

## Abraham (Part Twelve)

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**Given 22-May-90; Sermon #BS-AB12**

The last time we had a Bible study we covered the first half of Genesis 21, with the birth of Isaac. Then resulting from that, Hagar and Ishmael were sent away.

**Genesis 21:22-32** And it came to pass at that time that Abimelech and Phichol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying, “God is with you in all that you do. Now therefore, swear to me by God that you will not deal falsely with me, with my offspring, or with my posterity; but that according to the kindness that I have done to you, you will do to me and to the land in which you have dwelt.”

And Abraham said, “I will swear.” Then Abraham rebuked Abimelech because of a well of water which Abimelech’s servants had seized. And Abimelech said, “I do not know who has done this thing; you did not tell me, nor had I heard of it until today.” So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two of them made a covenant. And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves.

Then Abimelech asked Abraham, “What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs which you have set by themselves?” And he said, “You will take these seven ewe lambs from my hand, that they may be my witness that I have dug this well.” Therefore he called that place Beersheba, because the two of them swore an oath there. Thus they made a covenant at Beersheba. So Abimelech rose with Phichol, the commander of his army, and they returned to the land of the Philistines.



Now Abimelech comes back into the picture after being out of it for one full chapter, and he continues right here up to, at least in the background, until all the way to verse 34.

If Abraham was in the land of the Philistines, he could not have been in the land of promise. Now why has God chosen to show us that? The reason I choose to bring this up is because Isaac was born in chapter 21, and one would think with the birth of Isaac, then perhaps the pilgrimage was over, and we might be led to assume that the picture with Abraham was complete.

Well, I think that God, at least in part, is showing that the fulfillment of one promise is not the complete fulfillment of God's promises and it is not the completion of God's work with Abraham or with any other individual for that matter.

The reason I bring that up is somehow or another at times, we get detoured along the way because God fulfills a promise to us. Maybe it is a promise in regards to healing. How many of you who have been in the church for quite a long time, have known someone who is healed, and then maybe a year or two after that, they leave the church. They received a very great blessing, sometimes a dramatic occurrence, a dramatic healing of some sort that might have been life threatening or at the least very painful, and if they receive a promise like that they somehow or another they manage to forget it, and they are gone. Or maybe they get into a bitter cynical attitude because after the healing, things do not go quite as well as they thought things might have gone.

Now Abraham was still in exile and he did not live out his life in the land of promise. Even Isaac was not born in the land of promise, but rather Isaac was born in exile with his father, and he and Sarah and Abraham wandered from one nation to another.

I just want to read something to you. This is another one of those psalms that are recounting some of the history of Israel, and making a particular point about that history.



**Psalm 105:6-12** O seed of Abraham His servant, you children of Jacob, His chosen ones! He is the Lord our God; His judgments are in all the earth. He remembers His covenant forever, the word which He commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac, and confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, saying, “To you I will give the land of Canaan as the allotment of your inheritance,” when they were few in number, indeed very few, and strangers in it.

Now to you and me, He is going to give the earth, and eventually all that He has created. I think that you can see that in principle this applies directly to you and me. The church is not very large, Jesus called it the little flock, and we are strangers on the earth, but we are walking in and around on our inheritance.

Now when they (“they” here is primarily Abraham and Isaac and their family), went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another, He permitted no one to do them wrong.

We have been watching Abraham, beginning in chapter 12 as he went from one place to another, and got into one scrape after another, and yet in each case, God provided, God intervened, God actually prospered Abraham both materially and spiritually in the lands in which he was. Though he was a stranger, though he was in exile, though he was moving in rather a ruthless existence, just the opposite of what any of us want. Most of us want to put down roots and have a piece of real estate that is ours and to have a home with our family around us, we want to be prospered in that circumstance and lead stable lives. Well Abraham, Isaac and Jacob never really had an opportunity to do that. Their existence was rather footloose compared to most of ours.

**Psalm 105:13-15** When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people, He permitted no one to do them wrong; yes, He rebuked kings for their sakes, saying, “Do not touch My anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm.”



Abraham is called a prophet in Genesis 20.

The picture in both Psalm 105 and again in Genesis 21, when Abraham is dwelling in the land of the Philistines, remember the worldly-wise, generally, pretty good people. They were technologically advanced, well educated, academically inclined, people who are religious, people who also perceive the land of promise, as it were, and they reach out for it, they are very close to it. They reach out for it if you get my point here, they want to have it, however they want to have it on an uncircumcised basis.

