

The majority of chapter 23 is devoted to the description of a legal transaction involving the purchase of a burial plot for Sarah. God—through Moses—uses twenty verses to say, “Sarah died and Abraham bought her a grave.”

Note: Although not without her faults, Sarah was a great woman. She was an example of what a godly woman should be. In two different passages—one in the Old Testament and one in the New—we are told to look to Sarah:

- “Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the Lord: Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn; look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth” (Isaiah 51:1–2).
- “Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear” (1 Peter 3:3–6).

The death announcement of chapter 23 is preceded by a birth announcement in chapter 22. Who was born of interest? Rebekah (verse 23). A wife for Isaac had already been provided long before the need had arisen.

Sarah died at what age? 127 Sarah is the only woman in the Bible whose age at death is revealed.

In what land did Sarah die? Canaan—within the Promised Land.

God gave the Promised Land to Abraham in the first of two covenants (Genesis 15:17-20) so why did he have to buy something that God had promised He would give to him? Didn't Abraham own all of it? The land had been promised but he had not taken legal possession of it. Abraham never actually took possession of the Promised Land.

Side Notes:

- **Authorities believe that approximately 600 years passed between Abraham's death and the time that the Israelites entered the Promised Land.**
- **What 400-year event happened to Abraham's descendants during those 600 years?** The Israelites were slaves in Egypt. “Then the LORD said to him, ‘Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years’” (Genesis 15:13).
- **Who led the Israelites out of slavery?** Moses
- **Who would finally lead the Israelites into the Promised Land?** Joshua

How would you describe this negotiating for a burial plot? Bedouin bargaining

Abraham paid an exorbitant price for the burial site. Why did he agree to the full price? He didn't want to be indebted to an unbeliever. He wanted to maintain an honorable and credible witness.

Application: Be wise in your dealings with nonbelievers. Think in terms of what will happen after the transaction. Will you still be able to have a credible witness? If you bump into that real estate person or that car salesman, how will they react to seeing you again?

What other property did Abraham own? None

Abraham's descendants made the cave in Ephron's field the family cemetery. Who was eventually buried at Machpelah? Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Leah, and Jacob (Genesis 49:29-31; 50:12-13).

In Abraham's culture it was important to be buried with your ancestors in your hometown. What does Abraham's selection of a burial site in Canaan say? By determining that Sarah—and later he and his descendants—would be buried in Canaan, Abraham “staked his claim” in the land which God had promised. That's where his heart was. The land where he would be buried was to be the homeland of his descendants. The place that God had promised him was the place where he must be buried.

The occasion of the death of a loved one should always be viewed as an opportunity to present a Christian witness to the nonbelievers in attendance. What kind of a job did Abraham do in witnessing to the Hittites in the circumstances surrounding the death of Sarah? The significance of Abraham's actions did not pass these Canaanites by. They knew him as a “mighty prince” or “prince of God.” He had established his reputation and credibility among the outsiders. He didn't just wait until the day of the funeral. He had been witnessing for several years to these Hittites by his lifestyle.

Note: To weep for a loved one is to show that we have been close, that the loss is keenly felt, that death is an enemy, and that sin has brought this sad punishment upon the human race.

The Bible is God's self revelation to us. One question we should always ask is, “What can we learn about God from this passage?” Remember how Abraham had blown his chances to witness before pagan kings and peoples when he passed off Sarah as his sister. God is the God of second (or third) chances. Abraham had a credible witness to the Hittites.

We will return and finish this study with chapter 24 next time, but for now, let's look at Genesis 25:1-11.

Who was Abraham's new wife? Keturah

How many children did she have with Abraham? Six (1 Chronicles 1:32 identifies them as sons)

Why did Abraham send away the sons of his concubines? They posed a threat to Isaac when it came to the inheritance, the same issue as with Ishmael. Abraham wanted no kids squabbling over the inheritance.

Where was Abraham buried? Cave of Machpelah

Who else was eventually buried at Machpelah? Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Rebekah, Leah.

Why wasn't Ishmael buried there? The burial plot was reserved for those of the promise/the covenant.

Who buried Abraham? Isaac and Ishmael

Ishmael came back for the funeral in spite of being kicked out of the camp by Abraham. What does that say about him? He had great respect for Abraham. Ishmael knew he was loved by Abraham. He desired to honor Abraham appropriately.

Application: Honor your parents no matter what their shortcomings are. This is an unconditional command. (Exodus 20)
In a practical sense, what are some of the ways we can honor our parents?

What did God do after Abraham died? He blessed Isaac just as He had promised in Genesis 17:19.