

Genesis 23 – Sarah's death and burial

There is only one woman in the Bible whose age, death and burial we can read of – Sarah, here! God's peoples' deaths are precious in his sight (Psalm 116:15).

Sarah died (v1-3)

Sarah lived to a great age – but then she died. We must all die; whether great or small, rich or poor; young or old (Hebrews 9:27). Each day we reach closer. Abraham mourned her; it is right to mourn even those who are with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:13, John 11:35). Death is a terrible interruption. Abraham made ready to bury her (v4); he called her “my dead”; though she was gone, yet he still had duties. We must also be ready for such times, and make sure our families will be provided for. We bury our dead, because we are expecting the resurrection one day.

Abraham bought a burial cave (v4-20)

Abraham confessed that he was a stranger in the land (Hebrews 11:13). We also must confess and show that we are looking for our truest blessing in the life to come, not in this life. The people replied that to them, he was a mighty prince; God lifts up those who humble themselves. Abraham showed his respect for these people, even though they were probably unbelievers and wicked. He refused to receive something for nothing – this was wisdom and showed his faith in God to provide (Colossians 4:5). Abraham bought no other land except this. It showed his faith – that one day his children would return; by purchasing instead of receiving a gift he also made the ownership more sure. In all things he did he showed his faith in God.

God brought his purposes forward

One generation grew old and passed away – and it was time for another. God's purposes were going forward. The promised Son – Jesus Christ – was coming. Later we read of who was buried in this cave eventually – Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah; six ancestors of Jesus Christ from three generations. Rachel (Jacob's favourite wife) was not buried here; nor Esau (Isaac's favourite son), nor Ishmael (Abraham's first son). All things are for Christ! Abraham and Sarah were not sent back to Ur to be buried. They believed God's promise that one day their descendants would take the land. So they were buried there. God will remember all who remain faithful to his word to the end. Starting is one thing – but finishing well is all.