Now I would say that for you and me living in the United States of America, we are coming the closest perhaps of all church members on earth, of duplicating what Abraham was doing here in the twilight of his life, dwelling in the land of the Philistines. It was, by and large, in comparison to other lands that he had dwelt in or been a nomad within, a comfortable existence. And again, by and large, he was not being harassed frequently.

But again, God is showing His care and preserving of His people wherever they are and whatever state of conversion they are in. Now that is important to this thing I mentioned earlier, that Abraham, despite the giving of the promise, was still in the land outside of the Promised Land and his process of conversion was continuing in spite of the fulfillment of one of the greatest of all promises.

Now for you and me I think that there is a lesson there, and that is that although God is blessing us, although He fulfills great promises to us, we are still in exile. The conversion process is not complete. It is not a time to allow ourselves to let up and think that somehow, because God is blessing us, that the conversion process is finished.

I say this because it may very well be one of the traps that the Laodiceans fall into. They are rich, they are increased with goods, they are undoubtedly being blessed. They apparently look upon their blessings as being an indicator as to their closeness to God, but actually they are self-deceived. Yes, they are being blessed but they are being tricked by this blessing, by this attitude toward the blessing, which would probably be more precise, into letting down, and actually their spiritual development is declining rather than



increasing. So we see God saying that they are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked, and yet their own self-analysis is, I am rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing.

Abraham did not fall into that trap, that though he was in a land that apparently was pretty prosperous, the land was technologically advanced, he was amongst the worldly-wise, he recognized that his state of conversion was still not complete and he kept going on.

Let us go back to Hebrews, where the apostle Paul draws on this.

**Hebrews 11:8-10** By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 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; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

**Hebrews 11:13-16** These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

Here is instruction for you and me. Undoubtedly, Abraham could actually walk on his homeland, his inheritance. We know that because in chapters 22 or 23 or 24 he buys a piece of it. So, he was there.

I believe that this is one of those major lessons of the last half of Genesis the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter. That Abraham did not let down after he received the fulfillment of a promise that he had been waiting for twenty-five years. Of course, God did not let down either. God kept going on.



**Genesis 21:25** Then Abraham rebuked Abimelech because of a well of water which Abimelech's servants had seized.

If you have been reading through Genesis, and especially if you have read a little bit in advance here through several of the chapters that involve Isaac, I think that you will agree that one of the striking facts about Genesis is the frequency of the mention of wells. Now I think that it certainly gives an indication of how important they were to the existence of the people.

If you have ever looked at a geographical map of the area of Palestine, you will note that there is a river on the east side of the mountains, the Jordan River, and on the west side there is a small river that runs from Mount Carmel and down into the Jezreel valley. That is about it. For all of the land, there is one major river that was largely inaccessible to where the bulk of the people were going to live, and maybe the bulk of the people did live. This means that those people in that area were almost entirely dependent on the rain that fell from the sky or the water that was underground.

Now the rain that fell from the sky was dependent upon the weather pattern, and again you will find throughout the Bible that God used the weather patterns to either prosper or withhold prospering Israel. He used it to teach them spiritual lessons regarding faith in Him, reliance, and trust in Him. It becomes a very important aspect of their spiritual existence let alone their physical existence.

These wells were very important because the rain did not just fall that often. Palestine is in the same latitude as Los Angeles. Palestine, topographically, is not much different than the southern California area, and Jerusalem today gets about the same amount of rainfall as does Los Angeles. It might be an inch or two less, but it is very similar. Now you know that the people in the population here could not be supported without irrigation. So if we were going to depend on rain here, there would not be the level of population here.

I am only giving you this because I want you to see the relative importance of the wells that they dug. If any of you saw the movie "Lawrence of Arabia" you might remember that very near the beginning of the movie, Lawrence was being guided to meet the Arab king. He had an Arab guide,



and they stopped to drink water out of a well, to fill up their goat skin bottles. While they were at the well, Omar Shariff, of a competing Arab tribe, shows up and without a moment's hesitation, he shoots the Arab guide of Lawrence of Arabia to death, because people of that tribe were not allowed to drink water out of their well. Now at least it taught me how important water was at least in that type of existence.

