

Dr. Dave Mathewson, Storyline of the Bible,

Session 4, Jesus

6-minute Video Overview

Sponsored by Biblicalelearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

You know, when most of us think about the Bible, we kind of picture a library, right? A whole collection of different books, some history, some poetry. But what if we looked at it in a totally different way? What if, underneath all that diversity, there's actually a single, unified story being told from the very beginning to the very end? Let's dive in and explore that idea. So this is the big question we're tackling.

Is there a real, coherent plot that connects Genesis all the way to Revelation? Well, the authors of the New Testament, they sure thought so. They saw everything that came before as setting the stage for this one, dramatic climax. And trying to understand this single plotline isn't just some academic game.

It actually changes how you see all the individual parts, connecting them into a much bigger story of hope and restoration. So let's see if we can trace that storyline together. All right, every great story needs a setup, and it needs a conflict.

And the Bible's story is no different. It kicks off with this perfect blueprint for how the world should be, which almost immediately gets completely shattered. So in the very first chapters of Genesis, we get this absolutely beautiful picture of how things were meant to be.

You've got humanity in a perfect relationship with God, living in this land of blessing and enjoying his direct presence. You can almost think of the Garden of Eden as this kind of temple garden, a sacred spot where heaven and earth just overlap. This is the ideal.

This is the blueprint. And then, bam, chapter three happens. The complication arrives.

Adam and Eve disobey. And that act breaks the covenant, that core relationship. And the consequence? It's immediate, and it's severe.

They are exiled. They're kicked out of that land of blessing, and they're pushed away from God's presence. And this single act of exile becomes the central problem that the rest of the Bible story is trying to solve.

Now, what's really fascinating here is how this exact pattern of failure just repeats itself. Fast forward a few thousand years to the nation of Israel. God gives them the promised land.

It's like a new garden of blessing. And he gives them a covenant to obey. So what happens? They fail, just like Adam and Eve.

And the consequence is exactly the same. Exile. This repetition just hammers home how deep the problem really runs.

Okay, so the story so far is defined by this massive problem of exile and a broken blueprint. But it's also a story of incredible hope. The Old Testament prophets start to weave together this series of promises, painting a picture of how God is going to fix it all.

And these promises can be traced through five key themes, or you could call them threads. The prophets predicted that God was going to restore his people from exile. He was going to establish a new and unbreakable covenant.

He was going to renew the land, restore his presence through the temple, and finally place a rightful king on the throne forever. And together, these five threads create this powerful, building sense of expectation. And here's the crucial point.

The Old Testament doesn't wrap up with a neat little bow. No, it ends on a massive cliffhanger. It builds all this tension and then just leaves you hanging, asking, okay, so who is going to fulfill all these promises? How is this story ever going to reach its climax? And that question leads us right to the New Testament.

Because the gospel writers, especially a guy named Matthew, come along and they make this radical claim that all five of these threads, this entire grand story, they all find their long-awaited climax in one single person, Jesus. And Matthew does not waste any time trying to connect the dots for you. From his very first sentences, he's making it crystal clear that the story of Jesus isn't some brand new story.

No, it's the fulfillment, the grand finale of that old one. So let's just grab one of those threads, the one about the rightful king. The prophets had promised a king who would sit on the throne of his ancestor, David, and would rule forever.

I mean, this was a huge hope for a people who had completely lost their kingdom. And check this out. This illustrates the point perfectly.

What's one of the very first things Matthew calls Jesus in verse one? The son of David. Boom. Right away, he's picking up that kingship thread and basically shouting, Hey, this is the one.

This is the guy everyone has been waiting for. But Matthew goes even deeper than that. He starts to portray Jesus as the true Israel, as the one who succeeds where the entire nation failed.

And just look at the parallels he draws. Israel was called out of Egypt. So is Jesus.

Israel passed through the Red Sea. Jesus passes through the waters of baptism. Israel was tested for 40 years in the wilderness and failed miserably.

Jesus is tested for 40 days in the wilderness. And he succeeds. It's like he's reliving Israel's entire story and getting it right this time.

And this is a complete game changer. By passing the test, Jesus breaks that cycle of failure and exile that started all the way back in the Garden of Eden. He is presented as the one who can finally pull off God's mission and lead all of humanity out of its spiritual exile.

And that's the core claim, right? That this isn't just about one nation's story anymore. It's the answer to a universal human problem. So what about that temple thread? The idea of God's presence? Well, Matthew does this incredible thing.

He creates these bookends for his entire gospel. At the very beginning, Jesus is named Emmanuel, which literally means God is with us. And at the very end, Jesus promises, and remember, I am with you always.

The message is so clear. God's presence, the temple, it's not a building anymore. It's found in the person of Jesus.

And that new covenant thread? Well, at the last supper, Jesus picks it up himself. He takes a cup, and he says, " This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. He straight up declares that he himself is kicking off that new, restored relationship that the prophets had been dreaming about for centuries.

So you see how it works? All five of these threads- the people, the covenant, the land, the temple, the king- they all converge on Jesus. The climax has arrived. But according to the New Testament writers, the story isn't quite over yet.

And there's this really fascinating tension right here. See, on the one hand, the decisive moment has happened. The kingdom of God has arrived in the person of Jesus.

The new creation was kicked off through his life, his death, and his resurrection. The end of the story has already broken into our present reality. But on the other hand, all we have to do is look around to see that the world is obviously not fully restored yet, right? Theologians often call this the already-but-not-yet tension.

The victory has been won, but the full effects of that victory are still unfolding, and we're still waiting for that final completion. And this tension really explains the very end of Matthew's gospel. Now that Israel's story has reached its ultimate climax in Jesus, the mission just explodes outwards.

The blessings that were once promised to one nation are now meant to flow out to all nations. The story finally becomes truly global. Which, of course, leaves us with a final and pretty provocative thought.

If the gospel writers are right, if this ancient, epic story really did reach its stunning climax 2,000 years ago, what does it mean for us today to find our place in its next unfolding chapter?