

GENESIS 23: A FIELD PURCHASED IN FAITH

I. OVERVIEW

- A. Sarah died at the age of 127 in Kiriath-arba
- B. After Abraham mourned her death he went to the Hittites to request a burial place
 - i. The Hittites told him to bury Sarah in whichever tomb he chose
- C. Abraham asked for the cave of Machpelah
 - i. Owned by Ephron son of Zohar
 - ii. He offered to pay full price
 - a. Ephron refused payment but Abraham insisted
 - iii. So Abraham bought the cave and the field it was in for 400 shekels of silver
- D. Abraham buried Sarah in the cave of Machpelah east of Mamre

II. SARAH LIVED 127 YEARS – V. 1

- A. Only woman in the bible whose age is recorded¹

III. THE LIFE OF SARAH

- A. The bible shows great respect for Sarah
 - i. Hebrews 11:11 ***By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.***
 - ii. 1 Peter 3:1-6 ***Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external – the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear – but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.***
 - iii. Isaiah 51:1-2 ***Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the Lord; look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look***

¹ Guzik, D. (2018). Study Guide for Genesis 23. Blue Letter Bible. https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david/study-guide/genesis/genesis-23.cfm

to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, that I might bless him and multiply him.

IV. HEBRON – V. 2

- A. Abraham was in Beersheba in chapter 22
 - i. Indicates he is still living nomadic lifestyle
- B. Sets up the story in this chapter
 - i. Abraham doesn't own land where he can bury her

V. SOJOURNER AND FOREIGNER – V. 4

- A. Not just because he was from Ur of the Chaldeans
- B. He was looking toward a greater reality
 - i. Hebrews 11:9-10 ***By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.***
- C. We are also sojourners and exiles
 - i. 1 Peter 2:11 ***Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.***

VI. BURY MY DEAD – V. 4

- A. Variation of this phrase repeated seven times in this chapter
 - i. Represents completion, new creation

VII. PRINCE OF GOD – V. 6

- A. Hittites recognized God's favor on Abraham

VIII. IN YOUR PRESENCE – V. 9

- A. Abraham needed a burial place quickly
 - i. He wanted to get a deal done right away with the city elders²

IX. AT THE GATE OF HIS CITY – V. 10

- A. This is where these negotiations were typically held

X. I GIVE YOU THE FIELD – V. 11

- A. Typical method of negotiating a sale
 - i. Seller offers the item for free, knowing the buyer won't accept
 - ii. Buyer offers to pay full price

² Armstrong, S. (2012, February 28). *Genesis 2011 - Lesson 23*. Verse By Verse Ministry International.
https://versebyverseministry.org/lessons/genesis_2011_lesson_23

- iii. Seller suggests a price that is typically very high
- iv. Negotiate from there³

XI. ABRAHAM BOWED DOWN – V. 12

- A. Showed respect, integrity, generosity
 - i. We must show the same in our business dealings with others

XII. FOUR HUNDRED SHEKELS OF SILVER – V. 15

- A. Outrageous amount for a piece of land
 - i. One acre was about 40 shekels⁴
- B. Abraham could have gone back to his family to bury Sarah for free
 - i. Proves he will stay obedient to God and stay in Canaan

XIII. MADE OVER TO ABRAHAM AS PROPERTY – V. 20

- A. Solidifies Abraham's commitment to keep his family in Canaan
 - i. Sarah, Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah, Leah, Jacob would all be buried in this cave

XIV. POINTS TO JESUS

- A. Abraham buried Sarah looking toward her resurrection
 - i. "Bury my dead" repeated seven times
 - a. Looks toward new creation and resurrection
 - ii. Burial leaves body intact
 - a. Shows our faith in Jesus' return and our resurrection⁵
 - b. We now have hope in the resurrection
 - i. 1 Peter 1:3 ***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...***

XV. QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- A. What does it mean to be a sojourner and foreigner as a follower of Jesus?

³ Guzik

⁴ Armstrong

⁵ Wiersbe, W. W. (2010). Genesis 23. In *Be Obedient: Learning the Secret of Living by Faith: OT Commentary, Genesis 12-25*. essay, David C. Cook. Retrieved July 6, 2023, from <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=genesis+23&version=ESV>.

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- B. How does being a foreigner change the way you view your purpose on earth? How does it change the way you live?

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- C. What are some ways we can display respect and integrity in negotiations and business transactions in our modern culture?

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- D. What are some of the costs you have had to pay, monetary or otherwise, in order to stay obedient to God?

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- E. What can we infer from this chapter about how we should treat a person's body upon death? What should we keep in mind when burying a loved one who was in Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)?

XVI. FURTHER STUDY

- A. Why does Peter call us sojourners? Who and/or what are we identifying with? See Leviticus 25:23; 1 Chronicles 29:14-15; Psalm 39:12.

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- B. What did Paul say is the difficulty with living as sojourners? What should we be doing during this time? See 2 Corinthians 5:1-10.

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- C. Read the story of Jeremiah purchasing the field of Anathoth in Jeremiah 32. Why did God tell Jeremiah to buy the field? How does this compare to Abraham's purchase of the field in Machpelah?

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- D. In Matthew 27:3-10, the chief priests use blood money to purchase the potter's field for burials. In what ways does this invert the stories of Abraham and Jeremiah? What is Matthew trying to say about the chief priests?

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- E. Why do you think it is significant that Jesus was buried in a rented tomb in Matthew 27: 57-60?
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