

Through the Bible - Genesis 21-23

by Chuck Smith

This sermon explores God's faithfulness in fulfilling His promises to Abraham and the significance of obedience and sacrifice in the life of faith.

Scripture: Genesis 21:1-3, Genesis 22:1-2, Genesis 22:9-18, Genesis 23:1-4

Topics: "Faithfulness of God", "Obedience and Sacrifice"

Description

Chuck Smith emphasizes God's faithfulness in fulfilling His promises, as seen in the birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah despite their old age. He highlights the significance of Abraham's obedience when tested by God to sacrifice Isaac, illustrating the deep love and trust between them. The sermon also reflects on the importance of recognizing God's provision and the foreshadowing of Christ's sacrifice in Abraham's actions. Smith draws parallels between the covenant made with Abraham and the promise of salvation through Jesus, underscoring the theme of faith and divine provision throughout the narrative.

Transcript

Now the LORD visited Sarah as he had said (Gen 21:1),

I like this.

and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken (Gen 21:1).

I like that, "as He had said, and as He had spoken." I've got that underlined that just sort of hit me. "The Lord visited Sarah as he had said." The Lord keeps His word. The Lord is faithful to His promise. He may not do it as quickly as we would like Him to do it. Abraham been waiting for thirteen years, you know, since the last promise was made. And he was getting older everyday. But the Lord came to Sarah as He said and He did as He had spoken.

And Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time which God had spoken to him about. And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Laughter (Gen 21:2-3).

Certainly it's a fitting name for the son because the first time God said, "Hey, I'm going to give Sarah a son"; Abraham just laughed. And then later on when the angel of the Lord came to Abraham and said, "Sarah is going to bear thee a son"; she was standing at the tent door eavesdropping and when she heard that, she laughed. And the angel said, "Why'd you laugh"? She said, "Oh, I didn't laugh". "Oh yes, you

did". And so very fitting that the child be named Laughter when he was born.

And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him. And Abraham was a hundred years old, when Isaac was born unto him. And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me. And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah would be given a child to nurse? for I have born him a son in his old age. And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned (Gen 21:4-8).

Don't you know that this kid was one of the most pampered kids that ever came along? Boy, after waiting this long a time and all, I'm sure that Isaac was just, oh my, the center of attention and excitement and all.

And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born to Abraham, mocking (Gen 21:9).

Now at this time, he was a teenager, thirteen, fourteen years old and he at this great ceremony and all, and feast, he mocked. He was looking with a sneer at this half-brother of his. And Sarah saw his attitude and the sneering.

Therefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son (Gen 21:10-11).

Now Abraham was torn. He loved Ishmael because Ishmael was his son and the thing really hurt Abraham.

But God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called (Gen 21:12).

So God is telling Abraham, Go ahead and listen to your wife. "Hearken unto her, cast out the bondwoman."

And also the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, he took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba (Gen 21:13-14).

Now that is, of course, it's not very much to give to her. A bottle of water and a loaf of bread and send her off. And she wandered in the area of Beersheba. Evidently, she was intending to go down to Egypt but lost her way.

And soon she ran out of water, and the child, she put the child under one of the shrubs. And she went, and sat down over nearby a good way off, as it were a bowshot (Gen 21:15-16):

Now this was happened after the weaning of Isaac. And they usually nurse children till they were three or four years old, so it means that he was actually about sixteen years old or so at this point, Ishmael. And yet because of the lack of water, he was faint and she put him under a bush, one of the shrubs, and she got down a ways off, about as far as you could shoot an arrow,

And she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and she lifted up her voice, and wept. And God heard the voice of the lad (Gen 21:16-17);

So evidently, Ishmael was praying also unto God as he was lying there under that shrub.

and the angel of God called unto Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What ails you, Hagar (Gen 21:17)?

How many times has God called out of heaven and say, "What ails you?" you know.

fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise and lift up the lad, and hold him in your hand; and I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad a drink. And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt (Gen 21:17-21).

And so Ishmael became the father of the Arabs. And so actually, the Arabs and the Israelis are linked together through Abraham. And yet, there is to this day that bitterness and animosity that exists between the two, between the Arabs and the Israelites.

