

This Land Is My Land

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 02 November 2025

Preacher: Jonathan Chancey

[0 : 00] Please take your Bibles and open them up this morning to Genesis chapter 23.! Sarah lived 127 years.

These were the years of the life of Sarah. And Sarah died at Kiriath Arba, that is Hebron, in the land of Canaan. And Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.

And Abraham rose up from before his dead and said to the Hittites, I am a sojourner and a foreigner among you. Give me property among you for a burying place, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.

The Hittites answered Abraham, Hear us, my lord. You are a prince of God among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will withhold from you his tomb to hinder you from burying your dead.

Abraham rose and bowed to the Hittites, the people of the land. And he said to them, If you are willing that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me and entreat for me Ephron, the son of Zohar, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he owns.

[1 : 28] It is at the end of his field. For the full price let him give it to me in your presence as property or a burying place. Now Ephron was sitting among the Hittites, and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the Hittites, of all who went in at the gate of his city, Know, my lord, hear me.

I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. In the sight of the sons of my people, I give it to you. Bury your dead. Then Abraham bowed down before the people of the land, and he said to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, But if you will hear me, I give the price of the field. Accept it from me, that I may bury my dead there. Ephron answered Abraham, My lord, listen to me. A piece of land worth 400 shekels of silver, what is that between you and me?

Bury your dead. Abraham listened to Ephron, and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver that he had named in the hearing of the Hittites, 400 shekels of silver, according to the weight current among the merchants.

So the field of Ephron and Machpelah, which was to the east of Mamre, the field with the cave that was in it, and all the trees that were in the field throughout its whole area, was made over to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the Hittites, before all who went in at the gate of his city.

[2 : 46] After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah, east of Mamre, that is, Hebron, in the land of Canaan. The field and the cave that is in it were made over to Abraham as property for a burying place by the Hittites.

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of the Lord endures forever. Father, we ask now once more, would you speak?

Would you teach us? Would you lead us through the preaching of your word? Give us ears to hear. May it land on fertile soil this morning. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

You may be seated. Christ, the sure and steady anchor as we face the wave of death. I was at a wedding several years ago, and it's always interesting to me to kind of analyze and see what sort of scriptures are selected to be read during the wedding ceremony and what the vows are that are pronounced by the husband and the wife.

And in this particular wedding ceremony, the scripture that was supposed to be read was from Ruth chapter 1 verse 16, which says this, where you go, I will go.

[4 : 04] Where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people will be my people and your God will be my God. Very romantic. But instead, the reader mixed it up and accidentally read the very next verse, which says this, where you die, I will die.

And there I will be buried. It's not quite as romantic, is it? It was funny. We laughed about it afterwards. You know, that's not really the time that you really want to focus in on death and being grim.

That's supposed to be a joyful time celebrating a wedding. But even so, it was still appropriate, I think, if you think about it. You know, most weddings do have reference to death. And most vows that are pronounced have this ending at the end of it.

It's till death do us part. Right? And there's good biblical reason for that. For one thing, biblically speaking, the promises and the vows that you make to your spouse, they end at death.

You are biblically released from your vows in marriage. You're free to go marry again if you so choose. That applies to everybody except Amanda. I've told her she has to remain a widow if I go first.

[5 : 20] But for another reason, another reason, perhaps the greatest reason, is that marriage is meant to be a pointer to an even greater union, isn't it? Now, this temporary earthly marriage is a case study, is a lesson in an even greater marriage in the gospel between Christ and his church.

Paul tells us in Ephesians 5 that the gospel is pictured, it's shown forth in the marriage relationship. This temporary union points us to an eternal union.

The joys we experience in marriage point us to greater joys in Christ. The grief and the loss that we might experience at the death of a spouse, they're meant to point us to greater and truer promises that do not end in death.

Praise God, his promises to us in Christ are not till death do us part. In fact, I think that seems to be the main idea of our chapter this morning.

