

## **Abraham and Sarah Their Hope Gen. 23**

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Well, today, I like this turn to Genesis chapter 23. We're going to look at Abraham and Sarah and their hope. They had a hope that went beyond the grave. Now, here in this chapter, we're gonna see that Abraham grieves for Sarah. Have you ever known couples who have been married together for a long time? 60 years, 70 years.

Some people actually do know each other, married together for that long. One couple was married for 89 years in North Carolina. And, that's about the longest on record, I think, here in the United States, but that's a long time to be married together.

I imagine there are so many memories that have gone, that have left them. How could you remember all those things? Surely, there are things that they would remember because they would rehearse those memories and their stories. And so they would say them over and over again, and eventually it becomes more of a permanent memory. But a lot of things, you know, we don't, we can't remember day by day. Now, Barb and I have been married 49 years, and in a few months, we're gonna be celebrating our 50th anniversary. When we were married, you know, we had no idea what life would be like 50 years later. We do now. When people have been married, it's been a good marriage, and one of their partners passes away, there is a natural grief that occurs, and Chuck Swindoll speculates that Abraham and Sarah may have been married for 112 years.

With love comes a healthy grief. Because we are created in the image of God, we can love; having the ability to love, we can grieve when that love is lost. You know, this reminds me, of course, of the shortest verse in the Bible, in John chapter 11:35: "Jesus wept."

Why did he weep? Because he grieved for his friend Lazarus. He grieved along with Mary and Martha. Jesus knew what death meant for his friends. He knew what death meant for his disciples. He knew what death meant for those who were following his teaching. He knew what death meant for humanity. He came that he might give eternal life. And that eternal life is a gift.

But he himself would have to die. And he did so on the cross. And so when he wept in John 11, he was experiencing the normal human emotion of grief. And for those who grieve, we grieve with them. We must do that when people find their loved ones have passed away, and we need to grieve. And here, in Genesis chapter 23, we find that Abraham grieves for his wife.

All right, let's read it. Now, Sarah lived 127 years. One hundred twelve of those years were with Abraham. If Swindell's calculation is correct, she married Abraham when she was 15, which was common practice at the time. Abraham would have been 25? And they've been married a long time.

1 Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; these were the years of the life of Sarah. 2 So Sarah died in Kirjath Arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.

3 Then Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying, 4 "I am a foreigner and a visitor among you. Give me property for a burial place among you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight."

You know, there comes a time when we have to let the body go back to the earth. It doesn't do us any good to keep the body around the house, because it's just gonna keep breaking down. So, it's a lot better for us and for them to return to the ground, because that's what God intended. He wanted the bodies to return to the earth, where they would be recycled again.

5 And the sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him, 6 "Hear us, my lord: You are a mighty prince among us; bury your dead in the choicest of our burial places. None of us will withhold from you his burial place, that you may bury your dead."

Abraham has been dealing with these people in business for a very long time, is very aware of what we call haggling, and has a goal in mind: to actually own the burial place so he can control what happens there. He is later going to be buried there along with his children and grandchildren.

7 Then Abraham stood up and bowed himself to the people of the land, the sons of Heth. 8 And he spoke with them, saying, "If it is your wish that I bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and meet with Ephron the son of Zohar for me, 9 that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he has, which is at the end of his field. Let him give it to me at the full price, as property for a burial place among you."

10 Now Ephron dwelt among the sons of Heth; and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the presence of the sons of Heth, all who entered at the gate of his city, saying, 11 "No, my lord, hear

me: I give you the field and the cave that is in it; I give it to you in the presence of the sons of my people. I give it to you. Bury your dead!"

Now, they didn't actually have coins at the time of Abraham. What they had was pieces of valuable silver, pieces of valuable metal that they used for their coin, and it was weighed, and it, you know, so much weight gave it value.

12Then Abraham bowed himself down before the people of the land; 13and he spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, "If you will give it, please hear me. I will give you money for the field; take it from me and I will bury my dead there."

14And Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him, 15 "My lord, listen to me; the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver. What is that between you and me? So bury your dead." 16And Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed out the silver for Ephron which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, currency of the merchants.

So that's what he has here. He has silver pieces he wants to give to these people. Now, Abraham even answered, saying to him, My Lord, listen to me, the land is worth 400 shekels of silver.