And it came to pass at that time, that Abimelech and Phichol the chief captain of his host spake unto Abraham, saying, God is with you in all that you're doing: Now therefore swear unto me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son: but according to the kindness that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned. And Abraham said, I will swear (Gen 21:22-24).

Now Abimelech recognized that the hand of God's blessing and prosperity was upon Abraham. And he began to be a little fearful. What's the future hold? What about my grandkids, you know? This guy is continually blessed of God and gets great. Maybe they'll, you know, he'll wipe us out. And so he wanted sort of a treaty with Abraham that he would treat them well.

And Abraham then took the opportunity to reprove Abimelech because of a well of water, which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away from Abraham. And Abimelech said, I did not know that this thing was done: you didn't tell me about it and I didn't know it until now. And so Abraham took sheep and oxen, and he gave them to Abimelech; and they both of them made there a covenant. And Abraham set seven ewe lambs by themselves. And Abimelech said to Abraham, What's the deal with these seven ewe lambs that are setting over by themselves? And Abraham said unto it them that these are a witness that I am the one who dug this well. And so they called the name of the place Beersheba [or the well of witness]; because there they both of them swore together. Thus they made a covenant at Beersheba: and Abimelech rose up, and Phichol the chief captain of his host, and they returned to the land of the Philistines. And Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba [of tamaris], and called there upon the name of the LORD, the everlasting God (Gen 21:25-33).

El owlam. Owlam. El owlam, God everlasting.

And Abraham sojourned in the Philistines' lands for many days (Gen 21:34).

Chapter 22

Now it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham (Gen 22:1),

Or tested Abraham or proved Abraham. "Let no man, when he is tempted, say that he is tempted of God: because God never tempts a man to do evil" (James 1:13). Our enticements to evil come from our own flesh, the lust of our own flesh. God doesn't tempt you to do evil things. God does test us. Jesus went through great testings and He learned obedience through the things that He suffered.

We as Christians experience testings but the purpose of testings are manifold. There is not just a single purpose for a test, it isn't always just to make you fail, it's oftentimes to prove how much you do know, how far along you've come in your understanding, in your development.

Our scientists today have created many exotic materials for use in space. But these materials are subjected to all kinds of testing procedures. Now the purpose of these testing procedures isn't to destroy the material, but to prove whether or not the material will stand up in particular kinds of stresses. We want to prove the value of the material. And so the testing is to prove the worth, the value of the material. Will it stand up under stress, under strain, under heat, under cold, under pressure?

And so we are tested as Christians, not by evil from God. "Let no man say when he is tempted I am tempted of God" (James 1:13). God tempted me to do an evil thing. Now God doesn't do that. I'm tempted to do an evil thing when my own lust is drawn away, I'm enticed. But God does bring me into many testings and God was testing Abraham, proving him. In this manner,

God said unto Abraham, He called him and said, Abraham: Abraham said, Here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah (Gen 22:1-2);

This is the first time the word "love" is used in the Bible. And it's interesting it's not used of a mother's love for her children or a husband's love for his wife, but it's used of a father's love for his son as the greatest love, because we have a picture here of the love of the heavenly Father for His own only begotten Son, that relationship that exists between the father and his son. So "take now thy son, thine only son." Wait a minute, we've just sent Ishmael away. He was a son of Abraham through Hagar. God doesn't even recognize him. Why? Because Hagar was the product of the flesh and God does not recognize the works of the flesh.

Jesus said that "in that day, many were going to come saying, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in thy name and we healed in thy name and we cast out devils in thy name and did marvelous works in thy name? And Jesus said, I will say unto them, Depart from me, you workers of iniquity; I never knew you" (Luke 13:27). They were works actually of the flesh, not really of the Spirit, directed and guided by the Spirit.

There are a lot of our works that we have done for God that are totally unrecognized by God because they are works of the flesh. The Bible says "in that day our works are going to be tried by fire to determine what sort they are" (1 Corinthians 3:13). And if your works will endure the fire, then you'll be rewarded for them. But much of our works are as wood, hay and stubble. They will be consumed in the fire. You're not going to get a reward for it because of the motivation behind it.

