

Dr. Kenneth A. Mathews, Genesis, Session 12, The Covenant Ceremony and Sign, Part 1 (Gen 15:1- 17:27)

NotebookLM's 20-min. Podcast

Biblicalelearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

All right, so are you ready for this? We're going deep today, deep into a lecture series on the book of Genesis by Dr. Kenneth Mathews. Oh yeah, this will be fun. So we're going to be exploring the covenant that God made with Abraham.

Okay. And try to uncover why it still matters to us today, you know, thousands of years later. Right.

And get this, we're going to be talking about a mysterious king-priest named Melchizedek. Okay. Who just shows up out of nowhere, it seems like.

And he might just foreshadow Jesus himself. And then on top of that, we're going to unpack this really dramatic covenant ceremony with animal sacrifices, where Abraham's just watching. Sounds intense.

It's a lot to unpack. Let's jump in. So this isn't just some dusty old story.

No, not at all. The covenant with Abraham touches on some really foundational ideas. Yeah, like what? About faith, righteousness, and even salvation itself.

Huge topics for sure. So this Melchizedek character, I'm really intrigued by him. Yeah, he's fascinating.

So Dr. Mathews describes him appearing to bless Abraham after a battle. Okay. And he calls him King of Righteousness and King of Peace.

It's like something out of a movie. Yeah, it's pretty epic. But who was he really? That's the million-dollar question, right? So the author of the book of Hebrews picks up on this mysterious figure.

Okay. And actually uses Melchizedek as like a model to explain the eternal priesthood of Jesus. Now in ancient Israel, the roles of king and priest were totally separate, but Melchizedek was both, just like Jesus, who was both king and high priest.

So Melchizedek is like this sneak peek at Jesus. Yeah, it's pretty mind-blowing when you think about it. It really is.

And here's where it gets even more interesting. Okay. Melchizedek appears out of nowhere.

There's no family history, no explanation. Then poof, he vanishes just as quickly. The Bible leaves us hanging.

Yeah. Which is why Dr. Mathews suggests we consider, you know, whether this could be like a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus. Oh, wow.

Or maybe like a symbolic figure that represents something even greater. Okay. That's a lot to ponder.

Let's shift gears a bit. Sure. And talk about the covenant ceremony itself.

Okay. Dr. Mathews sets the scene. Abraham refuses to accept riches from the King of Sodom.

And God reassured them and promised him countless descendants and a vast land. The promised land. Right.

What's key here, though, is how Abraham responds to God's promise. The text says, Abraham believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness. Wow.

Okay. Let's unpack that a little bit. What does it mean for God to credit something as righteousness? Yeah, that's a great question.

It's a really pivotal concept. It means that God considered Abraham righteous. Oh.

Not because of anything Abraham did. Okay. But simply because he believed.

He believed in God's promise. It's a hack. So it's not about good deeds or following rules.

Nope. But about having faith in God's promises. Got it.

Wow. And this idea echoes throughout the whole Bible, all the way to the New Testament. Yeah, for sure.

Dr. Mathews points out how the apostle Paul. Uh-huh. Uses Abraham as like the prime example in Romans.

Correct. To argue that salvation is by faith, not by following the law. Huge point.

So this one moment with Abraham sets the stage for a really important theological concept. Couldn't agree more. And then things take another really interesting turn.

Yeah. With the covenant ceremony itself. Okay.

So Dr. Mathews compares it to a ritual that's described in Jeremiah 34, where people would make a covenant by walking between the halves of a sacrificed animal. All right. But in Genesis, it's only God who walks through.

Interesting. Symbolized by a smoking fire pot and a blazing torch. Wow.

Wait, so Abraham doesn't even participate. It's straight. It's so different from what you would expect.

Yeah, totally. And Dr. Mathews points out that this emphasizes God's complete commitment. Okay.

To fulfilling his promises. He's like, God is putting his own reputation on the line. Yeah.

You know. Wow. It's a big deal.

It is. Yeah. Powerful imagery.