Haggling over the price was always on the mind of Ephraim and on the mind of Abraham. Eventually, Abraham knew the cost would come out. And he didn't want to be "beholden", as they would say in the South, "beholden to somebody." The land would be under the control of others, which could be taken back. He wanted to own it himself and have legal rights on that day. And we're going to find out why just a minute.

When we look in the book of Hebrews, we'll see why Abraham wanted that land. That had a specific value, which was quite expensive. And Abraham bought it.

17So the field of Ephron which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field and the cave which was in it, and all the trees that were in the field, which were within all the surrounding borders, were deeded 18to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who went in at the gate of his city.

19And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of

Canaan. 20So the field and the cave that is in it were deeded to Abraham by the sons of Heth as property for a burial place.

Now, Abraham did this, okay? But it was an inheritance. So turn to Hebrews 11. And we're going to find out in verses 8-10.

8By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Why did Abram do this? Now, by faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out to the place where he would receive an inheritance, went out, not knowing where he was going.

So when he came to the land, when he was called out from the land of Ur, and they made the travel to the land of Canaan, Abram left his father. And his father died, and Abraham led his people into the land of Canaan. Uh, he would live that life in tents.

And that's what tells us here. So Abraham went out; he didn't know where he was going. By faith, he went to the land of the promise, a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs of the same promise.

For he waited for a city, whose foundations, a builder and maker, is God. Now, that's why he bought this property. Abraham lived in tents. He was looking for a time when he would be with God, in God's city, without foundations, whose builder and maker was God.

13These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

Now, God gave Abraham the whole land.

These all died in faith, not having received the promises.

But having seen them afar off, were assured of them, embraced them, and confessed them as they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, for those who

say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly, if they had called to mind that country which had come out, they would have an opportunity to return.

So God gave Abraham, and he promised the land. We already learned in Genesis chapters 12, 13, 15, and 17 that the land was promised to Abraham. And his descendants would be in that land. It would take another 400 years, but they would get there. So Abraham bought this property as part of the inheritance, and there he, Sarah, and some of his children were buried.

Now, it tells us here in Hebrews: Now, they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore, God is not ashamed, to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. So here, at the very moment of Sarah's death and burial, we see Abraham acting on the promise that God would give him the land. He buys a piece of it as an inheritance of the promise that will eventually be fulfilled. But he's also doing something else. He has a firm belief that both he and Sarah are going to another place not built by the hands of man, but by God.

They're going to be with God. They had to believe in life after death. And turn with me, if you would, to verse 35 of Hebrews 11.

And here we have this particular truth. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.

You see, not only was Abraham looking forward to the resurrection, but a whole lot of other people who lived for God were, too. And that resurrection is a tremendous promise, and that's why when we grieve, we grieve with hope. Now, turn over to something that Paul wanted you to know.

Okay? In 1 Thessalonians chapter 4.

13But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in

the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18Therefore, comfort one another with these words.

The Bible tells us 1st Corinthians, 2nd Corinthians, chapter 5.

To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. So we know that when we die, we go to be with the Lord.

But our bodies stay here on earth. And that's going to be quite a miracle, by the way. It's going to be quite a miracle. 1 Corinthians chapter 15<sup>1</sup> It happens in a twinkling of an eye. And we find that this will happen. Therefore, comfort one another with these words.

For 1 Thessalonians 5:18, we're to comfort people with the fact that there is a resurrection, that our bodies are not; that's not the final statement. We will go to be with the Lord, and then our bodies will be resurrected, and they will be made into eternal bodies.

Okay? And Paul talks about that in 1st Corinthians chapter 15. They will become eternal bodies made to last forever. The bodies we have now, as anybody who gets older realizes, these bodies are wearing out. But the body that God's going to give us in the resurrection is going to be an eternal body. So we're to comfort one another with these words.

Inheritance is also discussed in Romans. For. So I've turned to Romans chapter 4:16-25

16Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all 17(as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; 18who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be." 19And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. 20He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, 21and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. 22And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness."

23Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, 24but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 15:50-58 Let the truth of God's word sink in to give you the blessed hope of eternal life.

Jesus our Lord from the dead, 25 who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.

So that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, remember, Abraham believed God, and God accounted unto him righteousness. Well, we come to God by faith.

