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Genesis

Chapter 23 - God's Promise Beyond the Grave A Life Worth Remembering (vs. 1-3a)

Genesis 23:1-3: Now Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; these were the years of the life of Sarah. Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan; and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. Then Abraham rose from before his dead...

Well, the Book of Genesis is about beginnings, right? So, as you go through the different pages, you see the beginning of things, whether it's the beginning of sin or the beginning of creation or the beginning of families, as you see, especially the emphasis there with Noah and the ark, or in this particular case, the beginning of a relationship with a wife. It's pretty strange if you think about it. It's really not up till this point that you see a

relationship with a wife. Obviously, God created Eve to be a helpmate, but you don't see that interaction with Adam and Eve. And so, as you go through the very beginnings, in fact, you will not see the burial of Eve. It will not be emphasized. You will not even know who Noah's wife is, nor Shem, nor Ham, nor Jepheth. None of these women will be named or famed in Scripture. It would not be until the time of Abraham that we see actually a relationship and I would say a depiction of a husband-wife dialogue within the scheme of the Book of Genesis. So, as we go through this, we see a lot of firsts and clearly God is revealing some wonderful things in it because really it ultimately comes down to faith and the relationship that we have because of faith. Sarah really displays that kind of faith and will be mentioned not only in this particular passage in Genesis, but will be mentioned in the New Testament, specifically when you come to 1 Peter 3 and Hebrews 11.

We come to this text and it's clear that the passage is evocative in stirring strong images and feelings of longing. And what is the longing? I would say the longing is the

need for resurrection. We've oftentimes mentioned in Ecclesiastes that God has placed eternity in the heart of man and you know that there is something inside. And we see that with a contemporary who was living about the same time as Abraham, Job. And as Job comes to wrestle with the pain and the sorrows and the suffering of his life, in fact, one of the statements that he makes in Job 10 is, "I wish God would have just taken me from the womb and then put me in the tomb, so I wouldn't have had to go through all of this pain and suffering." Nevertheless, he comes up with a conclusion, "Yet I know my Redeemer lives and somehow this flesh will somehow be resurrected." There is that wonderful hope that he has. Now, what's to be noted is, up to this point, there is no word, there is no declaration, there's no evidence of any kind of resurrection. In fact, one of the reasons why the Sadducees would oftentimes argue about the fact that there is no resurrection is they've basically only believed in the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament. So, when you consider the first five books of the Old Testament, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, there's really not a mention of

resurrection. Jesus combats this as the Sadducees come before Him. So, Jesus goes, “You haven't read Scripture? Because God, as He comes to Moses, says, ‘I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,’” which is in the present tense, which Jesus is declaring, “Those that have died before, I still am their God,” which is referring to the fact that they still live. And so, Jesus refutes their ability to try to argue the case and describes the wonderful hope of resurrection even in the Old Testament. However, in this particular passage, we have that expectation and that desire which God is weaving in between the lines. And I think this is why I love Scripture so much, because God is revealing to us there is a resurrection, there is a hope, and this hope is clear. And so, as we come to this passage, we begin to see this.

The passage starts off, if you look with me, in Genesis 23 with giving the age of Sarah. At one time, her name, “Sarai,” as it says in Genesis 17, but then the Lord says, “No longer will she be Sarai, but now Sarah.” The names make reference to, of course, at the very beginning, that she was perceived, and perhaps by virtue of the fact that

Abraham was extremely wealthy, as a princess, “Sarai”. Nevertheless, God has greater plans for Sarah, which would emphasize that she would be a noble lady and queen over many people. And so, the hope is that she would have a child. Of course, we know that at the age of 65, when she first starts going with Abraham into the promised land, she has no children. And so, the promise haunts her as well as Abraham for some 25 years. And yet, God fulfills this promise and reveals to Sarah as well as to Abraham, “You're going to have a child.” Now, Scripture tells us that she will laugh internally. And of course, the angel of the Lord says, “You laughed.” And she will say, “No, I didn't.” But He says, “No, you did.” God reveals our hearts and the things that are in our heart. Nevertheless, it wasn't as much that she was doubting God's ability as it was that she was laughing over the possibility of a 90-year-old woman having child. And so, there was a sense of humor in this with her. And of course, they named the child “Isaac,” which means “laughter,” and makes reference to the fact that she was having a rough time even believing. I just want to say this in her defense, Abraham laughed first. And that's actually

mentioned earlier. She will laugh later, but Abraham laughed first.

