

Genesis: Truth for Understanding Our World (15)

Faith in the Face of Death

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Text: Genesis 23

Introduction

- A. If Genesis were written by moderns, the creation story would take 10 volumes, and the rest of Genesis might be told in 5 chapters.

- B. God chose to teach us about our beginnings through stories recounting His dealings with people. You have to pay attention to what *is* said, what one might *expect* vs. what *does and doesn't happen*.

- C. This story is about faith and death, bitterness and hope. How Abraham, in faith, faces death, rejects bitterness, and embraces hope.

LIVE THE STORY

The Gospel is intended to be learned and lived in community. The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.

- Read Genesis 23. What stands out? What seems missing? What questions does it raise for you?
- In what ways does death threaten Abraham's promise of blessing? How might it threaten God's promise of blessing for you or anyone? How does this relate to grieving?
- Does grief in death mean that faith is absence? Do you think it is meaningful that God is not mentioned in this section? If so, how so?
- In what way does God begin to fulfill His promise to Abraham through the death of Sarah? How might this foreshadow the Gospel?
- Abraham calls himself an alien and stranger in their land. How does this model for followers of Jesus how we too are to live?
- What about Genesis 22:20-24 should surprise us in light of the story of Abraham? What temptations to his faith do you think Abraham may have faced when Sarah died?
- Why should we read or study theological-narratives such as Genesis differently than instructional letters such as James? Can you give some examples of different ways to read or study each?
- How does Abraham's facing of the death of his beloved Sarah while clinging to hope give us truth for understanding our world? What aspects of our world does it help us deal with?

I. Sarah Dies (23:1-2)

- A. The barren woman has not only had a child, but a long life.
 - i. This chapter is about death.

 - ii. Chapter 22: How does Abraham, in faith grapple with the possibility of death? Chapter 23: How does Abraham face death itself—of the wife he has loved for so many years.

- B. Sarah's death in its context within the story of Abraham.
 - i. The Blessing of Shem and Curse of Canaan (Genesis 9:25-27)

ii. The Tower of Babel and the line of Shem (Genesis 11)

iii. The Call and Blessing of Abraham (12:1-3)

a) 15:1

b) 22:16-18

iv. All of this makes the end of chapter 22 surprising. (22:20-24)

C. How will Abraham respond to death itself?

i. It is not a failure of faith to mourn the loss of those we love. It is not a failure of faith to feel that loss so deeply that we weep.

ii. Mourning is not what the inspired text focuses on.

II. Abraham's Clings to the Promise by Faith (23:3-16)

A. In the face of death, Abraham still has hope in the promise! (3-9)

i. Abraham – *an alien and stranger*.

ii. *Prince of God*

B. The Legality of the Transaction (10-16)

C. God may seem absent in this chapter, but His promise is not.

III. Abraham Possesses the Promise Through Death (23:17-20)

A. The field and the cave were deeded over to Abraham.

B. Abraham buried his wife Sarah in a cave.

C. Through death Abraham took possession of the promise.

i. *"Sell me some property..."* (v4)

ii. *in the land of Canaan.* (19)

Conclusion

A. God said, "In the day you eat, you die..." and it was so!

B. *"I am a foreigner and stranger among you."*

i. 1 Peter 2:11

ii. Leviticus 25:23

C. We are living in the blessing that came through Abraham's faith.