

Genesis 25:1-18

Introduction

A. What we can learn from the descendants of Abraham

1. God fulfilled His promise to bless Abraham with a multitude of descendants (25:1-4, 16-18):
 - a. Throughout Genesis 12-25, we've seen how God promise to not only make Abraham into a great nation, but to make him the father of a multitude of descendants and nations (READ 12:1-2; 13:14-16; 15:5; 17:1-6)
 - b. God fulfilled these promises through three women:
 - 1) Sarah obviously gave birth to Isaac, through whom the nation of Israel would come
 - 2) After Sarah's death, Abraham married Keturah who gave birth to six sons (READ 25:1-4):
 - a) This passage also includes grandchildren
 - b) These ultimately settled to the east of the land of Canaan in the Arabian Peninsula
 - c) It's likely some Arab peoples are descended from these
 - 3) Hagar gave birth to Ishmael who became the father of 12 princes and settled to the east of Canaan in the Arabian Peninsula (READ 25:16-18)
2. But, God preserved the bulk of His promises to Abraham through Isaac (25:5-6; 11):
 - a. This was always God's plan:
 - 1) It was through Isaac that Abraham's descendants would be named, a reference to the establishment of Israel (READ 21:12)
 - 2) God also promised that Isaac would become Abraham's heir (READ 15:3-4):
 - a) We see this fulfilled here in 25:5-6
 - b) While Abraham was generous with his other children (born to Hagar and Ketura who are referred to here as concubines) by giving them gifts while he was alive, he reserved the inheritance ("all that he had") for Isaac
 - c) Abraham also preserved the inheritance of the land for Isaac by sending his other children **"away from his son Isaac eastward, to the land to the east"**

further See Genesis 18:18; 21:12-13; 22:15-18

 - b. God blessed Isaac (READ 25:11):
 - 1) In Genesis 17:21, God promised Abraham that He would establish a covenant with Isaac just as He had him (READ)
 - 2) We see God's promises and blessings to Isaac repeated in 26:1-6, 12-14, 24 (READ)
3. Takeaway: God fulfilled His promises to Abraham, and preserved the promises through Isaac, in order to make salvation possible to all mankind:
 - a. The promises God made to Abraham weren't just about Abraham, or Isaac, or even the Jewish people and nation of Israel
 - b. They have always been about God's redemptive plan for mankind:
 - 1) When God first called Abraham in Genesis 12 He promised not only to make Abraham into a great nation, and to make his name great, but He promised that through Abraham **"all the families of the earth will be blessed"** (Genesis 12:1-3)

- 2) He repeated this promise at least two more times to Abraham:
 - a) Genesis 18:18, “...**Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed**”
 - b) Genesis 22:15-18 (READ)
- 3) The New Testament identifies the “seed” of Abraham through whom God would bless all the families of the earth as Jesus Christ Who would make salvation possible to all mankind:
 - a) Peter did this after healing the lame man in Acts 3 (READ Acts 3:11-26)
 - b) Paul did the same thing in his letter to the Galatians (READ Galatians 3:8-16)
- c. So God’s plan all along when He made His promises to Abraham and preserved them through Isaac, was to make salvation possible through Jesus Christ and the Gospel; this is why Jesus proclaimed in John 8:56, “**Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad**”

B. What we can learn from the death of Abraham (READ Genesis 25:7-10)

1. The first is that Abraham succumbed to physical death:
 - a. The Bible makes it clear that Abraham was a righteous man, not on his own merits but because of his faith (READ Genesis 15:6)
 - b. This is repeated throughout the New Testament in places like Romans 4 and Galatians 3:6
 - c. In James 2:23, James added that Abraham was “**called a friend of God**”
 - d. Yet, in spite of his faith, his righteous status, and his friendship with God, Abraham still succumbed to physical death like every other OT and NT believer with the exception of Elijah and possibly Enoch
 - e. The sad irony of life is that every human being—saved and unsaved alike—has or will face physical death (with the exception of those who will be raptured):
 - 1) Death became the reality for all of us after Adam sinned in the Garden (Genesis 3:19): “**By the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.**”
 - 2) Psalm 89:48: “**What man can live and not see death?...**”
 - 3) The author of Ecclesiastes lamented this fact:
 - a) Ecclesiastes 3:19: “**For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity. 20 All go to the same place. All came from the dust and all return to the dust.**”
 - b) Ecclesiastes 7:1-2: “**A good name is better than a good ointment, And the day of one's death is better than the day of one's birth. 2 It is better to go to a house of mourning Than to go to a house of feasting, Because that is the end of every man, And the living takes it to heart.**”
 - c) Ecclesiastes 9:2-3a: “**It is the same for all. There is one fate for the righteous and for the wicked; for the good, for the clean and for the unclean; for the man who offers a sacrifice and for the one who does not sacrifice. As the good man is, so is the sinner; as the swearer is, so is the one who is afraid to swear. 3 This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is one fate for all men...**”