So, we come to this passage as it begins with an interesting declaration that she dies at this age of 127. Let me just say this. There are so many firsts with Sarah. Not only is there the first in the sense that there's a spousal interaction, but she's the first to have their death recorded in Scripture. And she is the first to be buried and cared for, her body cared for, in Scripture. It will be in this particular passage that her age will be mentioned. And let me just emphasize this, she is the only woman whose age is mentioned at her death in all of Scripture. There is a significance in it, of course, obviously, as we come to this passage, and it's that significance that we want to focus on because all Scripture is inspired by God. All Scripture is profitable for correction, for reproof, for training in righteousness, right? All Scripture, which means even 127. So, as we come to this, we realize that the number "127" gives some significance. And it's really the very beginning of this that really gives this evocative stirring in the text in which we have these images of feelings and longing and a

need for resurrection. Of course, Abraham coming to this time in which this beautiful woman, so beautiful that kings would want to have relations with her when she's well into her 80s and 90s. It's an amazing thing. But Abraham now comes to the point of having to bury his loved one. And once again, we've not seen affection like this in a relationship up to this point. So, what we're seeing is the way really relationships should be. And really, in many respects, we're laying the foundation for the relationship of the husband and wife. We know that God had declared, "Eve, you need to be a helpmate." But that relationship didn't go too well. Besides the fact that Adam threw Eve "under the bus," she did not lead him into help but brought him into sin. And so, it'll be very interesting as we watch this in which Sarah will begin to actually establish the pattern that we should have, thus being the mother of many nations in that sense, establishing the pattern.

Ephesians tells us in Ephesians 2 that we have a foundation of our faith. That foundation is actually laid by

not only the apostles but by the prophets of old. And so, we have a foundation of a relationship.

If you look with me in Genesis 23, we'll just look at the age of Sarah at the very beginning because Scripture saw fit to place it at the very beginning of the text.

It reads this way,

(Genesis 23:1) “Now Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years...”

The way that it's written, and King James is more accurate in this particular setting, in which the way that it lists the numbers. The way that it lists the numbers in your King James would be the basic way that it lists the numbers in the Hebrew. It would be 100 and then 7 and then 20. So, it's not saying that it was 170, 20, but it's actually saying, “127”. However, it lists the numbers in that order. The question you have to ask yourself is why would it list the numbers in that order? Well, numbers have meaning, right? So, as you go through the Hebrew, you begin to understand that each number has a meaning. And when you see the number “100,” it's much like the number “10,” which makes reference to fulfillment specifically.

But the number “100” is actually a picture of Divine fulfillment. So, the way that you could actually translate the number “100” is, “God will fulfill.” Now, the next number that you have within the text is “7”. And we oftentimes make mention, of course, that God declared the seventh day holy. But more specifically, it is seen as a number that literally is used for swearing or promising. If you were going to promise something, you would “seven” yourself. And the Hebrews actually use that particular word to make reference to a promise. So, what you have in the number “7” is a promise. So, God will fulfill a promise. Now, the “20” is very interesting in the sense that it's always listed as two tens. So two tens, once again, wholeness or completion or something to that effect. So, you would then double that. So, it's a very interesting way of putting, I would say, the hope that we have both sure and steadfast. That is to say that God will fulfill a promise to make you whole again. And so, it's a wonderful promise at the very beginning of the text by virtue of the numbers that are given in which God is saying, “We're going to do this again. We're going to bring you up again.” And it is that hope.

“Now Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; these were the years of the life of Sarah.”

It puts it in that particular way because once again, it's going to be life that's going to be emphasized within the passage, not death. Life will actually be mentioned more than death within the text.

And it says in verse 2,

(Genesis 23:2) “Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan; and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.”

