

Genesis 23, The Beginning of Hope in the Promises of God: A Life of Abraham, Preached by Michael Gunn @ Harambee Church on April 13th, 2008

Intro

As we're coming to an end of our study of Abraham's life, we have seen God take him on a journey preparing him for the mission and calling that God has called him to. Abraham was chosen by God to be the "Seed" of His blessing to the world. Abraham was called out of pagan roots, and spent much time maturing in his faith. God has sovereignly acted in Abraham's life, and protected him, Sarah and Isaac in order to stay faithful to His covenant promises. Abraham has had many sublime moments, and some obvious "fleshly" moments to say the least; but what we have seen is God is faithful to His covenant promises.

Today's passage seems a bit strange in that there is a whole passage dedicated to the burial of Abraham's wife Sarah. What purpose does this story play in the narrative? In the first few verses we see the death of Sarah, and the subsequent mourning of Abraham. It's interesting that there is so little spent on her death, and much is made in regards to her burial. I believe that two important points are made with the writing of this narrative:

From the Head...

Death is Inevitable Within the Covenant (**Genesis 23:1-13**)

Although the author of genesis (Moses) has already acquainted us with death as a result of the fall (**Genesis 2:17**) we have another vivid reminder that even godly women such as Sarah (See **1 Peter 3:1-6**) die. Mourning is an unnatural part of life. It is here as a result of our rebellion before God. It reminds us of our mortality, and brings us into a sobering reality that our life, as we are living it, will cease someday. It is however not natural, and is the very thing that Christ conquers in His death and subsequent resurrection from the dead (See **1 Corinthians 15:50-58**). This passage also reminds us that God uses mortal people who will die, and God's plan will continue as planned. The power of God's plan is in His own gospel, and not in the subjects that proclaim the gospel, but we are graciously used for His purpose and His glory. Death is inevitable, but it is not final!

Land Acquisition is Part of the Covenant (**Genesis 23:4-20**)

It is clear that land purchase is important to this narrative as is its importance to the covenant God has made with His people. Abraham has been quite content in not acquiring the land apart from God's leading. He didn't take the land by conquest when he could have (**Genesis 14**). Other than acquiring water rights (**Genesis 21**), he has waited on the Lord. In our passage today he takes great pains to pay a handsome wage for a burial cave that Ephron the Hittite wanted to give him for free. It is most likely Abraham demanded to pay full price for the cave so that Ephron's relatives couldn't come back to Abraham's relatives after their deaths, and take back the land. This purchase sets a precedent for future returns (**Genesis 49:29-50; 50:14-25**), and the preliminary acquisition to the land that would later be occupied by Abraham's descendants through their first savior (Moses), and subsequently by their ultimate savior (Jesus; see **Revelation 21+22**).

Land was quite important to these people, and was as sign of wealth (As it is today). Land is equally important to the covenant, and to God's plan to save His people. Since death is unnatural, Christ saved us from that death, so that we could be "Bodily" raised (Like Jesus), and serve Him in a real place for eternity (See **Revelation 22:3**).

...to the Heart

The reason we cannot put our hope in temporal healings and desire to keep ourselves alive, is the fact that death is ultimate and inevitable. While we ought to attempt to remain healthy, it is way more important to desire that "*Our inner man is being renewed day by day*" (**1 Corinthians 4:16**).

Books for further study: *Genesis*, Walter Brueggemann, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: Genesis*, Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis*, Bruce Waltke, *The Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis*, Gordon J. Wenham, *The NIV Application Commentary: Genesis*, John H. Walton, *Creation and Blessing*, Allen P. Ross

Next Weeks Verses: Genesis 24

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