

Genesis 23:1-20 Sarah lived 127 years; these were the years of the life of Sarah. ² And 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. ³ And 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." ⁵ The 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." ⁷ Abraham rose and bowed to the Hittites, the people of the land. ⁸ 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, ⁹ 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."

¹⁰ 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, 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." ¹² Then Abraham bowed down before the people of the land. ¹³ 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." ¹⁴ Ephron 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." ¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ 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 ¹⁸ to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the Hittites, before all who went in at the gate of his city. ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ The field and the cave that is in it were made over to Abraham as property for a burying place by the Hittites.

Announcements:

1. Women's Study
2. Giving in the App

Genesis 23:1-20 | Buried in Faith

Today's story is in many ways a simple one, it's one many of you have experienced in some way or another if you've ever had to work out a deal. It honestly seems like a group of middle eastern men trying to out polite each other. So what is it doing here? What can we learn from this little story? Here we see a picture of what it looks like to live with resurrection hope in a land that is not our home and a promise that we don't see fulfilled.

Birth of Isaac
7 Verses.
Sacrifice of
Isaac
20 vs.

→ Why does this story take up so much space?
→ What does the promised land mean if you never get to see it?
→ Lets get real about futility.

1. A Little Slice of Canaan

Sarah's death

Genesis 23:3-4 And 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.”

At 127 years old, Abraham's wife, Sarah, dies in the land of Canaan. After a period of mourning Abraham meets with the possessors of the land, the Hittites, to arrange her burial. And as he seeks land to bury his wife, he acknowledges the reality of his situation to the Hittites. He refers to himself as a “sojourner and a foreigner among them.” This is a resident alien, someone with some standing in the community but not a permanent standing because he doesn't own any land.

Sojourner & Foreigner.

*Burial = Permanent
→ Act of Faith.
Sarah never saw it.*

The stakes of this whole negotiation are determined by Abraham's position as a sojourner and foreigner. A burial site is a permanent fixture. Sarah's death raises this question about God's promise. She never got to see it realized, so what does it mean for her? Did God's promise for Sarah expire with Sarah? Can the foreigner buy the land? You see there are high stakes for this negotiation.

Genesis 23:5-6 The 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.”

*→ Subtext
- prevent legal ownership
- NIMBY*

Now it may sound like wonderful news, Abraham because of his shining reputation will simply receive the land as a gift. But there is something happening beneath the words. The Hittites are angling to prevent Abraham from becoming a legal owner of the land. The promises of God and the clean energy promise of nuclear power come up against the same constraint, NIMBY.

*Practical
don't Address the
gridlock of the
crowd.*

The Hittites are gathered together in a group with Abraham at the gate of the city where negotiations like this take place. The group does not want to let the foreigner in. But Abraham is smart, he knows that its time to stop addressing the gridlock of the crowd, and instead turn to an individual. The crowd has no incentive, an individual has a customer. He directs his conversation to Ephron, the owner of the land he wishes to buy. Ephron of course tows the party line, and offers to give him a burial site. Abraham retorts saying he couldn't possibly but must pay the cost of the land. They both say give, they mean buy.

*- localize to
what you want.
Ephron
→ Give, Give*

Genesis 23:15-16 “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.” ¹⁶ 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.

First resident
= Sarah &
only in death.

Did you see it. Ephron named a price. Abraham knew enough to take it. It's hard to say whether or not it was a fair price, but the land was bought, ratified in front of the rest of the town. Sarah is buried in Canaan. The first resident of the promised land resides only in her death. The wife of the owner of the land.

did the Lord forget
his promise?

Was the Lord faithful to his promise for Sarah did she receive the promised land? The reality is, she never witnessed it. She inhabited the promised land only in death, all the days of her life were spent as sojourner and a foreigner.

Christian:
your kingdom come...

