



Last week, we were able to witness the greatest trial in Abraham's life, a trial that revealed God's faithfulness is shaping and growing Abraham's dependence on him. Then, immediately after the narrative of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son at the Lord's command, we read about a genealogy in 22:20-24. I want to read it and comment briefly: ²⁰ Now after these things it was told to Abraham, "Behold, Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor: ²¹ Uz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram, ²² Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel." ²³ (Bethuel fathered Rebekah.) These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother. ²⁴ Moreover, his concubine, whose name was Reumah, bore Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah. ¹

What's the point of this genealogy? There are a couple of purposes. First, there are twelve sons that are going to mirror the 12 sons of Israel. People groups comes from these people and will interact with the Israelites. But that's not the main point. There's only one female child mentioned in this list: Rebekah. Why is Rebekah mentioned here? It's like the icing on the cake after Abraham's trial. Isaac lives and will be married and have children. God's promise to bring a rescuer to this world remains and continues! God's promises are being confirmed and affirmed to Abraham's heart. Everything seems to be going just right. But then the events of Genesis 23 come.

Before getting into the narrative, I want to ask you if you've ever been like me and you often wonder when something bad is going to happen after you experience seasons of rest. I mean, when I experience rest and reprieve, I do wonder when the hardship or trial is coming. We live in a broken world. It can't possibly stay this way! Maybe I'm being a pessimist. Maybe I'm being a realist. Maybe I'm somewhere in between, but we all know that life isn't always a bed of roses. And, if it is, we must be missing the real world around us.

Yet, when hardships come, our trust and joy in the Lord is tested, isn't it? I know I've had experiences where I've thought, "Lord, can't you just give me a break?" Or, "Why do you want to crush me, God? Do you want me to enjoy *nothing* in this life?" Sometimes it can feel like God gives us gifts and then rains on the parade. And so, we can wonder if God is a killjoy.

Now, let me ask you, "Is God a killjoy?" No! Does God just want to ruin things? Absolutely not! He is good in all of his ways. And, if God really is growing us through our trials, we increasingly affirm the goodness of God through the trials. How can that be? Because trials remind us that this world is not our home. There is an eternity that awaits us that God is preparing us for! This life is a blip on the screen of our existence. If we truly believe God is preparing caring for us now and preparing us for eternity, then we can endure with hope because they don't negate God's eternal goodness and provision.

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 22:20–24.

Why do I say all of this? Because this is what we continue to see in Abraham as God blesses him with Isaac and the hope of Rebekah, and then after all this good news, Sarah dies. Again, we're called to look at Abraham and see how God has developed Abraham's faith. So, the main idea of this sermon is: **God's promises are planted in this life, and bear fruit in eternity.** Another way of putting this is that **God's promises are not extinguished by death.** As a matter of fact, God's promises actually flourish through and after death!

Only God can make this happen because death puts a stop to everything. But death doesn't stop God. By God's power, death becomes a gateway to eternal joy for those who trust him. Therefore, the application for us from this text is that **We ought to trust God's promises and live today with eternity in view – even in the face of death.** Having said all of this, we'll jump into this very straightforward story:

1. **God's promises are planted in this life. . . (17:8; 1-20).**

In Genesis 17:8, we read, **"And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God."**² God promised Abraham that he would have the land of his sojourning. Up to this point in the story of Abraham, we've had an immense focus on Abraham sojourning and blessing others, but the bigger focus has been on Abraham waiting for Sarah to have a child. What about Abraham receiving at least some of the land? How will Abraham and his posterity receive the land?

Think about the wandering Israelites being called to the land of Canaan for a moment. Why should they even go to this land? Do they have any claim whatsoever to it? Yes, and here in chapter 23, we read about Abraham acquiring a little bit of land. And intriguingly enough, this land comes in the midst of the death of Sarah. God doesn't waste her death. Instead, he even uses her death to plant seeds of his promise to Abraham. Now, let's read 23 together:

Sarah lived 127 years; these were the years of the life of Sarah.² And Sarah died at Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.³ And Abraham rose up from before his dead and said to the Hittites,⁴ "I am a sojourner and foreigner among you; give me property among you for a burying place, that I may bury my dead out of my sight."⁵ The Hittites answered Abraham,⁶ "Hear us, my lord; you are a prince of God among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will withhold from you his tomb to hinder you from burying your dead."⁷ Abraham rose and bowed to the Hittites, the people of the land.⁸ And he said to them, "If you are willing that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me and entreat for me Ephron the son of Zohar,⁹ that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he owns; it is at the end of his field. For the full price let him give it to me in your presence as property for a burying place."

