

Old Testament types of the Lord Abraham & Isaac, Gen. 23 The setting aside of Israel

*[Please note : sections in blue type are not broadcast on every radio station.
English Standard Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

Genesis 23 carefully tells us about the death and burial of Sarah, Abraham's wife. Sarah was a remarkable woman. She was the wife of a very rich and powerful husband, but she never ever had a place in this world that she could call home. She travelled with Abraham, who was a nomad, they lived in a tent. She is the only woman in Bible that we are told of her age. I think this is quite significant. She was 127 years old when she died. We first read of Sarah in Genesis 11 v.29 where we learn her name was Sarai before God changed it to Sarah, as we read in Genesis 17 v.15. [Sarah is one of the few women mentioned in Hebrews 11 who were commended for their faith. She was the only woman where the Bible says, "by faith."](#)

Sarah did not have an easy life, but she was very faithful to Abraham. She had great respect for Abraham, she was obedient to him, and called him Lord as we read in 1 Peter 3 v.6. Abraham on two occasions wrongly used Sarah to shield himself from perceived harm. From Pharaoh when they went down into Egypt because of a famine, Genesis 12, and from Abimelech in Genesis 20. Sarah was a beautiful woman and Abraham thought that Pharaoh would kill him and keep her alive, so he told Sarah to tell the Egyptians that she was his sister. Sarah did what Abraham told her to do. Both times Abraham's wrong actions affected other people. We must be wary of doing things that cause people difficulties.

In Genesis 15 Abraham complains to God that he had no children with Sarah. God assures him that he will have a son. He takes Abraham outside his tent and points to the heavens and tells him that if he was able to count the number of stars, this was how many offspring he would have. Abraham believed God. However, in the next chapter Sarah was becoming increasingly frustrated that she could not bear children and she takes things into her own hands. She had an Egyptian servant called Hagar and she gives her to Abraham as a wife. Abraham went into her, and she conceived, and she bore a son called Ishmael. This caused so much trouble within the family. Sarah became jealous and dealt so harshly with Hagar that she had to run away with Ishmael. God told Hagar that a great nation would be born through her son. The descendants of Ishmael became known as Arabs, which basically means "nomads", and have been a thorn in the side of the Jewish nation since. Here we have a good lesson - to be patient and wait for God's time.

After Genesis 16 we have a silent 13 years. It is possible that God withdrew Himself from Abraham and Sarah because of their actions regarding Hagar. God was faithful to Hagar and promised to care for her and her son Ishmael. In Genesis 17, God appears again to Abraham, now an old man of ninety-nine. God promises to bless Sarah and give her a son and that she would be a mother of nations. Abraham laughed. He was almost a hundred and Sarah was ninety. It was humanly impossible! God pressed on and told Abraham that Sarah would bear a son and he was to be called Isaac, and that God's covenant blessing was to flow through him.

In Genesis 18 Abraham and Sarah have unexpected visitors. The men sent from God again assure Abraham that he will have a son. Sarah was listening in her tent, and she laughed to herself, as she knew she was well passed childbearing age, and Abraham was also very old. God heard her laugh and said, "Is anything too hard for the LORD?" When things seem hopeless, God acts. I said earlier that Sarah's age is mentioned. I think it is to emphasize God's power and plan which will never be thwarted because of human frailties or weaknesses. God was true to His word and one year later Sarah gave birth to Isaac.

Any child is special, but Isaac I imagine was cherished by Sarah and Abraham. From this point we do not read much more about Sarah. God seems to switch our focus to Isaac, the type of His own beloved Son the Lord Jesus. Sarah was the mother of the Hebrew race as we read in Isaiah 51 v.2, and generations on, it was through this lineage that Jesus, God's Son was brought into this world. Jesus was born into this world through Mary after being put into her womb by the Holy Spirit. God then delights to make His Son known to us as He walked through this world doing His will, and ultimately dying on the cross. The type of our blessed Lord Jesus going to the cross is seen vividly in Genesis 22. But with our Lord there was no substitute, He was the only One who was suitable, the perfect Holy One who could take our sins upon Himself and take our place on the cross of Calvary. We must pause for a moment to contemplate and consider what it meant to the Father to give His only Son.