Now when we follow the story thread here, we are going to see not only Abraham, but Isaac as well is constantly it seems having problems with water wells because they were so important to the existence of the people. In this particular occasion there are two things that are stressed. One is the personal dignity and the strength of Abraham who deals with the situation with, I would call it, authoritative forcefulness. But even more important is that Abimelech recognizes that God is with Abraham in all that he does and that is why Abimelech wants to make a covenant. You will notice how this section begins.

**Genesis 21:22** And it came to pass at that time that Abimelech and Phichol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying, "God is with you in all that you do."

Now here in the land of the Philistines, in the land of the worldly-wise, Abraham had enough impact from his personal example, from his witness, that the people of the land who were pretty well advanced, and I would have to say that from all that we see in the Bible about the Philistines, they were a pretty powerful people. They were a people that Israel always seemed to be afraid of. Yet here they are, coming to Abraham hoping to make a treaty of some kind with him because they recognize that God is with him. The occasion that is being taken advantage of by Abraham and Abimelech is a squabble over a well of water.

Now what it leads to is an agreement between the two of them, basically stating, "You stay here and I'll stay there. You keep your men there and I'll keep my men here. This is my well, you go dig your own well." Abraham dealt a very strong hand, which gives me an indication there was a great deal of respect by these people for not only what he was personally, but apparently he represented a great deal of wealth and power that they would respect.



Beersheba means, “the well of oaths.” There are some who insist that it means “the well of seven,” because the word “oath” comes from the same root as the number or word “seven.” Now apparently there were seven wells in Beersheba, and two of which are apparently still today sources of an abundant supply of pure water. Nobody knows whether Abraham and his people actually dug the wells, but one of them is pretty impressive. It is twelve and a half feet in diameter, forty-four and a half feet from the surface of the ground to the surface of the water, and it is constructed with masonry.

It shows every evidence of having been there a long, long, long, long, long time. It is still holding together, and it is still flowing. still pumping out. I would say there is a spring there that is still pumping out a great deal of water.

The last sixteen and a half feet down of this well is carved out of solid rock. Now how did they do that? Did they have jack hammers? Did they have steel chisels? Is it a sedimentary type of rock, you know like shale? I do not know. The resource that I had did not say, it only said that it was a solid rock, maybe a sandstone type that would not be quite so hard as granite. But nonetheless, it is quite an accomplishment because sixteen and a half feet through solid rock, and they dug down deep enough that as the water seeps into the well, there is a reservoir down there that can always be drawn upon whenever they throw their buckets in.

The second well that is still in service is about nine hundred feet away from the first one and it is not quite as impressive. It is about five feet in diameter and is only twelve feet deep, but it has never run dry either. Over thousands of years, it is still putting out water.

**Genesis 21:33-34** Then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there called on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God. And Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines many days.

Now, just to pick up something and remind you of something that we covered when we were going through the book of Amos.



**Amos 5:4** For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel: “Seek Me and live.”

Amos was preaching about 40 years before Israel fell and God was witnessing to them of what would occur. They were living in one of the most prosperous periods of time in the history of Israel, the time of Jeroboam II, who though the Bible calls an evil man. He showed every indication of being an able administrator. He built the nation of Israel into a very powerful force in that area and the people were basking in the security and in the prosperity the nation was having. They showed every sign of being religious, they *were* religious. The people were apparently thronging to the places of worship, and here in verse 5 he names three places they were making pilgrimages to.

**Amos 5:5** But do not seek Bethel, nor enter Gilgal, nor pass over to Beersheba; for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nothing.

It does not mention anything further about Beersheba.

Abraham apparently erected an altar there as well as planted an orchard there in the area of Beersheba, irrigated it with the water from the wells that were there. The orchard prospered, and as time passed went on, after Abraham was dead, that site became a spot where people made pilgrimages to and worshipped the Baals there.

Now what was it about Beersheba that attracted them there? Well, it has something to do with chapter 21, that we have just been going through. Beersheba apparently was the area which Abraham experienced the most stable prosperous period of his life. It was there that God showed him very clearly that He was with him. See, that is what Abimelech saw. “God is with you in all that you do.” Now let us go back to the book of Genesis again.

**Genesis 26:23-24** Then he went up from there to Beersheba. And the Lord appeared to him the same night and said, “I am the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I *am* with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for My servant Abraham’s sake.”



**Genesis 46:1-4** So Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, “Jacob, Jacob!” And he said, “Here I am.” So He said, “I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes.”

Because of Abraham building or planting an orchard there and because of the associations of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and God being with them there, the people superstitiously went to that area in the hope that God would be with them too.

