

## Genesis 23-24 “Passing the Mantel”

### Intro:

Our study tonight will close the narrative on Abraham and Sarah. While their story comes to the end their impact will certainly continue.

- Abraham is mentioned 285 times in 262 verses. 130 of those times are after his death.
- Sarah is mentioned 53 times in 44 verses. 4 of those times are after her death

What is said of Abel is certainly true of the Abraham and Sarah as well

#### Hebrews 11:4

**4** By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.

## The Death of Sarah: Genesis 23:1-2

Sarah goes by two names in Scripture;

- Sarai – her given name meaning **princess** used in 13 verses all in Genesis
- Sarah – a name given to her by God meaning “Noblewoman” used 37 times in 31 verses within Scripture. Speaks of the position she will carry as the matriarch of Israel.

#### Genesis 17:15

**15** Then God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah *shall be* her name.

We are first introduced to Sarah as the husband of Abraham

#### Genesis 11:29

Then Abram and Nahor took wives: the name of Abram’s wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor’s wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and the father of Iscah.

We also learn that she was:

- Barren – Genesis 11:30
  - This Barrenness continued until she was 90 years old and miraculously gave birth to her son Isaac
- Joined Abe on his sojourn to Canaan – Gen 12:5
  - This is a great illustration of the support role of a wife in ministry
- Was a recipient with Abraham of the promise to have descendants as the stars of the heavens
- While being a woman of great faith, she had a few times of faltering faith
  - Suggested Abraham seek to fulfill the promises of God through Hagar
  - Laughed at the thought of two elderly people ever having a child

Sarah is mentioned 3 times in the New Testament

- First reference is used in Romans 9 as an illustration of the way of salvation

### **Romans 9:9**

For this *is* the word of promise: “At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.

Paul’s argument is that not all who descend from Abraham are truly the children of Abraham. He declares: “For they are not all Israel who are of Israel”

9:32 he concludes;

### **Romans 9:32**

Why? Because *they did* not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone

Second reference is used in Hebrews 11 to illustrate trusting in God for what may seem impossible

### **Hebrews 11:11-12**

By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. **12** Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born *as many* as the stars of the sky in multitude— innumerable as the sand, which is by the seashore.

Her story is a great source of encouragement when we are facing obstacles that are greater than we can overcome

The third and final reference is in 1Peter as an example to women on how to win their husbands to the Lord

### **1 Peter 3:6**

**As Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.**

This verse is part of a larger section from 1Peter 3:1-6, describing how believing wives can win their spouses to Christ.

There are a few points that are worth highlighting

- 1) We should be seeking to win those who are not following Christ whether they have never come to Christ or they have wandered
- 2) We need to see our conduct as an important part of that process
- 3) There is hope for failing marriages even if all seems lost the Lord is able to redeem
- 4) When God does a work in our life it becomes a teaching point for others

It would do us all good to examine our life and see what testimony we are leaving behind.

Life should be lived with two primary focuses in mind:

- 1) We should live to store up treasures in heaven
- 2) We should live seeking to leave a pattern behind that will help others follow Christ

## **The Response of Abraham: Genesis 23:2-20**

We see in Abraham a beautiful expression of love toward his bride.

### **Genesis 23:2**

**So Sarah died in Kirjath Arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.**

Sarah was 127 years old when she died; it is possible that she and Abraham had been married for over 100 years. The loss of his wife would be devastating to him and he desired to honor her. There are a few key lessons in the story regarding **how to honor those** who we love at their passing:

1) He wept for her

Sorrow is the proper expression at the loss of a loved one.

- God did not design us for death, but for life. We do not know how to properly handle death

We do not sorrow like those who have no hope

**1 Thessalonians 4:13**

**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.**

The believer has the great hope that

- Their believing loved ones are in glory
- That we will be reunited with them in glory

This hope should bring us out of despair and into moving forward with the Lord

2) He buried her

Chapter 23 is an interesting story of Abraham purchasing land for a burial site for Sarah and later himself

This no doubt serves as a means up putting closer on his sorrow, but is also a picture of Abraham's continued faith.

The Lord had promised Abe and Sarah the land of Canaan although they lived in it as pilgrims within it

The writer of Hebrews sums up the life of Abraham and Sarah

**Hebrews 11:9-10**

**By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, **dwelling in tents** with Isaac**

and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; **10** for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.