You know? It's a gift of God. It's not by works.

We don't have anything to boast about. It's a gift. And we come to God by faith, and he saves us.

For "the just shall live by faith," "for whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." You know, this is by faith. And we are children by faith.

All right? So we're in this. Verse. 16, let's see, 16 at the last part of it.

Who is the father of all, as it's written? I have made you a father of many nations.

Now, Abraham's gonna have more kids after Sarah dies. We'll talk about that next week. He's a father of many nations, not just the Jewish people, but the people of Ismael and the people of his other sons. One of them was Midian, and we'll find Midian in the story of Joseph. So there are many nations from which Abraham will come in the presence of him who believed God, who lives to the dead and calls those things that do not exist, or the dead, which is contrary to hope. It was thought that he became the father of many nations.

So your descendants shall be, and not weaken faith. He would not consider his own body as already dead, since he was about 100 years old when he had Isaac. And Sarah was 90, and the deadness of the womb, he did not waver in the promise through unbelief, but he was strengthened by faith to the glory of God.

And being fully convinced that he had promised, he was able to perform. Therefore, it was accounted unto him as righteousness. So, what happens in Genesis 21 goes back to what happened to Abraham in Genesis 15. For it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It will be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised Jesus from the dead. Who was delivered up because of our offenses and was raised because of our justification.

Now, I could talk a lot about this particular section. I want to point out that Abraham had a promise he believed in, and he was talking not just about the land but also about eternal life. And the resurrection. And that's something that is, in faith, the biggest application that we could ever have.

Now, in the Old Testament, there are some really key verses for us to look at. Okay?

Job, 19:26, after my skin is destroyed, this I know. That in my flesh, I shall see God.

Psalms 17:15. As for me, I will see your face in righteousness. I will be satisfied when I awake.

Remember, the dead are described as sleeping. They will be alive and see Christ.

One of the best hymn writers of all time, Fanny Crosby, was born blind. Okay? And she had a belief: she was pleased to be blind, because the first face she would ever see was that of Christ. And she wrote songs about it. Great songs.

Saved by Grace - "And I shall see Him face to face,"

Now we have this promise.

Jesus said,

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. You see, Christ is the resurrection." Jn. 11:35

And if we believe in him, we will be raised, and that's a wonderful promise.

Now, turn to Isaiah 26:19.

Your dead shall live, together with my dead body, they shall arise, awake and sing, you who dwell in the dust, for your dew is like the dew of the herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. The body goes back to the ground.

It becomes earth again, but God will raise it. And the body will be resurrected and miraculously changed by the word of the Lord in a moment.

Be wonderfully changed. And these were the hopes of the people in the Old Testament. Now, the Bible continues to give us more and more truth about the resurrection.

It gives us more truth about what it was, what heaven is gonna be like. It gives us insight into paradise. "Abraham's bosom," the place of the dead in the Old Testament, where people were recognized, and they were in a place of blessing. There was also a horrible place called Hades, and the separation between the two was huge. You know, one of my biggest hopes is that anyone listening or reading would be. I want to meet you in heaven. I would like for you to be able to go to heaven. And I'd like you to join me.

Now, sometimes people joke about them and their friends as they go to hell, but it won't be any joke, not at all. It's so easy to think about how we can turn to Christ by faith, be saved, and believe in him. It's remarkable, you know, we know that Christ died for us on the cross. We know that he was buried. His body was buried. We also know that he was resurrected.

And when God resurrected him, it proved to you and me that the work he did on the cross was practical to take away our sin. And if we put our faith in him, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we can be saved because God raised him from the dead, and Jesus' resurrection from the dead is proof that his salvation is true and can be depended on. And if we put our faith in Christ, who is our Savior, who died for our sins, and we trust in Christ as our Savior, God gives us eternal life.

For God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believed in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

If you put your faith in Christ,<sup>2</sup> he gives you eternal life. And even though you die and your body goes to the earth, you will go to be with God in heaven.

1 Cor. 5:6-8

6So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. 7For we walk by faith, not by sight. 8We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

And later, God is gonna resurrect that body. Wherever it is, and he's gonna recreate it into an eternal body, and that body is gonna be recognized, and you're gonna have that body forever. It's made for heaven. It's made for the new city. It's made for the new earth.