Now we can understand, can we not, that it is not the place, but rather the relationship with God that matters. Abraham had a one-hundred-year relationship with God. Isaac had practically an entire lifetime of one hundred- and eighty-years relationship with God, and Jacob had a very, very large part of his adult life in which he was fellowshiping with, he had a relationship with God. That is what counts.

But you ought to be able to begin to see that the people, in their desire to serve God in their own way, are willing to or even eager to (I think we can go that far because Romans 10 says that Israel has a zeal for God but not according to knowledge and there is a way that seems right but the end there of is the ways of death), so these people, in their zeal to worship God in their own ways, took a place and there a cult arose. It became a place of pilgrimage and people went there superstitiously out of the hope that God would be with them and prosper them and help them in their lives in the same way that He helped Abraham.

Please brethren, do not allow yourself to get into that kind of attitude. It is the relationship that counts. It is prayer, it is Bible study, it is obedience, it is mediation, it is understanding, it is yielding to God. It is those kinds of things and you can do those things anywhere. It is those kinds of things that build relationships and that is what counts. If the relationship is working God is with you anywhere, at any time in your conversion. He says, “Am I not a God at hand?” Certainly He is.



He is the Lord of all of His creation. He is omnipotent, he is omniscient, and He is no more than a word, a thought away. That is very comforting.

**Genesis 22:1-14** Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” Then He said, “Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”

So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.”

So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” Then he said, “Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” And Abraham said, “My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.”

So the two of them went together. Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” So he said, “Here I am.”

And He said, “Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.” Then Abraham lifted



his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of the place, The-Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, “In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided.”

Looking at this event from the twentieth century, it seems to present ethical problems for you and me. Did God lie to Abraham? Did God deceive by withholding information? Was Abraham misled, because God knew full well that He never intended Isaac to die? Is there a problem with human sacrifice?

Now did you notice, as we read through that, that it seems to have presented no such problem for Abraham. Abraham had no doubt that the One who had given the promise, that is, the promise of Isaac, was also the one who was requiring the sacrifice of Isaac. Now some have made much turmoil, tearing Abraham up about this situation. You might recall seeing the movie, “The Bible,” and Abraham all the way to Moriah practically is arguing with God. But the Bible does not speak anything of that.

I do not mean to give the impression that Abraham was devoid of emotion while he was going through this, but rather that the Bible concentrates on how his faith led and guided him through this in spite of his undoubtedly very deep love for Isaac. The Bible is showing that Abraham’s friendship with God meant more to him than anything.

The Bible presents Abraham’s problem as being one of reconciling the revelations of God. If God promised him numerous descendants, and those descendants were to come through Isaac, how could that be fulfilled if Isaac is sacrificed? That was Abraham’s problem. Now if there was an ethical problem, it was apparently that Abraham saw that that was God’s problem to reconcile, not Abraham’s.

The Bible shows Abraham’s duty as being clear to him. He simply was to obey God because God could be safely trusted to discharge His responsibility. There is a powerful lesson in this for you and me.

**Genesis 22:3** So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his



son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

**Genesis 22:5** And Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.”

**Genesis 22:8** And Abraham said, “My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.” So the two of them went together.

I think that these three verses show that Abraham fully expected [unclear, cut off].

If we take those verses at face value, he made every preparation to sacrifice his son, and yet he also expected to bring him back. But how, if he was sacrificed as God said? The answer is supplied in Hebrews 11, where it shows that Abraham’s resolution was such that Isaac was as good as dead. But Abraham received him back as it says, in a figure, that is, by means of a resurrection.

How could Abraham believe such a thing? How could there be a resolution of this in his own mind? First of all, I think we have to remember that we are dealing with a very long-term relationship here. By the time we get to this point Abraham and God have been friends for about fifty years. These two knew one another very well indeed. However, the only variable in the relationship was Abraham. God was now determined to test how variable that friendship was. That is how the chapter opens up, “Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham.”

I think that it would be careless for us to assume that God did not mean what He said. Abraham expected Isaac to die though he had undoubtedly hoped that he would not have to sacrifice him because he knew that there was an alternative, a substitutionary sacrifice. But there is no indication of a substitutionary sacrifice made in any context in which this story appears in the Bible.



**Hebrews 11:17-19** By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, “In Isaac your seed shall be called,” concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

This was not the only son that Abraham had, but it is the only begotten son in relation to the promise. So this was Abraham’s hope as he was going to sacrifice Isaac. He knew some things about God which we will get to in just a minute. Undoubtedly the key to understanding this is in verse 19, where it says “concluding that God was able to raise him.”