God alone moving between those divided sacrifices really drives home the point that he's serious about keeping his word. But what does all this mean for us, you know, thousands of years later? That's the question, isn't it? I mean, if we go back to that idea of God crediting Abraham's faith as righteousness, Dr. Mathews highlights that this happened before circumcision or any laws were given. It was purely about Abraham's trust in God's word.

So are we saying that the way to be right with God has always been about faith, not about following rules or rituals? You're catching on. This establishes a foundational principle that carries through the entire Bible. Righteousness comes from believing in God's promises.

Okay. And Dr. Mathews makes a really compelling case. Yeah.

That this idea stretches all the way from Abraham to the New Testament and the Christian concept of salvation by faith in Jesus. Hold on. Are we saying that Abraham's faith in God's promises is somehow equivalent to a Christian's faith in Jesus? Those seem like pretty different things.

It's not that they're exactly the same, but there's a definite connection. Think back to Melchizedek, the mysterious king priest. Okay.

The book of Hebrews draws a direct line between Melchizedek's priesthood and the priesthood of Jesus. Okay, I'm following. And then Dr. Mathews brings in this incredibly thought-provoking verse from Revelation.

Okay. That describes the Lamb clearly referring to Jesus as being slain from the creation of the world. Whoa.

So you're saying Jesus's sacrifice was, in a sense, already in effect, even back in Abraham's time. Precisely. It suggests that the basis for our relationship with God has always been rooted in his grace revealed through faith.

The way of salvation hasn't changed. It's always been about trusting in God's promises, which find their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus. That's a lot to unpack.

Really? That makes you think about the continuity of faith throughout the entire Bible. But what does that kind of faith look like in our lives today? That's where it gets really practical. Dr. Mathews suggests that if we can tap into that same kind of radical faith that Abraham had, trusting God's promises, even when we can't see how they'll work out, we can experience that same righteousness.

It's not about earning our way to God. It's about surrendering to his grace. So it's like Abraham is the prototype.

Yeah. The model believer for all of us. He shows us what it truly means to live by faith.

Exactly. And that brings us to a really interesting point that Dr. Mathews raises at the end of his lecture. Okay.

He talks about how Abraham lived in tents, always on the move. But he was looking forward to a city with foundations. What does he mean by that? A literal city.

It's more of a powerful metaphor for the ultimate fulfillment of God's promises. Abraham might have been wandering in the wilderness, but his heart was set on a permanent dwelling place, a city built by God. Think about what that might represent for us today.

So if Abraham's living in tents, looking forward to this city with foundations, what does that city represent for us today? I mean, is it heaven? Well, that's the question that Dr. Mathews kind of leaves us with. What is our city with foundations? Is it

heaven? Is it a life lived in alignment with God's will, where we find true security and purpose? I think it's definitely something worth pondering. Maybe it's both.

It really makes you think about our own understanding of faith. How does this ancient covenant with Abraham shape our own journey today? Have you ever felt like you were living in tents, searching for that city with foundations in your own life, like where you truly belong? It's a great question. I think that's the beauty of this whole deep dive.

We're not just learning about these dusty old stories. We're unearthing timeless truths that speak to the very core of who we are and what we believe. This episode has been a journey.

We've encountered a mysterious king priest who foreshadows Jesus, unpacked the power of faith in God's promises, and explored the enduring relevance of the covenant God made with Abraham. And to think it all started with this one lecture series. Right.

I mean, it's amazing to think about how one man's radical faith thousands of years ago laid the groundwork for the salvation offered to all of us through Jesus. So what does this all mean for you? If you're even a little bit intrigued by what we've uncovered, I really encourage you to take this a step further. Crack open the book of Genesis, read those passages for yourself, and see what resonates with you.

Who knows? You might be surprised at the aha moments that are waiting for you. These ancient stories have so much power to unlock profound truths about our faith and our purpose. You know where we fit in God's grand story.

Well, that about wraps it up for this deep dive. We'll be back next time with more intriguing sources and thought-provoking discussions. Until then, keep seeking, keep exploring, and keep the conversation going.