

## Genesis 23:1-20 and 24:1-10

In our last lesson, Abraham had been called upon to make the supreme sacrifice.

**"Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."**

Not only was Abraham willing to lay his most precious possession on the altar of sacrifice, but in so doing, he had pictured the very heart of God Who would some day give His only begotten Son--**"that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."**

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Now, as we enter Chapter 23, we find that some years have passed by since that great event on Mount Moriah.

Isaac is 37 years old, and his father has moved back to Hebron, or Mamre, as it is called in V 19.

It was a familiar spot, being a part of Canaan where he had previously lived for many years.

Genesis 23:1-2 **"And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: these were the years of the life of Sarah. 2: And Sarah died in Kirjath-arba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her."**

Sarah has the distinction of being the only woman in scripture to have her age recorded at the time of her death.

Certainly she was an outstanding woman, and one who appears among the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11.

Hebrews 11:11 **"Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised."**

Yes, it could be truly said of Sarah that she **"received strength to conceive seed."**

As we have already noted in previous lessons, God had caused her to regain a measure of her youth shortly before her son was born.

V 12 **"Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as**

**the sand which is by the sea shore  
innumerable."**

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Genesis 23:2 tells us that **"Abraham came to  
mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her."**

I think, as Abraham looked at his dear wife,  
he was reminded of the loyalty,  
perseverance, and faith which she had  
shown throughout their married life.

After all, God's promises had been given to  
Abraham, not Sarah, but she had stood  
by him in his walk of faith.

Yes, throughout those many years of  
wandering, she had been his faithful  
partner.

True, Sarah had faltered once in regard to  
Hagar, but Abraham had failed his wife  
on more than one occasion.

But all had been forgiven and forgotten, and that is the way it should be in a marriage.

I'm sure as Abraham looked at his lovely wife, he would have heartily agreed with the words of Proverbs 31:10-12--  
**"Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.**

**11: The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.**

**12: She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life."**

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V 3-4 **"And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying,**

**4: I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying**

**place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight."**

Abraham had lived as a sojourner in the land of Canaan.

He had dug his wells and erected his altars on land that he had either rented or been given permission to use.

Yes, he had been content to be **"a stranger and a sojourner,"** for he knew that some day Canaan would belong to his descendants.

Hebrews 11:9 **"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."**

So he could live without land, but he was not content to die without land.

No, he was not willing to take Sarah back to their old home in Ur of the Chaldees for burial.

By this time, they had lived about 60 years in Canaan, and Abraham was determined that they would stay there.

So he was not just thinking of convenience when he purchased a burying place in Canaan. He was demonstrating his faith in the future.

Yes, Abraham believed God's promises, and he believed in the resurrection.

In Abraham's mind, the cave of Machpelah was not just a grave for Sarah.

Some day, that land would belong to their descendants, and he was determined that he and his wife would be resurrected in that land.

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And like Abraham, the believer is also a stranger and a sojourner in this world, and we also look **"for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."**

Yes, we must serve the Lord acceptably in this present world, but we must have our eyes fixed upon our heavenly home. Like Abraham, whose attachment to this world went no deeper than his tent pegs, we must not allow the affairs of this life to fill our view.

Jesus warned us that **"--the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful."**

And an old hymn also reminds us that our citizenship is in heaven:



♪♪ *I am a stranger here,  
Within a foreign land;  
My home is far away,  
upon a golden strand.*

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V 5-6 **"And the children of Heth answered  
Abraham, saying unto him,  
6: Hear us, my lord: thou art a mighty  
prince among us: in the choice of our  
sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us  
shall withhold from thee his sepulchre,  
but that thou mayest bury thy dead."**

Now this seems like a very generous offer,  
and perhaps the children of Heth were  
sincere, but more than likely this was  
simply the prevailing custom.

I am told that even today an Arab will  
instantly give you anything in his

house that you might be incautious enough to openly admire.

So no doubt Abraham knew that this was only a custom, and that they would have been quite put out if he accepted their offer.

However, I believe they were quite sincere when they called him--"**a mighty prince among us.**"

Unlike his nephew Lot, Abraham had retained his testimony before the unsaved.

