

Dr. Kenneth A. Mathews, Genesis, Session 5, Life Outside the Garden: Cain and Abel (Gen.4:1-26)

NotebookLM's 20-min. Podcast

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Right, so get this: we're going to be diving deep today into life outside the Garden of Eden. Ooh, interesting. Yeah, we're talking about the stories of Adam and Eve's descendants, using the teachings of Dr. Kenneth A. Mathews, who is like a big scholar on Genesis, to see how sin and judgment played out among those first generations.

But here's the thing we'll also uncover: where God's grace kind of pops up in all of this. Oh, cool. Get ready for some intense stuff, like the first murder, the mark of Cain, even the rise of polygamy.

Wow. Oh, and you won't believe the wild connection we're about to uncover between geography and theology. I'm intrigued already.

Me too. It's fascinating stuff. Yeah.

It's really remarkable how, even as humanity seems to be going downhill, God never gives up on his creation. It's like he's always working behind the scenes, setting the stage for his plan. Redemption, right?

Exactly. So we start with that first act of worship outside of Eden, Cain and Abel bringing their offerings to God. But what I found really interesting was how Dr. Mathews focuses on the motivation behind those gifts.

Oh, interesting. Not just like the gifts themselves. Okay.

So Cain, he's the farmer, brings some of his harvest, right? Yeah. But Abel the shepherd, he brings the firstborn and the best parts of his flock. Oh, wow.

It's almost like Cain was just going through the motions. Just doing the bare minimum. Exactly.

Well, Abel's offering showed real devotion. Yeah. That makes me wonder: do you think God values the heart behind the offering more than the offering itself? That's a really good question because when you think about it, God doesn't actually need our physical gifts.

Right. He owns everything already. Exactly.

So what he really wants is our love, our devotion. Our best. Yeah.

Our willingness to give him our best. Like Abel. Yeah.

Abel's offering seems like it came from a place of true love and respect, while Cain's maybe not so much. Maybe it lacked that kind of sincerity. And so because of that, God favors Abel's offering.

And Cain's reaction, well, it's not pretty. Oh, no. Instead of reflecting on why his offering wasn't accepted, he just gets consumed by all this anger and jealousy.

Oh, jealousy. And that ultimately leads to, well, the first murder? The first murder. That's heavy.

Yeah. Cain's story is like this huge warning about what happens when we let anger control us. Right.

Like unchecked anger is dangerous. It really is. And what's really interesting is how Dr. Mathews connects this to what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount.

Oh, okay. That holding onto bitterness is just as bad as actually doing violence. Wow.

It's like food for thought. How do we handle our own anger? Right. How do we process those emotions before they take over?

Take over. Yeah. That's important.

So what happens after that first act of violence? Right. Outside the garden. Outside the garden.

Yeah. Well, Cain faces some pretty serious consequences. Yeah.

Okay. A curse that affects both him and the ground. He's exiled from his family.

And he lives with this constant fear of being killed. That's a lot. It is.

And what's significant is how that curse affects the ground that Cain works. Oh, the ground itself. Yeah.

It's like humanity's ability to care for creation is broken. Like sin has messed up everything. Yeah.

Sin has this ripple effect, disrupting the harmony of the natural world. Like it throws everything off balance. Totally.

So sin impacts not just our relationships with God and each other, but also with the whole created order. Wow. That's a lot to think about.

It really is. But here's the thing. Okay.

Even while punishing Cain, God shows him mercy. He doesn't immediately strike him down. Right.

Instead, he puts a mark on Cain to protect him. Oh, wow. And get this, Cain's descendants end up becoming skilled artisans and inventors.

Really? That's amazing. Right? It shows us that God's grace can work in the most unexpected ways. Yeah.

It's not always what we expect. Definitely. It challenges that whole idea that God just writes people off because of their sin.

Right. Like, he gives second chances. Exactly.

He keeps working through them, bringing beauty and ingenuity even out of brokenness. That's a beautiful thought. So Cain is banished, and Adam and Eve have another son, Seth.

Okay. And this time, Eve specifically says- What'd she say? God has granted me another child in place of Abel. Oh, wow.

And it's through Seth's lineage that we see a pattern of worship and devotion. Oh, interesting. A stark contrast to the violence in Cain's line.

Right. Two different paths. And Dr. Mathews argues that it's through this chosen lineage that God's ultimate plan of redemption will unfold.

Okay. That makes sense. And all of this is laid out for us in that genealogy in chapter five.

Those long lists of names. Yeah. That might seem kind of boring at first glance.

Right. They can be hard to follow. But those genealogies were super important to the ancient Israelites.