Now, Scripture is wanting us to know where she died. Why is that so important? Well, that's the question you have to ask yourself. Are you guys asking yourself that stuff when you're reading the passage? Why is it that they're telling me? Why do I even need to know exactly where she died? Because that in and of itself is telling you something about Sarah. Now, what's interesting about this whole thing is that Abraham has been living and they have been living in Beersheba. And you have to ask yourself, “Well, how long have they been living in Beersheba?” About 40 years. So, how did she get to

Hebron? That's about 20 miles to the north. So, how did she get to Hebron? Scripture doesn't tell us. It doesn't tell us how she got there. It just says, Sarah died and Kiriath-arba, which is Hebron.

Now, if you back up into Chapter 22, we realize in verse 19,

(Genesis 22:19) “So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham lived at Beersheba.”

That's where he lived. So, what is Sarah doing here and where is Abraham? And now, it actually seems to convey in the passage that Abraham has to go to her to mourn for her.

The passage reads,

(Genesis 23:2) “Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan; and Abraham went in to mourn...”

So, the question is, of course, were they even together? Well, Scripture's not going to get into a lot of detail about it, so we're not going to speculate. But what we are saying is that somehow, she had a resolve to go back to Hebron.

Now, Hebron actually takes us way back into the time in which God first promised her that she would have a child. First promised her, directly promised her.

Hebron is a very interesting place. Of course, it's made reference to in this particular passage as that which was Kiriath-arba first and is at this day. It will not be till Joshua goes into the promised land that it will actually be referred to as Hebron. Yet, God is, in His word, looking forward and saying, "But this will someday be Hebron." Hebron seems to make the reference to the fact that there's an association or relationship. And if you remember, it was in Hebron where the oaks of Mamre were in which Abraham was sitting and the 3 men come, of course, 2 being angels and 1 being the Son of Man. And they reveal themselves to him at this time and they give him the news that she's going to have a child and they also give the news that they're going to have to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. It'll be at this time, at the very end of that particular passage, that Abraham will begin to intercede for his nephew, Lot, and begin to ask the Lord, "If there's just 50, if there's just 40, if there's just..." And

he begins to cry out to the Lord. And then he ultimately comes to the point, “Will not the God of all the earth do right?” And we see that God had already started rescuing Lot and his family before Abraham even began to pray. But it is from that point on in which the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, so you go into Chapter 18, now into Chapter 19, and in Chapter 19, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah come into play. And it says right after that, Abraham moves from Hebron into Beersheba. Now, the question is, once again, why did he move? And the answer is really clear. Because he has bad memories. Because Hebron overlooks Sodom and Gomorrah, and he could see the fire and the flames and all the destruction from that place. He's not going to live there anymore. He's not going back there anymore. He goes and moves into Beersheba, which is the region of the Philistines. Well, that's kind of a strange thing, that he would live with Philistines. And of course, he comes in contact with Abimelech. We go through the whole process of him presenting his wife as a sister to protect himself. And in the midst of that, they find, well, can we say, a relationship between the Philistines and Abraham. And

they come to this well, they name it Beersheba, which basically is the oath of sevens, and God begins to give him peace in the land. Peace to such a degree that 37 years he lives there in peace. But now, towards the end of Sarah's life, she leaves. Once again, we don't know why, except for the fact of the meaning of what Hebron meant to her.

We realize that as we consider this particular woman that she is the first, from what we understand in Scripture, to actually express a desire to help her husband. Now, albeit she helped him in an inappropriate way. However, you need to cut Sarah a little bit of slack because there are traditions involved. And of course, without going into a whole lot of history, but I want you to go all the way back to Genesis 16. And you remember her coming to Abraham and trying to help him out because they couldn't have any children. It seems like they couldn't have any children. Although, God had promised that He was going to bless them and He was going to make a great nation out of them, nevertheless, it was hard for them to fathom that that's the way that it was going to be. It was actually going to come through her. So, they're

