

The Sunset of Abraham's Life

Text: Gen. 25:1-11

Introduction:

1. This chapter forms an important transition from the life of Abraham to the life of Isaac. Abraham's story has been recorded under the "generations of Terah" (11:27). Now Scripture will take us on to "the generations of Ishamel" (25:12) and more particularly to the "generations of Isaac" (25:19).
2. In this chapter, Abraham's race comes to an end and the focus of inspiration turns next to Isaac. As someone put it, "God buries His workman and carries on His work." This final account of Abraham's life covers his final 35 years.
3. As with our study of Sarah's death and burial, there are lessons to be learned from this final chapter of the man who goes down in Biblical history as a man who was called "the Friend of God" (James 2:23). Wiersbe says, "After a person dies, we read the obituary; and after the burial, we read the will. Let's do that with Abraham."
4. We will divide our study of this final epoch of Abraham's life into three parts.

I. THE LEGACY OF ABRAHAM'S LIFE (VS. 1-6)

Abraham left behind a threefold legacy. It was:

A. Generational (Vs. 1-4)

1. Abraham re-marries a lady named Keturah after Sarah's death. Sadly, it appears she had the status of a lesser wife as she is referred to as a concubine (Vs. 6a).
2. Abraham has an additional 6 sons with Keturah. God had promised that Abraham would be "a father of many nations" (Gen. 17:4) so the six sons of Keturah appear to be a part of the fulfillment of that promise.
3. Over time the sons of Keturah merged with the sons of Ishmael and formed what we now know today as the Arab peoples. Henry Morris writes, "It seems likely that all of these peoples, together with the descendants of Ishmael, Lot and Esau, along with the earlier descendants of Shem and, in some cases, Ham, have gradually merged and become the modern-day Arabic peoples." Barnhouse notes that the six sons of Keturah "so mingled with Ishmael as to be indistinguishable".

B. Material (Vs. 5-6)

Abraham wisely disperses his estate prior to his death. We could say this was Abraham's last will and testament. We note there was:

1. A priority in Abraham's will (Vs. 5) – Isaac's portion of the estate.
 - a. Isaac would receive the majority of the inheritance since God had said he would establish his covenant with Isaac (See Gen. 17:21). Isaac was also the spiritual one amongst Abraham's sons who would pass on a godly heritage to his children and therefore it was fitting that he received a larger share of the

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inheritance. Ishmael, in contrast to Isaac, was a fleshly, wild man. The sons of Keturah were likely in a similar category.

- b. While everyone's family situation is different and the specifics of a will are private, a believer should try to reflect a spiritual priority in what they do with their estate. Don't make the wrong assumption that all the rebels in the family have to get equal share with those who are walking a godly, separated life. Ask God how He would have you allocate your resources. That may mean leaving something behind to aid the work of the Gospel.
 - c. John Butler writes, "Abraham was simply honouring God and His Word with his will. Abraham practiced what believers should always practice in regard to their wills; that is, they should always honour God and His Word with their wills. Therefore, let not the saints of God endow the world with their estates. Let not the saints of God give their estates to people and institutions that do not honour God and the Word of God."
2. A provision in Abraham's will (Vs. 6) – the other sons' portion of the estate. While Isaac received a greater share of the inheritance, Abraham did not neglect his other offspring, leaving them a gift each. This reveals something of Abraham's heart and wisdom. The Bible is silent on the details of how large or small this gift was but we can probably assume that if Abraham was sending them away to the east country, it would have been enough to sustain and help them for a while.

C. Spiritual (Vs. 11)

Abraham left behind material wealth for his family but more importantly, he left behind spiritual wealth for the whole world. Abraham's material wealth is long gone but his spiritual legacy remains.

1. Spiritual blessing for Isaac (Vs. 11)
 - a. Abraham passed on a godly heritage to his son Isaac. As God's hand was upon Abraham, so it was also upon Isaac.
 - b. What kind of spiritual legacy are we passing on to our children?
2. Spiritual blessing for the world (Gen. 12:3).

God had promised that all the families of the earth would be blessed through Abraham. What blessing has come down to us from this godly saint of old who was willing to heed God's call and consecrate Himself wholly to God's will.

