwelling among his people. Okay, in Jesus, those themes come together in a way that's both unexpected and totally revolutionary. Okay, color me intrigued; walk me through this. All right. How does Jesus fulfill each of those themes? Well, let's start with the restored people. Okay, the prophets envisioned Israel gathered back together, unified under God.

Yeah, with Jesus we see the formation of a new community. Okay, a spiritual family that transcends national boundaries. It's not just about Ethnicity or geography; it's about faith in him, faith in Jesus. So it's not just a physical gathering back in the land; it's this new community united by something much deeper. That's right. A whole new kind of peoplehood, exactly, and this new community is bound together by a new covenant, okay, established through Jesus's sacrifice on the cross, right? Remember how the prophets talked about God's law being written on people's hearts.

Yeah, that's what Jesus makes possible. Okay, through him there's forgiveness and a restored relationship with God for everyone who believes, so it's not about rule-following anymore. No, but about a heart transformed by what Jesus has done. Yeah, what about the Lamb? The prophets were pretty fixated on that Physical return to the promised land. Yes, they were looking forward to that. So, how does Jesus fit into that? Well, the land takes on a new meaning with Jesus. Okay, the prophets looked forward to a physical return, but in Jesus we see a different kind of return.

What do you mean a return to God's presence? Okay, that's available to anyone, anywhere. So the focus shifts From a specific piece of land. Yes to being in a right relationship with God.

That's it. Regardless of location, right? The real promised land is being in God's presence. Now think about the Davidic king. Okay, the prophets longed for a ruler from David's line, someone who would establish justice and peace. Yeah, well, guess what? What? Jesus? Is a direct descendant of King David? No way. So those prophecies about a righteous king they were actually pointing towards Jesus all along. That's amazing, but there's a twist. Of course. There's a twist.

Jesus's kingship isn't what most people expected. It's not about earthly power or political dominance. Yeah, it's about a spiritual kingdom a spiritual kingdom, a kingdom of love and grace. Okay, that's established in the hearts of those who follow him. It's like a kingdom.

That's not of this world. Exactly, but it has the power to change this world from the inside out. That's the idea And here's where it gets even more mind-blowing. Okay, I'm ready. Remember how the prophets yearned for the day? When God's presence would dwell among his people again, like in the temple.

Yes, that longing is fulfilled in Jesus in a way that surpasses anything the prophets could have imagined. It's true. Okay, I'm with you so far, right? But how does Jesus connect to God's presence dwelling among his people? Well, Jesus is God incarnate, God in human flesh, right? He's the ultimate dwelling place of God's presence. So in him, God is literally with us. Yes walking among us.

That's the idea. Whoa. So it's not about a physical building anymore. It's not Jesus himself; he is the new temple. Yes, the place where heaven and earth meet, and this new temple is accessible to everyone, right? Not just the select few; that's amazing. Through faith in Jesus, we can all experience the presence of God in a way that was never possible before. This is reframing how I understand the whole bible. It's pretty remarkable. It's like Jesus is the key that unlocks all these prophecies and themes, bringing them together in a way that's both Beautiful and incredibly profound, and there's more.

Oh, there's more: Jesus' resurrection is the ultimate sign that God's plan of restoration is in motion, right? It's a victory shout announcing the defeat of sin and death. So the resurrection isn't just some random event at all. It's central to God's plan, the proof that his promises are real, yes, and that his power can overcome anything, and that resurrection power is available to us, too. What do you mean through faith in Jesus we can experience that same new life? Oh, that same victory over sin and death. It's not just something that happened in the past. It's a power that can transform our lives right now. This is incredible. It really is, but what about the ripple effect on the world that we talked about? Remember how the prophets? Envisioned God's blessings flowing out from a restored Israel to the whole world. Yeah, we're called to be part of that.

Okay, this transformative power is meant to flow through us. So we're not just called to experience this new life for ourselves. We're called to share it with others, to be agents of God's restoration in the world. We become that ripple effect, exactly. We're ambassadors of this new kingdom. Wow, this kingdom of love and grace that Jesus established. We've gone from the prophets longing for a future restoration right to seeing it becoming a reality in Jesus. It's amazing, isn't it? It's amazing how it all connects.

It really is, but I have a feeling the story's not over yet. Is it? You're right; the New Testament doesn't just tell us about what Jesus has done, right? It points us toward a future culmination of God's plan, okay, where all things are made new, wow, in a complete and glorious way. So for that, we need to look at the book of Revelation. Yes, we do. Okay. Now I'm really hooked. What does Revelation say about this future? Well, that's a big question. We're going to need a whole other deep dive just to untangle that. We might not have time for a whole other deep dive right now, right, but we can certainly give you a taste of what's to come. Perfect. But before we jump into Revelation, let me throw this out to our listeners.