now quite some time into the promised land and things are not happening. She's getting a little antsy and probably with good reason because from the region that they come from, remember Ur of the Chaldeans, remember he comes from Ur of the Chaldeans. So, from that particular region, they had laws and they had ways of thinking. Probably about the only way that we can really understand the laws and the way of thinking is we have documents such as the Code of Hammurabi which actually came a little bit later than the time of Abraham, but you can kind of get a picture of what they believed in that particular time. It was Abraham and Sarah that lived in Ur. And Ur had its own code as well, in which they have documents, but they're kind of fragmented. It's called Ur of Nammu. And in those documents, it basically gives kind of fundamental laws. You say, "How did these people that didn't know God have fundamental laws?" Well, you have to remember that we're only about 300 years away from the flood. So, Ham, Shem, and Japheth are probably all alive. We know Shem is, because Shem will live some 500 years after the flood. He'll actually outlive Abraham. So, we know that God is never without a witness. So, we

know that these things were always clarified. So, there was not only the law that God has written on our hearts, which God calls conscience; if you don't know this is true, go into Romans 2 that reminds us that we all have a law written on our heart, a sense of right and wrong. And probably one of the reasons why these places, these kingdoms would actually have codes of ethics, codes and laws that they had.

Well, Ur of Nammu had these laws and they were much similar to the Code of Hammurabi. Well, in the Code of Hammurabi, we actually have some of the laws. And let me just read a couple to you. Law 138, I don't know if you've actually numbered some of the laws of Hammurabi, but Law 138 reads this way, "Though a husband could divorce his wife if she was unable to bear children, he could not leave her destitute and must return her original dowry." So, if a wife could not have children, then he could, by the law of the Code of Hammurabi, divorce his wife. He would have to give back the dowry in order to do that. Now, you have to remember, they come from this area. So, whether or not you're dating exactly

the code of Hammurabi or of Nammu, the same fundamental codes that were in practice at that time.

Now, there's another code that I want to read to you, and the other code is Law 144. Law 144 reads this way, "At the wife's discretion, the wife could give her husband a maidservant to bear children for her." That seems like a law that maybe she was pulling on.

So, as you come to the beginning of Genesis 16:1,

"Now Sarai, Abram's wife had borne him no children, and she had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar.

(Genesis 16:2) So Sarai said to Abram, "Now behold, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I will obtain children through her."
And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai."

The passage is making reference to the fact that she knew that by law she could do such a thing. And so, though we don't have necessarily the law of Moses at this particular juncture, we do have a way of living.

Did she make a right decision? Well, obviously not, as she goes on, because of the jealousy and the envy that came

because of this. Nevertheless, it was her desire, and this is probably, to me, the point that I'm wanting to bring out, is she expressed the desire to help in a way that she could help.

And in this particular text, she's not only trying to help, but the first time that we actually see a woman given charge over anybody, if you look in Chapter 16,

(Genesis 16:6) “But Abram said to Sarai, “Behold, your maid is in your power; do to her what is good in your sight.” ...”

And we actually see, I would say, the beginnings of Proverbs 31, in which the woman has charge over others in doing things. What's interesting too, as you watch the life of Sarah, is that she will willingly give herself to protect her husband. You have never seen that before. Now, once again, right or wrong, you can debate that, but it was her desire to actually give her life for the protection of her husband. In fact, as the text goes on, Abraham will make mention of this in Chapter 20. He says, “Sarah and I made plans about this before we decided to do this.” And it's actually the first time you see a husband and wife

making plans together, which is extremely interesting within the text. She is the only woman that we have seen up to this point that will give a strong advice to her husband, "Get this kid out of the house." And God will affirm her. God will say, "Do what your wife said. She has good advice." So, it's a first. All of these are firsts. And God is establishing this individual in which we see a caring, serving, industrious, generous type of individual, albeit misdirected. We're not saying there's perfection. But that's a wonderful thing about the Old Testament. God is not looking for the perfection of the individual. What He's looking for is the heart, and He has chosen those that will put their trust in Him. It is by faith that we're saved. And so, Romans 4, of course, will back this wonderful truth up.

