



The Sermon

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Genesis 23:1-20

"The Death of a Wife"

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TRANSCRIPT

We're in Genesis 23, and the title of this message is "The Death of a Wife. The Death of a Wife." And I want to begin by reading in verse 1, Genesis chapter 23, and this will be our focus for this Lord's Day.

"Now Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; these were the years of the life of Sarah. Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (which is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan; and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. Then Abraham rose from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying, 'I'm a stranger and a sojourner among you; give me a burial site among you that I may bury my dead out of my sight.' 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 graves; none of us will refuse you his grave for burying your dead.' So Abraham rose and bowed to the people of the land, the sons of Heth. And he spoke with them, saying, 'If it is your wish for me to bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and approach Ephron the son of Zohar for me, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah which he owns, which is at the end of his field; for the full price let him give it to me in your presence for a burial site.'

"Now Ephron was sitting among the sons of Heth; and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the sons of Heth; even of all who went in at the gate of his city, saying, 'No, lord, hear me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. In the presence of the sons of my people I give it to you; bury your dead.' And Abraham bowed before the people of the land. He spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, 'If you will only please listen to me; I will give the price of

the field, accept it from me that I may bury my dead there.' Then Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him, 'My lord, listen to me; a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that between me and you? So bury your dead.' Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, commercial standard.

"So Ephron's field, which was in Machpelah, which faced Mamre, the field and cave which was in it, and all the trees which were in the field, that were within all the confines of its border, were deeded over to Abraham for a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who went in at the gate of his city. After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field at Machpelah facing Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan. So the field and the cave that is in it, were deeded over to Abraham for a burial site by the sons of Heth." So this is the reading of God's word.

I think we have some new lights here, which is why I'm having trouble. You can see, I cannot, okay. This is like a Ligonier Conference, everything's for the video but not for the speaker to be able to see. So, wow, those are bright. So if I have a little trouble, we may have to cut the lights out. All right, let's go to the Lord in prayer.

[Prayer] Our Father in heaven, this is Your word, and is profitable for our soul. It's a relatively unknown passage to us, and yet we know that it is here for our instruction and for our valuable change of life. And so I pray that You will use this in ways beyond which I could even comprehend, as I stand here this moment. In each and every one of our lives may we all be marked by this chapter. And so I pray that You will, by Your Holy Spirit, administer Your word to us. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

The title of the message again is "The Death of a Wife." In these verses we read about the death of the wife of Abraham; her name was Sarah. And Sarah was a great woman. In fact, by contrast, never in the Bible are we told to be like Mary the mother of Jesus, but we are told several times to be like Sarah; and not just to be like Sarah for the women, but even, in Isaiah 51, even the men are to be like Sarah. And yet, as I have read this chapter to you, what strikes me is that this is not about Sarah.

Sarah mentions no words here. Sarah commits no deeds here. Sarah does nothing here. There's no eulogy for Sarah. There's no obituary for Sarah. There's no praise that is given for Sarah. There's not an epitaph that is written for Sarah. We really know nothing about Sarah from this chapter. Her name is found only five times in this chapter, four times in the first two verses, once in the next to last verse, but that's all. And the only time we read about Sarah in this chapter is that she died and that she was buried. In reality, this chapter is about Sarah' husband Abraham.

As we read this chapter it's all about Abraham. It's about Abraham mourning and weeping. It's about Abraham negotiating for a burial site. It's about Abraham accepting the terms. It's about Abraham digging down in his pocket in paying for the field and for the cave. It's about Abraham actually burying his wife.

What this chapter is actually about is the devotion of a faithful husband to love his wife unto death. Abraham loved Sarah throughout life, and he loved her unto death. And so this chapter is not about the wife, it's about the widower. It's not about Sarah, it's about Abraham. So as we walk through this passage our eyes are really going to be fixed on Abraham and how Abraham walks through this time of crisis in his life with the loss of his wife, which would have to be the major crisis in his life. And so, I want us to note several things about Abraham, and the first is, "The despair of Abraham." That's in the first two verses, the heart-wrenching despair of Abraham as he loses his wife.

Beginning in verse 1, "Now Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; these were the years of the life of Sarah." Let me just stop right there. It's the only time in the entire Bible where a woman's age is given at the time of her death. She has lived a long and full life. She was born in Ur of Chaldees. She married Abraham, she's traveled to Haran. She's traveled down to the Promised Land. She's left the Promised Land and gone to Egypt. She's returned from Egypt back to the Promised Land. She's witnessed the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. She's lived a very long life, and she's been married to Abraham now for more than sixty years, and she left Haran some sixty-five years earlier. It's been thirty-seven years since the birth of Isaac. So she's lived a very full life.