Okay, if Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophet's hopes for restoration, right. How does that change the way you read the Old Testament? It's something to ponder. Yes, as we move into this last part of our deep dive, all right, so we've journeyed from Genesis to the prophets. We've seen how those hopes find their fulfillment in Jesus. And now, for the grand finale, buckle up because we're heading into the book of Revelation. That's right, to explore the grand finale of God's plan. I have to admit, Revelation can be a little intimidating. It can be, with all its symbolism and vivid imagery. A lot of people get tripped up on that. Yeah, it's a challenging book.

It is. So how do we even approach it? Well, I think instead of getting lost in all those details, right? We can focus on those key themes. We've been tracing Great people: covenant, land, temple, king.

Yeah, and see how Revelation brings them to their ultimate climax. I like it sounds like a plan. Where do we even begin? Well, one of the most powerful images in Revelation is this vision of a new heaven and a new earth. A new heaven and a new earth it echoes Isaiah's prophecy, right? But John, the author of Revelation. Yeah, he expands on it in breathtaking detail. So it's not just about patching up the old creation.

No, it's a complete makeover. It's brand new, something brand new and perfect. Exactly. This new creation is described as a place where there's no more pain. Wow, no more suffering or death.

It's like paradise. It is. It's pure harmony and joy, with God dwelling among his people. Yeah, that's what we've been talking about: that longing for God's presence that we see throughout the entire bible, right? That desire to be close to God, to experience His love and goodness in a complete and unhindered way, and revelation doesn't stop there. There's more; it gives us a glimpse of the New Jerusalem.

Okay, this incredible city that descends from heaven to earth, a city coming down from heaven. That's a visual I wasn't expecting; it's a powerful symbol. Yeah, what does it mean? This city is depicted as the ultimate dwelling place of God. Wow, where his glory shines most brightly. Okay, and what's fascinating is that it's filled with echoes of the Garden of Eden. Seriously, a heavenly city that's like Eden 2.0. You could say that I need to hear more about this. Well, for starters, there's a river flowing through the city a river, a river of life that brings healing and sustenance. Oh, wow. It calls to mind that river in Genesis that flowed out of Eden and watered the garden, right? Right, and there's also a tree of life in the city a tree of life, a tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. So it's like the Garden of Eden is being restored and elevated to a whole new level. Yeah, the imagery is so rich and evocative, and let's not forget about the Davidic king. Oh, yeah, the king. Remember how we talked about that king who would rule with justice and righteousness? Revelation tells us that Jesus, the ultimate Davidic king, will reign over this new creation.

So all those promises about a kingdom of peace and justice find their ultimate fulfillment in the new heavens and new earth, with Jesus as king. That's the picture that Revelation paints. It's like everything we've been talking about is converging on this one point. It all comes together. It's incredible.

It's at the culmination of God's plan, His grand vision for restoring all things, and this kingdom isn't just about political power or control. Is it? No, it's not. What is it about? It's about God's will being done perfectly. Okay, his love and grace flowing freely, a place where all nations come together to worship him. It's like a cosmic symphony reaching its crescendo, everything coming together in perfect harmony. That's a beautiful image.

But here's the question that's been swirling in my mind this whole time: Okay, where do we fit into all of this? Are we just spectators to this incredible drama? That's what's so amazing about Revelation: what it tells us is that we, as followers of Jesus, get to be part of this new creation, really. We're not just watching from the sidelines We're invited to participate in the joy and glory of God's kingdom forever So it's not about escaping to heaven when we die No, it's about being part of something much bigger something more beautiful something that will last forever That's the hope and we're not just waiting passively for this future Are

we no we're not we're called to be a part of making it happen exactly this hope for the future this vision of restoration It should impact the way we live right now How so it should motivate us to be agents of God's grace and love in the world to work for justice and peace Yeah to share the good news of Jesus with others It's about bringing a taste of that new creation into the here and now yes living out those values of love Justice and peace in our everyday lives Wow, this has been an incredible journey. We've gone from the brokenness of Genesis to the hope of the prophets, seen those hopes fulfilled in Jesus, and then caught a glimpse of the glorious culmination of God's plan and revelation. It's truly amazing how all the pieces of the story fit together, isn't it? It is. It's like we've been given this panoramic view of God's grand narrative, and it changes everything it does. And the best part is this isn't just some ancient story, right? It's a living reality: God is still at work in the world today, bringing restoration and healing, making all things new, and we get to be a part of it.

What a privilege. That's a powerful truth to carry with us. There's a truth that should fill us with hope and joy no matter what challenges we face, and on that note, I think it's time to wrap up this deep dive. Thank you so much for joining us on this incredible journey through the Bible. It's been a pleasure. We hope you've been inspired and challenged by what we've discovered together. It's been great diving deep with you, and to our listeners, keep exploring. Keep asking questions and keep seeking the truth, because the more we dig into God's word, the more we discover the beauty and wonder of his plan for the world. Until next time