

# Genesis - Lesson 23

Genesis Chapter 23

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Memory verses for this week: *Psa 40:3 And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.*

**Introduction:** We continue our study on the book of Genesis this week as we cover the death of Sarah.

## I. Sarah's Death

*Gen 23:1 And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: these were the years of the life of Sarah.*

*Gen 23:2 And Sarah died in Kirjatharba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.*

We see God's providence at work. Sarah died at 127 years of age which would have made Isaac 37 years of age. Sarah was 90 when he was born if you remember our lesson a few week's ago. This is the only instance in the Old Testament where a woman's age is disclosed.

After a lifetime of companionship, Abraham had great sorrow. After their many years together, we should understand that there would be great sorrow. When you first marry, there is great love. But after years of faithful companionship, there is a bond that is hard to explain. A great loss was felt by Abraham.

## II. The Burial Place Obtained

*Gen 23:3 And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying,*

*Gen 23:4 I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a buryingplace with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.*

*Gen 23:5 And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him,*

*Gen 23:6 Hear us, my lord: thou art a mighty prince among us: in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead.*

Abraham makes a request of the children of Heth. He is living in a land where he has no burying place for his loved one. Being the stranger and sojourner, Abraham presents his need.

*Heb 11:11 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who*

*had promised.*

*Heb 11:12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.*

*Heb 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

*Heb 11:14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.*

*Heb 11:15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.*

*Heb 11:16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.*

The children of Heth respected Abraham as true man of God. The mighty prince is offered a place in any of their family burial plots. "Prince" here comes from the root word "elect."

### **III. Abraham Bargains With Ephron The Hittite**

*Gen 23:7 And Abraham stood up, and bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth.*

*Gen 23:8 And he communed with them, saying, If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight; hear me, and intreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar,*

*Gen 23:9 That he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which is in the end of his field; for as much money as it is worth he shall give it me for a possession of a buryingplace amongst you.*

*Gen 23:10 And Ephron dwelt among the children of Heth: and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the audience of the children of Heth, even of all that went in at the gate of his city, saying,*

*Gen 23:11 Nay, my lord, hear me: the field give I thee, and the cave that is therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee: bury thy dead.*

In verse 9, Abraham desires to buy the cave of Machpelah. Ephron offers to give it unto him for no cost. This was the method followed in those days. He really did not expect Abraham to take it as a gift. After he refuses, Ephron could then ask an high price for it.

*Gen 23:12 And Abraham bowed down himself before the people of the land.*

*Gen 23:13 And he spake unto Ephron in the audience of the people of the land, saying, But if thou wilt give it, I pray thee, hear me: I will give thee money for the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there.*

*Gen 23:14 And Ephron answered Abraham, saying unto him,*

*Gen 23:15 My lord, hearken unto me: the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver; what is that betwixt me and thee? bury therefore thy dead.*

*Gen 23:16 And Abraham hearkened unto Ephron; and Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver, which he had named in the audience of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant.*

Ephron tried again to give the burial place to Abraham, but he refuses and the price is settled there in verse 16. Abraham insists upon dealing correctly in financial matters. He is a good example in this for us to follow. We are commanded as Christians to speak clearly and to be honest with our dealings with our fellow man.

*Jas 5:12 But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.*

*Pro 11:1 A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.*

*Pro 11:2 When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.*

*Pro 11:3 The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.*

*Pro 11:4 Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.*

Abraham had some failures as all men do in their lives. But he was a good example of Godly living in many instances.

- a. He was fair when separating from Lot.
- b. He was correct in refusing the gift of the king of Sodom.
- c. He was honest in giving the tithe to Melchizedek.
- d. He is careful here in not getting in debt to the Canaanites. The value of the land according to Ephron was probably an inflated price. Omri bought the whole hill of Samaria for 6,000 shekels of silver. (2 Talents)

*1Ki 16:23 In the thirty and first year of Asa king of Judah began Omri to reign over Israel, twelve years: six years reigned he in Tirzah.*

*1Ki 16:24 And he bought the hill Samaria of Shemer for two talents of silver, and built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, after the name of Shemer, owner of the hill, Samaria.*

Secular records show that whole villages were bought in those days for 100 to 1,000 shekels. However, Abraham pays the price with no bargaining or complaint. There may be a lesson in this about our financial dealings also.