As you come back to the passage that we're looking at, it says that Sarah died in a particular area. And here again, we go back in verse 2, it is Kiriath-arba. It is now understood to be Kiriath-arba, which "Kiriath" just simply means "city". "Arba" is the word for "four," but is actually a name of a giant, which is telling us that this land has

giants in it. Hebron is probably one of the oldest cities in this particular region, so we have a region which not only is a place shall we say, perhaps of bad memories in which from there they could actually see the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; one of the reasons why Abraham would leave. But also, it's a region in which there are giants in the land.

Amos talks about the Amorites in particular, and the way he describes them is they're as tall as cedars, as strong as oaks. Those are pretty powerful guys.

And what we know according to Joshua 14:15, and you might want to just write it down as a point of reference, that the city was named after this giant. It specifically says there in Joshua 14:15 that it's named after the greatest man among the Anakim, which is another word for the giants in that. And Deuteronomy 2:11 will say, and they are regarded as the Rephaim. Giants. They're regarded as giants.

It seems almost inconceivable that you would go back to a place in which there's the bad memory of death and the smell perhaps of the smoke of Sodom and Gomorrah on

top of the fact that it's a land of giants and probably a hostile land. In fact, Abraham is going to buy this property from the sons of Heth. You go, "Well, who are the sons of Heth?" Well, I'm glad you asked. Actually, a great-grandchild of Noah through the Canaan region. So, here again, God has borne witness. But in this particular section, they're actually referred to as Hittites.

If you'll look in Genesis 23:10,

"Now Ephron was sitting among the sons of Heth; and Ephron the Hittite answered..."

So, we know that they're Hittites. Now, what do we know about Hittites? Well, what we know about Hittites is that they're a very aggressive people. They're territorial and expansionist, if we can describe them that way. And they were very aggressive. They actually took down a number of the giants. So, the fact that the Hittites are living there is telling us that they have subdued some of the great giants in that particular area. They won't be completely subdued until Joshua goes into the land. But they've been subdued in this area of Kiriath-arba. The interesting point to me of that is the one distinction of the Hittites that

goes beyond the fact that they're very aggressive and can be very hostile in that sense is a strange dichotomy in this sense, but they are highly diplomatic and highly pragmatic. So, when Abraham says, "I need a cave to bury my wife," Ephron goes, "Go ahead and take it." Now, he knows that you don't want to take anything from Hittite. So, he says, "No, I'm going to pay for it." Now, he wants to do this, of course, because he loved his wife so much as well. But the answer of Ephron is pretty interesting. He goes, if we can put it in the terms of maybe the way that he would say it, "400 shekels, what is that between you and me?" Now, of course, when he states that, he's actually giving him the price that he's wanting him to pay. And from what we understand, at this particular juncture, that's a lot of money at that particular time. Though it was silver, and if you were to put it in today's market, silver, it wouldn't be nearly as much. But at that time, it could be as much as hundreds of thousands of dollars. "What is that between you and me?" Well, of course, Abraham goes, "Nothing." So, he pays it because we know that he was a wealthy man.

The passage is telling us that somehow God had orchestrated for the Hittites to be in control of this particular region and for them to be in place at which they would make a deal for the cave in which she would be buried. Let me just say this. It is in the cave of Machpelah within the text, and we realize that the name "Machpelah" actually means "double portion". Once again, kind of a reference to resurrection, isn't it? If you were to go in Israel today, you could actually go there. In fact, Herod the Great built like a fortress over their tombs. You can go inside, you cannot go to their tombs because they're beneath the floor, and only very few can go into the realm of their tombs. But it is a place in which the tomb of Abraham, Abraham will be buried there, Genesis 49, right? Genesis 49 will list Abraham, Sarah will both be buried there, as well as Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob, and not Rachel, but Leah, his first wife. And those 3 will be buried in this particular cave. It's a big, huge fortress, and to get in, you have to go through some pretty intense things, but you can actually go in as a Gentile within the text. What's interesting, of course, in the passage is that she seems to

be there in a realm that you wouldn't think that she would go back in.

If you look in the passage,

(Genesis 23:2) “... in the land of Canaan...”

Once again, Heth is the great grandson of Noah through Canaan.

“... and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah...”