Oh, really? Yeah. They were all about inheritance, passing down blessings and identity through families. And what I found particularly interesting was how Seth, just like Adam, is described as being made in God's image.

Oh, right. It reinforces this idea that even though humanity messed up- fell into sin. Yeah.

That divine image- that spark of God- remained- is a glimmer of hope. Yeah. Amidst the darkness of a fallen world.

It makes you wonder, what does it really mean to bear God's image, even in a world full of sin? That's a great question. And it leads us to another cool concept Dr. Mathews talks about. Okay.

What's that? He calls it the theology of geography. Theology of geography. Yeah.

He points out that whenever there's an expulsion eastward in Genesis, it symbolizes being pushed away from God's presence. Really? Yeah. Think about it.

The tabernacle faced east. Right. So being driven out in the opposite direction, it represents a spiritual separation.

A consequence of sin. Exactly. Wow.

So geography becomes this symbolic language. It's fascinating. Yeah.

Conveying spiritual truths. It adds a whole new layer of meaning. I never thought of it that way.

It's subtle, but powerful. It really is. It reminds us that even physical places and directions can hold deep spiritual significance.

Absolutely. But as we continue tracing the lives of Adam and Eve's descendants, we see that sin doesn't just stay the same. It does it.

It actually intensifies. Oh, no. We meet Lamech, a descendant of Cain, who brags about his violence and even takes two wives.

Polygamy. Yeah. Lamech's actions are significant for a couple of reasons.

First, his polygamy shows a departure from God's original design for marriage. Right. One man, one woman.

Exactly. Like a growing disregard for God's order in creation. And second, his boasting about violence.

Yeah. It's disturbing. It really is, especially going beyond that principle of an eye for an eye.

It paints a scary picture of how bad sin is getting. Within Cain's family. Yeah.

It's like humanity's on this downward spiral, moving further and further away from God's purpose. That's a scary thought. It is.

So we were just talking about how Lamech's actions really show how sin keeps escalating in the generations after Adam and Eve. Yeah, it's kind of frightening. It makes you wonder what God could even do about such widespread wickedness.

Right. Like, what's the response to that? And that leads us to Genesis 6. Okay. Which introduces this whole idea of the sons of God and their interactions with the daughters of men.

Oh, yeah. That's a mysterious passage. It's caused a ton of debate and different interpretations.

I can imagine. What's your take on this whole sons of God mystery? Oh, it's definitely one of the most puzzling parts of Genesis. Right.

Some scholars think the sons of God were like fallen angels. Fallen angels. Interesting.

While others think they were powerful human rulers. Okay. But Dr. Mathews, he connects them to the lineage of Seth.

Okay. Contrasting them with the daughters of men who'd be from Cain's line. Right.

Right. Remember at the end of chapter four how the descendants of Seth are calling on the name of the Lord? Mm-hmm. While Cain's family is like spiraling into violence and all this wickedness? Yeah.

Two very different paths. Exactly. So this passage is showing these two lines merging.

The righteous and the ungodly. I'm guessing this doesn't end well. You got it.

Oh, boy. The result of this union is a generation of super powerful but incredibly violent individuals. Like worse than before.

Yeah. Much worse. They're known as the Nephilim.

The Nephilim. Okay. They're described as mighty men who were of old men of renown.

So they were famous. In a way, yeah. But it highlights both their strength and their bad reputation.

Oh, I see. It's not just about individual sins anymore. It's like a societal problem.

Exactly. It's about wickedness spreading on a much larger scale. That paints a pretty bleak picture.

It does. Genesis 6.5 says, "...the Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time." Wow. That's intense.

Like pure corruption. Right. So with that level of wickedness, God's decision to bring the flood seems almost inevitable.

It does, doesn't it? But it's crucial to remember that the flood wasn't just about wiping out the wicked. Okay. Dr. Mathews emphasizes that it was also about preserving a remnant.

A remnant of humanity. Exactly. A faithful few.

Okay. So God could start over and fulfill his promises. That makes sense.

And that brings us to Noah. Right. Who was like this beacon of righteousness.

Standing out against all the darkness. Genesis 6.8 says, "...Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord." And the Hebrew word for favor there is chin. Chin.

Okay. It means more than just approval. Oh, interesting.

It implies grace and loving kindness. So Noah's righteousness wasn't just outward obedience. Right.

It was deeper than that. It came from a place of genuine faith and trust. Exactly.

That adds a whole new dimension to his story. It does. And then we get to the instructions for the ark.

That's a big one. This tangible symbol of God's judgment, but also his provision for salvation. It's both sides of the coin.

The ark becomes like a mini version of creation. The microcosm. Yeah.

Preserving representatives of every living thing. Right. It shows that God's plan of redemption includes everyone and everything.