He had treated them with courtesy and respect, but at the same time, he had kept himself from being entangled with the affairs of this world.

Although they had found him courteous and friendly, he had not been a compromiser.

And the Christian should also try to earn the respect of his neighbours by fair and honest dealings.

Romans 12:17 **"Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men."**

You may not always be loved or understood by the unsaved, but you should be respected for your honest dealings.

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So, not only was Abraham familiar with their customs concerning the buying of property, but he was also very respectful and honourable in his business dealings.

V 7-9 **"And Abraham stood up, and bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth.  
8: And he communed with them, saying,**

If it be your mind that I should bury  
my dead out of my sight; hear me, and  
intreat for me to Ephron the son of  
Zohar,

9: That he may give me the cave of  
Machpelah, which he hath, which is in  
the end of his field; for as much money  
as it is worth he shall give it me for  
a possession of a buryingplace amongst  
you."

Abraham was a competent businessman.

He knew exactly how to proceed according to  
the customs of the day, and he also  
knew how to properly undertake a  
transaction.

In verses 8-9, which are now before us, he  
states his case.

That is, he clearly establishes the piece of  
ground he was interested in, and to

whom it belonged, and solicited their help in the transaction.

Then in verses 10-13, he again satisfies the custom of the day by going through the same procedure of being offered the land for free, and declining the offer.

Then in verses 14-18, he went through the proper legal procedure to secure the contract and finalize the possession of the land before the authorities in the gate.

And all the time he was aware that he was dealing with men of the world who were accustomed to getting the best deal they could.

However, without being obnoxious, he made sure that everything was properly signed, sealed, and delivered.

So with this background information in mind, let's take a look at these verses and see how Abraham handled the whole situation.

V 10-11 **"And Ephron dwelt among the children of Heth: and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the audience of the children of Heth, even of all that went in at the gate of his city, saying, 11: Nay, my lord, hear me: the field give I thee, and the cave that is therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee: bury thy dead."**

Again we have this same pretence at generosity, but again it was probably just standard business procedure.

V 12-13 **"And Abraham bowed down himself before the people of the land."**

**13: And he spake unto Ephron in the audience of the people of the land, saying, But if thou wilt give it, I pray thee, hear me: I will give thee money for the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there."**

Before all those present in the gate, Abraham acknowledged the man's generosity, but he also made it clear that he was willing to pay the fair price.

However, he did accept Ephron's offer to include the field with the cave.

V 14-15 **"And Ephron answered Abraham, saying unto him,**

**15: My lord, hearken unto me: the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver; what is that betwixt me and thee? bury therefore thy dead."**

I think Ephron knew full well that he was asking top dollar.

And, in spite of his seeming generosity, he had an exact figure in mind all the time.

And he also knew that Abraham simply must purchase a burying place for Sarah, and would not be inclined to haggle.

So with confidence, he says the land is worth 400 shekels, and then he hastily adds, **"What is that betwixt me and thee?"**

Well, Abraham didn't stoop to haggling, but handed over the full asking price.

To the people of the land, a grave was just a grave, but to Abraham, this burial ground was very important.



Sarah's grave, and, indeed, his own grave, must be in Canaan, so the price was not really too important.

The children of Heth thought Abraham was just making arrangements for the end, but, in actual fact, he was preparing for the *future*.

Hebrews 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."**

To Abraham, the field of Machpelah was not just a cemetery. It was the earnest of an everlasting inheritance, which, for him, could only come in the resurrection!

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V 16-20 "And Abraham hearkened unto Ephron;  
and Abraham weighed to Ephron the  
silver, which he had named in the  
audience of the sons of Heth, four  
hundred shekels of silver, current  
money with the merchant.

17: And the field of Ephron, which was  
in Machpelah, which was before Mamre,  
the field, and the cave which was  
therein, and all the trees that were in  
the field, that were in all the borders  
round about, were made sure

18: Unto Abraham for a possession in  
the presence of the children of Heth,  
before all that went in at the gate of  
his city.