 - a. The blessing of Abraham's godly example. Abraham left behind the example of a justification by faith and living by faith.
 - b. The blessing of Abraham's seed.
 - i. His natural seed – Israel. Through Israel God has blessed the world, using her to bring us both the written and the Living Word.
 - ii. His Messianic seed – Christ. The very first verse of the New Testament opens with these words, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." (Matt. 1:1).
 - iii. His spiritual seed – us! "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, **the same are the**

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children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” Galatians 3:6-9

- c. Challenge: God can use us to be channels of blessing to others too if we will but place ourselves totally in the hands of God for Him to take and use as He sees fit. Will you leave anything of spiritual value behind when you go to glory? D.L. Moody famously said, “The world has yet to see what God can do with a man fully consecrated to him. By God’s help, I aim to be that man.”

II. THE MEMORY OF ABRAHAM’S LIFE (VS. 7-8)

The years of Abraham’s earthly pilgrimage are noted in these verses. We note two truths about Abraham’s years.

A. The Quantity of his Years (Vs. 7-8a)

1. Abraham’s earthly life was long (Vs. 7). Abraham lived to the ripe old age of 175. That means Abraham lived for 100 years in the land of promise since he arrived in Canaan at the age of 75. That means Abraham lived to see Isaac reach the age of 75 – the age of Abraham when Abraham came to Canaan (12:4).
2. Abraham’s earthly life was limited (Vs. 8a). The Bible notes plainly that Abraham “gave up the ghost, and died”. It is a sobering reminder that even if God gives you a long life on earth, it will come to an end. Death is a 100% certainty unless the rapture comes before for the believer. Abraham died “in the Lord” (Rev. 14:13) as a justified believer (Gen. 15:6) so death held no fear for him. How about you? Death is a doorway into eternity either in heaven or hell. Where will you spend eternity? Are you ready to die?

B. The Quality of his Years (Vs. 8b)

More is meant in the phrase “in a good old age, an old man, and full of years” than just the fact Abraham lived to be an old man. The words also indicate that it was an abundant, blessed and satisfied life. Abraham’s journey of faith was not without failure but overall, it was blessed of God. He died satisfied in the Lord with the same assurance the Apostle Paul did over 2,000 years later when he testified “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:” (2. Tim. 4:7). As we cast our eyes back over the life of Abraham, we can see why he ended his years a blessed and satisfied man. Abraham knew a blessed life because of:

1. His faith in God
 - a. Abraham was saved by faith (Gen. 15:6). Abraham could not have been saved by keeping the law of Moses (the 10 commandments) as the law had not yet been given.
 - b. Abraham lived by faith (Heb. 11:8-10).
2. His focus upon God – Abraham lived a separated, consecrated life. He was separate from the world unto God.
3. His faithfulness to God – Abraham was faithful in the place God called him to for 100 years, waiting patiently decade after decade

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for God to fulfill His promises. How many blessings are forfeited by believers because they are unfaithful. James uses Abraham to illustrate the importance of proving our faith by our works (James 2:14-16). He was not saved by works, but he proved his faith by his works.

4. His friendship with God – undoubtedly this was the greatest secret to Abraham’s life. Abraham’s close relationship with God is emphasized by the presence of the altar in his life. Abraham knew God, fellowshiped with God (i.e., in prayer) and walked with God. He was called “the Friend of God” (James 2:23).
5. Note: Maybe you have wasted years in your history. Don’t stay defeated for the rest of your life! Ask God to forgive you for those wayward years (if you haven’t already), walk with him for the rest of what remains of your life and finish well for God’s glory.
6. What a contrast Abraham’s experience at the end of his life was to what is experienced amongst the unsaved in their sunset years. Maclaren writes, Maclaren said, “We have all seen godless old men cynical and sour, pleased with nothing, grumbling, or feebly complaining about everything, dissatisfied with all which life has thus far yielded them, and yet clinging desperately to it, and afraid to go.”
7. Wiersbe said, “How few people really experience joy and satisfaction when they reach old age! When they look back, it is with regret; when they look ahead, it is with fear; and when they look around it is with complaint.”

III. THE DESTINY AFTER ABRAHAM’S LIFE (VS. 8B-10)

These verses not only record the fact of Abraham’s burial but also reveal that Abraham did not cease to exist, his real person passing in to the afterlife. Let’s note what happened to both Abraham’s soul and body.