Jesus was not welcome in this world. The Bible tells us in John 1 vv. 11-12,

"He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

These verses help us to understand the type we have in Genesis 23, "the setting aside of Israel." Jesus was born a Jew. He loves His people, and He loves the city of Jerusalem. The Jewish nation and land will always have a special place in His heart, and we know that in the future He will return to the Mount of Olives when God's promises will be fulfilled through Him. Israel was always God's covenant people and always will be. As we read through the Old Testament God's ways were worked out through them. God loved them, He cared for them, He protected them and disciplined them at times. Anything that other nations did to Israel was allowed only by God. But in the New Testament we read that the Jewish nation rejected their Messiah.

Israel over the years were marked in many ways by failure, often rejecting God's way with them. They rejected their prophets, kings and men who God had positioned to lead them. Hebrews 1 vv. 1-2 tell us,

"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world."

Jesus came as God's last offer to the Jewish nation, "Surely they will reverence my Son" (AV). But, as we read in the New Testament, the Jewish nation not only rejected their Messiah, they also put Him to death. They cried, "Away with Him" and, "We do not want this man to reign over us." At this point their choice was made and God set Israel aside. Hosea 1 vv. 9-11 and Acts 28 vv. 25-28 makes this clear. The Jewish nation was not God's focus anymore. God's focus was on the Gentiles, those outside of God's covenant people, Acts 28 vv. 25-28. Gentile believers were to be the Bride of Christ, the type you will see in the next talk of the series, Genesis 24.

Because of the death of Christ every individual human being, no matter of which race, can be forgiven and brought into blessing by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The sphere of blessing has

been widened so that God would have a people who would love Him, respect Him, worship Him and be a companion of Christ in glory. My grandfather always used to explain the setting aside of Israel in this way; think of a single train track where only one train can travel, and further along the track there is a siding where a train can go into to allow another train to pass. The nation of Israel is in the siding now and the Church is on the track. The Church consists of every believer in Christ from the death and resurrection of our blessed Lord Jesus until the Rapture. The Church is God's vehicle in which He works out His purpose today. But when Jesus comes back to claim His bride (the Church), the Jewish nation and the land of Israel will once more become the focus of God. They will take the main line again.

So, just to make things clear. Sarah is the mother of nations and dies in Genesis 23. In Genesis 24 Isaac, the type of the bridegroom (the Lord Jesus) goes out to meet and receive his bride. Isaac went out to meet Rebekah. The Lord Jesus will one day come back to meet and receive His bride, 1 Thessalonians 4 vv.13-18. The Bride of Christ consists of every true believer in the Lord Jesus since the death of our Lord Jesus. Sarah leaves the scene and in this we see the type of Israel being set aside for a time and the Church taking its place as God's conduit of blessing toward this world.

Let's look ahead to when Israel will be once more be at the forefront of God's plans. The timeline is as follows: the next event in God's calendar is the Rapture when Jesus Himself will come for the Church and take them to Heaven. The Holy Spirit and the Christian's influence is removed from the world and there will be a period of seven years of tribulation where evil will go unhindered. Towards the end of the seven years the country of Israel will come under severe attack from the North and from the South. Many Jews who have returned to their Land will be killed. Jerusalem will be surrounded on every side and terror will strike the city. The city will be taken and the temple that the Jews will have built will be destroyed. The Western armies will come to defend Israel to stop the progress of the Northern armies. But, with Jerusalem captured and millions of Jews killed Christ will come in power! Revelation 16 vv.15-16. Nothing will stop Him. Man's armies and weapons will seem like plastic toys. He will destroy the armies of men with the brightness of His coming. Christ will appear in the heavens with His armies of saints, and He will destroy the nations that have made war with Israel.

