

## Abraham 12 - The Resurrection

We have traced the life and faith of Abraham for 11 chapters. We now come to the point where it has been 67 years since Abraham had left Ur of the Chaldees. Now comes what is arguably the saddest moment in his life.

### 1. The tears of Abraham

Gen 23:1-2 And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: *these were* the years of the life of Sarah.

2And Sarah died in Kirjatharba; the same *is* Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.

The first thing that we see as we look into the Word of God in this chapter, is this: Sarah having died, Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. We've had a long story of this great man of God – God's friend, Abraham (James 2:23). But this is the first time that we read where he wept.

We do not read that he wept when he left Ur of Chaldees and journeyed northward, turning his face toward a land that he knew not but which God had promised that he should afterward receive for an inheritance. We do not read that he wept when he left the home of his youth and turned his face to a strange and a far-away land (Gen 11:31). We do not read in the Scriptures that Abraham wept when he left Haran in Mesopotamia and bid forever an earthly farewell to all of his family and to all of his kindred, and crossed the Euphrates River, and beyond the great desert into the land of Canaan (Gen 12:1-5). We do not read that Abraham wept when Lot was captured by the five kings and taken away captive into slavery (Gen 14:8-16). Nor do we read that Abraham wept that evil day that fell upon Lot when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed and everything he possessed was burned up in the judgment of Almighty God (Gen 19:23-28). We do not read that Abraham

even wept when, with a sorrowful, heavy heart he made that long, arduous journey to the top of Mount Moriah there to sacrifice his only son, Isaac (Gen 22:1-14).

This is the first time that we read in this long story of Abraham that he wept: "And Sarah died in Kirjatharba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her" (Gen 23:2).

Now, why his tears here? It really is a simple answer. It is a difference between doing the will of God and suffering in it. As long as you can do something, there is an activity, there is a life, there is an intenseness pouring out. There is an abundance of vision and hope and energy. As long as you can do something for God, no matter what it is, there is a recompense and a compensation in the very activity itself. As long as you can battle for the Lord or go to war for the Lord, as long as you could speak for the Lord, as long as you could sacrifice for the Lord, as long as you can toil and work for the Lord, there seems to be something in just the doing of God's will that has a sense of great reward.

But when we suffer in the will of the Lord, when there is nothing left to do, when the last deed has been done and the last word has been said, when the last offices have been performed, when the last flowers have been arranged and we are left with our silent dead, there is nothing to do but to bow and cry. Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.

There was nothing for Abraham to do now but to cry. Is that a denial of our faith in God? Is that a repudiation of our persuasion of heaven to bow and to weep? No. Real religion is not inhuman or unnatural. It is a thing of the human heart to break, to overflow in tears. In our attempt to be good stewards of our faith, we try to be very deliberate in our thinking, but as long as our spirit is disciplined and in tune with God, our spontaneous response of the heart whether it be in joy or in grief is part of what it means to be a Christian. It is true

that we should have careful, measured responses as we minister to others.

1Pet 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

But, our spontaneous reactions speak of that which is natural to us and our more authentic self. Our knee jerk responses are more candid and transparent. What we are under pressure, or when no one is looking, or when we are not on guard speaks of what we actually are in a way that our careful responses do not. We need both kinds of speech. The Bible has numerous examples of this.

Jesus wept, and He wept before the dead. Standing at another cave before another sepulcher (John 11:31-36), He broke into tears. Simon Peter wept: "And he went out, and wept bitterly" from (Luke 22:62). The Ephesian converts wept. The Bible says: "They wept sore, falling on Paul's neck, kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he said, that they would see his face no more..." (Acts 20:37-38).

It is natural and it is human. There is a religion that says there's not any death, and there's not any grief, and there's not any separation, and there's not any bereavement – just a psychological aberration of the mind. If there's any one thing that we find in this holy Book, it is this: that true religion is clothed in humanity. It is full of understanding, infinite sympathy, and help. It is not calculated.

## 2. The hope of Abraham

At the same time as there are tears, we can find that in Christ we have hope. We can also have a sense of joy, but that is not what is recorded in this passage. Instead, we are given something that speaks of Abraham's hope. He had a strong sense of the resurrection. This was revealed already when he went up Mount

Moriah to sacrifice his son. On his way up, he told the others that he and Isaac would be coming back down – he fully expected that if there was a sacrifice there was going to be the resurrection.