Jesus said, "Take heed to yourself and your righteousness that you do not your righteousness before men to be seen of men" (Matthew 6:1). And so if the works that you're doing for "God" are really being done with the thought in your mind of recognition by men, they're going to know how spiritual I am, they'll know how wonderful I am, they're going to be saying, "Oh, isn't he great? Isn't that marvelous what he's doing and all?" And I'm doing them in such a way as it draws attention to myself and praise and glory unto me,

Jesus said, "Hey, you've got your reward. Take heed to yourself and your righteousness that you do not your works before men to be seen of men." Don't let that be your motivation. So our--the motivation behind what I've done.

Much of what we do for "God", again in quotes, is really done for our own glory or honor or benefit or recognition. God does not recognize your works of the flesh. That means that a lot of people are going to be totally wiped out, as far as rewards go, for the motivation behind their works or service for God was all wrong.

Now it is tragic that so many times we are motivated by ministers to works of the flesh. I was in a conference in the denomination where I was once serving the Lord, where the supervisor came before the ministers and he said, "Now we know that motivating people through competition is carnal. But it's time we face the fact that the majority of the people we minister to are carnal, and thus we must use carnal motivation. And so we're going to have a great contest in which we want each of you pastors to challenge another pastor and his church to an attendance contest and get this competitive thing going". Put up a comparative kind of a graph on the platform and at ten o'clock, one church calls the other, "How many did you have this morning?" And you give the number and you put up their number, and then you put up your number and you get the people all stirred through competition to beat the other church.

And then one of his cronies by pre-arrangement stood up and said, "That's a tremendous idea but I make a motion that our whole division challenge another division to a contest". And another crony by pre-arrangement stood up and said, "Marvelous, I second the motion", whipping them into a frenzy. The superintendent said, "All in favor stand to your feet". And they all stood but me. And some of the other young ministers that I have been in some of the sidewalk seminars with, seeing me sit down sat down also.

So after the meeting the superintendent called me. And he began to talk to me about rebellion and cooperation and things of that nature. And I said to him, "Well, let me tell you that I am really in a quandary over this because when you introduced the whole concept of competition, you yourself admitted that it was carnal motivation but that we had to recognize that most of our people were carnal; and thus, we needed to use carnal motivation".

I said, "I don't think that I agree with that in principle. I don't think that we should come down to their level, but we should seek to stay on a higher level and lift them to a higher level of relationship where they don't need carnal motivation". But I said, "The thing that bothered me even more than that is that then you went ahead, endorsed the motion of the competition between the districts, whipping these ministers into an activity through competition, thus you must assume that all of the ministers are also carnal". And I said, "I will admit that I am more carnal than I want to be, but God knows I don't want carnality. I want to be spiritual and walk after the Spirit".

And so we parted, and as I was praying over the thing saying, "God, I don't want to be a rebel and I don't want to be in that position of being classified a rebel. You know that I am not rebelling against You. You know that I'm seeking a spiritual walk and a spiritual life. I just want to walk with You, Lord". And the Lord spoke to my heart a very special way and He gave me the scripture, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). I said, "Oh, thank You, Lord, that's all I need".

At the end of this contest period, we received an interesting telegram that said, "Congratulations, your church won first place in the Class A division" and come to a combined rally of the two districts and pick up

a trophy and so forth. And take twenty minutes on the program to explain, you know, all that you did to motivate your people. And I had to write back to them and decline the trophy and decline the position and I said, "It would be embarrassing to bring a trophy" and the people never knew there was a contest going on. But "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Naturally I couldn't stay with the denomination much longer.

But I will confess that I have been guilty of in the early ministry, in the early years of ministry of motivating people to carnal works, through carnality, dividing the church into the reds and the blues, giving away bicycles and giant lollipops and beach balls and the whole thing, you know, to try to motivate people to work for God through carnal motivation. But God does not recognize the works of our flesh; doesn't even acknowledge them.

"Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac." God doesn't even recognize Ishmael, the work of the flesh. In another way, that's sort of a glorious thing that God doesn't recognize the works of my flesh. I am glad He doesn't. In my flesh I've done some pretty lousy things and I'm glad that God doesn't acknowledge those works of my flesh. "Take now thy son, thine only son." Of course, it brings us to the New Testament, "God so loved the world he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16), and you can only understand the twenty-second chapter of Genesis as you compare it with the New Testament and God giving His only begotten Son.

Here Abraham is called to do what God later did in giving His Son, His only begotten Son as a sacrifice. And "take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, get thee into the land of Moriah"

and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went to the place which God had told him of (Gen 22:2-3).