And we read in verse 2, "Sarah died." She came to the end of her days; and we're not surprised. The book of Hebrews says in Hebrews 9:27, "It's

appointed man once to die." The Bible says that, "All of our days are written in His book when as yet there's not one of them," Psalm 139:16. And Job 14:5 says that, "We will not live past the number of months that are allotted to us by God." This was God's appointed time for Sarah to die.

And we read, "and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah." This was the hugest loss that he would ever face. I mean, he had just faced having to offer Isaac in the previous chapter. But Sarah has been the treasure of his heart. Sarah has been with him through thick and thin. Sarah has been a life companion. Sarah has been a supporter to Abraham. And now Sarah is taken.

And we read that he mourns. The word "mourn" here is a Hebrew word, it's a very intense word, and it means "to wail, to wail out loud," to not be able to hold it within and it just comes bubbling up like the eruption of a volcano, the depth of emotion come pouring out of the heart and out of the mouth. The word means "to lament." This was devastating for Abraham.

And then on top of that, we read, "and to weep for her," and this just takes it to another level: to weep bitterly, to cry out loud, to shed tears. Abraham is at a point of uncontrollable meltdown as he is devastated by the death of his wife, and he feels it deeply, and he's torn up by it, and he's shattered. He's not stoic, he's a man of deep feelings, just like you and I are made with deep feelings.

And before we go any further, I think we just need to comment on this and to remind ourselves that we are made with emotions in the image of God, and we are to show these emotions when it is appropriate. And Ecclesiastes says, "There's a time to laugh and a time to weep; and wise is the man or the woman who knows when those times are." There is a foreordained time for us to weep.

In Psalm 3:4, David said, "I was crying to the Lord." The next verse says that he makes his bed to be almost like a swimming pool with just the tears that are flowing out of him. And I find it interesting that when you study the 150 psalms that are in our Bible, they are divided out by different categories. There are praise psalms, thanksgiving psalms, royal psalms, enthronement psalms, imprecatory psalms, et cetera.

But the number one category of psalms is the lamentation psalms. And it is so true to life, that life is filled with tears and heartbreak. Jeremiah 9:1, Jeremiah says, "My eyes are a fountain of tears." And there's an entire book in the Bible entitled "Lamentations," and in the first two verses it says, "The city weeps bitterly in the night." When Jesus approached Jerusalem in Luke 19:41, it says that, "Jesus wept over the city." And when Lazarus died in John 11:35, that tight little verse, "Jesus wept."

And so I think we see here that you and I are to be people of weeping. In fact, Romans 12:15 says that, "We are to weep with those who weep," and that's a command. It seems that our culture and our time does everything it can possibly do to take away any tears, to take away weeping. Even when you come to church it's just to be a happy place, and there's never to be any weeping. And yet, it's been well said the revival comes to the church when Mr. Wet Eyes comes back to church and Mrs. Brokenhearted sits in the pew; then revival will come. And so as you consider your own life and consider where you are – perhaps the loss of a loved one, the loss of a parent, the loss of a spouse, the loss of health, the loss of a job, the loss of finances, whatever that might be – it is right and appropriate for there to be weeping and mourning if the situation calls for it.

But as we continue to walk through this chapter I want you to note not only the despair of Abraham, but "the dealings of Abraham," as Abraham must now secure a place to bury his now departed wife, his beloved wife. And in verse 3 we read, "When Abraham rose from before his dead," the picture here is that he has just collapsed to the ground, that he's on his knees, perhaps even bent over the dead body of Sarah and has just poured out his soul to God, as she has been taken from him.

And after there were no more tears to flow, when his heart was dry as the desert, there could be no more tears to come, it says, "He rose from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth." The sons of Heth were the leaders of the Hittites, they sat at the city gate. And when you would enter a city in ancient times, the major landowners, the major businessmen would sit at the gate, and they could see all the comings and goings; and as they would sit there, they would conduct the affairs of the city, they would conduct the affairs of business.

And so Abraham approaches the sons of Heth, who are sitting at the gate – and we'll get to the gate in verse 10 and verse 18 – but, "spoke to them, saying, 'I'm a stranger and a sojourner among you.'" What struck me even early this morning as I woke up early and poured back through these notes is the humility of Abraham. Now Abraham was already a humble man. I mean, you recall even when he said to Lot, "You choose which piece of land you want, and whatever you choose I'll go the other way." That was a very submissive, humble tactic for him to take and is reflective of his humility.

