

Genesis Chapters 22-23 – John Karmelich

1. When I first decided to teach Genesis, I have to admit I was looking forward to Chapter 22.
 - a) It is the “high point” of Genesis and one of the most important chapters in the bible.
 - b) It is arguably, the high point of Abraham’s life.
 - c) It is also one of the most famous events in the bible: Abraham’s offering of Isaac.
 - d) I’m so excited I can hardly wait to write this stuff down! ☺
2. There are two key ways to study this chapter: The first is to study the prophetic implications and the second is to study is the personal applications.
 - a) First, let’s talk about the prophetic implications. One of the main points I am going to drive home today is that Abraham’s offering of Isaac is a detailed, word-picture prophecy of Jesus dying on the cross for our sins and rising again the third day.
 - i) Remember Jesus said, You (Pharisee’s) diligently study the Scriptures (Old Testament) because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me... (John 5:39 NIV)
 - a) Jesus is teaching that the Old Testament is prophetic about him.
 - ii) “For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” (Revelation 19:10b, NIV)
 - iii) Paul defines the Gospel for us in 1st Corinthians Chapter 15, Verses 2-4. As part of that definition, Paul makes this statement: “That he (Jesus) was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures”. (1 Cor. 15:4 NIV)
 - a) Paul is saying the fact that Jesus was to rise again on the third day was predicted in the Old Testament (The New Testament was not written yet). I believe this prediction is based on Genesis Chapter 22.
 - iv) The next thing one needs to know is prophecy (bible predictions) is often based on “word-pictures”. Prophecy is not just blunt statements about what will happen in the future. Prophecy also comes by studying the stories in the Old Testament and realizing they are prophetic word-pictures that tie to Jesus.
 - a) Remember that Jesus said, “these are the Scriptures that testify about me”. (John 5:39 NIV) It is not just the direct predictions, it is also the word-pictures and patterns that one reads in the bible stories.
 - b) In Genesis 20:7, Abraham was called a “prophet” by God himself.
 - (1) Here is something else the bible says about “prophets”:
 - (2) “I (God) have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitude’s, by the ministry of the prophets.” (Hosea 12:10 KJV) Similitude’s is a reference to “word-pictures”.
 - b) Next, let’s talk about the personal application of Chapter 22:
 - i) Yes, the chapter is a word-picture about “the cross event”, but it also has some personal applications that we can relate to on a daily basis.
 - ii) God tests Abraham. God tests us. God does not tempt us.
 - a) “When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; (James 1:13 NIV)
 - b) God wants to mature us, and He does that by testing us. During those tests we can fall into temptation, but that is not God doing the tempting. He is testing us to see our level of faith in Him.
 - iii) It is important to note that God waited until near-the-end of Abraham’s life before He asked Abraham to offer Isaac. It wasn’t until after Abraham had grown and matured in his faith, after he had passed all sorts of other tests, that God asked Abraham to do such a thing.

- a) Remember God knows the outcome of all things in advance. He knew what Abraham was going to do and knew that an angel was going to intercede and stop this event. God never asks us to sacrifice our children. God tests us to see if we love Him more than our children.
 - b) Jesus said, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life--he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:26 NIV)
 - (1) What Jesus meant by that is not to have hatred toward your family members, but that your love for God must supercede your love for anyone else. It is then that through God you can love others as God intended. God "tested this principal" in Genesis 22.
 - iv) This chapter teaches us the great lesson of "total surrender" to God.
 - a) It is about trusting God to do things we don't want to do.
 - b) Again, God never calls us to sacrifice our children. That was a special case and is designed to be a word-picture of the resurrection.
 - c) God does call us to be obedient to His Word, and that often means doing things we don't like or make us unpopular with others.
 - c) I guess I should also add, this is also a study of Chapter 23. ☺
 - i) I figured, while I was in the neighborhood, I would do that chapter as well. ☺
 - ii) Chapter 23 is the story of the death of Sarah, Abraham's wife.
 - iii) Most of the chapter tells about the negotiation to buy the burial plot for her.
 - iv) The question-of-the moment to ponder is, "why here, why now?"
 - a) Why include this story at this point in the text?
 - b) Why spend a whole chapter discussing the details of buying a burial plot?
 - c) We'll get into those details after Chapter 22, but the key point to remember is that it has to do with the promise of the land itself.
 - d) That piece of ground is where Abraham and Sarah both get buried.
 - e) It is the only piece of land "owned" by an Israelite prior to the conquest of the land over 400 years later. It is a symbolic first step that the Promised Land belongs to the Israelites.
 - v) More on that when we get there. For now, let's start Chapter 22.
3. Chapter 22, Verse 1: Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.
- a) The Chapter starts with "some time later", also translated "After these things" (KJV).
 - i) The concept is that there is a time gap between the events of Chapter 21 and the events of Chapter 22.
 - ii) In the last chapter, Isaac was just weaned (probably 2-3 years old) and Ishmael was 13-14 years old. We had the birth of Isaac, the casting out of Ishmael, and Abraham's dealing with King Abimelech.
 - iii) During that section, Abraham had to pass God's difficult test of telling his other son Ishmael and his mother Hagar that they had to leave. Now that Abraham passed that test, and some time had past, God was ready to move Abraham on to the next text.
 - iv) God works that way in our lives as well. In a sense, God is constantly asking us, "Do you trust me? Do you really trust me?" He puts us (or allows us go) through difficult situations to see if we are still trusting Him. Most Christian adults can look back on their life as a series of tests and how God got them through them.
 - b) Getting back to my introduction, notice the word "tested". You will never in the bible see the words "God" and "tempted" in the same sentence, other than James' statement that God does not tempt anyone.

