

Genesis 23

Faith Faces Death

Perfect Text for FUNERAL Directors > Get you Plan & Plot in ADVANCE

Real Estate Agents > Use Broker – NEVER Pay the First Asking Price!

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable ^{2 Timothy 3.16} READ & PREACH

1. Common Sorrow of Covenant People

a. Common

20 yrs ago Pastor in Hawaii – Unknown Woman told me of ‘Word from God’

‘God told me I am NEVER going to DIE!’

God did NOT tell ME anything about her – So I just said, “Good for you!”

Great HERO of our Faith – Mother of Faithful: Sarah heard NO Such PROMISE

vs. 1,2 Sarah lived 127 years; these were the years of the life of Sarah. And Sarah died at Kiriath-arba

Sarah Died in SAME AREA where she LIVED – Near Oak Trees of Mamre

67 years after Calling to Follow God – Her Death CAME

We KNOW that One Spouse will DIE before the OTHER > All Face This

Not SURE what happened to HI Woman: Called like Enoch & Elisha? – Maybe?

For MOST MORTALS we can EXPECT that we will DIE Someday

Sarah’s Death of Apparently NATURAL Causes

Astronauts in SPACE can DEFY Gravity > We Cannot ESCAPE DEATH

ALL the World is Hospital – Every Person in it is TERMINAL PATIENT

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. Ecclesiastes 7.2

Not MORBID to Think of Death > REALISTIC, UNAVOIDABLE > Prepare!

it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment Hebrews 9.27

Death is DOORWAY to Eternity > NO RETURN to Life in Another Form

b. Uncommon

I am not afraid of death, I just don't want to be there when it happens. Woody Allen

Faith GAME CHANGER in Life & Death > Sarah is Mother of Faithful

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,
for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. Psalm 23.4

Sarah ONLY Woman in Bible whose AGE at DEATH is Recorded

Look to Sarah as EXAMPLE, No other Woman Named > Not Eve? Or Mary?

Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you... Isaiah 51.2

Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do
good and do not fear anything that is frightening. 1 Peter 3.6

TODAY Old Ladies IGNORED – Helpless, Hopeless, Send to Rest Home

Bible COMMENDS this Old Woman – Virtue, Faith, Submission, Godliness

Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. Psalm 116.15

c. God-honoring Grief God's SPECIAL People GO thru COMMON Sorrows

Study of ABE > Bible HERO! Real MAN – Flesh & Blood

True SAINT of God but also a TRUE MAN > Broken, Crying, Grieving

Deep, Terrible, Suffering – HEART Dragged from His Body

v. 2 Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her

Abe NOT Stoic – No Stiff Upper Lip – It was NOT EASY

ONLY Time in Story that Abe WEPT – Greatest Grief of his LIFE

100 Years of FRIENDSHIP ENDED > Until DEATH do us PART...

On this WALK of Faith YOUR FEET will still TOUCH the GROUND

Some STARTING to TEAR UP just THINKING About Someone You LOST

EDGE will Go Away but the ACHE May Remain FOREVER

MOURNING for one who Died is Not Only Permitted > It is EXPECTED

Tears show LOVE and PAIN Keenly Felt – DEATH is Great ENEMY

Jesus wept. So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” John 11.35,36

Jesus ONLY knew LAZARUS for a FEW YEARS > Still Felt Deep Grief

Mourning, Weeping, NORMAL > Father of Faith – ALL People

...you may not grieve as others do who have no hope...since we believe that
Jesus died and rose again 1 Thessalonians 4.13,14

Scripture gives GROUND for HOPE – Solid Reasons for Hope

Don't be TOO TRIUMPHANT: Alive in X, Never see them Again...on Earth

LONG DISTANCE between Head and Heart – Deep Love, Difficult Recovery

Sarah a Sinner – Godly VIRTUES OVERSHADOW her WEAKNESSES

Like Husband SAVED by GRACE thru FAITH in Jesus saw in HOPE

SARAH > Her RACE is COMPLETED – she has GONE to her REWARD

2. Pains of Pilgrim Status

Genesis 23 MORE about LAND Transaction than Sarah's Death

GRIEF did not PARALYZE Abe from FACING RESPONSIBILITIES

Not to mourn is a great failure, but to mourn indefinitely is equally an error. Life
must go on. James Boice

Natural Process of DECAY was Quickly at Work

Grave Robbers my Take Riches – Dogs could DIG Up her BONES

Priceless and Informative Snapshot from Ancient History

Masterful Ancient Writing and Vivid Look at Customs of Ancient Near East

Elaborate Exchange of Courtesies between Abraham & the Hittites

a. Unfulfilled Promises – almost 70 yrs passed since Promise was made...