Notice the repetition of the word "and." It is a form of Hebrew grammar known as polysyndeton which speaks of a continued deliberate action; in other words, no hesitation. Notice Abraham rose up early in the morning; the immediate obedience to God. There wasn't any hesitation. And the implication of this polysyndeton is that his actions now are deliberate and willful and continued. There is no stopping, no hesitation in obedience to the command of God.

And on the third day (Gen 22:4)

Significant. "Third day,"

Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off (Gen 22:4).

For Isaac was dead in the mind of Abraham for these three days. And yet though he was dead in the mind of Abraham, somehow Abraham was believing in the resurrection. Now Paul said, "The gospel that I preach, how that Jesus died, according to the scriptures; and rose again the third day, according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). I can give you plenty of scriptures in the Old Testament that speak of the death of Jesus Christ. But where in the Old Testament do you find the Scriptures speaking of His being dead for three days and rising again? Here it is.

Now Abraham by faith offered Isaac as a sacrifice unto God believing that God would, if necessary, raise him from the dead to fulfill His promise, for God had said, "Through Isaac shall thy seed be called",

Hebrews the eleventh chapter speaking of Abraham's faith in this test. You see, Abraham had a promise of God. The promise of God was this: "Through Isaac shall thy seed be called."

Now Isaac did not have any children yet. He was not married yet. But Abraham knew that God's word had to be fulfilled. He had that kind of confidence in the word of God. If God said it, God is going to do it. And having that confidence that God would keep His word, when God called upon him to make the sacrifice of his son, he knew that somehow Isaac would be raised from the dead, if necessary, because God's word had to be fulfilled, "through Isaac shall thy seed be called."

And so because of the promise that through Isaac his seed was to be called, he was obedient to the call of God to offer now his son, his only son Isaac as a burnt offering on the mountain that God would show him. And so he got together the altar, the wood and the materials for the altar and the servants, and they journeyed for three days until they came to the place that God showed to him.

And now again, in verse five, the use of this Hebrew grammar again, the polesintudon, the repetition of the "and."

And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you (Gen 22:5).

Now "will go yonder and worship, and come again." The two verbs are associated with the nouns "I and the lad" so that Abraham is saying, I and the lad are going to go, we're going to worship and we're going to come again. He's declaring that Isaac is going to come again with him. Isaac's coming back. "I and the lad are going to go and worship, and we'll come again." Confidence in the promise of God that through Isaac shall his seed be called.

And so notice verse six.

And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son (Gen 22:6);

A picture of Christ who bore his own cross. They laid the cross upon Him and He bore His own cross. So he put the wood on Isaac and Isaac was carrying the wood. And it is at this point

he took the fire and the knife in his hand; and they journeyed both of them together. And Isaac broke the silence, he said to his father, Father: Abraham said, What do you want, son. And he said, Here's the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for the burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together (Gen 22:6-8).

What a beautiful prophecy; God will provide not for Himself a lamb, but God will provide Himself a lamb, for God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. And here Abraham is prophesying the fact that God is going to provide Himself as a lamb for the burnt offering. A prophecy of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh who was offered as a sacrifice for man's sins. So they journeyed both of them together.

Now don't let the term "lad" confuse you. This term "lad" is used for an unmarried man. Till you were married you were still a lad. So Isaac at this point was probably twenty-five, twenty-six years old. The word is translated actually young man in other places and it doesn't mean a little child of six or seven. Isaac could, at this time because of his age and physical maturity and because of the age of his father, who at this point was nearing a hundred and thirty; he could have overpowered Abraham. When Abraham decided, started to tie him and lay him on the altar, "Hey, what's going on here? Getting senile, dad". It's

far enough. And he could have overpowered his dad, but he was obedient unto the call of God upon his father's life.

Submitting, even as Jesus could have escaped the cross. When Peter drew the sword and began to strike out against the soldiers and the servants that had come to take Jesus, Jesus said to Peter, "Put away thy sword, Peter. Don't you realize that at this moment I could call ten thousand angels to deliver Me?" One angel went through the camp of the Assyrians and wiped out one hundred and eighty-five thousand in one night. Imagine what ten thousand could do. But Jesus was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, submitting to the will of the Father for He prayed, "Father, not my will, thy will be done" (Luke 22:42). And thus submitting Himself to the will of the Father, even as Isaac was submitting unto the will of his father Abraham.

