

Scripture Reading: Genesis 25

“1 Abraham again took a wife, and her name was Keturah. 2 And she bore him Zim-ran, Jok-shan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shu-ah. 3 Jokshan begot Sheba and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim, & Leummim. 4 And the sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abidah, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah. 5 And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac. 6 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. 7 This is the sum of the years of Abraham's life which he lived: one hundred and seventy-five years. 8 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. 9 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, 10 the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth. There Abraham was buried, and Sarah his wife. 11 And it came to pass, after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac. And Isaac dwelt at Beer La-hai Roi.

“Abraham, the Father of Nations”

Well as I have hinted at in recent sermons, our time with Abraham is coming to a close this week. Starting next week the focus of the Book of Beginnings will shift to Isaac and the continuing line of promise. So this week we will consider the death of Abraham and some final details that we are given as a reminder that God was faithful to His promises made to Abraham: **The Father of Nations.**

➤ **And this is a very appropriate week to review all of this as we celebrate Pentecost Sunday.**

So before I can wrap it all up with a big bow at Pentecost where we will clearly see Jesus, we should consider the three details that we are given in this transition from Abraham to Isaac.

The first is the marriage of Abraham to Keturah which is an interesting detail that many struggle to fit into the story of salvation! The proper focus is going to be on the son of promise, but God reminds us that he keeps track of the details in these verses that open chapter 25.

While many, including none other than John Calvin struggle to see this as a chronological account I think we should see it as such because the writer clearly says, ‘again’ Abraham was married. The difficulty comes from the fact that the Apostle Paul referred to the body of Abraham as “dead” in the time before Isaac was born... And, whether just under forty years was enough time to have six children, get them established, and send them off to the east as the text says.

➤ **I think both can be resolved so we can read the text as it appears to be written!**

When Paul is discussing the faith of Abraham he says this in Romans 4:

“19 And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. 20 He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, 21 and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.”

I do not believe that Paul was saying Abraham could never have more children...

➤ **He is focused on the faith both Abraham and Sarah needed to believe that he they would bring forth the promised son, Isaac!**

Remarrying after Sarah’s death and having more children would not have been unusual in that day and forty years is certainly long enough to have and establish six families! *[use my family example]*

The last objection was that Keturah is referred to as one of Abraham's concubines along with Hagar, but that is no different because Hagar was also given to Abraham by Sarah as a wife and secondary wives were often referred to as concubines.

- Sarah is the wife who bore the son of promise and it will be that son who Abraham will set up as the heir of the Promised Land.

We don't know much about the children of Keturah who are listed in our morning text, except for the Midianites who will later play a significant role in the history of God's people, especially in the time of Moses. So after we are given these details about his marriage to Keturah we are told about the end of Abraham's life:

5 "And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac. 6 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. 7 This is the sum of the years of Abraham's life which he lived: one hundred and seventy-five years. 8 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. 9 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, 10 the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth. There Abraham was buried, and Sarah his wife."

Seeing how Abraham could give "all" that he had to Isaac and also give gifts to his other children should help us understand how confusing that word "all" can be, if we are not careful to see the context in which it is used! Isaac was the son of promise and Abraham gave all that he had to him as such: The focus here is not on his material possessions, but rather the promises that God had given, including the Land of Promise. Thus Isaac is given the material things he would need to carry on the family but Abraham sent the others away with some provisions so they would not interfere with the ultimate possession of the land God had promised. Abraham is faithful to God AND a good father to all of his children!

This should be instructive & encouraging to those who often have to find the right balance between providing for a family and being with that family!

So Abraham lives to be 175, meaning that he spent about a hundred years as a wanderer in the Promised Land! He is buried in the tombs he purchased at Machpelah and as we saw this is the down payment if you will for the land that God will provide as He promised in a few hundred years!

- Another interesting detail is the fact that both Isaac and Ishmael come to bury their father.

It reminds us not only about how a family cares for each other in times of great sorrow, but also that we do not have all the details that we might want in these accounts.

- A casual reading might leave one thinking that Isaac and Ishmael had no further contact after Ishmael was sent away many years before, but this was obviously not the case.

