

Genesis: God and Man

Bury Your Dead

Genesis 23

Today we're going to look at the death and funeral of Sarah, Abraham's wife
Mother of Isaac

She and Abraham have a storied past

1. Half sister
2. Barren until older age, miracle
3. Lied a few times for Abram/ham
4. Almost became a part of several king's wives/concubines
5. She is the one who suggested Hagar could be the vessel of the promise

Death is a hard thing. We're truly not meant to experience it.

Genesis "when you eat of it, you will surely die"

We are not capable of dealing with it on our own.

We were created for a world without it

Now we live in a world full of it, it seems more and more of it every day

But we can learn something through it. We can know that in this life, there are seasons of life and seasons of death.

Ecc 3:1-2a To everything [there is] a season, A time for every purpose under heaven: A time to be born, And a time to die; ...

The problem often lies in when we do not move on from it, and we live in it.

Mat 8:28-34 NKJV - When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed [men], coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way. And suddenly they cried out, saying, "What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?" Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. So the demons begged Him, saying, "If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine." And He said to them, "Go." So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water. Then those who kept [them] fled; and they went away into the city and told everything, including what [had happened]

to the demon-possessed [men]. And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged [Him] to depart from their region.

The demons loved being around death,
the tombs, the graves, and they brought their captive hosts there to live.

Where are you living? Could it be because you are captive to some death in life?
An actual death? A personal one? A relationship? A career? A hope? A dream?

Pro 13:12 NKJV - Hope deferred makes the heart sick, But [when] the desire comes, [it is] a tree of life.

Ecc 7:2-4 Better to go to the house of mourning Than to go to the house of feasting, For that [is] the end of all men; And the living will take [it] to heart. Sorrow [is] better than laughter, For by a sad countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise [is] in the house of mourning, But the heart of fools [is] in the house of mirth.

Mourning is an important part of healing. If we do not properly mourn, we cannot properly heal.

The place we must first mourn is at the cross of Christ, over our sin that caused his death.

From there, we can begin to accurately mourn over death in our life

1Th 4:13-18 NKJV - But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive [and] remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

There's a lot there...but the key is...we have HOPE.
The hope that only ETERNAL LIFE can give.

Death, the fear of it, the planning for it, the waiting for it, the counting on it...will always hold us back (sometimes that's good...wear your seatbelt, make sure you've fully thought that bungee jump through...)

But don't let it hold you back from following God and his promises and plans for and in your life

Luk 9:59-60 NKJV - Then He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God."

The Kingdom of God is a kingdom of life.
That's the difference between it and the kingdom of this earth.
It's obvious.

[pray]

[Genesis 23:1-2]

Sarah dies at 127...only woman's age at death recorded in the Bible...showing her vast importance in the scripture

Twice told to look to her as a godly example, but never to Mary

The years of the life of Sarah

What are the years of the life of YOU?

*37 now, 38 this year...clock keeps ticking up. Getting older, feeling older...
What will the years of my life be?*

Psa 90:12 NKJV - So teach [us] to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.

She dies in Hebron west of the Dead Sea, south of Jerusalem

Abram came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her

Cultural mourning, weeping (Jesus putting the mourners out of the house when healing the little girl)

Funerals, memorial services, "celebrations of life"
Cultural differences

Mourning showing a great loss.

It's ok to feel a great loss at death. Death is an immeasurable loss. No matter how short the life.

No parent should ever have to mourn the loss of their child

Friends losing their little boy the week before last

4 mo-old boy dying in daycare in NYC

Sometimes we tend to bury the pain, ignore it, try and focus on the happy side, positive side

But we need to mourn. It is a loss. And it is OK to feel that loss. But, again, we must go through it

Psa 23:4 NKJV - Yea, 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.

**It is a deep, dark, brutal, heavy, sometimes long valley in life.
Covered in shadows, pain, hard to see forward**

But we can and must walk through it

The only comfort there is that the Lord is with you

Psa 34:18-19 NKJV - The LORD [is] near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit. Many [are] the afflictions of the righteous, But the LORD delivers him out of them all.

He will deliver you through the valley of death

Spend time with him in the psalms, in proverbs, in ecclesiastes, the gospels, revelation

It says that Abraham came to mourn...

To come, to go, to enter in, to lead, bring to pass

He was obviously leading the procession

Planning the memorial, burial, and everything else

It was his wife of a lifetime

Someone I'm sure he truly loved

But, and the commentaries don't say this, so it's me maybe reading into it, or maybe not...