¹⁰ Now Ephron was sitting among the Hittites, and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the Hittites, of all who went in at the gate of his city,¹¹ "No, my lord, hear me: I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. In the sight of the sons of my people I give it to you. Bury your dead."¹² Then Abraham bowed down before the people of the land.¹³ And he said to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, "But if you will, hear me: I give the price of the field. Accept it from me, that I may bury my dead there."¹⁴ Ephron answered Abraham,¹⁵ "My lord,

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 17:7–8.

listen to me: a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that between you and me? Bury your dead.”¹⁶ Abraham listened to Ephron, and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver that he had named in the hearing of the Hittites, four hundred shekels of silver, according to the weights current among the merchants.¹⁷ So the field of Ephron in Machpelah, which was to the east of Mamre, the field with the cave that was in it and all the trees that were in the field, throughout its whole area, was made over¹⁸ to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the Hittites, before all who went in at the gate of his city.¹⁹ After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah east of Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan.²⁰ The field and the cave that is in it were made over to Abraham as property for a burying place by the Hittites.³

Death is often a wake-up call to all of us. Ecclesiastes 7:2 says, **“It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart.”**⁴ We prefer to go to parties and celebrations than to funerals and deathbeds. Yet, oftentimes it’s at a funeral when we’re confronted with much greater realities. And, if you are a follower of Jesus, you are reawakened to the purpose of living. Almost every time I speak at a funeral or a gravesite, I share a specific story and illustration. I talk about how when I was a youth pastor, I used to go on prayer walks at a local cemetery, and then I’d get distracted looking at the tombstones. I’d read the names and look at the dates. Sometimes I’d try to do the math to calculate how many years that person was alive. Even if the person lived for 80-100 years, more than likely that person is barely known to anyone today. And yet, to us 80-100 years feels so long, doesn’t it? When you really think about it, the entire lifespan of that person in the ground is described by a beginning date, a dash, and the end date. The entire life is that dash. And, you know, the sad reality is that many people live for that dash. Yet Jesus summons people to seek first his Kingdom, to live for eternity – not just this world. This world is a seedbed for a future after our death. Do you know that? Do you believe that?

I know Abraham and Sarah believed this. In Hebrews 11, we read this about Abraham, Sarah, and the patriarchs: **¹³These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. ¹⁴For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁶But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.**⁵

If you look at Hebrews 11, “These all” includes Sarah. She was seeking a homeland, a better, heavenly country. And she arrived before Abraham. Now, how is Abraham going to respond to Sarah’s death? Will Sarah’s death destroy Abraham’s faith and lead him to give up and say, “What’s the point if death just wins?” No. He too was seeking a better homeland, and on his way to eternity, he also believed God’s promises that were to take place in this world, too. Sarah’s death doesn’t negate God’s promises. Instead, Abraham acts with faith in the Lord even in the midst of Sarah’s death. He, the living, takes to heart the realities that the house of mourning preaches, seeking to watch God continue to plant the seeds of his promises in this broken world – this world that has death in it and a world that needs a serpent crusher to come who will remove death and sin and brokenness. This serpent crusher will come through the seed of the woman who will come through Sarah and then Rebekah. And this serpent crusher will come into a

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 23:1–20.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ec 7:2.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 11:13–14, 16.

land of promise. So, Sarah's death becomes the ground where God plants the seeds of his promise for land.