- c) Twice in Chapter 22, Abraham makes the statement to God, "Here I am".
 - i) His grandson Jacob also said "Here I am" to God two times (Gen. 31:11, 46:2).
 - ii) God called to Moses via the burnish bush, and Moses said, "Here I am" (Exo. 3:4).
 - iii) When God first called Samuel, He responded several times "Here I am" (1st Sam. 3:4, 3:5).
 - iv) When God called Nathan the prophet, who worked with King David, he responded, "Here I am" (2 Samuel 7:2).
 - v) The point is obedience to God starts with the attitude prior to any command given by God. If you desire to be used by God, you first must be willing to have the attitude to be used by God. You start by saying, "Here I am, Lord".
- 4. Vs 2: Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."
 - a) The key word in this sentence is "only". God says, "Take your only son".
 - i) Remember that Abraham spent years raising Ishmael and I suspect that Abraham still loved him dearly. You can't "unlove" a child.
 - ii) The word "only" here is a reference to the promised Messiah. In that sense, this is the only son, as this is the one who God promised, and is working through.
 - b) The "region of Moriah" is also "Mount Moriah" where the Temple was built by Solomon (2 Chronicles 3:1). This is the same temple mount where a temple existed in Jesus day.
 - i) It refers to not one specific mountain, but a general rise in the hillside. It also refers to area where Jesus was crucified.
 - ii) The same location where Abraham offered Isaac is the same location where God "offered" Jesus as a burnt sacrifice for our sins.
 - iii) This is the first of many clues in this chapter that what Abraham is doing is prophetic. This event is a word-picture of God "offering" Jesus on the cross. More on this to come, later in the chapter!
 - c) Here is something else special: This is the first time that God uses the word "love" in Genesis. The only previous mention of "love" is a reference between Abraham and Sarah. The Abraham/Sarah reference is a different Hebrew word, which is better-translated "kindness". In a technical sense, Genesis 22 is the first mention of the Hebrew term for Godly love, in the sense of a total commitment of oneself to another.
 - i) From the prophetic picture, it is that reminder of God who loves "his only son", and offers him on our behalf.
 - ii) This is God testing Abraham and saying in effect, "I know you love Isaac. My test for you is to see if you love me (God) more than Isaac".
 - a) Remember that God knows all things in advance. God did this to "act out" prophesy for our behalf as well as to glorify Abraham by showing his willingness to be obedient to God.
 - d) Before I move on, I should also explain a "burnt offering".
 - i) A burnt offering does not mean you burn it alive. A burnt offering required killing the animal and then burning it completely on the altar. It is symbolic of a total commitment. A burnt offering is saying, "I 100% commit this thing to you as I love you more than this thing I am offering".
 - ii) When the tabernacle was put together in the Book of Exodus, the first thing one comes to when entering the tabernacle is a firepit to place a burnt offering. The idea is to approach God, one must fully commit themselves to God.
 - iii) In a "word-picture", the crucifixion was a "burnt offering" by Jesus as he was completely given of himself on behalf of our sins.