Gen 22:5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

Heb 11:17-19 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*...

19Accounting that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

What he did next was consistent with his sense of the hope of the resurrection.

Gen 23:3-4 And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying,

4I *am* a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a buryingplace with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.

Look at this confession that is wrung from the heart of the great patriarch: "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you" (Gen 23:4) You might never have thought he was just a stranger in the land. If you look at his presence there, it might never have entered your mind to look at Abraham and have surmised or judged that. He is the greatest chieftain in the land. He's the emir of a princely clan (Gen 23:6). He's the richest patriarch in all that world. He had been in the land of Canaan 62 years (Gen 12:4, 17:17, 23:1) having become rich and wealthy, having become the head of a great tribe and clan, having many, many hundreds and hundreds of servants, vast herds and droves of cattle and camel and sheep and goats, and many, many tents: a whole

city around him (Gen 13:2,6-8).

You might never have thought of Abraham looking upon himself as being a stranger where he lived and how much more so when he has been in the land sixty and two years. Yet, he refers to himself, in the revealing of his heart in this hour of sorrow – he refers to himself as a stranger and a sojourner in the land (Gen 23:4). And those words of Abraham sank deep into the memory of his children and of his children's children, and those words came to be a very characterization of the whole nation and of the people of God. They were never forgotten.

Here, in the twenty-fifth chapter of the Book of Leviticus, Moses writes that very thing at the order and word of God:

Lev 25:23-24 The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land *is* mine; for ye *are* strangers and sojourners with me.

24And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land.

That is, the land belonged to God, not to the people, and if the people used it, it was to be redeemed from the hand of God.

We also are supposed to see ourselves as strangers and sojourners in this earth. Abraham and others were the great example to us of this.

Heb 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Now, look at those same words in the mouth of David as he prepares for the tremendous building of that great temple. In (1Chr 29:14) and following, David says:

1Chr 29:14-16 But who *am* I, and what *is* my people, that we should be able to offer so

willingly after this sort? for all things *come* of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.

15For we *are* strangers before thee, and sojourners, as *were* all our fathers: our days on the earth *are* as a shadow, and *there is* none abiding.

16O LORD our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name *cometh* of thine hand, and *is* all thine own.

All that we have both in time, talent, and substance is only on loan to us for a short period. That is not just true of the children of God, but for everyone. The natural man without hope in God tries to cling and hold on to all that is on loan like a drowning man clutching at a straw to keep him afloat in 100 ft. seas.

How did Abraham sustain himself with that kind of a spirit? "Here is no home of mine. This is no land of mine. These are no possessions of mine." How did he sustain himself? In what spirit? You find that answer in this same chapter, the eleventh of Hebrews:

Heb 11:9-10,14-16 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as *in* a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

10For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.

14For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

15And truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

16But now they desire a better *country*, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

Abraham confesses in the hour of his

grief and sorrow, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you" (Gen 23:4). His heart was in heaven. His vision was in glory. His eyes were focused on the great and beautiful land that is yet to come. And, God did not disappoint him. He prepared for him a city (Heb 11:10).

Where are *our* eyes set? If we confess ourselves strangers in the earth and pilgrims looking for a city that is yet to come whose builder and maker is God, will the Lord prepare for us, too, a city? Yes.

John 14:1-6 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

2In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

3And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.

4And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

5Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?

6Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

In all of this, what does Abraham do? He buys a piece of real estate for the dead. "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a buryingplace with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight" (Gen 23:4). Why didn't Abraham take Sarah back to Haran, back to his people, back to the house from whence he came, back to the land from whence he had come as a stranger and a pilgrim? Why didn't he? Almost every family that is able, when their beloved dead lay before them, will take them back to the burying ground of the family. They will take them back to some dearly beloved place to lay them to rest. And there, by the side of these they have loved and lost for a while, there do

they inter their beloved dead.