And as we walk through this, there are ten marks of humility that I see in Abraham that need to be in me, that need to be in you. And this is the first mark of humility, we see it here in verse 3: he sees himself in a very lowly way. He says, "I am a stranger and a sojourner among you." Well, hardly. He's been there sixty-two years. He has been a major character and a major force, and yet he has this humble and lowly opinion of himself. It's the very opposite of how they see him. In verse 6 they refer to him as a mighty prince.

But Abraham sees himself perhaps as God sees him: one who's unworthy, one who is an outsider, one who does not have entitlement to things. And so he says, "I'm a stranger and a sojourner." The word "stranger" means "a temporary inhabitant," or "a newcomer," according to the dictionary. Now he's not a newcomer, he's been here sixty-two years; yet this is how he sees himself; "and a sojourner," that means "a stranger."

So that's the first mark of his humility. And he says, "Give me a burial site." Now when he says, "Give me a burial site," he's not asking for a free burial site to be deeded over to him, he is asking for permission to be able to purchase and buy a burial site for his wife. So when he says, "Give me," he's really saying, "Sell to me a burial site among you that I may bury my dead out of my sight."

"And the sons of Heth" – verse 5 – "answered Abraham, saying to him," – verse 6 – "Hear us, my lord." And "lord" here does not refer to deity, it's a title of respect, of high esteem, usually for an older man as an elder, and that would be Abraham in their midst; and so to refer to him as "my lord."

But then they add to that in verse 6, "you are a mighty prince," literally prince of God. The ESV translates it "prince of God." They have Abraham

on such a high pedestal that they refer to him here as "prince of God," yet he sees himself as just a stranger and a sojourner.

"You're a mighty prince; bury your dead in the choicest of our graves; none of us will refuse you his grave for burying your dead." They give him carte blanche, "You just go pick it out and it is yours; none of us will put up any resistance. You will not be refused for any plot of land that you so desire; take it, it is yours."

So, verse 7, "So Abraham rose," and the reason that he rose is that he had been sitting at the city gate with the other leaders, and they would all sit and conduct their business, and so he rose. But here's the second mark of his humility, "and bowed to the people of the land." I mean, he shows reciprocal respect. They have referred to him as "my lord" and "prince of God," and he now actually reciprocates. It doesn't go to his head. He doesn't become puffed up. He doesn't say amen to them. He doesn't imbibe this. He deflects it actually, "and bows to the people of the land, the sons of Heth." So he responds to their elevation of him by lowering himself and bowing to the people of the land. What a humble man this is.

So, verse 8, "And he" - Abraham - "spoke with them, saying, 'If is your wish.'" Now this is the third mark of his humility. The word "wish" here is literally the Hebrew word for "soul," like "your soul's desire." And he yields to their desire. He is the man in this crisis moment, in the flames of adversity having just lost his wife. But nevertheless, he doesn't feel any sense of entitlement and yields to their wish, to their soul's desire: "If it is your wish for me to bury my dead out of my sight," and it will be not in a grave in the ground, it will be in a cave on the side of a cliff.

And so here's the fourth mark of his humility; it's just being stacked one on top of another. In the middle of verse 8 he says, "Here me, and approach Ephron the son of Zohar for me, that he may give me the gave of Machpelah." He doesn't want to put Ephron in an awkward position by going to him directly and asking for this piece of land that has a cave in it, he sends the city leaders to Ephron so that there's somewhat of a buffer so as not to infringe upon Ephron where he would have to say yes. He gives him space by sending these city leaders so that Ephron is not put in an awkward position, so that he can make up his own mind. And I think we understand what he is saying here, and so that's the fourth mark humility.

And then at the end of verse 8 there's a fifth mark of humility. He says, "that he may give me the cave of Machpelah," and when he says, "give me," he means, "sell to me." They have said to him, "You go pick whatever you want and it's your free from us to you," and Abraham says, "No, I'm not going to accept your gift; I want to pay for it." Again, a mark of humility. He understands that they owe him nothing.

And so in the middle of verse 9, "which he owns, which is at the end of his field." So the cave is at the end of the field which will be the burial site. And it's interesting, Matthew Henry in his commentary says, "There's always a burial site at the end of every life. There's always a burial site at the end of every piece of land, because all of life is headed that way."