- 4) The author of Hebrews said it plainly (Hebrews 9:27): “...it is appointed for men to die once...”
 - 5) However, even with this daunting ending to our physical lives hanging over our heads, there is hope in both this life and the next
2. The second thing we can learn from Abraham’s death is that he died satisfied (RE-READ 25:8b): **“Abraham breathed his last and died in a ripe old age, an old man and satisfied with life...”**:
- a. The Hebrew phrase translated “**satisfied with life**” here is more literally “**old and full**” and there are mainly two different understandings of this verse when you look at the English translations:
 - 1) One is what we find in the ESV, NIV, LSB and KJV which render the phrase simply as a synonym for old age: “**an old man and full of days**” [or years]; this is probably because the exact same phrase, but with the additional word “**days**”, is used three other times in the OT:
 - a) It’s used of Isaac (LSB; Genesis 35:29): “**Isaac breathed his last and died and was gathered to his people, an old man and full of days...**”
 - b) It’s used of David (LSB; 1 Chronicles 23:1): “**Now David became old and full of days...**”
 - c) Finally, it’s used of Job (LSB; Job 42:17): “**And Job died, an old man and full of days**”
 - d) So, these translations treat the Hebrew phrase “**old and full**” here in Genesis 25:8b as a shortened form of the phrase “**old and full of days**” found in the three verses above
 - 2) However, the NAU and NET take a different approach:
 - a) The Hebrew word for “full” also means to be satiated or satisfied, as well as to have abundance which is the way the NAU and NET render it:
 - The NAU renders this verse as Abraham being old and “**satisfied with life**”
 - The NET renders it as “**an old man who lived a full life**”
 - b) So both of these translations see this phrase “**old and full**” as a reference to the quality or nature of Abraham’s life—that it was a long and satisfying or full life
 - b. It’s impossible to know for sure which translation is best from a purely grammatical perspective, but the NAU and NET translations remind me of something Jesus said in John 10:10: “**The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly**” or as the NIV says, “**and have it to the full**”:
 - 1) It’s clear from the rest of Scripture that Jesus wasn’t talking about riches and wealth in this life, but it’s also clear He wasn’t only talking about eternal life because He uses the present rather than future tense
 - 2) An abundant or full life isn’t something Jesus only promised us for the future but something that we have now because of our relationship with Him
 - 3) He not only makes us a new PERSON, but gives us a new PURPOSE in life and new PERSPECTIVE on life that leads to a more abundant, full and satisfying life
 - c. The same was true of Abraham who died “**old and satisfied**” because of his relationship and dependence on God

3. The final thing we can learn from Abraham's death was that he was gathered to his kin (RE-READ 25:8c): **"and he was gathered to his people":**

- a. Contrary to what we might first think, this phrase is not a synonym for death or dying
- 1) According to multiple commentaries, it was an idiom used to describe being reunited with one's ancestors after death; listen to what the Jewish Publication Society's Torah Commentary on Genesis says (p. 174):

This phrase, peculiar to the Torah, is also used of Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Aaron, and Moses. An analysis of the contexts in which it is found reveals that it is to be distinguished from death itself because the action follows the demise. It is not the same as burial in an ancestral grave, because it is employed of Abraham, Aaron, and Moses, none of whom was buried with his forefathers. It is also not identical with interment in general because the report of burial follows this phrase, and the difference between the two is especially blatant in the case of Jacob, who was interred quite a while after being "gathered to his kin." It would seem, therefore, that the existence of this idiom, as of the corresponding figure "to lie down with one's fathers," testifies to a belief that, despite his mortality and perishability, man possesses an immortal element that survives the loss of life. Death is looked upon as a transition to an afterlife where one is united with one's ancestors.

- 2) This reminds me of something God said to Moses in Exodus 3:6: **"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob..."**
 - 3) Jesus quoted this verse when debating with the Sadducees about the reality of life after death and resurrection, but then added, **"He is not the God of the dead but of the living"** proving that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were all spiritually alive and had been gathered together after death
- b. An analysis of this phrase and a similar one (to lie down with one's fathers) in the Bible shows that it was only used of Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Aaron, Moses and David—all of whom we can safely assume were saved
- c. So, it seems reasonable to interpret Abraham's being gathered to his people here as him being reunited and united in Heaven with those of like faith who proceeded him in death
4. Takeaway: While all of us face the prospect of an earthly death like Abraham, we can die satisfied in this life and be assured of eternal life in the next:
- a. One of the reasons the author of Ecclesiastes declared life to be meaningless and empty is the fact that we all die—the good, the bad, the righteous and the wicked—and it led him to despise life and ultimately to total despair
 - b. But, it doesn't have to be that way: we can be satisfied in this life and assured of eternal life in the next:
 - 1) Abraham was satisfied with life because He placed his faith and trust in God and enjoyed God's promises and blessings
 - 2) He was also assured of eternal life when he believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness; as a result when he died he was gathered to his people—those of like faith
 - 3) The same is true of us when we place our faith in Jesus Christ:
 - a) He promised us not only abundant life here and now, but eternal life in the future
 - b) Our great future hope is that one day we will be gathered together with our people—people of like faith in Jesus—and be forever in His presense