Why didn't Abraham take Sarah back to the family grounds in Haran and lay her body to rest? The answer lies in the persuasion and in the faith of this man of God. He believed the promise of God that Canaan should be given to him and to his seed forever and forever.

Gen 13:14-17 And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

15For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

16And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, *then* shall thy seed also be numbered.

17Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.

Abraham was expecting to launch from that spot in the resurrection to receive that land. He placed the family cemetery plot there and there he buried Sarah in anticipation of that resurrection.

### 3. The glory of God

This brings us to an even greater message. It is a message of God's faithfulness. It was not only the hope and expectation of his and Sarah's resurrection that Abraham had. He was only part of something far greater, far bigger, than himself.

For nearly 2000 years, it might seem to some as though Abraham's faith had fallen to the ground. The Jews became dispersed and separated from Canaan land. Even in this day, they hold on to the land only by vigilance and strife. Abraham believed that the land of Palestine would be his and would belong to his children forever and forever. The Lord God had said to Abraham,



Gen 12:7 And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.

Gen 15:7,18 And he said unto him, *I am* the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.

18In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:

Gen 17:8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

Abraham believed the promise and the Word of God. In Genesis 15, God revealed to Abraham that the children of Israel would be captive and bondsmen for over four hundred years in a strange land, even in Egypt (Gen 15:13-16). And the Lord revealed to Abraham, in the darkness of an awful vision, that his people, his children, his seed, would have how much of blood, how much of toil, how much of sorrow, and how much of grief in this world.

In the story in Second Kings, there is the wasting of the seed of Abraham and the Babylonian captivity (2 Kings 23:26-27, 24:10-25, 25:1-21). In the story of the book in Chronicles, there is that same terrible wasting (2Chronicles 36:15-21). In the story of the life of Jesus, there is that same terrible reiteration of that vision of the horror by night, the destruction of the city of God, the Jerusalem of Palestine, and the wasting of the children of Israel (Matthew 24:1-2).

Matt 24:1,2 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to *him* for

to shew him the buildings of the temple.

2And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

But beyond the years of the captivity in Egypt, and beyond the years of the wasting in Babylonia, and beyond the years of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the burying of the children of Israel among the nations, Abraham believed that God would keep His word: that God would keep His promise and that the land of Palestine would belong to him and to his seed forever and forever. That promise and that faith is the great reiteration of the mighty prophets of God in an unvarying word. In this matchless sixty-third chapter of Isaiah, is the prayer of the prophet to Jehovah God:

Isa 63:15-19 Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where *is* thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me? are they restrained?

16Doubtless thou *art* our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O LORD, *art* our father, our redeemer; thy name *is* from everlasting.

17O LORD, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, *and* hardened our heart from thy fear? Return for thy servants' sake, the tribes of thine inheritance.

18The people of thy holiness have possessed *it* but a little while: our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary.

19We are *thine*: thou never barest rule over them; they were not called by thy name.

You can feel the heart throb of the great prophet of God. "We have possessed it, this land, but a little while. Uprooted, sent away, ravaged, destroyed,

decimated, we have possessed it but a little while, and the Lord God promised it to Abraham forever." And the prophet lifts up his voice in prayer saying, "O Lord, bow down Thine ear. Listen here. Return for Thy servants' sake, for Abraham's sake, for the promise sake, the tribes of Thine inheritance. We possessed it just a little while. And God said to Abraham, "Forever, forever." Look at the Word of the Lord to Amos:

Amos 9:11,14-15 In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old:

14And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit *them*; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

15And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God.

The Jews had possessed it only a little while, but the Lord God said to Abraham: "It shall be thine forever" (Gen 13:14-15). And Amos the prophet lifted up his voice in the name of the Lord and said, "The day is coming when the Lord will again raise the fallen tabernacle of David and God shall place His people back in their land, and they shall abide there forever, saith the Lord thy God."

Abraham believed the Lord and instead of taking Sarah back to Haran and back to his people and back to his father's house, he buried her in the land of Canaan, in the cave of Machpelah, because he believed the word and the promise of God that it would be his as a possession forever to him and to his seed.