It's this, God's promises to us in Christ extend beyond the grave. In our passage this morning, Abraham has to do one of the most difficult things that anyone has to do in this life, which is deal with the death of a spouse.

[6 : 45] And this problem of death, it looms large here in this passage. It looms large here in this world cursed by sin. But even so, even in the presence of death, we see the persistence of God's promises.

This will be our outline this morning. If you're taking notes, it's two parts here. First, the problem of death. And second, the persistence of God's promises. First, we see the problem of death.

And we see here in verses one and two. Look there with me, starting in verse one. It says, Sarah lived 127 years. These were the years of the life of Sarah. And Sarah died at Kiriath Arba in the land of Canaan.

You know, this continues that sort of cyclical refrain that we heard all the way back in chapter five. If you remember, that was a fun chapter, wasn't it? It is a long list of life and death.

Adam lived 930 years, and he died. Seth lived 912 years, and he died. Enosh lived 905 years, and he died.

[7 : 55] On and on and on it goes. It was a pretty depressing chapter that week, if you were here for that. It's an unavoidable reality in the world that we live in, isn't it? The world in which we live is cursed with the problem of death.

You know, apart from the word of the Lord, you will not really understand why. You might just think that, well, death is just a natural part of life, right?

Well, you live, you age, you die, the fittest survive, the longest. That's just how life works. Death is a natural part of life, right? We who know the word know better, don't we?

Death is not natural. In fact, death is about the most unnatural thing that there is. We are not designed by God to die.

Death is a stranger. It's an intrusion into God's design. And we remember why, don't we? As we look all the way back to the beginning of the book of Genesis, there's a reason for this thing called death.

[8 : 59] What is it? Death came into the world because of what? Because of sin. Genesis chapter 2, God gives Adam and Eve a command and a consequence.

Do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil for consequence in the day that you eat of it. What does he say? You shall surely die. Death on a physical level and death on a spiritual level both exist in the world because of sin.

So Paul tells us in Romans 5 that death came into the world through one man's sin. Death spread to all because all sinned.

He says in chapter 6, the wages of sin is death. We ought to recognize death for what it is. It's a terrible enemy. And it's a constant reminder for us of the seriousness and the widespread nature of sin.

And it's a universal problem, isn't it? Well, this problem, all people, all people come into the world spiritually dead.

[10:12] And all people eventually will be physically dead as well. Who can escape it? It comes for everybody. Death is the great equalizer of all people.

It doesn't really matter if you're rich or poor. Sometimes it doesn't matter if you're young or old. In good health or not in good health. Sometimes it seems random.

It doesn't matter if you're educated or uneducated. If you're important in the eyes of the world. If you're unimportant in the eyes of the world. All people are under this curse of death.

This is what the writer of Ecclesiastes tells us. He says, the same event, death, happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and to the evil, to the clean, to the unclean.

And to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice, as the good one is, so is the sinner. And he who swears is as he who shuns an oath.

[11:10] At some point, death comes for everybody. And here, after 127 good long years, it is Sarah's time.

Now just think about how significant this death is. John Currid points out that this death, this is the first death and burial recorded in Hebrew history.

Now this is a big deal. Sarah is incredibly significant, isn't she? Abraham gets most of the attention most of the time, but just consider how important Sarah is.

She's the mother of the Jewish people. She is the matriarch here. She's the mother of the promised child Isaac. She is Abraham's beloved wife.

And yet, for all of her significance, death still finds her. It's unavoidable, isn't it? Now I've referenced Brian Johnson before.

[12:08] Maybe you'll remember that name, Brian Johnson. He's now famous for his attempts to not die. He's done everything to optimize the years of his life and to live as long as he possibly can.

His life is about not dying. So he downs about 54 pills for breakfast. He spends about \$2 million a year avoiding death. And I'm all for healthy living, right?

Eating right, exercising, optimizing your life. That's all well and good. But church, one day we will read about Brian Johnson's death. death. No amount of money, no amount of effort, no amount of success, no amount of prosperity can ultimately end the problem of death.