As Christians we understand this all too well. Every true Christian in history has lived their lives with the prayer that "your kingdom would come, your will would be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven." But not one Christian has seen it. Instead they have merely been buried here. Some might look at this pattern and see only foolishness and meaninglessness. What did this glorious promise of the land mean to Abraham if all he would live to see was his buried wife? Is the hope of Christianity just some mental trick not connected to any realization of goodness? Hebrews clarifies what is happening.

- Foolishness
- Meaninglessness
- Psychological
trick.
Self-deceit.

2. The Pattern of the Exile

Not received:

Hebrews 11:13 *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.*

Greeted from
afar:

The writer of Hebrews referring to Abraham and Sarah wrote the above. Here we see how Abraham and Sarah are the pattern of faith for the Christian. We see in our story today, that Sarah died in faith, not receiving what was promised. Instead, her experience was like that of Abraham, it was only a greeting from afar. It was a zoom call, not a meeting. And the way that they postured themselves towards the promised land, was the same as our posture towards our world now. We are only strangers and exiles here on the earth, and whatever purchase we make of this good world we might experience only in death.

Acknowledged
Strangers
Aliens.

die in Apparent
Failure.

What this means is many of the most successful Christians will die in apparent failure. Don't be deceived. They might just be a foothold in the promised land. The writer of Hebrews continues

Hebrews 11:14-15 *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.*

Seeking, abundant.
did they live
foolishly?

People who speak in terms of being strangers and exiles make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. You see there is something about how clearly Sarah and Abraham geared their lives towards the promised land that might cast their death as a failure. What if instead of living their lives on the promise of a destination they had instead lived their

↓
 "My Way" - Frank Sinatra
 - Journey.

could have turned
 back.

lives on the promise of a great journey. At my Grandpas funeral they played a song that I absolutely hate, "My Way" by Frank Sinatra. "Regrets I've had a few... but then again too few to mention." The moral of the song is it doesn't matter what you did or didn't accomplish so long as you did things your way. You can never be accused of failure.

Abraham and Sarah could have always turned back and abandoned the promise. You know the verses just before this story recount the many children had by Abraham's brother back in their homeland. The one landless son looks like a failure. But they were looking forward to what made the land truly home, the promise.

3. Living as Exiles

Hebrews 11:16 *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.*

Bach
Sola Dei Gloria
 Lost & Found.

Listen to this description of Bach's Music. "Bach's music is extremely faithful to the mathematical and physical reality of vibrations made by an instrument, but at the same time seems infinite. In this sense Bach's music might be the best representation of God made alive in Christ." The infinite in presence, the incarnation. How wonderful. When Bach died his music disappeared but for some of his compositions left in a textbook for his students. It was discovered 100 years later by Felix Mendelssohn. Bach used to write at the end of his compositions "Sola Dei Gloria." For the glory of God alone.

occupied only
 in death.
 but they bought
 the Land.
 -Joseph

There is a hiddenness to the promise that the Christian pursues because we live as exiles in a world that doesn't understand our culture, but with our lives in Christ we trust that the kingdom is gaining a foothold here. It might not be visible, perhaps only a death. But it is there by faith in something like resurrection. One of Sarah's great grandson's is named Joseph. He will become the most powerful man in the world, second only to pharaoh, but when he dies he will have his bones buried not in a pyramid, but in the family tomb in Canaan. Hope that the promised land is coming.

prepared for
 them a city.

Jesus, Death
 & Resurrection

What does this mean for how you gauge your life and the fruit it might bear? It means that our only true hope is a life lived for the glory of God alone. This is shown to us in Christ alone. The one whose death secured the true promise of the promised land, that God might dwell with us. Whose resurrection shows that a life lived for God's glory might look like it ends only in death, but was absolutely secure in the promise of God. The deal for this tomb barely came together. But in it we see an expression of hope in a promise that extends beyond death. Through meaninglessness, into the heart of God to redeem his people. We know this is the case because we see Jesus himself conquered meaninglessness by making death the center of his story. And Resurrection the absolute hope.