Now Paul used a bookkeeping term, translated here, accounting that, or concluding that. It means that a person put things in order, like an accountant does. He adds them up, or he reconciles them. It can also mean that he calculated. That is what Abraham did based on his long fellowship with God.

There was nothing hidden between God and Abraham. Did not Jesus say there in John 15 that, “You are My friend, therefore I tell you everything.” That is what friends do. They bare their souls, at it were, to their friends, because they know that they can trust them, and they know that they will give good counsel to them. They know that that is the kind of person that things can be bounced back and you are going to get good counsel.

So there was nothing hidden between God and His command to Abraham because there was fifty years of evidence for Abraham to reason, to calculate from, and to reach a conclusion. By faith then, he resolutely faced and pursued that conclusion. So what are some of the things that Abraham had to reason with?

**Numbers 23:19** “God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?”

Abraham knew this. He knew that it was impossible for God to lie. He knew that the God who had given him the promise was now requiring him to sacrifice his son. These are things that are written for you and me, but Abraham knew them by his fellowshiping with God.



**James 1:12-14** Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

Abraham knew from his experience of fellowshiping with God that God does not play dirty. He does not lead people into sin.

**I Corinthians 10:13** No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

Again, Abraham knew that. He knew that God does not test us above what we are able, but God is faithful and provides a way through the test.

He also knew that Isaac was the promised heir, and that the fulfillment of God’s physical and spiritual promises depended on Isaac’s life continuing. He knew of God’s creative power, His power to resurrect. There was a mass of evidence given by God from previous fellowshiping, so Abraham did not limit the power of God in any way. See, the thing that sets Abraham apart from others is that he believes God. That is our problem.

Now what about the question of human sacrifice?

**Hebrews 10:5** Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me.

This is an expression of God’s will concerning Jesus Christ. It took a human sacrifice for the salvation of mankind. Now think about that. Was that not a human sacrifice? Yes, it is. It was the sacrifice of the God Man, Jesus Christ. Isaac was a type of that.



I might also remind you of a fair number of times that God ordered the killing of people, as with Saul and the Amalekites. When Saul did not kill king Agag, Samuel was awfully upset, and he hacked Agag in pieces, right in front of Saul's eyes. And Saul lost out having a royal house as a result of that rebellion.

Now brethren, you do not need to be concerned about being involved with that kind of thing, I mean being given an order to go out and kill someone. The reason you do not need to be concerned about it is because of the nature of the New Covenant and the church, as compared with the nature of the Old Covenant and Israel. But those examples are given in the Old Testament to teach us facets of our response to God.

I want you to think about some of the things that are mentioned there in Hebrews 11 about the torturing of people, about the putting to death of people, the prophets of God, great names from the past, people of faith sawn asunder. God allowed it to occur. He allowed His prophets to be sacrificed. He could have intervened and they could have died in bed. But for whatever reason, He allowed them to die an agonizing death.

**Revelation 6:9-11** When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been 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, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.

So we cannot ignore what it says in Hebrews 11 and what it says here in Revelation 6, that there are going to be some sacrificed in the future, permitted by God, as a witness of God, before this unbelieving world. Those people are sacrifices.

That is sobering, and we need to take that into consideration and recognize that this isolated event with Isaac was in many ways different only because the person doing the killing was Abraham.



But the sacrifice of a life as a witness to God, a human life, is not all that unusual. It is certainly not something that is done on a regular practice, and I am sure that God is very restrained in the number of times He has permitted it to occur. But it has occurred, and it will occur.

So what we have here in Genesis 22, in the first fourteen verses, is the story of a man of seemingly unlimited devotion to God. I am not sure if he knew in exact detail what God wanted, I mean as he was headed toward Mount Moriah. But the important thing is that when he felt that he did understand what God wanted and was willing to obey, he obeyed to the limit, and that is the point. What God is showing you and me is that there is awesome power in that kind of commitment.

If you think that that did not make God feel good. . . “Now I know!” He said, that there is no variable in you, Abraham. You are committed.” It is no wonder that he is the father of the faithful. When a person is willing to do something like that, just based on a sense of a friendship, that is awesome.

