

Genesis 23 and 25

The majority of chapter 23 is all about “Bedouin bargaining” to buy a burial plot for Sarah. Moses takes twenty verses to say, “Sarah died and Abraham bought her a grave.”

Looking back over the life of Sarah, what are some of the words you use to describe her?

Impulsive, submissive, controlling.

Note: Although not without her faults, Sarah was a great woman. She was an example of what a godly woman should be. In two different passages—one in the Old Testament and one in the New—we are told to look to Sarah. God holds her up as a model to emulate. When God considers Sarah, He remembers/emphasizes the good. He doesn’t bring up the Hagar incident. He doesn’t say, “If only Sarah hadn’t.....”

- *“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the Lord: Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn; look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth” (Isaiah 51:1-2).*
- *“Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear” (1 Peter 3:3-6).*

The death announcement of chapter 23 is preceded by a birth announcement in chapter 22. Who was born of interest? Rebekah (22:23). A wife for Isaac had already been provided long before the need had arisen.

Sarah died at what age? 127. Sarah is the only woman in the Bible whose age at death is revealed. **Where was Sarah when she died?** Canaan—within the Promised Land.

The occasion of the death of a loved one should always be viewed as an opportunity to present a Christian witness to the nonbelievers in attendance. What kind of a job did Abraham do in witnessing to the Hittites in the circumstances surrounding the death of Sarah (v. 6)? The significance of Abraham’s actions did not pass these Canaanites by. They knew him as a “mighty prince” or “prince of God.” They addressed him as “My Lord.” They looked favorably upon Abraham. He had laid the groundwork. He had established his reputation and credibility among the outsiders. He didn’t just wait until the day of the funeral. He had been witnessing for several years to these Hittites by his lifestyle.

How does this compare to Abraham’s witness to Pharaoh (chapter 12) and Abimelech (chapter 20)?

Abraham had blown his chances to witness before pagan kings and peoples by his character failures when he passed off Sarah as his sister. However, God is the God of second (or third) chances. This time he pulled it off. Abraham had a credible witness to the Hittites.

Abraham needed to find a place to bury Sarah. The obvious choice of a burial site would be within the Promised Land. After all, God gave the Promised Land to Abraham in the first of two covenants (Genesis 15:17-20). If that’s the case, why did he have to buy something that God had promised He would give to him (v. 16)? Didn’t Abraham own all of it? The land had been promised but he had not taken legal possession of it. **When would he take possession of it?** Abraham never actually took possession of the Promised Land. Scholars believe that approximately 600 years passed between Abraham’s death and the time that the Israelites entered the Promised Land to take possession of it.

What 400-year event happened to Abraham’s descendants during those 600 years? The Israelites were slaves in Egypt. *“Then the LORD said to him, ‘Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years’” (Genesis 15:13).*

Who led the Israelites out of slavery? Moses. **Who would finally lead the Israelites into the Promised Land to take possession of it?** Joshua

This chapter describes the bargaining that is so typical in Eastern lands. At first, the Hittites suggested that Abraham choose any one of their burial places. With overflowing courtesy, Abraham refused and insisted on paying full price for a cave owned by Ephron. At first Ephron offered not just the cave but the entire field as an outright gift, but Abraham understood that this was just a polite gesture. The owner really had no intention of giving it away. When Abraham countered by insisting on his desire to purchase it, Ephron suggested a price of four hundred shekels of silver, pretending that this was a great bargain. Actually, it was an extortionate price, and ordinarily the buyer would have continued to haggle. So, it was a surprise to everyone when Abraham agreed to Ephron's first asking price.

In negotiating for a burial plot, Abraham insisted on paying for the burial plot and paid an exorbitant price for the site (v. 16). What were his motives? He didn't want to be indebted to an unbeliever. He wanted to maintain an honorable and credible witness.

Application: We should be wise in our dealings with nonbelievers. Think in terms of what will happen after the transaction. **Will you still be able to have a credible witness? If you bump into that real estate person or that car salesman, how will they react to seeing you again?**

What other property did Abraham own? None. Interestingly the only part of the Promised Land Abraham himself ever received he bought, and that was a burial cave.

Abraham's descendants made the cave in Ephron's field the family cemetery. Who else was eventually buried at Machpelah? Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Leah, and Jacob (Genesis 49:29-31; 50:12-13).

Who was missing? Rachel – Jacob's wife. **Where was Rachel buried?** Alongside the road on the way to Bethlehem (Genesis 35). She died in childbirth.

In Abraham's culture it was important to be buried with your ancestors in your hometown. What does Abraham's selection of a burial site for Sarah in Canaan say? By determining that Sarah—and later he and his descendants—would be buried in Canaan, Abraham was “staking his claim” in the land which God had promised. That's where his heart was. The land where he would be buried was to be the homeland of his descendants. He is making a statement that there would never be a return to Mesopotamia

Genesis 25:1-11

Who became Abraham's new wife (v. 1)? Keturah. **How many children did she have with Abraham (v. 2)?** Six (1 Chronicles 1:32 identifies them as sons).

Why did Abraham send away the sons of his concubines (v. 6)? They posed a threat to Isaac when it came to the inheritance, the same issue as with Ishmael. Abraham wanted no kids squabbling over the inheritance after his death.

How old was Abraham when he died (v. 7)? 175. **Where was Abraham buried (v. 9)?** The cave of Machpelah. **Why wasn't Ishmael buried there?** The burial plot was reserved for those of the promise/the covenant.

Who buried Abraham (v. 9)? Isaac and Ishmael. **Ishmael came back for the funeral in spite of being kicked out of the camp by Abraham. What does that say about him?** He had great respect for Abraham. Ishmael knew he was loved by Abraham. He desired to honor Abraham appropriately.

Application: Honor your parents no matter what their shortcomings are. This is an unconditional command. (Exodus 20). **In a practical sense, what are some of the ways we can honor our parents? What if they have died?**

What did God do after Abraham died (v. 11)? He blessed Isaac just as He had promised (17:19).

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