It is universal. Now if you're depressed, I want you to know I do have good news for you. We'll get there. Okay?

I promise. But we need to let the reality of death sit here with us for a minute. We need to understand this is a terrible issue that all people, everybody in this room, everybody in this town, everybody in this world, we all share this problem in common.

[13:21] We're all trying to avoid it. And we have to understand that this curse of death is real, it's serious, it's universal, it is inevitable.

But we also see here that it is profoundly sad. Death is sad, isn't it? We've seen the presence of death already in Genesis, but this is really, this is the first time we get to just sit with its impact for a little bit.

And we see here in verse 2, Abraham goes to mourn! For Sarah! To weep! For her! I'm confident every single one of us can think of a time when we have grieved the loss of a loved one, a family member, some of you a spouse, some of you even a child, a friend.

We should know that it is right to grieve in the face of death. It is okay, even as Christians who have hope beyond the grave, it is good and right and appropriate to understand the sadness of death and to grieve and mourn when it comes.

It's right and appropriate to do so. We know Jesus himself mourned, he wept at the tomb of Lazarus, didn't he? Christ himself who knew exactly what he was about to do in raising Lazarus from the dead, Christ himself who is himself the resurrection and the life, Jesus felt and experienced the sadness that you and I feel in the presence of death.

[15:01] Jesus stepped into that experience and he knows what it's like to mourn in the face of death. So we see here that it's good, it's right, it's appropriate to grieve in the face of death but praise God, here's the good news, church, in Christ we don't grieve without hope.

Amen? Yes, death is a terrible enemy, yes, death is a terrible universal problem, yes, death is profoundly sad but we who know the Lord we face death differently than those who don't know the Lord.

Why? It's because we believe by faith that God's promises to us in Christ extend beyond the grave. We're going to see this here in our second point this morning. We see the problem of death now second. We see the persistence of God's promises. Abraham believes this.

Abraham clearly believes that God's promises extend beyond the grave. We saw that last week, didn't we? God commands him to sacrifice that which is most precious to him, his beloved son Isaac.

[16:26] He is willing to do so in obedience to the command of the Lord. Why? Why? We saw from Hebrews 11 he believed that God was able even to raise him from the dead.

That promise of God would not be nullified by the presence of death. We see that same faith in the promise of God is active here again in the rest of this passage and his behavior and what he's doing here.

It's all rooted in this belief God's promises don't end at death. Look there to verse 3. Abraham ends his time of mourning for Sarah and now he needs to bury her.

But that's a problem isn't it? Because he doesn't actually own any land here yet. You remember God's called him out of his homeland to come here to the promised land.

God has promised this land to him but it's not actually his yet. He doesn't own any of the land and now he's got a body on his hands and he doesn't know what to do.

[17:30] He needs to bury it. So verse 3 Abraham rises up from before his dead and he starts speaking. He says to the Hittites I am a sojourner and a foreigner among you.

Give me property among you for a burying place that I may bury my dead out of my sight. He makes his request and then he enters into a little bit of bargaining here.

And notice how all of this goes down at the gates of the city in the presence of all the people. Did you notice he kept telling us that? In the presence of all the people. In the presence of all the people.

In the presence of all the people. Why is he doing that? It's because this is a legal transaction that's happening here. In fact the end of the passage there in verses 25 onward it reads kind of like a legal document.

The front gate is basically the courtroom of the ancient near east. Anything judicial or official would be happening right here in the presence of many witnesses.

[18:34] Abraham's making sure that everything that's said here is formalized and ratified is official is all above board and there's no under the table exchange here.

So the Hittites respond and they respond graciously. Verse 6 They say hear us my lord you are a prince of God among us bury your dead wherever you want and none of us will withhold from you their own tomb to hinder you from burying your dead.

Take your pick. So Abram again bows down he makes his request a little bit more specific he says if you are willing that I should bury my dead out of my sight well then hear me and entreat for me Ephron the son of Zohar that he may give me that cave of Machpelah which he owns it's at the end of his field and let me pay him full price and let him give it to me in your presence as a property for a burying place.