On the basis of that faith, Abraham buried Sarah in the field of Ephron, in the cave of Machpelah (Gen 23:19). On

the basis of that promise, Isaac and Ishmael buried Abraham in the cave of Machpelah by the side of Sarah (Gen 25:8-10). On the basis of that promise, Isaac buried Rebekah in the cave of Machpelah (Gen 35:25,31). On the basis of that promise, Jacob and Esau buried Isaac in that cave of Machpelah. Now listen to the word of Israel just before he died in the land of Egypt:

Gen 49:28-32 All these *are* the twelve tribes of Israel: and this *is it* that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them.

29And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that *is* in the field of Ephron the Hittite,

30In the cave that *is* in the field of Machpelah, which *is* before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a buryingplace.

31There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah.

32The purchase of the field and of the cave that *is* therein *was* from the children of Heth.

Did Joseph bury his father Jacob in the land of Egypt? No. His sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in that cave of the field of Machpelah.

Gen 50:12-13 And his sons did unto him according as he commanded them:

13For his sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field for a possession of a buryingplace of Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre.

If the land of Palestine is just like any other land, if it doesn't belong to Israel, if it is not in the promise of Abraham, why not bury Israel in the land of Egypt? Why not? Why not take Sarah back to the land of Haran? And when Joseph died, he made them swear that in the day that God delivered them, they would take up his bones and carry them back to the promised land of Canaan.

Gen 50:24-25 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

25And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.

If it's not to be theirs, if it's like any other place or land, why not bury Joseph in the land of Egypt? Because God has sworn. He who never changes (Malachi 3:6), with whom is not the shadow of turning (James 1:17), God hath sworn that the land of Palestine should belong to Abraham and to Abraham's seed forever Gen 13:15. And on the basis of that promise, Abraham buried Sarah in Machpelah. And Isaac and Rebekah were buried by the side of Abraham and Sarah. And Leah and Israel were buried in that field of Ephron, their possession forever and forever.

Over that cave of Machpelah, there stands what is today the children of Ishmael, the sons of Abraham by that wild man Ishmael (Gen 16:11-12). One of these days and very soon, the children of Abraham will be raised from the dead. Some day, there in that land, they will look upon their Lord and King, Christ Jesus, and acknowledge Him as their Lord, as their Savior. There will be one nation and one King and one throne and one Lord and one everlasting sea of righteousness filled with the knowledge of the Lord. The nations of the earth will go up to the mount of the Lord there to worship our Savior and theirs, world without end (Revelation 21:24), for the

Word and the promises of God are sure (2Cor 1:20).

Abraham had an immediate hope, the hope of the resurrection, for Sarah. That cave in Machpelah, though represented far more than *his* hope. It represented the far greater glory of the fulfillment of the great Millennial plan of God where Abraham and his children would receive their promise. That cave was merely a deposit paid down in anticipation of all that was to come. That cave speaks to us of the glory of God come down to earth as the hosts of hell are vanquished and King Jesus takes His place on the throne of David. But that hope is fulfilled in us only if Jesus has taken His place on the throne of our heart. The nations are gnashing their teeth all around that tiny piece of real estate, but it stands by the grace of God. Satan hovers over this earth fuming at God's creation, man, but this world stands by God's grace. However, the only way to pass on to the next phase, that Millennial Kingdom, is to stand as a child of God by His grace through the blood of Christ.

Rom 8:16-18 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

17And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.

18For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Abraham will rise from Machphelah. Sarah will rise from Machphelah. Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph will rise from Machphelah. All those who have placed their faith in Christ and are in Him will rise, all to the glory of God's grace.

— Based on excerpts from Dr. W. A. Criswell's message, July 7, 1957,

<https://wacriswell.com/sermons/1957/tear-stained-machpelah/>

1. The tears of Abraham Gen 23:1-2, 1Pet 3:15
2. The hope of Abraham Gen 22:5, Heb 11:17-19, Gen 23:3-4, Lev 25:23-24, Heb 11:13, 1Chr 29:14-16, Heb 11:9-10,14-16, John 14:1-6, Gen 13:14-17
3. The glory of God Gen 12:7, 15:7,18, 17:8, Matt 24:1,2, Isa 63:15-19, Amos 9:11,14-15, Gen 49:28-32, 50:12-13, 24-25, Rom 8:16-18