Zechariah 12 vv. 9-10,

“And on that day, I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced. They shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.”

The godly Jews will be delivered, and Israel will be restored. The Lord will reveal Himself to the Jews when He comes, and His feet will touch the Mount of Olives. The lost tribes will be recovered and brought back from every corner of the world. They will weep and praise the Lord as they return. The Lord will make a new covenant with Israel, and they will prosper once more in their land under the reign of Christ. Dear friend, it is wonderful to know that God is in control, His plans will never fail, and it is wonderful to know that as a believer your future is certain and secure in His hands. What a wonderful God we have!

Just in closing there are some nice practical thoughts in Genesis 23 that I noticed while studying this passage.

Sarah's death, burial and Abraham's tears.

In vv. 1-2 we learn of Sarah's age, where she died, where she was buried and Abraham's grief. Sarah was 127 years old and died in Hebron in the land of Canaan. Hebron means "fellowship" and Canaan means "the place of blessing." The land of Canaan was God's promised land for the people of Israel. Abraham came to Hebron to mourn and weep for her. Let's picture the scene. An old man in deep sorrow mourning because of the death of his beloved wife, the love of his life. She was the mother of Isaac who had been given to them by God in their elder years. Abraham was on the ground; I assume on his knees and must have been contemplating the years they had spent together. Dear Christian friend it is right that we mourn when our believing loved ones die. We know that they have gone to be with the Lord, which is a happy change, but we will feel their loss deeply. Abraham knew Sarah had gone to be with her Lord, but he felt the loss.

Abraham's outlook, wisdom, and testimony.

Abraham rose from the ground because he had to attend to the practical aspect of burying his wife. He had a problem as he had no land himself. He was a very rich man, but he lived in a tent. Abraham had no fixed abode here on earth, he was looking for a city whose builder and maker was God. His eyes were on another world, but he needed to be practical and purchase some land.

Abraham goes to the sons of Heth (the Hittites) who owned the land that Abraham desired to buy to bury his dear Sarah. Abraham was a very wise man and a humble man. Abraham sat down before them and acknowledged that he was a foreigner and was dwelling temporarily in their land. Abraham asks to buy a piece of land from them. The Hittites knew all about Abraham, and they had a great deal of respect for him. In fact, they call him lord and a prince of God. They kindly offer Abraham any of their tombs, they tell him to take his pick. But Abraham shows his real humility as he rises and bows to them (v.7 and again in v.12).

Abraham had his eye on a certain piece of land. The land he wanted belonged to Ephron. It was in Machpelah, which was to the east of Mamre. The field he wanted had a cave at the end of it and there were trees around it. So, Abraham asks to buy the land from Ephron in the hearing of all the other men who were there. Ephron offers to give the land to Abraham. Abraham does not want to be held ransom to anyone or feel that he always owed a debt to Ephron. So, Abraham offers to pay for the field. Ephron was a businessman and said that it was worth 400 shekels, but he said, "don't worry that's nothing between us." I rather think this was a high price, but Abraham weighed out the silver shekels and paid the full price for the field. Abraham did all this in front of witnesses so that no one could ever say that he had not purchased the field. When Christians are dealing with others in business matters it is good to be courteous, respectful, honest, righteous, accountable to no one and have a good testimony. Abraham is a great example of this.

Abraham having purchased the field and the cave, buried his beloved Sarah. (Later he would also be buried there along with Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Leah). With Sarah now dead and buried the Lord turns our attention to Isaac, a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. Dear beloved friend,

"Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face and the things of earth will go strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace."

Thank you for listening to the Truth for Today talk on Abraham & Isaac, Gen 23, 'The setting aside of Israel', talk number T1248

Please Note:

We encourage you to use this transcript for your personal or group Bible studies. This material should not, however, be used in any publications without the express permission from Truth for Today, whose contact details can be found on page 1.