Verse 10 says Ephron was there and he's listening to this so he speaks up again verse 10 says in the hearing of all the Hittites know my lord hear me I'll give it to you I give you the field and I give you the cave that's in the field in the sight of all the sons of the people let me give it to you bury your dead that seems incredibly generous doesn't it Abraham only asked for the cave and now Ephron says I'll just give you the field and the cave but really we should recognize that this is a little bit of posturing here this is how negotiation was done here in the ancient near east in this culture they want to appear to be gracious and giving so he says you can have it but really in the back of his mind he is fully expecting Abraham to come back and offer to pay and in fact that's exactly what he does again he bows down and he says again quote in the hearing of all the people of the land let me pay for it

I'll give you the price whatever it is and so Ephron again responds my lord listen really a little piece of land worth I don't know exactly 400 shekels of silver what's the big deal don't worry about it it sounds it appears so gracious doesn't it but what's he doing he's naming his price and honestly the price is not good this is not a discount it's like if he said a new car worth about 200 grand what's that

between us right but Abraham he hears him name the price he knows all the witnesses are all around they've all heard him name his price he doesn't even haggle at all he weighs it all out exactly what Ephron named again in the hearing of everyone there at the gate he pays him exactly what he asked and now the deal is done

[21 : 36] Abraham is a proud owner of a new cave in the promised land so now verse 7 the field of Ephron the whole field with the cave in it all the trees that were in the field the whole area all of this was made over to Abraham as a presence as a possession in the presence of the Hittites before all who went in at the gate of the city it isn't much and it cost him a fortune but just think about the significance of that transaction now this is the first official piece of property that Abraham owns in the promised land and if you look ahead you'll see it would prove to be a pretty good investment Abraham buries Sarah here eventually Abraham will be buried here then Rebecca will be buried here then Leah will be buried here then Jacob will be buried here all here in this tomb but I have a question and maybe you're wondering the same thing right why did Abraham go through all of this trouble to bury

Sarah here think about that for a minute he has a homeland right why go through all the trouble to negotiate with the Hittites as a foreigner with no property to his name Abraham his wife is dead it seems like a natural thing to do just to pick up and go back home go back to Ur of the Chaldeans go back to be around your people your family mourn for her and bury her there why is he so insistent to buy a cave and a field at such a large sticker price why did he not turn back here's the answer Abraham believes in the promises of God you remember the promises do you remember what God promised Abraham God promised him a child promised offspring not just one but he promised a multitude of offspring more numerous than the stars of the sky more numerous than the sand on the shore now Isaac is here this proof of God's faithfulness but it's just one child the fullness of the promise has yet to come in Abraham's life he does not see the stars in the sky multitude here does he he doesn't see the fullness of the fulfillment of God's promise does he

God promised Abraham land the land of Canaan as far as he could see from east to west and north and south God promised him this land and now finally he gets this little sliver of fulfillment it's not much just a cave just a field just some trees but it's something he has a piece of land here in Canaan Abraham doesn't turn back home because God promised him this land would be his he believes him more specifically Abraham believes that these promises extend even beyond the grave think about it Abraham's going to be dead within 40 years how easy would it have been for him just to go home bury his wife live out his years around his kinsmen die in peace but that seems like a reasonable thing to do doesn't it it's clear to me nothing is clear to

Abraham he is not going to get to enjoy the fullness of these promises in this life is he Abraham won't get to see the multitude he won't get to enjoy life in the promised land not now but he does this because he believes by faith that even death cannot nullify the promises of God listen again to what it says in Hebrews chapter 11 the passage that was read this morning it says by faith he Abraham went to live in the land of promise as in a foreign land living in tents with Isaac and Jacob heirs with him of the same promise why verse 10 for he was looking forward to the city that has foundations whose designer and builder is God is that Canaan no keep reading these all died in faith not having received the things promised but having seen them and greeted them from afar and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth for people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland if they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out they would have had opportunity to return but as it is they desire a better country that is a heavenly one therefore

