

PROMISE AND PURCHASE
GENESIS CH23:1-20

ILLUSTRATION

What is the most famous funeral of all time? Arguably the most memorable funeral in recent history is the **funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales**. The September 1997 ceremony is believed to have cost up to £5 million with approximately 1 million attendees. It's one of the most watched funerals ever, with an estimated 2.5 billion viewers worldwide

SARAH DIES! V1-2

Again, decades go by where we are not told of any further experiences that Abraham has with God! We are now told that Sarah dies at the age of 127, making Abraham 137 (Ch17:17) years old, with Isaac being around 37 years old. They could have been married for over a 100 years! Sarah's death, has left Abraham grieving! Sarah dies at "Kiriath-arba" (Hebron).

Hebron, the highest town in Israel and about 18 miles south of Jerusalem. It will end up not only the burial place of Sarah, but also of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Leah (Gen Ch40:31 + Ch50:13). It was also the place that during the "years in the wilderness" when the 12 spies were sent out, it was this region they reported on (Num Ch13:22, 28, 33)! Hebron itself during the Israelite conquest of the land was taken by Caleb and given to him as a family possession (Joshua Ch14:12 + Ch15:13; Judges Ch1:10, 20)! And in Hebron David was anointed King of Judah (2 Sam Ch2:4) and 2 years later King of Israel also (2 Sam Ch5:3), remaining his capital for over 7 years.

Kent Hughes says "Sarah had been Abraham's soul-mate on his epic journey from Ur to Canaan and then down to Egypt and back again as they sojourned in and around the promised land. Sarah was at hand for every pinnacle of Abraham's life-the repeated covenant promises; the defeat of the invading coalition of kings and Abraham's victorious return when he was greeted by Melchizidek, king of Salem; the covenant of circumcision and the dramatic renamings; Abraham's intercession for Sodom; and, of course, the offering of Isaac. Sarah was also there for all of Abraham's failures as she was twice cajoled into complicity in perpetrating the deception that she was not his wife but his sister. And, of course, she was principal to some failures of her own-in the Hagar affair and mocking the Lord's promise of Isaac. But above it all, in her old age, she had been the mother of laughter, the son of promise" (Cited in Kent Hughes commentary on Genesis, page 307 + 308).

Sarah remained through it all a woman of faith, the prophet Isaiah urged his countrymen to "look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you" (Isaiah Ch51:1-2). In **Hebrews Ch11:11**, Sarah is included in the list of the faithful! **Genesis chapter 23 opens with news of Sarah's death and finishes with her burial!**

SARAH'S FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS ARE PAID FOR! V3-16

After being in Canaan for over 60 years, Abraham has moved back to Hebron and is living out the promise made by God concerning the land! On no less than **9 occasions**, God makes the same promise to Abraham, regarding the land, his descendants and being a blessing:

1. **Gen Ch12:1** "Now the Lord said to Abram 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that **I will** show you.'"

2. **Gen Ch12:2** “And *I will* make of you a great nation, and *I will bless* you and make your name great, so that you will be a *blessing*.”
3. **Gen Ch12:3** “*I will bless* those who *bless* you, and him who dishonours you *I will* curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be *blessed*.”
4. **Gen Ch12:7** “To your offspring *I will* give this land”.
5. **Gen Ch13:15** “For all the land that you see *I will* give to you and your offspring forever.”
6. **Gen Ch15:7** - And He said to him, “I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to **give you** this land to possess.”
7. **Gen Ch15:18** “On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘To your offspring *I give* this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates.’”
8. **Gen Ch17:7-8** “*I will* establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And *I will* give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and *I will* be their God.”
9. **Gen Ch22:16** “**By myself** I have sworn declares the Lord, because you have done this and not withheld your son, your only son.

However, up until now the only land that is “owned” (loosely put) by Abraham, after 62 years of living in the land, is a well – Genesis Ch21:30!

According to Kent Hughes “Despite his three `I gives` Ephron was extorting Abraham. All Abraham wanted was the cave, but Ephron added the field. More real estate, more money! Abraham knew it. But there was nothing he could do. Abraham had been sincere in his offer to pay `full price` (literally, “full silver”) for the grave, but Ephron had just a wee bit more in mind.

Following the elaborate protocol, `Abraham bowed down (v7+12) before the people of the land. 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.` Ephron answered Abraham, `My lord, listen to me: a piece of land worth 400 shekels of silver, what is that between you and me? Bury your dead` (v12-15).

If Abraham had been given to quick retort, he could have answered Ephron's `What is that between you and me?` With `A whole lot, Ephron! You're taking me to the cleaners.` Indeed, 400 shekels of silver was extortionate. During patriarchal times the shekel was a weight, not a coin. Coinage was not invented until centuries later. 400 shekels of silver was about six and a quarter pounds of silver” (Cited in Kent Hughes, Genesis, page 310).

How do we know that Ephron wants to exploit and take advantage of Abraham? In Jeremiah Ch32:9, he pays 17 pieces of silver! Abraham is expected to pay 23 times more! In 2nd Samuel Ch24:24, King David pays 50 pieces of silver for the threshing floor and oxen! Abraham pays 7 times more than David! This is how we know that Ephron is exploiting Abraham!

As it was with Abraham, times of bereavement, and even our own deaths, are times to declare our hope. Just as Abraham bought the cave in hope, we must substantively declare our hope in the stupendous benefits of salvation beyond this life. As Allen Ross says, “The time of death (when the natural inclination is to mourn as the world mourns) should be the time of **our greatest demonstration of faith**, for the recipient of God's

promises has a hope beyond the grave.”

SARAH IS BURIED! V17-20

The death of a loved one can lead to a time, for those left behind, of reflection of the eternal! In the Book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon wrote “It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting (Eccles Ch7:2)! Sarah's passing, caused Abraham to not only grieve, but to plan and think in terms of eternity! We are mortal, we break, hurt, decay and finally, we die, an appointment that cannot be ignored, postponed or avoided!

As Christians, we are prisoners of hope! We are chained and barred in by hope. We cannot escape hope. We declare at death:

“I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God” Job Ch19:25-26

APPLICATION

1. How can we support those amongst us, who are grieving loved ones?
2. Our materialistic culture constantly tempts us with “bargain offers”, which are usually in the seller's interests rather than ours. How can we learn from Abraham to maintain our integrity in such matters? ***Especially with “Black Friday” approaching!***
3. How prepared are we for our own funerals?