- iv) This is the second reference in Genesis to a burnt offering. The first was by Noah after the ark has rested from the flood. Noah gave a burnt offering as a sign of gratitude after the event. God is asking Abraham to go one step further, and offer a burnt offering prior to “the event”. (Ref. Genesis 8:20).
5. Verse 3: Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. ⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵ He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."
- a) I stated in the introduction that Paul said that Jesus would rise again on the 3rd day, as “according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:4 NIV). I believe this is the specific passage.
 - i) In Verse 2, God told Abraham to offer his son. In Abraham’s mind Isaac is “dead” at this point. God told Abraham to kill Isaac, so “mentally”, Isaac is “dead”.
 - ii) Notice it was the third day (Verse 4) when the sacrifice took place. It was on the 3rd day when God stopped this action and an angel told Abraham not to offer Isaac, as told in Verse 11.
 - iii) My point is in Abraham’s mind, Isaac is “dead” in Verse 3 and three days later, in Verse 11, Isaac became “alive” again.
 - b) Paul said something interesting about the Gospel message and Abraham:
 - i) “The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." (Galatians 3:8 NIV)
 - ii) I’m going to argue that Abraham knew he was acting out prophecy-in-advance:
 - a) God told Abraham that he would have many children (i.e., descendants) through this promised son, Isaac. (Genesis 13:16 and 15:5)
 - b) Yet here in Genesis 22, God is telling Abraham to kill his son.
 - c) Therefore, if Abraham believed God, then Abraham knew God had to resurrect Isaac. If God wanted Abraham to kill Isaac and at the same time, God promised Abraham children via Isaac, then God has to resurrect Isaac in order to perform that promise.
 - iii) That is how Abraham had the faith to kill Isaac. He knew God would have to resurrect Isaac in order to fulfill the promises about Isaac.
 - a) “By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." (Hebrews 11:17-18 NIV)
 - c) Which leads us to the wonderful words of Verse 3: “Early the next morning”:
 - i) Abraham didn’t procrastinate, he started off early the next morning.
 - a) It is probable that Abraham couldn’t sleep that night, and it may have been a matter of “getting it over with”. ☺
 - ii) Sometimes I think there is nothing God loves more than obedience. It seems like every time the bible gets a chance to comment on someone’s obedience, it does.
 - d) OK, what’s the deal with the “two servants”? Why did Abraham bring two servants along on this trip?
 - i) It leads back to God’s rule of “two or more witnesses to an event”. God likes to have human witnesses to major events of the bible.
 - a) “One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.” (Deu. 19:15 NIV)
 - b) Remember when Jesus died, there were two others crucified at the same time. There were also witnesses at the cross. (Reference: John 19:25-26)

- ii) Notice the last part of Verse 5, Abraham says, “We will come back to you”.
 - a) First of all, it says, “We will come back”, as in Abraham and Isaac.
 - b) Second, it says, “We will come back”. I personally believe this is Abraham trusting in God’s promise of a resurrected Isaac.
 - iii) Also notice the two “witnesses” didn’t participate in the actual offering. They waited at the base of Moriah while Abraham and Isaac went’ up.
 - a) This was a word-picture of “God alone” in the process of the offering of his son for our sake.
6. Verse 6: Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, ⁷ Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"
- a) Some of the details of the prophetic word-pictures are interesting to consider:
 - i) Isaac “carried the wood”. Think of that picture of Jesus carrying the cross.
 - ii) Abraham carried the knife and the fire. Both speak of the judgment by the Father. The “Father” took the responsibility of placing the judgment on the son.
 - iii) The only aspect at this point that “doesn’t fit” the word picture is that Isaac was not aware that he was being offered. If you study the gospels carefully, you get the idea that Jesus fully understood his purpose and mission in life.
 - b) There is a classical debate as to how old Isaac actually is at this point.
 - i) Some of the Jewish commentaries say he may have been over 30, which would be another word picture of Jesus at the time of his death and resurrection. This is possible because the next chapter records the death of Sarah at time Isaac was 37. (Ref. Genesis 23:1, 17:17). Further, it was stated that right after Sarah’s death, a bride was arranged for Isaac. Isaac was 40 as of that time (Genesis 25:20).
 - a) Isaac may have been as young as a teenager and as old as his mid-30’s.
 - b) It is just speculation as to his actual age at the time of this sacrifice.
7. Verse 8: Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.
- a) In some ways, Verse 8 may be the most powerful verse of the chapter:
 - i) The literal Hebrew can be translated “God will provide himself as the lamb”.
 - ii) The idea, in the Hebrew is that God himself is being the sacrificial lamb.
 - iii) One of the things that distinguishes true Christianity from cults is the concept that Jesus is God-himself, being the perfect offering for our sins.
 - b) There is a classic illustration about “perfection” that fits here. Let’s start with the premise that God is perfect. A perfect God is perfect in his love. He loves us perfectly and therefore desires to 100% forgive us of all our sins, well, because He’s perfect. At the same time God cannot tolerate any sin whatsoever, because again, He’s perfect.
 - i) The question becomes: How do you reconcile a God of perfect love (perfect forgiveness) and a God of perfect judgment?
 - ii) If God forgives say 1% of our sins, he would not be perfect in judgment.
 - iii) The only “perfect” answer would be for God himself to pay the price for our sins.
 - c) Which leads to classic illustration #2: There is a courtroom judge who is known as the “perfect judge”. He has a great ability to discern who is truly guilty and who is fully innocent. When he finds someone guilty, that criminal gets the maximum punishment allowed under the law. One day, the judge’s son is on trial. The son is found guilty. The judge pronounces the maximum penalty. The judge then takes his robe off and agrees to go to jail on the son’s behalf. That is how the judge shows “perfect love” and “perfect judgment” at the same time.