You know, it's made for us to live eternally, utterly different than the body we have now, in many ways. But there it is, and all you have to do is put your trust in Him.

Now, some of the applications are obviously phenomenal. Now, Daniel said, in many of those who sleep in the dust, the earth will awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. I don't want you to choose death and judgment.

We know of the resurrection. We know of the resurrection appearances. Jesus actually appeared to 500 people<sup>3</sup> at one time. He appeared to the

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. 15:3-4 the good news

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. 15:5-8

apostles; he appeared to the believers. He appeared to James. He appeared to Paul, you know, people saw the resurrected Christ.

And it's so essential for us to understand that. So the gospel is empty without talking about the resurrected Christ.

The meaning of baptism in the Lord's Supper is visibly connected to the dying and resurrection of Christ. We have hope in the face of grief and sickness. Oh, we live in a fallen world, and there are all kinds of things that we have to deal with, but we can live in hope.

Johnny Erickson Tata became paralyzed as a teenager. She was a beautiful girl, very athletic, very talented. She dove into the water, and her head got hit at the bottom of the water. She broke her neck, and from then on, she was paralyzed from the neck down. She was able to move her shoulders to move her neck, and from that movement, she was able to simulate movement with her hands and body. She learned how to paint with her mouth. She painted very nice artwork, and she has been a spokesperson for people with disabilities ever since.

You know, she's looking forward to her resurrected body. But she's still living in hope. Now, the proof of that is, she's still alive in her 70s.

She's older than I am, she's still living for God, she still has the joy, and she's still walking with the Lord. And despite her disability, she's lived a very long time, and I think a lot of that has to do with her faith. And her optimism that Jesus is going to give her a new body, and she's going to be with the Lord. And she's been enjoying fellowship with God here on earth for, you know, 60-some years. It's a great story, but it's true. So anyway, whatever problem we have, we have hope.

In our mission, we have boldness. We don't, we're not afraid of those who may kill the body. Okay?

In discipleship, it causes us to walk in the newness of life. We can walk in faith. We can walk according to the new man that God has created when we got saved.

And we can walk in that life, in the life of Christ, in the life of spiritual life, where we were spiritually dead. Now we're alive, we can walk in that life. We can walk in it.

And that's, you know, tremendous. Okay, we have hope. We can go through what we have to go through. Knowing that there is a resurrection, knowing that we're gonna be with Christ.

These things are a sure thing. And it's precisely what we need, even for those of us who are getting older. The resurrection is the kind of truth that we need to spend time with. Heaven is a real place, and we're gonna be there.

So let's take that to heart today. Yes. Abraham grieved. But Abraham believed the promise about the land. His descendants mean more than the stars in the sky. And of course, we're talking about the visible stars. In his mind, you know, we can see about 4000 stars at night that are visible to us. And the whole idea is that Abraham's gonna have countless descendants.

Now, with a telescope, we have seen millions and millions and billions of more stars. Far beyond what ancient man, even thought, were up in the sky, we have seen more. We haven't even seen it all yet.

You know, anyway, it just tells us that Abraham had many descendants and believed in God. But he also believed that when he died, he would be with the Lord. The place where the Old Testament people went was called Abraham's Bosom, according to the Lord in Luke. Okay, you can look that story up in Luke, I believe you'll see it in Luke 16. But Abraham's bosom.<sup>4</sup>

And Abraham is recognized. You know? He's been with the Lord since Jesus was down here on earth, where he came as a baby, and he lived his life for 33 or 36 years. Abraham saw Jesus in heaven. The pre-incarnate Christ rejoiced to see what he was seen with Jesus. And before Abraham was, Jesus was. You know, and so Abraham had a tremendous promise, not just of the land, not just of the people, but of the resurrection and eternal life. He lived a long time. But he's been living with God now. Now, for over 4,000 years, he's been with God.

That's just a spec, you know, that's hard, you know, it's hardly measurable in relationship to eternity. But there is a resurrection. So take that with you as our main application.

Where you're at, with whatever you're going through in your life, realize you have hope.

Lord, thank you for these wonderful truths. Please help us apply it. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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<sup>4</sup> Lk. 16:19-31 Read it, what does it teach you about life after death?