

Abraham - Part Eleven

by Charles E. Wigg

The death of Sarah:

God gave back to Sarah, the son whom she had given up to Him: She had the joy of his company for another 15 to 17 years. What blessed years they must have been. She had given up the dearest object of her affections, at the command of God; and now she receives him back. She would hold him differently ever afterwards, realizing that he now belonged to God, not to herself, yet she enjoyed unhindered fellowship with him for the rest of her life. But the time came when her long pilgrimage came to an end.

Abraham had been confronted by death before; First, in the death of his brother, then, in the death of his father. God used both of those bereavements to Abraham's blessing; to bring him into the centre of God's salvation, His will, and His blessing. We are told nothing about those funerals, but things are different now with Abraham. He had come to know God, as the God of resurrection. The dark mystery that surrounded death is now gone; he must find a suitable burying place.

He approached the sons of Heth, who gave a touching testimony to the esteem in which they held Abraham: "Thou art a mighty prince among us:" is their unified testimony to him. They would be honored if he would bury Sarah in the best of their sepulchres. But while moved by their kindness and respect, Abraham could not accept their offer.

Sarah and Abraham's family were different, they had lived separate lives; they were not a part of that society, or community; Even in death that separation must be maintained. Abraham had a hope that those men did not possess. So it was; that he bought a field and the cave that was in it.

A Hope beyond the Grave:

This is the first burial in scripture, where the hope of resurrection is suggested. That is why a cave was required. It is an indication that Abraham believed in the resurrection of the just. Though the frail old body was laid to rest there; it was not going to remain there. One day soon, Sarah's dust will be gathered; it will be quickened by the Spirit of the Living God, the old body will be changed, and she will come out of that cave; what a glorious hope!

Abraham gave that dear old body, a burial that was suited to it. Sarah was a Princess; and she was given the burial of a Princess. Hers was a long and beautiful life. A life of faithfulness, and loyalty to the husband she revered. We are told that she obeyed Abraham calling him Lord. This was not because of fear, but because of her love for him. She had stood loyally by the husband whom she loved, through all the trials, the temptations, the joys and sorrows of life. Together, they had trodden the path of the will of God: She thus has become a model, for all women of faith. Those who follow her example, become her daughters, see 1 Peter 3: 1 to 6.

A Bride for Isaac:

The next chapter, (24), is devoted to the securing of a Bride for Isaac. This chapter can also be interpreted in two ways. Firstly; as typical of the operations of the persons of the Godhead, the Father, and the Holy Spirit, in securing a Bride for the Son. Secondly; we can view it as a godly example of a spiritual father, and his concern for his family, and the choice of suitable life partners for the members.

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In the first case, Abraham is a type of the Father, the unnamed servant, a type of the Holy Spirit, and Isaac as a type of Christ, the Son, Rebecca is a type of the Church, the Bride of Christ.

The Church's Origin:

Abraham made the servant swear that he would not take a bride for Isaac from the daughters of the Canaanites; they were finally to come under the judgment of God. This reminds us that the Church, (though taken from amongst the nations), is composed of those who already have a relationship with Christ, through the new birth. Like Eve, who was made from a rib taken from over Adam's heart, so the Church is of Christ's flesh and His bones, Eph. 5: 30.

The servant takes a long journey, in obedience to Abraham's commands, and goes laden with tokens of his wealth, to secure a bride for his son. The Holy Spirit; also came from heaven, in obedience to the commands of both the Father and the Son. He came at Pentecost, with the expressed purpose of securing a Bride for Christ.

Humility; complete dependence; and godly grace, at every step marked the servant. His name also is not given; and the Holy Spirit has not taken a personal name. Ever since coming from Heaven at Pentecost; the Holy Spirit has been pursuing His work of grace. He has been convicting and converting sinners to Christ; performing the miracle of the new birth in each one, then baptizing each into the Body of Christ, His Bride.

The servant never praised, or drew attention to himself, and the ornaments and gifts; he always gave the credit to his master, and acknowledged the gifts as belonging to Abraham. In the same way; the Holy Spirit does not speak, from Himself, or of, Himself: He glorifies Christ; He takes the things of Christ and shows them to us, He shows us things to come. (John 16:7 to 15.)

Rebecca; wholly fulfilled the desires, and expectations of the servant, so that there was no doubt that she was the one chosen of God for his master's son.

The true Church; also responds to the leading, and the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Here we need to distinguish between the true Church, the Bride of Christ, that which the Holy Spirit has formed: and the Professing Christian Church, which embraces much that is not genuine, and is in fact grieving to the Holy Spirit.