I want to highlight just a few things from this narrative that help us in seeing **Abraham's faith and God's goodness and provision.**

Abraham is a sojourner. In verse 4, Abraham, in humility says to the Hittites, "I am a sojourner and foreigner among you; give me property among you for a burying place, that I may bury my dead out of my sight."⁶ Abraham doesn't say, "God promised me this land. I'm going to take it." No. God promised that through Abraham all the nations would be blessed, and Abraham wasn't to take. Abraham has to trust. The phrase "sojourner and foreigner" was synonymous with the idea of being a resident alien. He has no claim to this land legally. Yet, Abraham is wanting a legal claim to have a proper grave for Sarah.

I love this example of Abraham because here's a man who has the most glorious promise of God given to him, while at the same time, he truly is a sojourner awaiting a greater homeland. He doesn't feel the need to fight for the land. Instead he asks.

Abraham trusted God's promise. Traditionally, people would go back to their homelands for burials. Abraham doesn't do that. This land of his sojournings is a symbol and pointer of a greater homeland. Sarah is going to be planted here as a sign of God's faithful promise of land. She's the matriarch of Israel. Keep in mind that this burial sight is the burial sight of all the patriarchs. In Genesis 50, we're told that when Jacob died, he was taken to this cave to be buried. To this day, after the Western Wall in Jerusalem, this grave is considered the second most important memorial for the Israelites. Why? It reveals the beginning of God's promise of land. Just like the birth of Isaac was joyous, so the purchase of this land was strengthening not only to Abraham but to his posterity after him. In the face of death, Abraham trusts the Lord's promise. He trusts that God will keep his promise and that even death can't destroy his promises!

Abraham trusted God's provision. Keep in mind here that Abraham is actually taking up a legal conversation. At the end of verse 10, we're told that Abraham is speaking in front of ". . .all who went in at the gate of his city. . ."⁷ The gate of the city is where the leaders met, and made legal decisions.

Now, Abraham simply seeks for a burial place – and in recognizing he's an alien, he knows he can't lay claim to anything. So, he humbly acknowledges his sojourning. But what's phenomenal is the initial response of the Hittites. They say, as recorded in verse 6, "Hear us, my lord; you are a prince of God among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will withhold from you his tomb to hinder you from burying your dead."⁸ Over the course of years and decades, God has worked through Abraham to truly be a blessing to the people around him. Isn't that part of God's promise initially? Through him, the nations will be blessed. Through Abraham's sojourning. Through Abraham's actions of faith in the Lord, God has grown his faith and exemplified himself to other people. They know something's different about Abraham. This attitude of the people reminds me of the New Testament where the apostle Paul declares to Christians that we must, "¹⁷ **Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.** ¹⁸ **If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.**"⁹ As far as it depends on me, live at peace. Abraham has failed at this in his life. But clearly Abraham learned to trust the Lord increasingly, so much so that even the world knew he was like a prince of God. What a testimony. Abraham trusted the Lord in this, and revealed it in his humble interactions with the people.

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 23:4.

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 23:10.

⁸ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 23:6.

⁹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 12:17–18.

But there's more to his trust. His trust also enabled him to even ask for the cave. There's humble boldness here. And this humble boldness even leads him to make a strong legal request. When Abraham says in verse 9, "For the full price let him give it to me. . ." ¹⁰ that is to be understood as an "all sales final" term. It's not simply that he's going to pay the MSRP, but this purchase cannot be altered whatsoever. It's final. That's trust in the Lord. In humility, he asks boldly.

And then he gets beyond what he asked or thought to ask. He requests the cave at the edge of Ephron's field, and then Ephron takes it a step further. Ephron offers the entire field, along with the cave. But Abraham won't accept it for free. There's only one other situation in the Old Testament that carries a similar storyline – and it's with King David purchasing the threshing floor to make sacrifices. King David is offered it for free, but David says, "**I will buy it from you for a price. I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God that cost me nothing.**" ¹¹ I wonder if this might be a similar attitude of Abraham. He's worshipping the Lord and emphasizing the Lord's provision. God gave Abraham his wealth. God gave Abraham his wife. God gave Abraham his son. God was going to give Abraham a daughter-in-law, and grandchildren and a heritage as numerous as the sands of the seashore. Abraham will show God's provision and care through paying for this land with God's money because truly, God is the one purchasing this land. And God can afford whatever the cost.