**Genesis 22:15-18** Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: “By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son—blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

Brethren, you and I are receiving the benefit of that today living in Israel. We are blessed because of Abraham’s obedience. And it shows of the faithfulness of God’s promise to carry right on through regardless of the way we are living, in disobedience to Him as a nation, and yet He continues to pour out fantastic material blessings on us because of His faithfulness to Abraham.

You just wonder what in the world the Millennium is going to be like when people are yielding to God! What kind of blessings is God able to pour out? He talks about the plowman overtaking the reaper. They are still harvesting



the crops when its time to plow it under and have a new crop. Awesome prosperity is in store.

**Genesis 22:19-24** So Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba. Now it came to pass after these things that it was told Abraham, saying, “Indeed Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor: Huz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram, Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel.” And Bethuel begot Rebekah. These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham’s brother. His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore Tebah, Gaham, Thahash, and Maachah.

I think that this is undoubtedly given to introduce into the story the future bride of Isaac, and to show that she came from the wife and not from the concubine. So she was also from Abraham’s family, so Isaac married within the family of his father.

Chapter 23 covers Sarah’s death and the purchase of the field of Machpelah.

**Genesis 23:1-2** Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; these were the years of the life of Sarah. 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.

This seems to be written from the standpoint that Abraham and Sarah were living apart, like he was in Beersheba and she was in Hebron, or maybe they were just apart as she was visiting in Hebron and died. But in any rate, she was there and he came to Hebron after she died.

There are two subjects that are covered in this chapter, and I think that it is interesting that Sarah’s death is treated so briefly, but the arrangements for her burial are covered in some detail.

Now there is more that is said about Sarah than I care to go into at this time, so I am only going to deal with this aspect of her death. It shows the father of the faithful mourning. There are those who think that one should show no emotion over the death of a loved one because we know their end. We know



that they are going to be resurrected. They are either going to be resurrected in the second resurrection, or they are going to be resurrected in the first resurrection. We will not even consider the third resurrection at this point. But there is an extremely high percentage that they are going to in one of those two, and we can just assume that since we are dealing with Sarah, that we know of these people, that she is going to be in the first resurrection.

Life for a Christian is more than just a cold appraisal of truth. God gave us emotions and they are similar to His emotions. We find that when Jesus became a man, that He wept, He was a man that was experienced grief. In addition to that, God is portrayed in His Word expressing a wide variety of emotion—being happy, being angry.

Now even though one knows that the deceased is going to be in the Kingdom of God, that does not erase a multitude of experiences that one had with that person, perhaps over a period of fifty years or more. To be denied of life's experiences with all of its attended hopes and joys and fears and doubts and worries and discouragement, and not being able to experience the personality and all of its unique characteristics that make up what that person is, is something to mourn about. Now is that selfish? No. Because there is going to be a void that will never be filled. It cannot be duplicated, because no two personalities are exactly alike.

In Sarah's case, I like to think of her death, maybe this sounds weird to you, but being like the felling of a tall and beautiful tree, it leaves a hole up there that cannot be replaced. You know when you look up in the forest and there is an empty place in the sky because the tree has fallen. In good and bad, in evil and righteousness, this beautiful women shared everything with Abraham.

I once read an epitaph, I did not see it on the tube, I just read about it because it appeared on a Greek tombstone, and it sounds to me like something Solomon would have written. It says, "I was not. I became. [I lived.] I am not. [I died.] I care not." That is pretty cold, but the pagans are pretty much without hope. Now that is what God says in the book of Ephesians about those who are not part of the New Covenant. They are strangers from the covenants of Israel, they are without Christ, and without hope in the world.



Mourning and weeping are right and good in the face of grief. That is the second thing that Abraham shows, that though they are right, Abraham shows that life goes on, that one must not be paralyzed by grief, one must not be held in bondage by it. If one is, then there is something wrong. So there is a balance here. God shows through Abraham that it is right and good to grieve but it is not right and good to remain that way. So he mourned for her and then he got down to business of living life once again.

Notice what Paul writes back here in I Thessalonians 4.

**I 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.

In the unbelieving world there is a measure of hopelessness because of not being sure. Now perhaps the measure of our grief at the death of a loved one will be in accordance to our understanding of the hope that they had, the hope we have, and the grief that we have because we are no longer sharing the companionship that we had with them, the experiences that we had with them through our life and looking forward to the time when we will be together.

There are two things that I want to note in the burial negotiations here.

