

### The Death and Burial of Abraham

In our last topic, we saw the importance of teaching our physical and spiritual children that godly marriages are always based on commitment to love the partner and not just physical appearance. In this topic, we will learn about the death and burial of Abraham.

Genesis 25:1-6 says, “Abraham again took a wife, and her name *was* Keturah. And she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. Jokshan begot Sheba and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim. And the sons of Midian *were* Ephah, Ephher, Hanoch, Abidah, and Eldaah. All these *were* the children of Keturah. And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac. 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.” We see that Abraham took another wife. In 1 Chronicles 1:32, we see that she is called a concubine. The first part of that verse says, “Now the sons born to Keturah, Abraham’s concubine...” The rest of that verse and the following verse have the samelist of names of sons and grandsons that are found here, in verses 2-4.

The descendants of Hagar through Ishmael, the descendants of Keturah, and the descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob, all became the early fathers of the Arabs. As a result, many of the Arabs are also descendants of Abraham. That is why Genesis 21:12 becomes such an important verse, as that verse says, “But God said to Abraham, ‘Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called.’” Since Hagar and Keturah are both called concubines, they both had a lower status than Sarah. That also meant that their descendants did not have the same status. The servant had earlier told the family of Rebekah, in Genesis 24:36, “‘And Sarah my master’s wife bore a son to my master when she was old; and to him he has given all that he has.’”

We see that Abraham chose to make this fact very clear before his death. That is why verse 6 says, “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.” By giving gifts to the descendants of Keturah and then sending them away to the east, they were no longer in that area at the time Abraham died to even try and claim a part of the inheritance. Although there was no conflict between Isaac and the sons of the concubines before their deaths, many of the descendants of the concubines later had conflicts with the descendants of Isaac. In fact, that conflict still continues today.

We go on to read, in Genesis 25:7-11, “This *is* the sum of the years of Abraham’s life which he lived: one hundred and seventy-five years. 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. 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, the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth. There Abraham was buried, and Sarah his wife. And it came to pass, after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac. And Isaac dwelt at Beer Lahai Roi.” Since Abraham was one hundred thirty-seven years old when Sarah died, this meant that Abraham lived thirty-eight more years after the death of Sarah.

We have a description of both the life and the death of Abraham. His life is described by several thoughts. We see that he “died in a good old age.” We see that he was considered “an old man and full of years” by the time that he died. This means that the lives of the people were now much shorter than the lives of those who lived before the flood. His death was also mentioned in a different way because we read that “he was gathered to his people.” This is an important statement because Christ told the Sadducees, in Mark 12:26-27, ““But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the *burning bush passage*, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.”” Physical death for all true followers of God means that they are gathered with those who have gone before, because 2 Corinthians 5:8 says, “We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” Both Old and New Testament saints are alive and present with the Lord. In contrast, all unbelievers are in Hades in physical torment. Luke 16:22-23 says, ““So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.””

Since the sons of Keturah had been sent away before his death, only Isaac and Ishmael were still in that region when Abraham died. We see that they took the body of Abraham and buried it with the body of Sarah in the cave of Machpelah. This was the cave that Abraham had purchased from Ephron thirty-eight years earlier when Sarah had died. This would later become the burial place of Isaac and Rebekah, as well as Jacob and Leah. That was the only piece of land that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob owned at the times of their deaths, so that was where they were all buried.

We also see that the Lord blessed Isaac after the death of Abraham, just as He had blessed Abraham. We also see that Isaac lived at Beer Lahai Roi. This was the place where Isaac had married Rebekah, as Genesis 24:62 says, “Now Isaac came from the way of Beer Lahai Roi, for he dwelt in the South.” The following verses tell us that he was meditating out in the field in that area as the servant arrived with Rebekah. Since it was Isaac and Ishmael that buried Abraham, the following verses give us a summary of the family of Ishmael. Genesis 25:12-18 say, “Now this *is* the genealogy of Ishmael, Abraham’s son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah’s maidservant, bore to Abraham. And these *were* the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: The firstborn of Ishmael, Nebajoth; then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadar, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. These *were* the sons of Ishmael and these *were* their names, by their towns and their settlements, twelve princes according to their nations. 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. (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.”

In this summary of the family of Ishmael, we see that God kept His promise to Hagar. Genesis 16:9-11 says, “The Angel of the Lord said to her, ‘Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand.’ Then the Angel of the Lord said to her, ‘I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude.’ And the Angel of the Lord said to her: ‘Behold, you *are* with child, and you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has heard your affliction.’” The Lord also made a similar promise about Ishmael to Abraham, when He said in Genesis 17:20-21, ““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. But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.” We see that God fulfilled both of these promises.

In this summary, we see the names of the twelve sons of Ishmael. We also see that towns and settlements were named after each of these sons of Ishmael. These towns and their settlements were scattered across a wide area to the south and east of the land of Canaan. These settlements developed into various tribes that intermarried and eventually became a part of the people from which the Arabs descended. The original towns and their settlements were located in areas on what is today the Sinai Peninsula, the Arabian Peninsula, and then north as far as Assyria, which would be in the present, country of northern Iraq. Those settlements on the eastern side would also be the area where the descendants of Keturah went. As a result, through the years, there was also intermarriage with them. So, they too are part of the people from which the Arabs descended.

Moses wrote the books of Genesis through Deuteronomy during the time that Israel was traveling through the wilderness. As a result, Israel was going to meet some of the descendants of Ishmael and of Keturah. That is why it was important for them to have knowledge of the fact that these groups of people were also descendants of Abraham. It was also important for Israel to realize and understand the promises that had been made to these descendants. Then, we are told about the time when Ishmael died. We see that Ishmael was one hundred thirty-seven years old, so he did not live as long as Abraham had lived. We see that when Ishmael died, he died in the presence of all of his brethren or relatives. This would point out the fact that they did not scatter to the various areas where they built their towns and settlements until after the death of Ishmael. This summarizes the other descendants of Abraham so that we can know a little about his entire family. It also helps us to understand why it was so important for the statement to be included in Genesis 21:12 that says, “in Isaac your seed shall be called.” This made it clear that the statement God made to Abraham, in Genesis 12:3, “...And in you all of the families of the earth shall be blessed” would be carried on through Isaac since Christ would one day be a descendent of Abraham and Isaac.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the importance of the promises, made to various men in the Old Testament about the fact that the One who would bring blessing to all of the families of the earth, would be fulfilled in Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.