“Canaan” actually is a word that we understand refers to lowland. This word will actually be used to describe humbling. And I believe one of the reasons why God had His people go into this land is because it would be the land of humbling. Because of course, unless you humble yourself, you cannot see the kingdom of God. And so, God brings us all into that land in order to meet Him, in order to have a relationship with Him.

So, he went into this land of Canaan,

“... and Abraham went in to mourn...”

This is kind of an outward show that it's describing.

“... for Sarah and to weep for her.”

Once again, the only text that we've read up to this point that there's actually any sorrow over anybody's wife dying. So, it's monumental in that respect in which we begin to see great attachment within the text.

Now, I purposely divided verse 3 up and it will read this way in the passage,

(Genesis 23:3) “Then Abraham rose from before his dead...”

And I just want to stop there. We're going to talk about Hebron and we're going to talk about all the details of Heth and the family as well. But as you look at this verse 3, that first part says a mouthful. Because once again, of the fact of the way that it's written in the Hebrew; it actually makes reference to “Abraham rose”. You see the word “rose” there? There's kind of a sense of resolve. It's going to surprise you that the word is actually used in verse 17 of the same text.

If you drop on down to Genesis 23:17, it reads this way,

(Genesis 23:17) “So Ephron’s field, which was in Machpelah, which faced Mamre, the field and cave which

was in it, and all the trees which were in the field, that were within all the confines of its border, were deeded over.”

That's the same word “rose”. That's the Hebrew word, “*qûm*,” which makes reference to not only perhaps in some cases “rising up,” but it has this sense of being made sure or steadfast or remaining firm. And that's why it's referred to “deeded over,” because it's something that remains firm.

So, let's read it the way that probably is described better in the Hebrew,

“Then Abraham rose (was made firm) from before
(*pānîm*) ...”

“*Pānîm*” - face

“In the face of death.”

A very interesting phrase, isn't it? Abraham was made sure, stood firm in the face of death.

What we know, of course, of Abraham specifically, and if you're taking your Bibles and turn to Hebrews 11, it makes mention of him as well as Sarah. I think it's only

appropriate that we understand what actually is going on within the passage. Hebrews 11, if you look with me in verse 19, as it speaks of Abraham's willingness to lay his son on the altar.

Hebrews 11:19) “He (Abraham) considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead...”

Even though it hadn't happened before. The word “considered” within the text is making reference to the fact that he knew God to such a degree that he not only knew of God's power, but he knew of God's intent and that God would not leave them. You kind of have that sense of the Psalm, “I know that God will not abandon my soul in Sheol. I just know that to be true.” Same thing with Job, “I know that God has something more.” It's in your heart. It's in the desires of your heart.

But in the same chapter, Chapter 11, if you look with me, we have the description of Sarah.

And it reads this way,

(Hebrews 11:11) “By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised.”

Wow, we didn't really read that in the Old Testament. Did you catch what it said? That she received the ability to conceive when she believed. And it was by that faith that she was declared righteous according to Romans 4.

(Hebrews 11:12) “Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants AS THE STARS OF HEAVEN IN NUMBER, AND INNUMERABLE AS THE SAND WHICH IS BY THE SEASHORE.”

In Genesis 18, when God came to visit Abraham by the oaks of Mamre in Hebron, among the giants, when He came and they sat down and had a meal, Abraham turns to Sarah, and he says, “Why don't you go fix some bread?” That's a first; we don't see that anywhere else. But she goes and does it. She obeys him. And in this particular passage, she will call him, “adon,” “lord,” where we get the word “Adonai”. She will call him “lord”. She'll call him “master”. Why? Well, Scripture says in 1 Peter 3,

because she hoped in God. She believed that if she would submit to her husband, God had called her husband, that God would take care of her. She needed to obey and do what God had told her to do.

Oftentimes I think people perceive that, especially women, they're going to be great if they make themselves great. But if you think about all the great women in the Bible, you think of their positions or what they did that made them great. And let's see, it wasn't careers, it wasn't going to college. I'm not telling you that you can't do that. I'm just saying that's not what made them great. What made them great is, well, you look at Ruth, or you look at Esther, or you look at Mary. I mean, what degree did she have? What had she done that in any way would declare her the greatest among women? She kept herself pure and she was a virgin and she believed in God. And that's the fundamental pattern that we see in all these things.