So interesting picture all the way through.

Abraham and they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built the altar there, and they laid the wood in order, and he bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the LORD called to him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here I am. And he said, Don't lay your hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that you fear God, seeing that you have not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and he looked, and behold behind him there was a ram caught in the thicket by his horns: and Abraham took the ram, and offered him for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of the place Jehovahjireh (Gen 22:9-14);

Or "Jehovah sees literally". It has come to be interpreted, "Jehovah provides" but literally in the Hebrew it is "Jehovah sees". But with God there is very little difference between vision and provision. God sees. Jesus said over and over, "I know thy works" (Revelation 2:2). God sees. God sees your need. God sees your heart. God sees the problems that you're facing. God sees the tests you're going through. And because God sees, He provides. Jehovahjireh.

and it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen (Gen 22:14).

So they started saying, "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen."

Mount Moriah, in Second Chronicles, the second chapter, "And so Solomon began to build the temple in Mount Moriah" (2 Chronicles 3:1). And so the place where the sacrifices were to be offered through the history of the nation is the same place where Abraham, the same mountain where Abraham was offering the sacrifice of his son. But the prophecy was, "the Lord will provide himself," and then, "in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen."

And so it is significant that when Jesus was crucified, they led Him out of the city to a place called Calvary or Golgotha, the place of the skull. And today if you go to Jerusalem and you stand there in the garden tomb, just above the Arab bus depot, and you look to the left there on the face of the mountain, you distinctly see the impression of the skull there on the mountain.

But standing there, look over to your right and look at the city wall near Herod's gate and you'll see that the wall has been built up over the mountain, over the bedrock. And that this valley where the bus stop is, is actually been quarried out. And that the mountain that you see on the right, on the walls where the walls of

Jerusalem are built over, were actually once a continuation of this same mountain. And that the top of the mountain is to your left where the skull is.

Now going on the other side and following the topography, you see that this mountain slopes right on down to the temple mount, the place of the sacrifices or Mount Moriah. So really, the place of the crucifixion Golgotha was the top of Mount Moriah. There are several mountains around Jerusalem, Mount Zion, the Mount of Olives, Mount Escopas, but the most important was Mount Moriah. And Mount Moriah crested above the area where the skull is, the place where Jesus was crucified.

Abraham no doubt took Isaac to the top of the mountain, because usually when they would build their altars, they would build them right at the top of the mountain. And so at the very spot where Abraham built the altar in obedience to God, and he prophesied "God will provide himself a lamb," and the people picked it up and said, "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen." Two thousand years later God provided Himself a lamb for a burnt offering. It was seen, for God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. And in the very spot where Abraham built his altar, the cross of Christ was placed as God gave His only begotten Son because He loved the world.

And so we have that beautiful picture here in the Old Testament as Abraham was acting out a drama that would later on in history become a reality where God gave His only begotten Son that whosoever would believe in Him would not perish but have everlasting life.

And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself (Gen 22:15-16)

Now the angel of the Lord here is, of course, Jesus Christ, for He said, "By myself"

have I sworn, saith the LORD, [saith Jehovah] for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee (Gen 22:16-17),

Now in Hebrews tells us that God, because He cannot swear by any higher, has to swear by Himself. Now man when he takes an oath, he swears by something greater: By my mother's honor, I swear by God I will do it. We swear by something greater, but if God wants to make an oath that is very positive, who can He swear by? Nothing greater than God so He has to swear by Himself. And so the Lord swore by Himself in order to confirm the oath, to give force to it. "By myself have I sworn, saith Jehovah, for because you have done this thing, and not withheld thy son, thine only son. That in blessing I will bless thee,"

and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies (Gen 22:17);

So God promised great posterity, "As the stars of heaven, as the sands of the sea." Now in both of them you have an innumerable multitude. And that's the idea. It's just numberless that are going to come from thee. You won't be able to number them or count them.

It is interesting that God relates two things: the stars of heaven, the sand of the sea. Now in those days, the scientists believed that there were six thousand one hundred and twenty-six stars. Now it's obvious there are many more sands of the sea than there are stars. So there were no doubt the critics in those days saying, "Look, you know, how foolish the Bible is. If God really knew, you know, what He was talking about, He wouldn't have said 'As the stars of the heaven and the sand of the sea' because you can't compare the two of those". We know there's only 6,126 stars but my, who can count the sands of the sea?