The whole created order. Dr. Mathews points out all these specific details about the ark's construction too. Like what? The dimensions, the materials, the three decks.

Right. It seems like they all have symbolic meaning. He suggests the dimensions reflect a deliberate and harmonious design: 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high.

The gopher wood, he says, points to the ark's durability. Gopher wood? What even is that? We don't know for sure, but it had to be strong. Okay.

And those three decks, they're like the three levels of the cosmos. Heaven, earth, and the underworld. Oh, wow.

They symbolize the ark as this temporary sanctuary. For all of creation. Exactly.

It's not just some random raft. Right. There's clear intentionality there.

Absolutely. The detail shows how much God cares. His forethought, his plan.

He wasn't just saving Noah and his family. He was saving life itself. Exactly.

It's amazing how those little details can reveal so much about God. Yeah, his character and his purposes. But eventually, the floodwaters rise.

Right. And they cover the earth. It's a powerful image.

Destroying those who rejected God's offer of salvation. Sobering, but also hopeful. Because the ark floats above it all.

Carrying the seeds of a new beginning. For humanity and all creation. What an incredible image.

So we left off with that powerful image of the ark riding out the flood. Yeah. Carrying the hope of a new start.

For everyone and everything. Exactly. Okay.

The waters recede, and Noah, his family, and all those animals come out of the ark. What happens next? What happens next, right? Yeah. Well, the first thing Noah does is build an altar.

Oh, okay. And offer sacrifices to God. Makes sense.

It's like this powerful expression of gratitude. For being saved. For being delivered, yeah.

And it's a beautiful way to reconnect with God. After the flood. After the judgment.

The separation of the flood. Like hitting the reset button. Yeah.

A fresh start for humanity. And that's when God makes a covenant with Noah. A covenant? Yeah, a promise.

Okay. But it's not just for Noah and his descendants. Oh, so it's bigger than that? It's for all living creatures.

Wow. This covenant affects everyone and everything. For equal created order.

So what exactly does God promise in this covenant? Well, Genesis 9:9 to 17 spells it out. Okay. And there are a few key parts.

Yeah? First, God promises never to destroy all life with a flood again. Never again? And he puts the rainbow in the clouds as a sign. The rainbow.

Yeah. Like a visible reminder. Of what? Of his faithfulness.

His mercy. I love that he chose a rainbow for them. Me too.

It's so beautiful and universal. It speaks to everyone, no matter what language they speak. A symbol of hope and renewal.

Yeah, exactly. And in this covenant, God also reaffirms his blessing on humanity. Okay.

He tells them to be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth. Hmm. Sounds familiar.

It echoes that original command to Adam and Eve. Right. Back in the garden.

Exactly. God still wants humanity to thrive. To multiply.

To multiply. Take care of creation. To fulfill his purpose.

So it's about more than just surviving. Right. It's about flourishing.

Living a full life. In line with God's plan. What else is in this covenant? There's one more big thing.

Okay. God prohibits the shedding of human blood. Oh, wow.

He says, whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed. For in the image of God has God made man. That's serious.

It is. It's a recognition of how sacred human life is. Why the sudden emphasis on protecting life, you think? Dr. Mathews says it's because we're all created in God's image.

Right. That sets us apart. It's the basis for justice and accountability.

When someone takes a life. God's drawing a line, showing how much each person matters. So this Noahic covenant.

Yeah. It's like a continuation of God's plan. But also a new chapter? Because of humanity's sin? It reaffirms God's blessing, his purpose.

But also sets some new rules. Boundaries. Expectations.

It shows God's faithfulness. His commitment to judgment and mercy. And his love for all creation.

Exactly. But we know the story doesn't end there. Sadly.

Humanity keeps struggling with sin. Even after the flood. Even with this new beginning.

It's like that tendency to rebel is still there. In our hearts. Yeah, deep down.

And in the chapters that follow, we see that cycle again. Sin. Judgment.

Grace. It just keeps playing out. In the lives of Noah's descendants.

It makes you think, doesn't it? About our own lives. About the choices we make. And how God responds.

With both judgment and grace. It's a complex story. But it's our story.

The story of humanity. And it's a story that continues to unfold even today. I'd like to leave you with a question to think about.

Okay. If the Mark of Cain was a sign of God's protection. Even after he killed his brother.

What does that tell us about God's heart? His mercy. His willingness to forgive. Even the worst of sins.

Does his grace extend to everyone? Even those who have done terrible things. And how should that shape our own understanding of justice and forgiveness? Those are questions worth wrestling with. Keep exploring Genesis.

See what other truths you uncover. And until next time. Keep diving deep.