The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.”
Genesis 12.7

The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, “Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever.”
Genesis 13.14-15

On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates...”
Genesis 15.18

No EXPIRATION Date on TRUTH of God > Walk by FAITH Not by SIGHT

Abe’s FAITH in PROMISE of God > BOLDNESS to BARGAIN!

b. Unwelcome Stranger

vs. 3,4 And Abraham rose up from before his dead and said 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.”

Not statement of NATIONALITY > Relationship to THIS WORLD

Sarah’s DEATH REMINDED him that he was LANDLESS

All they had was WATERING HOLE and a SINGLE, BACHELOR Son

Not even PLOT of Ground to BURY his Dead

Uganda in 1980’s – friends w/ M Doctors some of first to discover AIDS

+50% of Patients in MULAGO Hospital – Largest in Nation – in Kampala

Found Aids VIRUS on BLOOD Slide > Told to Get on BUS for Home

You’ll Be DEAD Very Soon > Easy to Ride Bus Home > Hard to Carry Corpse

Where would you – or LOVED Ones do with your DEAD BODY in Beijing?

If your Faith not Strong Enough to Die In - You are a FOOL to LIVE in it Now

vs. 5,6 The Hittites answered Abraham, “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.”

Social HESITATION to Sell Land to an OUTSIDER > Lose Power, Influence

Abe was Not Stranger but PRINCE – He would be a DESIRABLE NEIGHBOR

...tombs were used by several generations. A body would be laid in a prepared shelf, along with grave goods (food, pottery, weapons, tools), and then the skeletal remains were removed and placed in another chamber or an ossuary box or simply swept to the rear of the tomb to accommodate the next burial.

John Walton and Victor Matthews

KIND Words but IGNORED Heart of Abe’s Request – Prince w/ NO Property

Not want Rent-a-Tomb on Loan / Turned to BONES they will be DISPOSED

Live ABROAD No Matter How LONG - Language & Customs >> OUTSIDER

...underneath that offer you must understand they desire that Abraham would not gain a permanent foothold in their land. You see once he was a landholder, then he would have had certain rights under the law, and they would have much rather him remain a landless dependent who had simply received their generosity.

J. Ligon Duncan

c. Unfriendly Bargain

vs. 7-9 Abraham rose and bowed to the Hittites, the people of the land. 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, 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.”

Abe named an INDIVIDUAL – Ephron > A SIGN that he was Not Outsider

BARGAINING was both Entertaining and Competitive > Used to Advantage

vs. 10,11 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, “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.”

Awkwardness of FREE STUFF – Hamburger Place in Liangmaquao Wonderful!

Owner is GREAT Christian > Pastor's EAT FREE > Feel like Cheapskate!

SOMETIMES!! – Biggest Problem is TOO FAR AWAY!!

The offer to receive the land as a gift was refused by Abraham because that would have enabled Ephron's heirs to reclaim the land after Ephron's death.

John Walton and Victor Matthews

vs. 12-16 Then Abraham bowed down before the people of the land. 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." Ephron answered Abraham, "My lord, listen to me: a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that between you and me? Bury your dead." 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.

NOT Direct Speech – Not Dutch or Americans – DISCREET Middle Easterners

Adds FIELD! – Wants more cash? Package Deal! *I have a DEAL for You!*

Abraham was COURTEOUS – Did Not use his "Right" to be Short-Tempered

Abe was JUST – BARGAINING would have Created many PROBLEMS

Laborer / Artisan Earned 10 Shekels a YEAR NOT Earn 400 in a LIFETIME

PRODUCTS, GOODS in KZ – Made in Russia, Turkey, China, Europe, US

Locals: "I cannot AFFORD to buy the CHEAP Ones" – Will Need Another!