And the critics were no doubt making fun of God's word in those days because He related the two together.

But then came the advent of the telescope and we found out that there were far more than the six thousand one hundred and twenty-six stars. In fact, it is now estimated in all the galaxies and so forth that there are ten to the twenty-fifth power stars in the universe. But also if you count the number of sands in a bucket or in a square foot and figure how many square feet there are in the earth, you find out there are about ten to the twenty-fifth power grains of sand upon the earth. So there is a close relationship between the number of stars in the heaven and the grains of sand upon the earth, ten to the twenty-fifth power. Now you can go ahead and count them if you want or you can take my word for it.

But what God was actually saying is that they'll not be counted. Now that is why David got in trouble when he decided to have a census. David numbered the people and the judgment of God came upon Israel because God said, "Hey, you're not going to be able to number them". But David decided he liked to know how many people were in His kingdom and so he took the census. And the judgment of God fell upon David for the taking of the census because God said, "They're going to be innumerable. You're not going to be able to number them".

So from the time of God's judgment upon David, the Jews refused to take census. In fact, what they have began to do was everybody had to put a temple shekel in and so they would count the shekels then. Everybody throw in the shekel, they count the shekels. They wouldn't count people. And the Orthodox Jew today still won't count people. You're at a party. You need the number for a game. They'll say, Not one, not two, not three, not four, not five; ways of getting around everything, I guess.

So Abraham returned unto his young men (Gen 22:19),

Wait a minute.

they rose up and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba (Gen 22:19).

Where was, where was Isaac? It says, Abraham returned to his young men and they rose up and went to Beersheba. But then what,--what about Isaac? Where's Isaac? It's interesting it doesn't say Isaac, does it? In fact, it's interesting that you're not going to read anymore about Isaac for awhile. And it's interesting that the next time you'll read about Isaac is when the servant is bringing his bride to him. He is out in the field meditating and he rises up and goes out to meet his bride. Even as Jesus after His sacrifice ascended into heaven and He's just waiting now for the Holy Spirit to bring His bride. And He's waiting actually, as the Bible said, until His enemies are made His footstool, until all things are brought in subjection, until the Holy Spirit brings His bride.

And so I'm sure that Isaac was with Abraham but it's interesting and significant that the Bible doesn't mention it. What the Bible doesn't say is quite often as important or significant as what the Bible does say.

For instance, in the book of Daniel, which we'll be studying starting Thursday night, you remember when Nebuchadnezzar built this great golden image and demanded everybody bow down and worship it. But the three Hebrew children refused to do so and they were brought in and thrown in the fiery furnace. Where was Daniel? Did Daniel bow down? I'm sure he didn't. Where was he? Bible doesn't say. It's silent.

Now that's very interesting because it calls them the three Hebrew children. Daniel is a type of the church and somehow he is missing when there is this great fiery furnace. He shows up afterwards. But the three

Hebrew children are sealed and they go through it, even as God is going to seal Israel to take them through the Great Tribulation, but the church will be gone.

So Isaac, the type of Christ; gone after the sacrifice and doesn't appear again until the servant is bringing his bride. And he arises and goes forth to meet his bride as she comes.

So it came to pass after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, Behold, Milcah, she hath also born children unto thy brother Nahor (Gen 22:20);

And so they brought a message to Abraham telling him about his family back in the land and how that the various children, his brothers, the children that they had and the children of his brother's children.

Chapter 23

And so Sarah was a hundred and twenty-seven years old. And she died in Kirjatharba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah (Gen 23:1-2),

Now evidently Abraham had been away with the flocks or something when Sarah died and he wasn't at her side at her death, which is a sad thing indeed. He came to mourn,

and to weep for her. And he stood up from before his dead, and he spake to the sons of Heth, saying, I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession for a buryingplace with you, that I might bury my dead out of my sight (Gen 23:2-4).

Now Abraham didn't really possess anything. He was a stranger and a sojourner in the land of promise, knowing that God was going to someday give that land to him and to his descendants.

The children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him, Hear us, my lord: thou art a mighty prince among us: in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us will withhold from thee his sepulchre, that you may bury your dead (Gen 23:5-6).

