

## Death of Sarah

Genesis 23

### Abraham's Pain

Genesis 23:1-2

#### **Sarah Died:** *Genesis 23:1*

##### **Sarah's Life**

Sarah was blessed with a long life, living to be 127 years old. A resident of Ur, she married Abraham and together they followed the LORD into a new land (Genesis 12:1-5). For sixty years Sarah lived in the land of promise and was blessed with a son, Isaac (Genesis 21:1-3). She was intelligent, persistent, ambitious, and at times outspoken. Sarah was a loving wife recognized for her faithfulness (1 Peter 3:1-6). The devil has convinced many women that their career is more important than their families. Because of this marriages struggle and homes fall apart. The scriptures place more value on the family and home than a career.

Sarah was a princess – the title given to her from God (Genesis 17:15). She possessed spiritual strength, faith in God, and physical beauty even in her old age. Yes, she doubted the LORD and even meddled in His work but in the end she leaned upon God (Hebrews 11:11). Sarah is a good example of a godly woman.

##### **Sarah's Death**

Sarah died in Hebron, evidently after returning there with Abraham. They resided in Hebron after Lot moved to Sodom and it is where Abraham received the LORD and His two angels (Genesis 13:18). It is possible Sarah died suddenly, since nothing is said concerning her being sick or becoming old. Death often comes unexpectedly, so it's best to be ready for it (James 4:14; Hebrews 9:27-28).

Death is real and part of our world because of sin (Romans 5:8, 6:23). Death does not have to be a time of extreme sorrow because God has promised victory over death for those that trust in Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:55-57; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). For a child of God, death marks the beginning of eternal life.

#### **Abraham Mourned:** *Genesis 23:2*

##### **Abraham Loved Sarah**

Some believe Abraham was at a distance when Sarah died, because he went to mourn for her. Perhaps but not conclusive, seeing he could have been in a nearby tent when she died. It is clear that Abraham was greatly hurt due to Sarah's death.

1. *Abraham mourned* – mourning means to wail and lament because of sorrow.

2. *Abraham wept* – weeping implies the mourning was sincere. Abraham shed tears because his heart was broke.

Abraham shed tears of sorrow because he greatly loved Sarah and missed her. For sixty years he sojourned in the land with Sarah, his wife and friend. Weeping is not a sign of weakness, but relieves the sorrow found within.

### **Abraham Continued**

Abraham's mourning ceased and he moved forward. The death of Sarah provided an opportunity for Abraham to display his faith in the LORD. His trust in an eternal home enabled him to continue without Sarah (Hebrews 11:13-16). He had hope of reuniting with his beloved wife (1 Thessalonians 4:13). Many are unable to deal with sorrow and struggle with discouragement.

1. *Some attempt to ignore sorrow* – remaining active hoping sorrow departs, only to find it never leaves.
2. *Some attempt to cover sorrow* – masking their sorrow with alcohol or drugs, only to find new problems.
3. *Some attempt to remove sorrow* – looking to worldly psychology to remedy sorrow, only to reopen old wounds and magnify sorrow.

Sorrow is real and faith in Jesus Christ provides comfort for the bereaved. Jesus Christ will carry burdens for those that trust in Him (Matthew 11:28-29). He is able to bear our burdens and lift us out of our misery. By looking to the LORD we are able to live and move forward. Instead of dwelling on the past, Abraham walked with God and looked to the future (Philippians 3:13-14).

## **Abraham's Purchase** *Genesis 23:3-20*

### **Abraham Desired Land: *Genesis 23:3-15***

#### **Abraham Approached the Canaanites**

Abraham went to his neighbors looking for a place to bury his wife. He was a pilgrim without land, even though the land was promised to him and his descendants, Abraham did not possess any of it at this time (Hebrews 11:13).

1. *Abraham was a stranger in a foreign land* – he found himself in a place he did not naturally belong, so he was never comfortable in the world or in the presence of those that loved the world. His new life was better fit for heaven than earth (2 Corinthians 5:17).

2. *Abraham was a sojourner on earth* – he was a temporary resident and did not plan on remaining. Abraham never settled down in the land.

Abraham humbly approached the Canaanites in search of land. He was a good neighbor, being honest, fair, and never expecting favors from the world. He went to the sons of Heth and asked to purchase a piece of property. Abraham's testimony preceded him; he was called a 'mighty prince' and offered his choice of the best sepulchers. It was important to Abraham to bury Sarah's body in the land promised him. Burying her body was a testimony of a future resurrection and of God's covenant concerning the land (1 Corinthians 15:51-53). He knew death was not the end but the beginning and he believed the promise given him concerning the land. By faith, Abraham was able to search for a place for Sarah's body to be buried.

### **Abraham Desired the Cave of Machpelah.**

The cave he wanted to purchase belonged to Ephron, the son of Zohar. He offered full price for the cave. Abraham did not use his hardship to gain an advantage, but was willing to pay for what he received. Abraham was determined to own the land. It may have been his way of staking a claim on what God had already promised. Perhaps he did not want Sarah's body buried in a strange land but a cave that belonged to him.

Ephron offered Abraham the cave along with the field to bury his people. What appears to be a gift was in reality eastern custom for saying 'I have a field and cave for sale.' Ephron was a typical crafty businessman, throwing the field into the deal when Abraham only asked for the cave. Evidently, this cunning man planned to take advantage of Abraham's situation. On the other hand, Abraham respectfully did business with Ephron, bowing before him and kindly offering to pay for the field. Ephron named the price, 400 shekels of silver, looking to bargain. According to John Butler, in eastern customs the first price was often six times higher than value. The custom called for a long and drawn out period of haggling and bargaining that would last days or even months. In this case, Abraham had no interest in haggling for a bargain, so he offered to pay the full price.

### **Abraham Possessed the Land: *Genesis 23:16-20***

#### **Abraham Purchased the Land**

Abraham paid 400 shekels of silver for the cave and field. He paid with money that was acceptable and sure. In other words, he did not put it on credit. Abraham wisely conducted his business before a group of witnesses. The terms were verified, including the amount of money and land. The transaction was final and the land belonged to Abraham.

Believers should always do business wisely and honestly. There is never a need to be deceptive in our business dealings (James 4:17). Every bill should be paid completely and on time. This produces a good testimony.

### **Abraham Buried Sarah**

Sarah's body was buried in the cave of Machpelah before Mamre. It was the land Abraham purchased and is located in Hebron of Canaan. The bodies of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would all be buried in this location (Genesis 25:9, 35:27-29, 50:13). Leah and Rebekah's bodies were also buried in Machpelah. It became a place for Abraham's kindred to be buried and reminded others of God's promises. It was a location filled with memories and encouragement.

### **Conclusion**

Abraham faced a tremendous trial, the death of Sarah. His tears flowed as he mourned for his wife but by faith he was able to continue. Abraham looked to a heavenly country and believed in a resurrection. He found God's promises to be comforting in his time of difficulty. Trials and hardships are like storms, often arriving unexpectedly and with great force. When they appear in your life trust in the LORD and His word. *In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Psalm 62:7*

### **Point to Ponder**

Death is a reminder that this world is not our home.

### **Quote**

"His love in time past forbids me to think He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink." John Newton

### **Questions**

What kind of testimony did Sarah leave behind?

What was Abraham's reaction to Sarah's death?

Why did Abraham choose to bury Sarah's body?

Where did Abraham bury Sarah's body?

What new truth have you learned from this lesson?