“By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive...”

Why did she go back to Hebron? I'm going to tell you why. Because that was the first place that she had the promise, "Your dead womb will be alive." And she knew that this is the place where resurrection takes place. It's a great hope that we have, and we believe, as Jesus says to the family of Lazarus, Mary and Martha, who fundamentally say, "If you'd been here a little bit earlier, he would have never died." He goes, "Even if he dies, he'll live again. Do you believe this?" And God is asking us to believe, yeah, the impossible, but that's what makes us righteousness. And Abraham was declared righteous, not because of the great things that he did, not because he did everything perfect, not because Sarah did everything perfect, although she had a desire to help. She desired to work and plan and work with her husband. They have this wonderful dialogue together. Although, clearly, misleading each other within the process, nevertheless, what did she have that was her most redeeming quality? She hoped in God.

We've got to read the passage in 1 Peter 3, just as by way of closing. And this wonderful text, I think, just kind of

summarizes who she was. And here again, the very fact that the New Testament makes mention of her, Peter will make mention of Lot and actually refer to him as “righteous Lot”. And people go, “How could God refer to Lot as being righteous?” And I would say, because we're in the New Testament. And one of the things that the New Testament does is it puts all of those sins behind us. It removes as far as the east is from the west because we're in the realm of the gospel. And so, when you come in this particular passage, we don't hear the failures of Abraham. We don't read of the failures of Sarah. What we read is, she hoped in God. And that's what we know about her.

1 Peter 3 reads this way, as it begins to tell the wives of today in verse 1,

(1 Peter 3:1) “In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives.”

Think about this. I don't think Abraham had planned to be buried in the cave in Machpelah. He's in Beersheba, but

that's Philistine territory. And that's not where the altar and the promises were made. But Sarah makes her way back, and because Sarah makes her way back, Abraham will be buried there, too. His son will be buried there, too. His wife. Jacob, his wife, will be buried there too. It's a place of promise. But it was Sarah that began that desire.

It reads this way,

“In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives,

(1 Peter 3:2) as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.

(1 Peter 3:3) Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses;

(1 Peter 3:4) but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.

(1 Peter 3:5) For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God...

That really is the fundamental point.

“... used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands;

(1 Peter 3:6) just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.”

Just do the right thing. Do what God has called you to do. Don't try to be somebody that God has not called you to be. God's called you to be a woman. He wants you to act like a woman. And it's in obedience to that call that God will use you greatly, that you'll become ever remembered by God. A life that is truly valued. Nothing's going to keep Sarah back from going back to the place of promise.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today, and we come back to the place of promise. In our lives, it was perhaps a difficult place, a place perhaps of sorrow. It was a place of giants.

Everything was not easy. But it was a place in which we felt and could hear the promise in our ears that You would never leave us; You would never forsake us. It was that moment that we received You as Lord and Savior. And we believed. We believed that even if we die, we will live again, that there's going to be another time, that You've prepared a place for us and that You're going to come again and receive us to Yourself that where You are, we'll be with You forever.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, what we're asking you to do is put your trust in God. There's a lot of things that the word of God tells you to do. We're asking you to walk by faith, not by sight. We're asking you to trust and obey. Oftentimes, it's going to seem that God has placed you in a subservient role, but don't ever forget that God elevates the servants. And so, it is the greatest place in the kingdom of heaven. As you consider what God has called you to do, as you considered the calling that God has given you, don't underestimate the simple things and never underestimate those moments of promise. Keep going back there. Keep remembering how

God has led in your life. Never leave that place. You heads bowed and your eyes closed, what we're asking you to do is have a relationship with God, something that we do not read of any woman having until this woman, Sarah. Nevertheless, You have established this wonderful foundation for us, that here is a life worth remembering, one that simply believed and clung to the promise that God had for her. You cling to that promise; you'll have peace.