

THE DEATH OF SARAH (Genesis 23)

OPENING THOUGHT

Our journey through the life of Abraham is coming to an end as we study today the penultimate chapter of his life. Thus far, we have witnessed all the major events of the man of faith's life. We have seen his perpetual walk of faith with God. We have read the promises that God has given to him: that he would have a son through Sarah, that his descendants would be a vast multitude, and that he would inherit the land of Canaan. God has fulfilled the first of the three promises, but it is becoming increasing apparent that the other two will not be completed during Abraham's lifetime.

As we witness Abraham's story drawing to its end, we now read of Sarah's death. She lived 127 years, which would have made Abraham 137 at this time. Abraham's goal throughout the chapter is to secure a piece of property for burying his wife. In order to do this, he engages in a rather lengthy discourse with the Hittites, the people who were then living in Abraham's land. Eventually, Abraham is able to purchase a piece of land with a cave for burying Sarah.

To be honest, I find chapters like this one very interesting. The death of Sarah is obviously significant for Abraham, but why does it spend so much time focused upon Abraham buying a piece of property? The land in question here is important because it is a piece of the land that God promised to give to Abraham's offspring. Though Abraham would not come into possession of the promised land in his lifetime, this piece of it served as a guarantee that God would give to his offspring the promised inheritance.

SUGGESTED VERSES FOR MEMORIZATION & MEDITATION

- The field and the cave that is in it were made over to Abraham as property for a burying place by the Hittites. (Genesis 23:20)
- For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. (Hebrews 11:10)
- In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:13-14)

READ VERSES 1-2 AND DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING

1. After being at Abraham's side throughout his journey, we now learn that Sarah has died, and Abraham weeps and mourns for her. Why, even though we hope in heaven, is mourning still an appropriate response for a Christian to have during the death of a loved one?

READ VERSES 3-16 AND DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING

2. Abraham seeks to buy a piece of land with a cave from the Hittites for burying Sarah. Upon speaking with him, the Hittites declare that he is a "prince of God." In what ways does this reflect how nonbelievers should view Christians? How do Abraham's actions serve to build respect between himself and the Hittites?
3. Though God promised to Abraham all of Canaan, he still lived as a foreigner in that land, knowing that God would be faithful to fulfill his promise. How is this similar to the Christian life of being in the world but not of the world?

offspring would receive the full promise of God. What does this reveal about Abraham's hope and faith beyond his life? How is Abraham's land here similar to the Holy Spirit that now testifies within us?

ACTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Consider how non-Christians see your life and in what ways you can display Christ with your lifestyle.
- Consider your hope and desire for heaven. Do you desire heaven for the sake of pleasure or because God is there? Pray then for a greater love and desire for the LORD.

READ VERSES 17-20 AND DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING

4. Abraham finally owns a piece of the land that God promised to him 62 years ago. This serves as a guarantee that Abraham's