

Genesis 22:20-23:20 – The Promise Extends Beyond Death

NOTE: We will look briefly at the end of chapter 22. This is the genealogy of Abraham's brother Nahor (The other son of Terah – see Gen. 11:27). This genealogy shows us that Abraham's ancestral home was still in the east (Mesopotamia.) Notice that while Abraham has struggled for years with no children as he waited on the child of promise, the brother of Abraham bore many children. One of these descendants is a woman named Rebecca. She will become very important in the story of the promised seed. The genealogy shows that God is not just in control of Abraham's line, He is at work everywhere to bring about His promise.

I. Abraham Experiences the Loss of Sarah (1-2)

A. Sarah Dies In Canaan (1-2a)

1. Sarah Dies at Age 127 (1)

- a. This puts Isaac at about 37 years old (See 17:17)
- b. This is 62 years after entering Canaan (See 12:4)

2. Sarah Dies in Hebron (2a)

- a. Hebron is the same place where we saw Abraham build an altar near the oaks of Mamre (See 13:18)
- b. Sarah has spent her life waiting on God's promise of the land (12:7; 13:15; 13:17; 15:18; 17:18) – Now she has died and they own no land at all
- c. Abraham must realize now that the fulfillment of the promise won't come without suffering and it won't be fulfilled in his lifetime. The promise extends beyond death.

B. Abraham Mourns For Sarah (2b)

1. Abraham Grieves for His Wife

- a. They have been married for over 100 years
- b. They have been through good and bad together
- c. They had seen God's establish His promises
- d. Abraham is weeping by Sarah's body (see v.3)

2. Even The Family of Promise is Not Exempt From The Fall

- a. Even the Lord's chosen and blessed will suffer and die
- b. The creation's fall still takes its toll on God's people

C. Suffering and Loss Will Come Before The Promise's Fulfillment

II. Abraham Purchases Land For Sarah's Burial (3-16)

A. Abraham's First Discourse With the Hittites (3-6)

1. Abraham Seeks To Buy A Burial Ground (3-4)

a. Abraham Rises From Mourning (3)

- i. Abraham is violently weeping and crying beside Sarah's body
- ii. Abraham rises from mourning decisively – He will bury her in the land of Canaan
- iii. Abraham decides to purchase a piece of land for a family burial ground

- Ancient people cherished their ancestral burial ground.
 - Being buried with one's "fathers" indicated honor and dignity
 - Later in Egypt, Jacob will insist that his bones be brought to Canaan to be buried so that the promises God made to Abraham would be honored (See 49:29-32; 50:24-25)
- iv. Abraham refuses to bury Sarah in his ancestral home (with Nahor in Mesopotamia). Abraham will bury Sarah in Canaan. This is now his homeland.
- Abraham is trusting in the promise that his descendants will be given the land
 - Abraham will purchase a small piece of land because he believes his descendants will indeed possess the land – when they arrive, their family burial ground will already be there.
 - Sarah's death makes Abraham look beyond death to the promises of God
- v. Abraham will begin negotiations to purchase a piece of land
- b. Abraham Admits His Status To Hittites (4a)
- i. The sons of Heth are the ancient Hittites
 - ii. Abraham admits that he is nothing more than a stranger and sojourner in the land
 - Even after 25 years, Abraham owns no land
 - He is a nomadic stranger in the land
 - He has built altars to symbolize his possession of the land – but he actually owns none of it
- c. Abraham Asks For Land To Bury His Dead (4b)
- i. Abraham asks the Hittites (the land owners) to give him ownership of a piece of land to bury his dead
 - ii. Abraham wants to legally purchase land. He is not asking for a gift (we will see that in this chapter)
2. The Hittites Agree To Help Abraham (5-6)
- a. The Hittites Recognize Abraham's True Status (5-6a)
- i. They recognize Abraham is a "mighty prince" (lit. a prince of God)

- ii. Just as Abimelech saw God's hand aiding everything he does, they recognize that Abraham is great and prosperous.
 - b. The Hittites Offer To Aid Abraham (6b)
 - i. They offer Abraham the choicest of their tombs
 - ii. Basically, they agree to deal with Abraham
 - NOTE: Some people think they are being deceptive with Abraham and will attempt to give him land so they might legally reclaim it later
- B. Abraham's Second Discourse With the Hittites (7-11)
1. NOTE: Here the negotiations begin – notice the repeated offers, counter offers, and Abraham's repeated bowing – These indicate a formal legal transaction is being negotiated.
 2. Abraham Offers To Buy The Machpelah Cave (7-9)
 - a. Abraham Bows Before The Hittites (7)
 - b. Abraham Desires Ephron's Cave At Machpelah (8-9a)
 - i. Abraham obviously already has the burial site picked out
 - ii. Abraham already knows the name of the man who owns the cave and the field (Machpelah probably encompassed the field and cave)
 - c. Abraham Desires To Pay The Full Price (9b)
 3. Abraham Is Offered The Land For Free (10-11)
 - a. Ephron Sat With The Elders Of The City (10)
 - i. This shows that Abraham has offered to pay the full price to Ephron in front of the city elders
 - ii. The elders sitting at the gate is where business and civil matters were conducted in ancient cities
 - iii. Abraham wants legal and uncontested ownership of the plot of land
 - b. Ephron Offers To Give The Land For Free (11)
 - i. Ephron counter offers to give the land to Abraham – this could be a remarkable act of generosity or a bargaining ploy
- C. Abraham's Third Discourse With The Hittites (12-16)
1. Abraham Counter-Offered To Purchase The Land (12-13)
 - a. Abraham refuses to be given the land – He bows again symbolizing another counter offer
 - b. Abraham will not be "given" it – he will pay the full price for the field
 - i. To ensure that he has a lasting possession of the family burial ground – Abraham must legally purchase and possess the field

- ii. He will not take the chance of being “given” the land
- 2. Ephron Politely Reveals The Value of The Land (14-15)
 - a. Ephron states the value of the land as 400 shekels of silver
 - b. Ephron may be slyly revealing the price or he may be sincerely stating that the value is not worth strife between the two
- 3. Abraham Pays Ephron The Full Price (16)
 - a. Regardless of Ephron’s motive, Abraham will not take the chance.
 - b. With no more explanation, Abraham weighs out the full price and pays for the field
- D. Abraham Trusts That The Promise Extends Beyond His Death
- III. Abraham Establishes His Family Burial Ground (17-20)
 - A. Abraham Rightfully Purchases The Land (17-18)
 - 1. Abraham now owns a small piece of the promised land
 - 2. This is the only land Abraham will own at the time of his death
 - 3. Abraham is looking forward to the promise of owning the land – and he is preparing for the promise even after his death
 - B. Abraham Buries Sarah On His Own Land In Canaan (19-20)
 - 1. Abraham establishes the burial ground for his descendants
 - 2. Abraham will be buried here (25:9)
 - 3. Isaac will be buried here (35:27-29)
 - 4. Leah and Rebecca will be buried here (49:30-31)
 - 5. Jacob will be buried here (50:13)