But notice what he says: "which he owns, which is at the end" - verse 9 - "oh his field." Now note this. Here's the sixth mark of humility: "for the full price." He doesn't want a bargain. He doesn't want it marked down what he would have to pay. "No, I'm going to pay you top dollar. For the full price let him give it to me in your presence for a burial site." And this would be taken place in front of the other city fathers who would be witnesses of this transaction to make it official.

And so already we've seen six marks or layers of Abraham's humility. No wonder he was such a great man. The Bible says in 1 Peter 5:5, "God is opposed to the proud, He gives grace to the humble." And it was John Calvin who once noted that the number one mark of a Christian is humility. It's not even love, because you can't love without humility. He says, "It's not even faith, because there is no faith until there is first humility."

Every one of us entered the kingdom of heaven with a humble heart. "In my hands no price I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling." And every step of growth in Christlikeness is a step of lowering ourselves yet lower and lower in humility. In Ephesians 4:1-2, after Paul says, "I, a prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of your calling," the very number one virtue of Christlikeness is humility there in verse 2.

So this is Abraham. And just to remind you of these first six, he had a low self-identity, "stranger and sojourner," that's in verse 4; he bowed to the leaders, verse 7; he yielded to their wish, verse 8; they approached Ephron



for him, verse 8; he refuses a gift, verse 8; and he insists on paying full price for this burial plot. What a humble man.

And I think one inference we can draw from this - listen to this - is that it is in the times of our greatest losses that we become the most humble, that when things have been taken from us is when we all the more lower ourselves beneath the mighty hand of God. And as you look back over your Christian life and your walk with the Lord, I would be willing to say that those times on a timeline for your Christian walk, when you advanced the most in your Christlikeness would be times after which you have gone through adversity and loss and pain and difficulty, and God used that to strip you down in order to bring you before His throne of grace in greater dependence and humility. And that's exactly where Abraham is.

And so as we come to verse 10, I want you to note, "The dependence of Abraham." He is totally dependent, really, upon God to work this out, and he is dependent upon them even to set the terms on how this will work out. He's not like so many today who would go in demanding and setting the terms and being overbearing, he is the total opposite.

And so I want you to note, beginning in verse 10 now, "Now Ephron was sitting among the sons of Heth." That means he too was one of the city leaders, he too was sitting at the city gate conducting the affairs of business; and so that tells us Ephron must have been a major landowner at this time.

And in verse 10, "Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham," - who's sitting there with the city leaders - "in the hearing of the sons of Heth; and even all who went in at the gate of the city." So this is the busy intersection of the city, it's heavy traffic as people are coming in; and this is all being played out publicly.

And so Ephron says now in verse 11, "No, my lord," to Abraham meaning, "No, sir, whom I esteem highly. No, my lord, hear me; you may not buy it from me because I'm going to give it to you." And so he says, "I will give you the field, and I will give you the cave that is in it. I'm going to give you not just the cave, I'm going to give you the field as well. I'm going to give you not just the burial site of the cave, I'm going to give you the land around the cave where it is found."

Well, if that had been any one of us, we would have just gobbled that up, buried our wife in the cave and sold the field on eBay. I mean, who knows. Reminds me, one time I gave R. C. Sproul a driver for golf. It was a very expensive driver. And he played with it one round, and the next time I saw him he wasn't hitting it so well, he didn't like it; and so right in front of me, he sold the driver that I gave him free to the guy who was in my cart. And it's like, "You're the smartest man in the world. Can you not connect these dots that I gave you this gift and you sold it." But anyway... So Abraham does not do what R. C. did. "Do as I say, not as I do."

So, in the middle of verse 11 - and actually, R. C. was in my cart as I recreate this story - verse 11, "In the presence of the sons of my people I give it to you; bury your dead." I mean, that's as emphatic as emphatic can be. I mean, he's just pushed this onto Abraham.

But in verse 12, here's mark number seven of humility: "Abraham bowed before the people of the land." I mean, this is a sign of humility. It's a sign of self-denial. It's a sign of lowering yourself in the presence of others. It's a sign of showing respect and esteem to others. And at this point you would think they would be bowing down to Abraham at the time of this great loss, but it's Abraham who's bowing down to them.

So, verse 13, "He" - Abraham - "spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, 'If you will only please' - okay, that's an eighth mark of humility. I mean, he's saying please. I mean, this is as open-handed as he can possibly be in these negotiations - 'please listen to me.'"