He realized that many of the promises of God would find their fulfillment not in time but in eternity

### 3) He moved forward

Chapter 25:1-6 of Abraham's 2<sup>nd</sup> marriage after Sarah's death

While it is in no way necessary for anyone to remarry after their spouse passes, it is important to see that God still has plans for us until the time he takes us home.

Paul wrote

#### **Philippians 1:21**

**For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.**

And he wrote it from a prison cell facing a death sentence.

It is important that we keep in mind that no matter what

- Realizing that God had more that HE desired to do
  - Not all widows or widowers need to remarry, but we must move on for God has more that he wants to accomplish in and through our lives.

## A Bride for Isaac

This chapter is one of the most ancient of all love stories. It relates how the promised child Isaac found his bride Rebekah

No marriage in Scripture is without problems or failure. That being said, the love relationship between Isaac and Rebekah is a beautiful one.

As Abraham is aging and his son is not yet married he determines to get involved.

#### **Genesis 25:20**

**Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah as wife,**

He sends his servant back to Ur on a mission to find a suitable wife for his son. Loaded up with 10 camels and a plethora of gifts the servant makes the long journey. Overwhelmed by the task at hand he summons the aid of the Lord. With what is one of the most interesting prayers in scripture he asks for some very specific details to be accomplished.

He prays:

**Genesis 24:13-14**

Behold, *here* I stand by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. **14 Now let it be** that the young woman to whom I say, 'Please let down your pitcher that I may drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink' —**let her be the one** You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. And by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master."

And before he could finish praying Rebekah approached and offered to provide drink for himself and his camels

Rebekah then invited the servant back to her home where he met the family and told them of the purpose of his journey. Stunned by the lavish gifts that were presented, the family gave their blessing and Rebekah joined the servant enroute to Canaan to meet her new husband. When she arrived we find Isaac in a field meditating. In what seems to be pretty rapid fashion the young couple are wed

This story illustrates two very important truths

- 1) Principles for the unmarried
- 2) An illustration of the work of the Holy Spirit

## Principles for the unmarried

Genesis 24:1-4 –

Let those who have spoken into your life, speak into your life

It is always dangerous when someone will refuse to listen to godly counsel.

One form of idolatry is wanting something at all costs. If we are not willing to listen to the warnings of those who care for us the most, we probably have something out of line.

Fish in the appropriate pond

If you fish in a pond filled with carp, you will catch carp

**2 Corinthians 6:14**

**Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?**

- One of the great problems for Israel throughout their history was forming ungodly relationships
- Samson, and Solomon alike found unequal relationships to be their downfall
- We can be unequally yoked in more than one way
  - 1) With an unbeliever
  - 2) With a believer with a different view of ministry

Gen 24:5-6

Don't go backwards

Isaac was not to go back to the land that his family had been called out of

We need to be careful not to revert back to our old ways because we are lonely or impatient

Gen 24:7-9

God has a plan

Abraham was convinced that God had a plan for his son and could work it out.

God has someone for us

God does not have the perfect someone for us, because no one is perfect, He does however have the person who is best for helping to perfect us

It is not good for man to be alone

God works everything toward the good of making us like Christ

Marriage is designed as a means of perfecting us

As an aside – look carefully at 24:8

“If the woman is not willing”

She must be willing

Too many have spent time pursuing someone who does not have the same interest.

Gen 24:10-14

He prayed through it

His prayer is very specific

He was also looking for the right qualities

- She must be loving,
- She must be a servant,

Camels drink upwards of 30 gallons  
A gallon of water weighs about 8.3lbs  
30 gallons would weigh about 250lbs  
She did this for 10 camels

- She must be hospitable

Too often we look for all the wrong qualities in someone

Gen 24:15 – AND IT HAPPENED

God was able to provide even when things seemed impossible



Finally Gen 24:63

All the while Isaac was in the field meditating

## An illustration of the work of the Spirit

Gen 24:1-2

Father sends his servant to find a bride for his son

Gen 24:7

A supernatural work must take place

Gen 24:10, 22

Carried with him lavish gifts to pour on the bride

Gen 24:32-36

Servant drew attention to the Son

Gen 24:54

Servant came to bring bride to Son

Gen 24:57

Rebekah had to exercise her own personal choice