19: And after this, Abraham buried  
Sarah his wife in the cave of the field  
of Machpelah before Mamre: the same is

Hebron in the land of Canaan.

20: And the field, and the cave that is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a buryingplace by the sons of Heth."

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In type, Chapter 23 makes way for Chapter 24.

Let me explain.

We have already learned that during the Mount Moriah experience, Abraham pictured God the Father, and Isaac pictured God the Son.

Also, in Jeremiah 31, we see an interesting relationship between God and His chosen people.

There in V 32, God says "**I was an husband unto them.**"

So Sarah, because of her relationship to Abraham, becomes a perfect type of the nation of Israel.

Not only because she was the wife of Abraham, but because she was the mother of Isaac.

And as we know, the nation of Israel brought forth Christ.

So after the symbolic sacrifice and resurrection of Isaac on Mount Moriah, the very next event recorded in scripture is the death of Sarah, and her entombment in Canaan to await the resurrection.

In like manner, after the death and resurrection of Christ, Israel was set aside to await *her resurrection* in the Promised Land.

So in Genesis 23, what does the laying aside of Sarah signal?

And what is the next logical event in God's great program after the setting aside of Israel?

Why, it is the calling out of the bride of Christ, of course, and that is exactly what Chapter 24 is all about.

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V 1-4 **"And Abraham was old, and well**

**stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things.**

**2: And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh:**

**3: And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a**

wife unto my son of the daughters of  
the Canaanites, among whom I dwell:  
4: But thou shalt go unto my country,  
and to my kindred, and take a wife unto  
my son Isaac."

This responsibility must have lain heavily upon Abraham's shoulders, for the inhabitants of Canaan were not only idol worshippers, but, for the most part, a very wicked people.

Of course many of Abraham's own people, like his father Terah, were idol worshippers also, but at least they were his own kind.

However, Mesopotamia, the country where his kindred lived, was far away, and by now Abraham was too old to make such a trip.

So if Isaac was to obtain a wife from Mesopotamia, then Abraham would have to rely on another to make that happen. The man he chose was his own head servant, a most important individual who was in charge of all of his goods, and yet, surprisingly, this man is never named. He was simply called Abraham's "**eldest servant,**" and this omission of his name is quite significant.

Actually, it is the first indication that, as Isaac is a type of Christ, this man is a type of the Holy Spirit.

John 16:13-14 says, "**Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.**"

**14: He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."**

And also, like the Holy Spirit, this "**eldest servant**" was charged with the responsibility of *seeking a bride* for Abraham's only son.

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And even though Isaac was about 40 years old by this time, Abraham still considered it *his* responsibility to find a suitable partner for his son.

It was a grave responsibility, for Isaac's wife must have some very specific qualities.

Of course, it would be nice if she was beautiful, like Abraham's own wife Sarah, but there was much more involved than that.



Obviously, she would be the wife of a rich man, and therefore have the responsibility to govern a household of servants wisely.

In addition to that, like any good wife, she must be a *help meet* to her husband.

And most importantly, she should be a fellow believer, one whose faith was grounded in Jehovah.

As a mother in the direct line of the Abrahamic Covenant, she should instruct Isaac's children in the way of righteousness.

So it was a very serious matter, and, in fact, all marriage, and especially the marriage of a believer, is a very serious matter.

Oh, how we need godly mothers in our day!

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V 2-4 "And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh:  
3: And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell:  
4: But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac."

As we have already mentioned, Abraham's age prevented him from personally taking care of this important matter.

He was "**well stricken in age**," being 140 years old, and Haran was over 500 miles from his home.

So he entrusted his eldest servant with this grave responsibility.

I think this man was more like a family member than a servant, for he **"ruled over all that he had."**

And not only did Abraham assign this task to his most trusted man, but he put him under a solemn oath.

Yes, this was *serious* business.

V 5-7 **"And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?  
6: And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again."**

Now this commandment was not just Abraham's personal preference. It was God's will.

If Isaac actually went to Haran and met a beautiful and persuasive young lady, he might be tempted to remain there for some time rather than returning to the Promised Land.

Actually, that is exactly what happened to his son, Jacob, many years later.