But I get the sense that perhaps he came to where she was to mourn...perhaps they weren't together at the time of her death

Perhaps again I'm reading too much into this, but perhaps it can relate to someone

Being out of town when something happens

9/11 being separated from them

If that's the case, and again, I know their marriage had issues...Hagar, both times lying for Abraham...I'm not saying there was...but how tragic would it have been if they were separated for some reason personally

You never know when you're going to lose someone to death

Always say I love you

Always forgive

Never take it for granted

Hugging my kids this past week and a half, being grieved for our friends and the loss of their baby boy

It's heavy

But it can teach us, remind us, of all the good in life we have...or had

The memorial service, photos, memories, verses

How many of us would have regrets if someone we knew died right now?

Have we forgiven them?

Have we sought their forgiveness?

Don't want until it's too late

Make that phonecall

Make that trip

Write that letter

Do whatever it takes...even if it's not reciprocated

Love one another.

Weep for her...

If it is too late...if death has already come, whether in a good relationship or not

Weep

Mourn

Cry out

Rom 8:26 NKJV - Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

There's been such loss, such pain in my life at time...when only groanings and mourning and weeping would come out...but I knew God heard it...i feel even more intimate than any word I've said to Him

[:3 - 6]

Bury my dead out of my sight

The dealing process here with the locals

Ever been to a foreign land?

Trying to buy something?

Haggling prices?

The funeral costs

\$7,181

Cost of cremation... \$1,100

Babe, cremate me...it's on record

Do whatever is cheapest. I'll be back at the rapture with a new body

At least they are friendly enough to offer the best

Or perhaps they're trying to get him to buy their best and make a buck off the grieving man in need

Supply and demand

[:7 - 13]

If it is YOUR wish

He begins to give THEM credit for his desire, his need

Begins to call out the guy he wants

Ephron, son of Zoar

Machpelah - cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron

is a series of caves located in the heart of the old city of Hebron in the southern West Bank.

Asks for it at full price...willing to pay whatever to bury his wife and to have peace with the locals

You wouldn't want your beloved buried somewhere you could never visit or weren't welcome

Ephron wasn't a son of Heth, he was a hittite

Another outsider, in a way

Not taking more land away from them, reallocating some that they already sold to a transplant

In front of everybody, he says, I GIVE IT TO YOU

But the deal doesn't stop there...this was all apart of the haggling

[:14 - 20]

"As a gesture of kindness, the selling party may offer to give the property in question to the buyer, until the buyer insists on paying a price." David Guzik commentary

Ephron names the price, 400 shekels, but says what is money between us?

Joking with Brad all the time over this verse and the magical mystery dollar

Abraham listened to Ephron and weighed it out

It's always important to listen and consider what is really being said by someone else, especially in a contract, especially if you're emotionally distraught

Used car salesmen pressure, what does that lease agreement REALLY say when you read it, don't be so quick to sign on the line, especially when it's about death

Before Mamre...Ah, i think we see why Abraham wanted this particular piece of land

Gen 13:18 KJV - Then Abram removed [his] tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which [is] in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD.

Gen 14:13 KJV - And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these [were] confederate with Abram.

Gen 18:1 KJV - And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day;

**This was a special, spiritual place for Abraham
A place where He and God met on many occasions
Altar there**

If I die before the Lord's return, cremate me, and if you're up for it, scatter my ashes in these mountains.

**Sarah's death was a big deal for Abraham
Being called out. Becoming a father of faith. The promise of a son. Becoming a father.
Isaac.**

**He needed to mourn for her and lay her to rest right where his relationship with God was
He didn't necessary want to see her every day. But he wanted her to be where he was
with God.**

Legal contract in front of everyone. Paid full (over inflated first offer?) price. Not a shekel less.

Good Christian witness is to do business well, keep contracts, etc.

Psa 15:4c He [who] swears to his own hurt and does not change;

Still the land of Canaan

**Interesting that the first bit of the promised land that Abraham actually owned...was the
burial place of his wife and the place he met with God when first entering the land.**

"The text emphasizes this property was Abraham's land by deed, not only by the promise of God." DGC

**The death of Sarah marked the beginning of the physical inheritance of the land
Death, when handled by God, always brings about more life
Promises fulfilled**

**But if Abraham wasn't a man of faith, or lost his faith at the death of his wife, he would
have missed the next part of the promise...the land**

How much of our lives have reduced inheritance (spiritually, mentally, physically) because when death has come we weren't looking for faith?

Don't let death bury you before it's time.

Don't let death have it's victory over you...why?

1Co 15:54-58 NKJV - So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O Death, where [is] your sting? O Hades, where [is] your victory?" The sting of death [is] sin, and the strength of sin [is] the law. But thanks [be] to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.s