God is not ashamed to be called their God for he has prepared for them a city church Abraham's promised land and our promised land is much bigger much better much more glorious than Canaan and here he gets just the smallest sliver of what God has in store for him but Abraham believed by faith God's promises to him extend even beyond the grave do you believe that do you believe that God's promises to you do not end at death but will blossom and multiply in ways that we can hardly fathom in the age to come do you believe that Abraham didn't quite know how but by faith he trusted yes

[27 : 53] God's promises will not fail every word of the Lord will prove true he will accomplish all that he promised Abraham didn't clearly see how the church on this side of the cross we do where do we look for assurance of all of God's promises where do we look to be reminded that even death can't overcome his promises to us that his word is good and trustworthy and true no matter what's

gained or lost in this life where do we look church we look to Christ Jesus to see God's promises extend even beyond the grave what's the answer to the problem of death there's only one Christ Jesus has conquered sin and overcome the grave he has lived sinlessly the only person not to earn death by his sin and yet he died in our place and rose from the grave to save sinners like us by faith in him do you want to know the solution to the problem of death it is

Christ Jesus the Lord Christ is the resurrection and the life we know that God's promises to us extend beyond the grave because Christ himself is living proof and so we say with Paul in Romans chapter 8 nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord Christ has conquered death for us and because of this we we get to look forward to the future fulfillment of all of God's promises at his return you know Christian the challenge for us is that you and

I like Abraham we do not enjoy the fullness of God's promises to us in Christ not yet not in this life we get little slivers of it just little little foretaste of it yes we have his spirit in full measure yes we are sons and daughters of God right now yes we get taste of victory over sin we have glimmers of joy we get these partial pictures of our fellowship with one another and our fellowship with him but Christian don't you know the fullness of these promises is yet to come don't you know that there are greater and more glorious truths yet to be fulfilled!

hardly begin to imagine in a place without the shroud of death and the weight of sin when Christ returns you and I and all who are in Christ will finally and fully know the fullness of God's promises to us in him don't you long for that day God has promised you Christian you will be glorified in his presence can you imagine that God has promised you Christian you will be freed completely from the presence of sin in your life can you even imagine God has promised you Christian death will be no more grief and sadness will be swallowed up God has promised you eternal life with him and with one another in a multitude that no one could count more numerous than the stars in the sky dwelling together in the true promised land the new heavens the new earth and the age to come our hope beyond the grave is tied up with a king who conquered the grave as long as he lives

God's promises to us live with him this is good news for us church one day we believe Christ will come for his bride we will feast with him at the wedding supper of the lamb don't you long to be there and we will enjoy the fullness of his presence with us for the rest of eternity truly for us to live as Christ to die is gain do you believe that I was putting our boys to bed the other night and you get every now and mostly it's chaos right every now and then you get these sweet moments sometimes at bedtime I was competing with one of them about who loved the other one more right we do that and he said dad I will love you even when you're dead and I was able to say son

[33 : 12] I'll love you even when I'm dead it's a promise it's a promise that can only be kept in Christ the power of the resurrected Lord eternal life in the age to come God's promises to us do not end at death life for the Christian doesn't end at death joy and pleasure do not end at death for you Christian love itself does not end at death life is yet to come do you have certain hope that goes even beyond the grave and if not friend what keeps you from repenting of your sin and putting your faith in the risen Lord Christ this morning and if so Christian church as we wait for the fullness of these promises in the age to come we walk now by faith as strangers and sojourners in a land that is not ours but one day will be we walk by faith trusting in the eternal promises of

God clinging to Christ looking backwards to the cross and the empty tomb and looking forwards to his return in the age to come father we thank you that your promises to us are not till death do us part but God that Christ has truly conquered the grave and that eternal life is available to us who believe by faith by your grace Lord we pray would you fill us with hope and joy in believing these promises we pray in Jesus name amen holy