As far as we know, Isaac had never been outside of Canaan, and apparently that was the way God wanted to keep it.

Isaac was a type of Christ, and his wife must be willing to leave her world and come to his, not vice versa.

And that's the way it is with Christ and His Bride today.

During this age of grace, the Holy Spirit  
presents Christ in all His glory, and  
individuals are drawn unto Him.

As Christians, we must operate the same way.  
We should never lower Christ to the  
standards of the world in order to  
attract the unsaved.

We must preach the Word, and then allow the  
Holy Spirit to draw Christ's bride into  
Christ's world, not vice versa.

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Also, if Isaac had returned to Mesopotamia,  
he would have been obliged to pass  
through the land of Moriah, the land  
where he had been symbolically  
sacrificed.

This would be an improper route for one who  
is a type of Christ, for Christ never  
repeated Calvary.

Hebrews 9:28 says, **"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."**

Oh, Christ will return to this earth a **"second time"** in order to rule and to reign, but He will never pass through **"the land of Moriah"** again!

So, even though it might seem like a good idea to take this good-looking man to Haran in order to win over the young lady's heart, Isaac was not to go.

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V 7-9 **"The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this**

land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence.

8: And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again.

9: And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning that matter."

So the servant's instructions were: *Go to Haran and faithfully represent my son. Tell of his riches, and tell of his love, and God will do the rest.*

If the servant followed Abraham's instructions to the letter, then he would have fulfilled his oath.

And by the way, he would have also fulfilled the *type* of the Holy Spirit to the letter.

Yes, these are the rules under which the Holy Spirit operates in this Age of Grace, and this is our guide in presenting the Gospel.

Christ must be faithfully presented in all His glory as **"the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."**

On the testimony of the Holy Spirit found in His Holy Word, the sinner must choose to follow or reject an absent Lord Jesus.

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Abraham needed to find a wife for Isaac, but in the final analysis, it was God's responsibility.



Notice how he said, **"The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence."**

Yes, it had been God's plan all along.

He had called away Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees, and set him on the road that would bless all nations.

The calling out of Rebekah was simply another step in His overall plan, and He would surely accomplish it.

Like Abraham, Christians are not responsible to plan God's campaigns for Him. We are only responsible to obediently fit into His plan.

So, under God's direction, Abraham initiated the plan, and then his faithful servant wasted no time in putting it into action.

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V 10 **"And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor."**

Nothing is mentioned about that long trip of over 500 miles.

There could have been many trials and dangers along the way, but the Holy Spirit has seen fit to pass over the servant's adventures and focus our attention upon Rebekah.

Here again the affairs of this faithful servant, who so closely typifies the

Holy Spirit, were only important as they concerned the interests of Isaac and Rebekah.

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Now, Abraham's servant was only aware of the *first* step in God's plan when he left his master's tent.

He didn't know whom God would choose to be Isaac's bride.

So did he delay his trip?

Did he linger at home and pray for more directions?

No. He acted immediately on the instructions he already had.

He made his preparations, and started out on the long and arduous journey.

Then, having obediently taken the first step, and it was a big one, he stood by

the well in Haran, and prayed for further instructions.

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And that is exactly the way it should be in our own lives.

God usually reveals His will to us one step at a time.

He will fill in the details after we have been obedient to what we already know.

It is an important principle.

Take the first step in faith, and God will fill in the details

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And this same principle was further emphasized many years later in the crossing of the Jordan.

Let's look at this important portion of God's Word before closing our lesson.

Joshua 3:13 **"And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap."**

As we read on, V 15 tells us another important detail: **"(for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest.)"**

Sometimes God asks us to do some very scary things.

And without a doubt, an overflowing river is a scary thing to step into.

But we need only take the first step, and God will open up a path before us.

And we must remember that "--**Jordan**

**overfloweth all his banks all the time  
of harvest.)"**

If we wait for a safer time to cross, the harvest will be over. The opportunity to speak a word for Christ will be forever lost.

So, like Abraham's servant, we need to take the first step immediately.

Just jump in and get your feet wet, and God will open a way before you!