And now the ninth mark at the end of verse 13; this is unbelievable. He says, "I will give the price of the field, accept it from me." So what he is saying is, "Just set your price, I'll pay it. There's not going to be a counter negotiation, a counter bid to your bid, and we're going to go back and forth in this," like you're trying to buy a house today, or a car. He's such a humble man. They're trying to give it to him free: "Just go pick it, it's yours, as much of the land you want." And he goes, "No, I'm going to have to pay for it."

And so he says here in verse 13, "You set the price." They could have taken advantage of him, and there would have been no pushback by Abraham. He says, "accept it from me that I may bury my dead there. I will pay top-dollar, I will pay full price, or whatever say is the price for this field and cave; and really all I need is the cave. But you want me to have the field and the cave, so I will have to pay for not just the cave, but also the field and the land all around it."

So, verse 14, "Then Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him, 'My lord, listen to me; a piece of land' - this is Ephron speaking - 'a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that between you and me? So go bury your dead.'" He sets that price pretty high: four hundred shekels of silver.

Now these are not coins, because coins were not yet made where there's an imprint on them, but pieces of silver, four hundred. And it speaks to really how rich Abraham was, and it does show that many of God's saints have been blessed financially and walk with the Lord humbly, that this man Abraham, who had such reserves in his deep pockets, would be so humble. And the irony is, so many who have nothing are so arrogant.

And here is Abraham, able to pay this; and Ephron knows it. He goes, "What is that between you and me?" as if, "It shouldn't be a big deal, Abraham, because I know of your wealth. So go bury your dead."

And so we come to the tenth and last mark of humility in Abraham, verse 16, "Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, commercial standard," meaning that was the way that wealth was measured and transactions occurred with pieces of silver. That was the coinage, if you will, that was used at that time.

But this mark of humility is just Abraham just immediately accepts it: "You say it's four hundred pieces of silver, it will be four hundred pieces of silver; and I don't need to go home and pray about it," he right then immediately weighed out, meaning if he had a large bag or if he had multiple bags; I don't know what that would have looked like. But he immediately gave it to Ephron who has already said, "I'll give it to you free."

Verse 17, "So Ephron's field, which was in Machpelah, which faced Mamre," - that's where Abraham lived with Sarah - "the field and the cave which were in it, all the trees which were in the field, which were in all the confines of its border, were deeded over to Abraham for a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who went in and out of the gate of his city."

So this was a public transaction. There would be no reneging, there would be no going back on your word, there would be no wanting it back. No, this was in front of all the city leaders, it's in front of everyone who's coming in and out of the city gate. It's an official transfer of resources, and the land deeded over to Abraham. And this is God's grace really at work in Abraham's life, because Ephron is surely an unbeliever, and the other city leaders, it is reasonable to assume, were unbelievers, just lost in the things of this world. And Abraham is totally dependent, really, upon God to work in the heart of Ephron in order to come by this burial site. And God works even through unbelievers to carry out His will in the lives of believers.

And it's hard for me not to think about where we are as a church right now, that we need more land, we need more space, we're spilled out into the lobby, we're spilled out across the street into Herb's House, and we need to be able to buy more land; and we're totally at the mercy of others, and it'll be dependent upon God to work out whatever's going to be worked out. We have no promise from God on how this will work out; God may have something else for us. But if something is to work out, it will be God working in the hearts of the Ephrons of this city to free up what we need to be able to praise and worship God and to study the word of God in this location.

But it's not just for us corporately as a church, it's for you individually as a believer. You are dependent upon an unsaved boss. You're dependent maybe in some ways on unsaved parents. You're dependent upon unsaved neighbors. Who knows what the connection of this is for you and your life. But Proverbs 21:1 says, "The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord, and like rivers of water He channels it whichever way He wills." And everyone's heart is in the hand of the Lord, and some He just lets go their own way; others, He redirects and re-channels so that His eternal purposes and plan can be worked out. But before Abraham's very eyes, this is being played out and worked out, and he now has a place to bury his wife Sarah, and in many ways bury his own heart with her.

So this leads us now to the last heading in verse 19, "The devotion of Abraham," as we close this chapter. And I think you see why I said it just dawned on me over the last couple days, this isn't about Sarah. Every Bible that I own, right here in my Bible says, "The death and burial of Sarah." I looked in the ESV, I looked in the King James, I looked in the Holman, I looked in all these other translations; at the top Sarah's name's right there. But this isn't about Sarah, Sarah didn't do anything. The Lord took her life, and Abraham buried her. It's about how Abraham walked through this time of loss in his life, and it is how Abraham walked with humility before the Lord and walked with humility before others at this heart-wrenching time in his life.