Verse eleven tells us that God blessed Isaac and that is where our story here in the Book of Beginnings will go next week as we see the two nations that will come from the union of Isaac and Rebekah. But as is usually the case, the minor details will be brought in before the major portion of the story is told. In this case we are given the genealogy of Ishmael before the account of Isaac's line.

Again these details are important because it confirms and shows how God kept the promise to Abraham that his first son Ishmael would be cared for which we studied in Genesis chapter sixteen:

"18 And Abraham said to God, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!" 19 Then God said: "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him. 20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation."

So here we are given the twelve princes:

12 “Now this is the genealogy of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's maidservant, bore to Abraham. 13 And these were the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: The firstborn of Ishmael, Ne-ba-joth; then Kedar, Ad-beel, Mib-sam, 14 Mish-ma, Dumah, Massa, 15 Hadar, Tema, Jetur, Na-phish, and Ked-emah. 16 These were the sons of Ishmael and these were their names, by their towns and their settlements, twelve princes according to their nations.”

➤ God has kept his Promise and now Ishmael will exit our story...

17 These were the years of the life of Ishmael: one hundred and thirty-seven years; and he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people. 18 (They dwelt from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt as you go toward Assyria.) He died in the presence of all his brethren.”

➤ And thus we see how God kept the promise to Abraham that his first son Ishmael would be cared for

Again God said, “as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.” But now our story will move on as that earlier chapter does at verse 21:

“But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.”

➤ And thus our story will now turn to the promised son and the Kingdom that will come through him as his line leads to the Seed who is Jesus the King of Kings!

But as we leave the great man of faith, Abraham, we should see the faithfulness of God, in his life and in the future... Back in Genesis 15 we saw God explain that Abraham and many of his heirs would be wanderers and not possess this Promised Land but the day would come when they would return and possess it fully...

Genesis 15: “13 Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. 14 And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. 15 Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age.”

➤ As Abraham approached the end of his life he knew that God had provided the Son of Promise and now could see this promise of going in peace at a good old age being fulfilled as well.

We see this in Psalm 116 where we read in part, “I love Jehovah, because He has heard My voice and my supplications. 2 Because He has inclined His ear to me, Therefore I will call upon Him as long as I live. 3 The pains of death surrounded me, And the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow. 4 Then I called upon the name of Jehovah: "O Jehovah, I implore You, deliver my soul!" 5 Gracious is Jehovah, and righteous; Yes, our God is merciful. 6 Jehovah preserves the simple; I was brought low, and He saved me. 7 Return to your rest, O my soul, For Jehovah has dealt bountifully with you. 8 For You have delivered my soul from death, My eyes from tears, And my feet from falling. ... 15 Precious in the sight of Jehovah Is the death of His saints.”

➤ So as Abraham’s life draws to an end he has made provisions for the many children he has fathered which in part fulfills his calling to be a father of nations.

➤ Abraham’s true rest came in seeing the Son of Promise and the land that God has promised would be his one day.

And his final solace came from knowing that it would all be completed with the coming of the Seed, Jesus who told the religious leaders of His day that Abraham saw His day and rejoiced!

- We have the advantage of seeing all of this from the other side of the completed work of his Seed Jesus.

We know that Jesus is now seated as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords and that the Spirit of God is bringing all the nations of the earth under His rule as we learned from the Book of Acts!

As we saw near the beginning of our study of the life of Abraham, God had promised him many descendants, promised him that he would be the father of nations & kings and that he would inherit the land. While Abraham had to believe all of this in faith in his lifetime and his heirs would see it carried out in history with the Nation of Israel, we now see it all completed and expanded in Jesus!

That is what the Great Commission is all about and why we celebrate Pentecost each year in the Church Calendar... God called upon Abraham's children in the Nation of Israel to be a priestly nation for all the nations of the earth.

- Remember the seventy nations that were given in detail after the flood in Genesis chapter ten?