Intriguingly, Ephron names a price, and so while it seems Ephron is generous in offering it for free, there also seems to be a business tactic here as well. To add to this, it seems like Ephron's price might be a little steep when you consider costs of property in other cultures and ancient time periods. But whatever the case, God provides. Abraham trusts. And, instead of arguing and fennagling and worrying if he's being taken advantage of, Abraham trusts God's promise. God is planting the seeds of his land promise right here and has provided for Abraham. The death of Sarah hasn't hindered God's promise. Her death has become the impetus for his promises to continue and flourish.

Isn't it intriguing that the first acquirement of land, related to God's promise, is a tomb? I love how a man named Allan Ross describes this scene. He takes us to the overall teaching of Genesis and says, "**The promise of the land is one of the major themes of Genesis – but so is death. Death entered the race by sin, and the death of the patriarhs was a harsh reminder of the presence of evil. It brought out the mourning. But death in this passage became the reason for hope. In life the patriarhs were sojourners; in death they were heirs of the promise and occupied the land**" (Ross, *Creation & Blessing*, pp. 411-12). Abraham knew death didn't stop God's promises. Instead, death became the beginning to God's greater promises. And so, to quote Ross again, ". . . **what God has in store for us is far greater than what we now experience**" (p. 412). These are some of the great realities that I think we should ponder as we consider Sarah's death. These are realities I think Abraham believed. He and Sarah were yearning for a homeland that was greater. Abraham believed a resurrection. And so, what does this mean for us? Christian, these are realities we should believe when we face death. In the face of death, faith can arise because our hope lies beyond the grave. God's promises will flourish not just in the dash of this life, but after the date on our gravestones! Truly, **God's promises are planted in this life, and bear fruit in eternity. Therefore, we ought to trust God's promises and live today with eternity in view – even in the face of death.**

But you might say, "I think you're reading too much into this." Maybe I am, but let me briefly respond with a final point from the main idea:

¹⁰ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 23:9.

¹¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Sa 24:24.

2. . . .and bear fruit for eternity (Mk. 12:26-27; Gal. 4:4-5; Heb 11:16; Heb 12:1ff).

When Jesus spoke to the Sadducees about the necessity of a bodily resurrection, he responds to them in Mark 12:26-27 by saying this: ²⁶ **And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?’** ²⁷ **He is not God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong.”** ¹²

What’s the theological point Jesus is making? This life is only the beginning of God’s promises. This life is just the seedbed, but a resurrection is necessary for the fulfillment of God’s promises. That’s why we see in Hebrews 11:16, **“But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.”**¹³

Do you realize Abraham and Sarah knew they would live after death? Do you realize Abraham and Sarah knew that the promises in this life were seeds for the eternal life to come? The serpent-crusher had to come through a woman. That woman needed to live in a land. And so, we read in Galatians 4:4-5, **“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”**¹⁴ Paul then adds that all of us who have turned to this Son, Jesus, are then heirs of God. Meaning, we too will live in a land whose builder and maker is God!

How is this possible? Because Jesus took the curse humanity deserved, and Jesus accomplished the perfection none of us could attain. Do you know this Savior? If so, you have hope! Remember the words Jesus spoke to his disciples? In John 14:1-3, he said, **“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ² In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”**¹⁵

Like a cave led to God’s fulfillment of land for the Israelites, the death of Jesus is the foundation of all of our hope! He absorbed all the curse that came through Adam’s sin, and then through his death and resurrection, he grants new, resurrection life for all who turn from their sinfulness and turn to him for reconciliation and life with God.

So, what are the implications for us? We ought to trust God’s promises and live today with eternity in view – even in the face of death. And more precisely, listen to the words of Hebrews 12. After we’re told about these people who didn’t experience all the promises in this life, but persevered in hope in God, the author of Hebrews says to us who know Jesus, **“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”**¹⁶

Our home is set. Our Savior has sealed eternity. Even our deaths in this life are seeds for resurrection fulfillments. Let’s together trust God’s promises and live today with eternity in view.

¹² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mk 12:26–27.

¹³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 11:16.

¹⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ga 4:4–5.

¹⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jn 14:1–3.

¹⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 12:1–2.