Rebecca rode on the camels and followed the servant:

The camels represent the **power** of the Holy Spirit; that which he makes freely available to us, when we are willing to be obedient. At the journey's end, the servant draws attention to his master, and finally presents Isaac with his bride. Isaac leads her into his mother Sarah's tent, she becomes his wife, he loves her, and he is comforted after the death of his mother.

All of these things are full of teaching. The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ, leads us to wholly yield ourselves to Him. Causes us to refuse the attention of all others, to cover ourselves from the attention of the world, and to hold our beauty, which is wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, wholly, and only, for the Lord Jesus; our Bridegroom.

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The Holy Spirit presents us to Christ as His Bride. We have come into Israel's place in the testimony of God, (See Romans chapters 9 to 11), and our Lord Jesus now finds comfort, during the time of Israel's rejection of Him.

Abraham's declining years:

The first 10 verses of chapter 25 of Genesis make rather sad reading. After Sarah's death there was evidently moral decline in Abraham's life. He took another wife, as well as concubines, from them he had six sons. She is called Keturah: It is interesting to note that there are several ancient opinions, that she was none other than Hagar, who Abraham took again after Sarah's death. There seems to be some ground in Genesis for us to believe this idea. One of the sons of Keturah, was Midian, his descendants are called Midianites. The descendants of Ishmael, are called Ishmeelites, but in Gen. 37: 28, there was a caravan of Midianites, who are also called Ishmeelites. Likewise in Judges 8: 24, though it was the Midianites who were defeated by Gideon, yet it is said that they were Ishmaelites. It is interesting to note that they had golden moons, (crescents,) on chains about their camel's necks: The Muslims even today, have adopted the crescent as their national, and religious symbol, this is obviously a carryover from ancient idolatry, and the worship of the moon.

However, whether that is so or not, before he died, Abraham wound up his family affairs; he gave gifts to these sons, and sent them away to the east country, (Saudi Arabia, Oman, Yemen, Qatar, etc). He realized that they were not like Isaac, and that they could not share the blessings of God, that were promised to, and through him.

It also seems that Abraham brought Ishmael back into the family, or at least brought about some reconciliation between Isaac and Ishmael, because both had a part in Abraham's burial.

Hebrews 11: 9, gives us some positive information about Abraham's later years, and tells us that he lived in "Tabernacles, (tents,) with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." Perhaps at the very end; he realized his mistake, and turned again to lay hold of the plan and promise of God? It seems that he lived during the first fifteen years of Jacob's life; and that he had greater discernment than Isaac, as to whom was the chosen of God of his two grandsons. Because he lived with Isaac and Jacob; not with Esau.

During those years, he must have had a tremendous effect on Jacob's life. He must have told of the promised blessings of God; so that Jacob came to strongly desire those blessings; though he had no right to them by birth.

All this would remind us of the great influence for good, that it is possible for grandparents to have, on the lives of their grandchildren. Let us see to it, that it is so with us; and our grandchildren!

Thus ended the long life of our illustrious Father. He died in a good old age, an old man and full of years. Thank God for Abraham! The challenge comes to us: Will others be able to thank God for us, for our lives, for the example that we have left, for others to follow, when we die? May it be so!

It then says of Abraham, what it says of none before him; that he was "gathered to his peoples". It seems that the blessing of God that he had entered into was also imputed to his ancestors; those who had died in faith. He was not the first to die in faith, but he is exalted to be the father of all those who have faith. Isaac

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and Jacob also, were gathered to their peoples. They departed this life, to be added to all those who had entered that unseen world of the dead. A place of rest, comfort, and of blessing, (see Luke 16: 19 to 31.)

Abraham's final resting place:

He also was buried in the cave of Macpelah; buried in the light of the hope of resurrection. His body still rests there awaiting that great day of victory. But Abraham's soul and spirit are now in Paradise. The Lord Jesus went down into Hades, (paradise), during the three days that His body lay in the tomb: But when He arose victorious; He led captivity captive. He released the spirits of the just; now made perfect, because of His atoning death; and took them up with him into what is now Paradise; where they await the Day of Jesus Christ; when at His shout the dead in Christ shall rise first. When we the living who remain, shall be caught up together with them, to meet the Lord in the air; to be forever with Him in that place he has gone to prepare for us. **EVEN SO, COME LORD JESUS!**

Conclusion:

May it please the Lord; to bless the thoughts expressed in this small book; to all whom have the opportunity to read it!