This history was given to the people of God in the Books of the Law and they were reminded about it even in the sacrificial ceremonies they were commanded to perform each year. This comes in Numbers 29, a portion of the Scriptures that we might miss because it seems VERY repetitive! In the midst of various commands for sacrifices we read this at verse 12:

“On the fifteenth day of the seventh month you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work, and you shall keep a feast to Jehovah seven days. *[explain ascension offering]*

13 You shall present a burnt offering, an offering made by fire as a sweet aroma to Jehovah: thirteen young bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs in their first year. They shall be without blemish. 14 Their grain offering shall be of fine flour mixed with oil: three-tenths of an ephah for each of the thirteen bulls, two-tenths for each of the two rams, 15 and one-tenth for each of the fourteen lambs; 16 also one kid of the goats as a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering.”

Then we have instructions for the second day...

17 'On the second day present twelve young bulls, two rams, fourteen lambs in their first year without blemish, 18 and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, by their number, according to the ordinance; 19 also one kid of the goats as a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering with its grain offering, and their drink offerings.”

So I hope you noticed that the only thing that changed from the 1st to the 2nd day was having twelve bulls instead of thirteen! And so it continues for the next five days, with each day bringing one less bull.

So if we start with 13 and then add 12 and then, 11, 10, 9, 8, and finally 7... Do you want to guess what that adds up too? That is right, 70 which means that Israel has offered sacrifices for all of the seventy nations of the earth! On the eighth day, the Day of Resurrection, we have another set of sacrifices with one bull for the nation of Israel because as the writer of Hebrews explains in detail these were shadows of the work of Jesus yet to come because the blood of bulls & goats could not forgive sin:

- Only the blood of Jesus could do that!

Of course we know that God's people often rebelled and failed as their history unfolded and eventually God punished them by scattering them among the very nations for which they were supposed to be the priests! From a human standpoint all would seem to be lost, but God never forgot His promises to Abraham and thus we see the coming of the Seed Jesus who saved His people from their sins.

God also promised His scattered people through the prophet Jeremiah that they would one day be returned to the land He promised Abraham and that is just what we see at Pentecost...

First, in Jeremiah 30 we read:

"2 "Thus speaks Jehovah God of Israel, saying: 'Write in a book for yourself all the words that I have spoken to you. 3 For behold, the days are coming,' says Jehovah, 'that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah,' says Jehovah. 'And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.' "

➤ **Turning to Acts chapter two we see this fulfilled:**

Acts 2: "5 And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. 6 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. 7 Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, 'Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs--we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.'"

➤ **Again, lots of names that can appear tedious, but God is making it clear that His promises have been kept as we see Jews gathered from all the nations of the earth!**

And just a few days before Jesus had made it very clear to the disciples that the Good News was not to be confined to Jerusalem or the Jewish people: They were to proclaim the Good News in Jerusalem and Judea and then to Samaria and finally to the ends of the earth. The promised Seed of Abraham was now seated as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and the Father was going to give Him ALL the nations of the earth as promised in Psalms 2 & 110! Listen to how Peter explains this to the gathered Jews who would return to their various nations...

Acts 2: "32 This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. 33 Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. 34 For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, 35 Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" ' 36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

➤ **The descendants of Abraham would be like the stars of the heavens or sand of the seashore as the fullness of the Gentiles were brought in as true Sons of Abraham!**

➤ **So what does all of this have to do with us?**

At the first celebration of Pentecost after the ascension of Jesus the promised Comforter was sent and He has been saving and empowering the Saints ever since as the Kingdom of Jesus grows to fill the earth!

The job is certainly not complete and so each of us must take seriously the request of Jesus that we find in Matthew chapter nine during His earthly ministry:

"Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

36 But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. 37 Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. 38 Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

➤ **Such should be our prayer and Lord willing such will be our calling!**

Communion Meditation: Numbers 33

“1 These are the journeys of the children of Israel, who went out of the land of Egypt by their armies under the hand of Moses and Aaron.

2 Now Moses wrote down the starting points of their journeys at the command of the Lord. And these are their journeys according to their starting points:

3 They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the day after the Passover the children of Israel went out with boldness in the sight of all the Egyptians.

4 For the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, whom the Lord had killed among them. Also on their gods the Lord had executed judgments.

...

9 They moved from Marah and came to Elim. At Elim were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there.