So Abraham called the men together and he said, Look, I need a place to bury my dead. And they said, "Take your pick. All of our sepulchres, none of us will hold back from you and you can just use ours".

Abraham stood up, and he bowed himself to the people of the land, to the children of Heth. And he communed with them, saying, If it be in your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight; hear me, and entreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar, That he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which is in the end of his field; for as much money as it is worth and give it to me for a possession for a buryingplace among you (Gen 23:7-9).

And so he's asking now for a particular area and he's asking that they will entreat this man that he will sell or that he would give this area to Abraham.

Now Ephron was among the children of Heth (Gen 23:10):

And he was in the crowd that was there.

And so he answered Abraham in the audience of all the children, and he said, Nay, my lord, hear me: the field I will give to you, and the cave that is therein, I will give it to you; in the presence of the sons of my people I give it to you: to bury thy dead (Gen 23:10-11).

And so he gives a very generous offer, which is typical of the culture. In other words, the polite thing was to say, "Oh, I give it to you". But it would be extremely impolite for Abraham to take it. In other words, it was one of those things, you know, it's the way that they would deal and barter with each other; bow and they'd say, you know, "Oh", in the audience of all the people I give it to you. But it would be, oh, if Abraham took it then man, you know, flames and fire and all would come.

And so,

Abraham bowed himself before the people of the land. And he spake to Ephron in the audience of the people, and he is saying, But if you wilt give it, I pray, hear me: I will give thee money for the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there. So Ephron answered Abraham, saying unto him, My lord, hearken unto me: the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver; but what is that between us? You take and bury your dead (Gen 23:12-15).

Now four hundred shekels of silver is greatly overpriced. They always start off with a high price. And then they enter into this haggling where the guy offers a high price and you come back with about forty percent of what he offered and you expect to buy it for about fifty to sixty percent. But it's just like a game. They'll never give you the selling price for the first price. First price is always the sucker's price.

You go over there today, the same thing. They, if you don't haggle with them, they get disappointed, because it's just like a game. They love the haggling. It's just a part of their culture and you've got to say, "Ah, no, I don't want it, you know, at that price"; and you go to turn. "Wait a minute, wait, come back, come back. How much will you give me for it?" "Oh, I'll only give you fifty cents". That's not worth much. Oh, fifty cents, go away. That's terrible. Get out of here. You start to leave. "Come back, come back, come back. If I sell this to you for fifty cents, the business is going to be lost. I can't afford to. My grandfather owned this business and he gave it to my father, my father has given it to me. And now we're going to lose the business if I sell for fifty cents. Sixty-five". You know. And it's just a game with them. They love to haggle like that.

And so Abraham is going through the old typical thing, you know, I will not take it but I want to buy it from you. Oh, it's worth four hundred shekels of silver but what's that between us? And suddenly, surprise, Abraham pulls out and rather than haggling, because of course it's the thing now of a place to bury his dead and all, he doesn't enter into the game. He just measures out the four hundred shekels of silver and he buys it at the inflated price. Everybody's disappointed. Abraham didn't get into the haggle but because of the death and the whole emotional thing, rather than haggling he pays the inflated value for the land in order that he might have the burying place for Sarah. And thus he buried Sarah in this cave there at Machpelah, which is in view of Mamre, where he was dwelling near Hebron.

Now there is one difficulty with this. According to the seventh chapter of Acts in the New Testament, as Stephen is rehearsing their history, he speaks of Joseph and Jacob being buried in the cave in Shechem that Abraham bought from Hamor. And so either Stephen didn't know the facts or made a mistake in the facts or a copyist made a mistake in the facts or what is probably correct is that not recorded. Abraham also bought a field in Shechem at an earlier or a later time from Hamor, also for a burying place. So that Abraham actually purchased two parcels; one in Shechem, the place where he first came, and now this parcel in Hebron, the cave of Machpelah where Sarah was buried. But it's nothing to lose your faith over. There's easy explanations.

Next week we get into the bride for Isaac, one of the most beautiful stories in the Bible as the servant goes into the far country to get a bride for his master's son and we see the beautiful sequel of the Holy Spirit in this world, drawing out a bride for the son of God, Jesus Christ.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/chuck-smith/through-the-bible-genesis-21-23/>

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