But I want you to note now, finally, in verse 19, "The devotion of Abraham," and I hope you're seeing the practicality even of this chapter for our daily life. "After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field at Machpelah facing Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan."

So this is the final act, the sad act of a grieving husband to now lay his wife in the cave and lay her to rest in this sad farewell. They've been married for over sixty years, and now the end has come, and Abraham is all alone; and yet we don't know everything that had been revealed at this time to the patriarchs. Yet Abraham had the hope that he would see Sarah again, that this departure would not be final, that he would see Sarah again one day in a place in heaven that would later be referred to Abraham's bosom, one day when Abraham would lay his head upon the bosom of the Lord and others would lay their head upon his bosom who were believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. And Abraham's bosom, which is mentioned in Luke chapter 16 in the parable of the rich man who died and went to hell, and the poor man, the beggar, who went to Abraham's bosom; and it speaks of in heaven the close intimacy and fellowship and communion that we will have one with another in heaven.

I think of that as I think of family members who have gone on ahead of me, and the joy of being reunited yet again. And surely in Abraham's mind he understands this is not the last chapter, that there will be a land that is fairer than day. There will be a gathering place around the throne of God, and we know that, because in Hebrews 11:9-10, and I end with this. We read, "By faith he lived as an alien," referring to Abraham. "Abraham lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise," - verse 10 - "for

he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God."

As Abraham was living in the Promised Land, he really lived as a nomad. He lived a Bedouin lifestyle, meaning tents just being moved around. No piece of land was in his possession until this moment, where this is the first time now he owns a piece of land in the Promised Land, after all of these years. Yet even now that he is a stake-owner and a landowner in the Promised Land, he's looking beyond this. He's looking for a far better city, a city whose architect is God, the New Jerusalem, whose builder is God.

Jesus said, "I go and prepare a place for you. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will go and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." That was Abraham. He was looking beyond the temporal to the eternal, even as he buries Sarah. He's looking beyond the visible to the invisible. He's looking beyond the human to the divine.

And that's how you and I are to live our lives, every step of life's journey. Colossians 3:2 says, "We are to be setting our minds on things above, and not on things of the earth." We are to live with an eternal perspective. Jonathan Edwards said, "O God, stamp eternity on my eyeballs. Let me see all of life, how temporal it is in light of an eternity with God forever in heaven." And at this time, even Abraham is looking for a better city, a perfect city, a celestial city, where Sarah has gone; and one day he will come in behind her, and there they will have perfect fellowship and perfect union together, unending throughout all of the ages to come.

And so as I bring this message to a close, I want to ask you, "Do you have this hope, that when you die, that you will go to that city whose architect and whose builder is God, or will you go to a lake that is filled with fire and brimstone?" You will either go to the heavenly city or you will go to hell, and the only way to go to the heavenly city is through faith in Jesus Christ.

And maybe at this moment, it is an epiphany moment for you, that you would wake up and realize that, "My only hope of heaven and being with God and being with Christ is to put my faith in God's precious Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was born of a woman, who lived a sinless and

perfect life, who went to the cross, who was lifted up to die, who bore the sins of His people, who shed His blood, who make the only atonement for sin, who was taken down, buried, and on the third day raised from the dead, now ascended to the right hand of God the Father. And whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Do you have this hope? And you may have this assurance even today if you will repent of your sins and turn away from this temporal world, living for it, and turn to the living God through His Son Jesus Christ, and throw yourself upon Him and ask for His mercy and for His forgiveness and for His grace, Jesus says, "Him who comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out."

Abraham was looking for a far better land than even this promised land. And I trust that you're looking for a far better world than this world in which we live that is literally going up in smoke before our very eyes, that you're looking for a world yet to come, whose architect and builder is God, where there is the river of life, where there is the tree of life, where there is no more sorrow and no more death and no more pain and no more loss, where you will see the face of God, and where you will dwell forever and ever in peace and in joy in communion with Jesus Christ. Believe upon Christ and you will be saved. That is our message for you today. Let us pray.

[Prayer] Father, as we have walked through this chapter in Genesis I pray that the truths that You would have for us would be planted in our heart and soul, and that it would fall on fertile soil, and that it would bear fruit, some 30, some 60, some 100-fold. Bring forth much fruit from this time in your Word. Let us not go home barren. Let us not go home without a harvest. Let there be much fruit from this time today, in Jesus' name. Amen.