

A Beautiful Death
3-20-2016

Gen 23:1-9

Sarah lived 127 years; these were the years of the life of Sarah. 2 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. 3 And Abraham rose up from before his dead and said to the Hittites, 4 "I am a sojourner and foreigner among you; give me property among you for a burying place, that I may bury my dead out of my sight." 5 The Hittites answered Abraham, 6 "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." 7 Abraham rose and bowed to the Hittites, the people of the land. 8 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, 9 that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he owns; it is at the end of his field. For the full price let him give it to me in your presence as property for a burying place."

Palm Sunday marks Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem right behind Passover "national" lamb procession. This was five days before the lamb would be sacrificed for sins of Israel. Mt 21:1-11, Jn 12:12-16

- Palm branches symbol of freedom/defiance. Hosanna="save us."
 - The people were unaware that the saving was more than just political and they were not choosing Jesus Christ as only a king to liberate but as a Lamb to sacrifice and die.

Death & associated grieving can be very difficult to discuss and deal with.

- It is not unmanly/unbiblical to grieve, but it is a natural expression of love as seen here in the first record of a man's grieving with tears in Bible. Gen 23:1-2, Rom. 12:15, Jn 11:35

The death of Sarah, a believer, Abraham's lifelong companion (80-100 yrs married) & a mother of his child brings Abraham emotional pain, grief, and probably loneliness & financial impact as well.

- Abraham pays a huge price so Ephron's descendants never have a challenge of ownership on the grounds that Abraham paid less than the fair market value. Gen 23:13-18

Modern burial considerations: Moderate cost, honor deceased, concern for decedents & personal convictions. Ps 139:13-16, 1 Cor 6:15-20, 15:35-49

- Theologically: It does not matter if you are buried or cremated. There is no problem for God to raise a body on the day of resurrection.
- Preparation for death is made by making sure your desires are known to family and/or friends.
- At the funeral service the main focus should be the present reality of death & hope of gospel. Ecc 7:2

The story is really about trusting in God and His promises when your hopes and dreams are unfulfilled.

- Abraham's faith is tested again: He is still a sojourner 77 yrs after the initial promise. Gen 23:3-4, 19-20, 12:7, Rom 4:20-22
- Purchase an expression of his faith in God to keep His promises.
 - The way we spend our money is one way that indicates the reality of our faith & where our heart is.
- The first & only piece of land in Canaan gave Abraham "dual citizenship". Heb 11:13-16, 1 Pet 2:11-17
 - Abraham lived in the present in light of future, so should we.

Abraham faced the agony of losing a loved one by looking forward to God's promised One who would abolish death & bless all nations. 2 Tim. 1:10, 1 Thes 4:13, Rev 21:3-4

- Jesus Christ's death is the reason Christians grieve fundamentally differently than world.
 - Christians believe in the sovereign design in all and that someday we will reunite with the Christian's loved ones!
 - Surety of eternal life with the Lord, a new, resurrected body, and no tears/pain/sorrow.

Biblical faith is a confident trust that God is who He says He is & that He can & WILL DO what He promises He will do.

- Believe His promises even when all seems dark, hopeless, and can't FEEL God's love or presence & are tempted to despair. Mt 27:46, 1 Cor 15:53-58
 - Like Jesus, trust the Father when there is no visible reason to.
 - Jesus lost the SENSE of His Father's love/favor—not the love/favor.
 - The ground of our faith is not in feeling God's love but in the promise of His love made at cross.
- Face death with realism concerning the pain, but also with faith in the promises of God.
 - Because of Jesus beautiful death, the sting of death is gone for Christians.
 - Like Abraham, we grieve but not as one without hope