#### **IV. Sarah Is Buried in the Family Tomb**

*Gen 23:17 And the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field, and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the borders round about, were made sure*

*Gen 23:18 Unto Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of his city.*

So in the field of Ephron, they found a burying place for Sarah and the transaction for the family tomb was completed. In verse 17, we find the legal description of the land given. The bargain was sealed before legal witnesses.

*2Co 13:1 This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.*

Matthew Henry had several good comments about the death of Sarah.

We have here, 1. Sarah's age, Gen 23:1. Almost forty years before, she had called herself old, Gen 18:12. Old people will die never the sooner, but may die the better, for reckoning themselves old. 2. Her death, Gen 23:2. The longest liver must die at last. Abraham and Sarah had lived comfortably together many years; but death parts those whom nothing else could part. The special friends and favorites of Heaven are not exempted from the stroke of death.

She died in the land of Canaan, where she had been above sixty years a sojourner. 3. Abraham's mourning for her; and he was a true mourner. He did not only perform the ceremonies of mourning according to the custom of those time, as the mourners that go about the streets, but he did sincerely lament the great loss he had of a good wife, and gave proof of the constancy of his affection to her to the last. Two words are used: he came both to *mourn* and to *weep*.

His sorrow was not counterfeit, but real. He came to her tent, and sat down by the corpse, there to pay the tribute of his tears, that his eye might affect his heart, and that he might pay the greater respect to the memory of her that was gone. Note, It is not only lawful, but it is a duty, to lament the death of our near relations, both in compliance with the providence of God, who thus calls to weeping and mourning, and in honour to those to whom honour is due. Tears are a tribute due to our deceased friends. When a body is sown, it must be watered. But we must not sorrow as those that have no hope; for we have a good hope through grace both concerning them and concerning ourselves.

*Gen 23:19 And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre: the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan.*

*Gen 23:20 And the field, and the cave that is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a buryingplace by the sons of Heth.*

Verse 19 gives record that Sarah was buried in the cave of the field of Machpelah.

Not only was Sarah buried there, but the following were buried here also: Abraham, Gen. 25:9; Isaac, Gen. 35:27,29; Rebekah and Leah, Gen. 49:31; Jacob, Gen. 50:13.

Albert Barnes in his commentary said this about the buying of the burial place.

Abraham now makes a specific offer to purchase the field of Machpelah from Ephron the son of Zohar. "Treat for me" - deal, use your influence with him. Abraham approaches in the most cautious manner to the individual with whom he wishes to treat. "The cave of Machpelah." The burial of the dead in caves, natural and artificial, was customary in this Eastern land. The field seems to have been called Machpelah (doubled) from the double form of the cave, or the two caves perhaps communicating with each other, which it contained. "For the full silver." Silver seems to have been the current medium of commerce at this time.

## **V. Spiritual Lessons From Abraham's Conduct In This Chapter.**

1. Abraham believed in immortality. This is evident in his care for the dead. If death ended it all, what difference would it make?

2. He believed that God would grant his posterity to inherit this land. There is a mosque built over this burying site today. Of course we do not know for sure that it is the exact same place in Hebron.

3. Abraham also believed in a blessed future state for the righteous. His hope was not merely here on this earth, but he looked for a city whose builder and maker is God.

## **VI. Some Types in Last Weeks Through Next week's lesson**

Gen. Chapter 22-The offering of Isaac is a type of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Gen. Chapter 23-The death of Sarah is a type of the death of Israel nationally.

Gen. Chapter 23-Sarah buried in the midst of the children of Heth, is a type of Israel buried among the Gentiles, awaiting their restoration by resurrection.

Gen. Chapter 24-The servant is a type of the Holy Spirit, who goes into the land of the Gentiles to seek a bride to comfort Isaac, after his mother's death. The Holy Spirit is now seeking out a bride for the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **STUDY QUESTIONS**

1. How old was Sarah when she died?

127

2. Where did Sarah die?

Kirjatharba in the land of Canaan

3. What is the death of Sarah typical of?

A type of the death of Israel nationally

4. Abraham purchased a burial plot from the children of Heth

5. What was the name of the cave used for burial?

The cave of Machpelah

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*Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*

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