A. The Immortality of his Soul (Vs. 8b)

We now encounter another “first mention” in the Book of Genesis, the phrase “and was gathered to his people”. This expression is only applied to several others in the Old Testament: Isaac (Gen. 35:29), Gideon (Jdg. 8:32), David (1 Chr. 29:28) and Job (42:17).

1. What this phrase does NOT mean – it is not a reference to the burial of the body. That is described in the next two verses. Further, Sarah was the only other one buried at that time in the cave of Machpelah so Abraham’s burial there could not be described as being gathered to his people (plural).
2. What the phrase does mean – the phrase clearly refers to life after death. Henry Morris notes, “The phrase “gathered to his people” must refer to life after death, with those who before him had died in faith since none of his ancestors were buried in the cave of Machpelah, where he was buried. The location of such departed spirits was, nineteen hundred years later, actually is called “Abraham’s bosom” (Luke 16:22).” We learn a number of truths about the immortality of the soul after death.
 - a. The reality of life after death. Abraham did not cease to exist after he died nor did he enter a state of soul slip as erroneously

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taught by certain groups such as the SDA's. When the body dies, the soul does not. It continues to exist, to live for all eternity. Death is not the end. Death is the doorway into eternity. Let's establish some Bible facts about life after death:

- i. It is true that the Bible in places speaks of death in terms of sleep for the believer but we must not that the sleep is in reference to the body, not the soul in relation to death. The body will be brought to life again at the resurrection but until then the spirit is alive and conscious in the presence of God.
 1. 1 Thess. 4:14 "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so **them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.**"
 2. Rev. 6:9-11 "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they *were*, should be fulfilled."
- ii. For the believer, death is the doorway into heaven, the presence of God and the company of departed saints.
 1. 2 Cor. 5:6-8 "Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (7) (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) (8) We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather **to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.**"
 2. Php. 1:23 "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and **to be with Christ**; which is far better:"
- iii. For the unbeliever, death is a doorway into hell. As soon as the rich man in Luke 16:19-31 died the Bible says, "And **in hell** he lift up his eyes, being in torments..."
- iv. Remember, Hebrews 11 confirms this view of Abraham's destiny as it notes that Abraham was seeking a heavenly city – "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10). The word for "looked" means that he "expected eagerly". Abraham's faith helped him see beyond the land of Canaan which is why he maintained the pilgrim mindset throughout his earthy walk. His faith enabled him to see that there was life beyond the grave and something much grander and glorious to live for than anything this world could offer.

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- b. The representation of life after death. The phrased “gathered to his people” gives a touching, simple picture of the afterlife for the believer.
 - i. After death, we are gathered with the people of God in glory. Our people are the saints, our spiritual family. The glories of heaven are unveiled in greater detail in the New Testament but on a simple level, heaven is where we gather with Christ and His people.
 - ii. Wiersbe writes, “One day you will be “gathered to your people”. If God’s people were your people in life, then you will be with them after death in the home that Jesus is now preparing (John 14:1-6). If the Christian family is not your “people”, then you will be with the crowd that is going to hell; and it is described in Revelation 20:10-15; 21:8. You had better make the right choice, because eternity is forever!”

B. The Internment of his Body (Vs. 9-10)

1. The place of Abraham’s burial – Abraham was buried in the cave of Machpelah with his precious Sarah who had died some 38 years prior. Abraham was not buried back in Mesopotamia with his natural family but in the land of promise. This represented an act of faith on Abraham’s part. He believed God’s promise that the land would be given to his seed and was buried in faith, in the only little piece of that land he owned, trusting that God would fulfill the rest of His promises for his seed in the future.
2. The principle of Christian burial. We have already discussed the issue of cremation vs burial in a previous message (Sarah’s death and burial) but it is worth noting again that the saints of old buried their loved ones in anticipation of the coming resurrection rather than following the pagan practice of cremation.

Conclusion: What are you living for? What are you building with your life? “Scaffoldings are for buildings, and the moments and days and years of our earthly lives are scaffolding. What are we building inside the scaffolding? What kind of structure will be disclosed when the scaffolding is knocked away?” (Maclaren)