**Genesis 23:3-18** Then Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying, “I am a foreigner and a visitor among you. Give me property for a burial place among you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.” And the sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him, “Hear us, my lord: You are a mighty prince among us; bury your dead in the choicest of our burial places. None of us will withhold from you his burial place, that you may bury your dead.”

Then Abraham stood up and bowed himself to the people of the land, the sons of Heth. And he spoke with them, saying, “If it is your wish that I bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and meet with Ephron the son of Zohar for me, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah which he has, which is at the end of his field. Let



him give it to me at the full price, as property for a burial place among you.”

Now Ephron dwelt among the sons of Heth; and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the presence of the sons of Heth, all who entered at the gate of his city, saying, “No, my lord, hear me: I give you the field and the cave that is in it; I give it to you in the presence of the sons of my people. I give it to you. Bury your dead!” Then Abraham bowed himself down before the people of the land; and he spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, “If you will give it, please hear me. I will give you money for the field; take it from me and I will bury my dead there.”

And Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him, “My lord, listen to me; the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver. What is that between you and me? So bury your dead.” And Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed out the silver for Ephron which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, currency of the merchants.

So the field of Ephron which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field and the cave which was in it, and all the trees that were in the field, which were within all the surrounding borders, were deeded to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who went in at the gate of his city.

Now, this first is not all that important but I think that it is just an interesting thing here, and that is, Ephron the Hittite’s seemingly magnanimous eloquence as he gave the cave to Abraham while making sure that everybody, especially Abraham, knew how much it was worth.

From the little bit of research that I have made (I cannot say that it is all that thorough or deep), but it seems that the field was vastly overpriced, an exaggerated amount was paid by Abraham for it. I guess what we are seeing here was the customary formula for Middle Eastern bargaining at that time. But it also shows that Abraham was even more magnanimous, he does not even quibble over the price. He meets it exactly as the man requested and then calls all those who are near to come witness the transaction.



The important thing for you and me, at least it was important to Moses, and perhaps we do not appreciate it and do not fully understand it, but Abraham came into possession of the land fair and square, and I think that is the major reason why this is shown. There is a lesson here for you and me.

Now remember who Abraham is, he is the father of the faithful. What happened here in Genesis 23 in the dealing with Ephron is exactly what happened in Genesis the fourteenth chapter, when the king of Sodom tried to give Abraham a gift, and Abraham rejected the gift that was being given by the king of Sodom. In both cases, Abraham would not accept a gift from those people who were living in Canaan, and thus Abraham is shown looking entirely to God as the source of Abraham's hope or blessing.

He did not seek to become wealthy or to own land apart from the promises of God. You will find in Genesis 33:19 that Jacob is shown doing much the same thing, and again, it was not a gift. I think that Moses is laying down here a principle which shows that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob came into possession of land fairly and squarely.

See, it was something given by God, it was not something stolen from the people. It was not something that was given by the people either. Abraham used the wealth that God gave him to purchase the land. I think that is intended to be a type as to how all of the land came into their possession. Even though God does not cover everything, the principle is there.

**Genesis 25:1-10** Abraham again took a wife, and her name was Keturah. And she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. Jokshan begot Sheba and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim. And the sons of Midian were Ephah, Ephher, Hanoah, Abidah, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah and Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac. But Abraham gave gifts to the sons of the concubines which Abraham had; and while he was still living he sent them eastward, away from Isaac his son, to the country of the east.

This is the sum of the years of Abraham's life which he lived: one hundred and seventy-five years. Then Abraham breathed his last



and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people. And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth. There Abraham was buried, and Sarah his wife.

What we are seeing at the beginning of chapter 25, is the effect of Abraham's healing by God at the time that Isaac was conceived, that the healing was not just a one shot affair, that Abraham married after Sarah died and continued to produce children well after he was 137 years of age. Now how long after that I do not know. But it does show Abraham's posterity beginning to multiply toward the end of his life.

What we see here then is a complete rejuvenation of Abraham's powers. It is quickly stated in verses 5-6 that the bulk of the inheritance went to Isaac, and he died at a good old age, even as God had prophesied back there in Genesis 15:15, where He prophesied to Abraham that he would go to his grave in peace and die in a good old age. One hundred and seventy-five years, and one hundred of them living by faith.

Well that is as far as we are going to carry the Bible studies on Abraham. I hope that they have been interesting and informative to you and that they will help you in understanding some applications of faith, and that you will be able to make some applications of faith in your own life as a result of the things that are recorded here about Abraham.