Abe Cannot AFFORD the DISCOUNT DEATH PLAN for WIFE & Family

How unlike Abraham are many of his spiritual children. They embark in business, they enter into contracts and even marriages without due consideration. They transact their affairs without order and leave them in confusion. Thus by indiscreet conduct they disgrace their names and ruin their families. Donald Barnhouse

vs. 17-20 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 over to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the Hittites, before all who went in at the gate of his city. 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. The field and the cave that is in it were made over to Abraham as property for a burying place by the Hittites.

Abe was PRUDENT – Public Witnesses had EFFECT of a CONTRACT

v. 17 TREES Mentioned – Characteristic of HITTITE Land Transactions

Ephron probably SMIRKED: Stupid OLD MAN, So DUMB I Ripped him OFF

Jesus > People of World MORE SHREWD than Sons of the KINGDOM

Abe got BEST DEAL - Grave was CRADLE of Abrahamic Covenant

Ephron may have GAINED WHOLE WORLD > But LOST his SOUL

GRAVE was Seed of Hope, Statement of Faith > God who OWNS in ALL

Even DEATH will NOT ROB Abraham of the PROMISES of God

Jesus: “As for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? *He is not God of the dead, but of the living.*” Matthew 22.31,32

3. A Grip on God’s Faithfulness

a. Piece of the Promise NOW Abe has SOME of PROMISED Land

Abraham was buying Ephron’s field not only to bury Sarah but also to express his confidence in God’s promises concerning the land and the future. James Boice

Chapter BEGINS and ENDS with Ref to Canaan > PROMISED LAND

v. 2 Sarah died at Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the *land of Canaan*

v. 19 Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah east of Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the *land of Canaan*

v. 4 give me property / v. 9 property for a burying place / v. 18 a possession

v. 20 The field and the cave that is in it were made over to Abraham as property
Sarah is buried in promised dirt that belongs to Abraham. Dale Ralph Davis

Jacob: “I am to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field at Machpelah, to the east of Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite to possess as a burying place. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife. There they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah...”
Genesis 49.29-32

RISE Together – Meet the Lord TOGETHER on the FINAL DAY

TODAY Physical Sons of Abe fighting Palestinians for Real Estate in Tiny Land

Tomb TODAY is Muslim MOSQUE! Xtians NOT have a PONY in that Race

God’s Purposes MUCH BIGGER than BACKYARDS of Palestine

For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. Romans 4.13

CAVE is DECLARATION of Faith > Whole WORLD now HIS by PROMISE

Paul describes WONDERFUL Salvation we NOW HAVE in Jesus Christ

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places Ephesians 1.3

Abe Just a GRAVE? That’s it! After Walking with God for almost 70 years!

TINY – Just GRAIN of SAND in Whole of Canaan – EARNEST, DEPOSIT

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.
Ephesians 1.13,14

PARCEL was PLEDGE > Down Payment for Full Return God Promised him

Holy Spirit of God – Very God inside Us – Token of Final Day Fullness

b. Status as Strangers v. 4 “I am a sojourner and foreigner among you...”

Poignancy: At END Life, Father Abraham > Stranger, Sojourner, Resident Alien
My Family asks when are you going to QUIT this M work – In & Out since 1980

American Dream – Work for Golden Years, Retire, Travel, Cruise, Relax!

It's all about YOU – You DESERVE IT – Go to Grave a SELFISH PIG!!

Leave a BUNCH of Stuff for your KIDS to Fight Over and Hate Eachother!

LIVE ABROAD like OUTSIDER > GO HOME & REALLY Feel like Stranger

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the
dispersion... 1 Peter 1:1

Prof Karl Ludwig Schmidt U.BONN – Strongly Criticized rising Nazi Gov't

Lost Teaching Job - Citizenship Removed, Forced out of Germany

Writing article for Kittle's Theol. Dict of NT >> PEROIKOS = 'Sojourner'

Schmidt – Lived out days in Switzerland – Never returned to his Fatherland

Christians do NOT have BURIAL Services, they have PLANTING Ceremonies

...What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in
dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is
sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. 1 Corinthians 15.42-44

Bury DEAD in SURE and CERTAIN HOPE of the Resurrection

NOT proof-text Against Cremation? Going for Cremation Myself / Poor Lazarus

Luke 16 – Destitute Beggar – Bodies dumped on Fires of Gehenna > w/ ABE

God ABLE to gather ALL My Bits and Pieces to Make my Resurrection Body

DEAD Still EXIST! Not GONE, FORGOTTEN, ANIHILATED > LIVE ON!

ONE CHURCH – Triumphant & Militant – In Heaven and On Earth....

And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was
promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us

they should not be made perfect. 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, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith Hebrews 11.39-12.2

We are UNITED with the Faithful DEAD > Mystic Connection in the Lord

We DO NOT Worship the Dead or Pray TO or THRU Them

ONLY Jesus is FOUNDER and PERFECTER of our Faith – God & Mediator

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. 1 Peter 2.11,12

1. Fight Daily against Sin – Forgive the Unforgivable
2. Do your Job / Studies every day for the Glory of God
3. Trust God for your Future even though it is UNKNOWN to you
4. Live in Hope when all around you might be HOPELESS

c. Hope in a Homeland

LONGER Abe walked with God > HIGHER God raised BAR of Discipleship

ABE was 10 years OLDER than Sarah > Stood in FACE of MORTALITY!

Even once IN the Land cannot OWN It Permanently – BELONGS to God!

“The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine. For you are strangers and sojourners with me. Leviticus 25.23

David: “But who am I, and what is my people...For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you. *For we are strangers before you and sojourners, as all our fathers were.* Our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no abiding. 1 Chronicles 29.14-15

“Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my cry; hold not your peace at my tears! For I am *a sojourner with you, a guest, like all my fathers.* Psalm 39.12

Even when IN PROMISED LAND > In Hearts they Knew were Passing Thru

NOT ENOUGH to say GOSPEL is Great Hope, or even GIVES great HOPE

TRUE! But it is YOUR Hope – Your TRUST – Even in FACE of DEATH??

These 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. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. 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. Hebrews 11.13-16

GOD-MAN is in HEAVEN > Heaven will COME DOWN to EARTH

God saves PEOPLE AND PLANETS

“...for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth” Revelation 5.9,10

God will REDEEM AND RESTORE all that is FALLEN and LOST in Christ

According to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. 2 Peter 3.13

Greek for New > NEW in Nature, Quality / Not NEW in Origin and Time

God will NOT LOSE this Earth to SATAN, or MAN’S POLLUTION

YOU will only BE THERE if He makes YOU New – Repent & Believe

BORN Again to LIVING HOPE thru Faith in Resurrection of Jesus Christ

That city is also prepared for us who have left our past to follow Jesus. Let us take heart in that. We weep when there is cause to weep. We get on with the business of living when life must be lived. But in joy or in sorrow, in life or in death, we do not forget that we are citizens of that heavenly city and press on toward it.

James Boice

Brian & Cindy belonged to Respected Church > CULT – Adds to Jesus & Bible

Jesus + Anything = 0 – even if good things > FAITH in Him ALONE!

Left FALSE Church – Church was their Family, Financial Support > POOR!

Cindy had COLD > Craving for some Orange Juice – Could NOT AFFORD

Walking Grand Ave. in St. Louis – Can of Frozen Orange Juice, Still Frosty

Rolling down Sidewalk toward Them – Nobody Around!

Brian picked up Can gave to Cindy, “Honey this is For You!”

CAVE Just GRAIN of SAND in Whole of Canaan – EARNEST, DEPOSIT

PARCEL was PLEDGE > Down Payment for Full Return God Promised him

1. Are you ready for your death? How about those you love?
2. Do you have a ‘will’? Do those who love you know how to care for you - your possessions, your remains - at your death? What hymns should be sung?
3. Abraham seems to have paid the ‘foreigners tax’! How can you hold on to an eternal perspective when you get conned in Beijing today?
4. What is the difference between godly humility and an inferiority complex?

Genesis 23:¹Sarah lived 127 years; these were the years of the life of Sarah. ²And 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. ³And 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.” ⁵The 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.” ⁷Abraham rose and bowed to the Hittites, the people of the land. ⁸And 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, ⁹that 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.” ¹⁰Now 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.” ¹²Then Abraham bowed down before the people of the land. ¹³And 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.” ¹⁴Ephron answered Abraham, ¹⁵“My lord, listen to me: a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that between you and me? Bury your dead.” ¹⁶Abraham 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. ¹⁷So 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 over ¹⁸to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the Hittites, before all who went in at the gate of his city. ¹⁹After 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. ²⁰The field and the cave that is in it were made over to Abraham as property for a burying place by the Hittites.