- i) Which leads back to cults that claim that Jesus is less than God.
 - a) In this “judge” illustration, suppose the judge says to his son, “you are guilty, but because I love you, I will let your brother Leon will serve your jail sentence for you”. ☺ That wouldn’t be perfect love as that is “unfair” to the criminal’s brother. If you think of Jesus as anything less than God-himself, the concept of “perfect love” and “perfect judgment” won’t work. If Jesus is less than God, that God is being “cruel” to Jesus making him pay for the sins of someone else. This is why the concept of the “trinity” is so necessary for Christianity. It is God-himself paying the price for our sins.
 - ii) Which, surprisingly, leads us back to Genesis. ☺ The last part of Verse 8 says, “And the two of them went on together”. It is almost as if Abraham and Isaac “became one in their prophetic plan”. It is another “word-picture” of the “father and son” being “one” and paying the price for our sins.
- d) Before I move on, notice how Abraham encouraged his son through what had to be a difficult moment for Isaac as well.
 - i) I suspect Abraham spent a lot of time teaching Isaac about God and the ways of God. Abraham led Isaac in both words and deeds. Isaac respected the God of his Father, because Isaac not only saw his father “preach it”, he saw his father “live it”. So when it came to this crucial time in Isaac’s life as well, Isaac was willing.
 - ii) Notice that in Verse 7, Isaac knew what a burnt offering was. That means his father trained him on how to worship God.
 - iii) Give Isaac some credit. He got up on the wood willingly. That too, is a wonderful word-picture of Jesus freely choosing the path of the cross.
- 8. Verse 9: When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.
 - a) Here is the climatic moment: Don’t take this lightly. Despite God’s commands, despite the fact that Abraham understood God’s promise of a resurrection, despite Isaac’s willingness to go along with this plan, this moment is difficult.
 - b) It was only at the exact moment that Abraham was about to offer Isaac that the angel intervened. Remember that all of this was a test (Verse 1). Abraham now passed with flying colors.
 - c) Here we have the second statement of Abraham saying, “Here I am”.
 - i) Just as Abraham was willing to slay Isaac, Abraham was just as willing to receive new instructions by the angel.
 - ii) Notice Abraham didn’t say to the angel, “Excuse me, but God told me to kill him, now get out of the way.” ☺ My point is that since God tests us, we have to be willing to obey new instructions as we receive them by God. Saying, “Here I am” to God is not just in the beginning our trust in God, but all along the way as well. We have to be flexible enough to understand that just because God worked “one way” in our life one day, it may be “another way” on the next day.
- 9. Verse 12: "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."
 - a) Here we have the second reference to your “only” son. This is God letting Abraham knew he past this test.

10. Verse 13: Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.
- a) In Verse 13, we get introduced to the idea of the “ram” as an animal used as a substitute sacrifice for our sins.
 - i) Back in Verse 7, Isaac asked his father, “Where is the lamb for the sacrifice?”
 - a) This may mean that Isaac was used to seeing his father sacrifice a lamb.
 - ii) The lamb is a word-picture of “innocence”. Lambs are baby sheep and are harmless. In the New Testament, there are a number of references to Jesus as our sacrificial lamb. (E.g., John 1:29, 36, Rev. 5:6, 5:12, et.al.)
 - iii) The ram has his power through his horns. Here we have a ram and his “power was stuck in the bushes”. It is a word-picture of power being taken away.
 - iv) When one gets to the book of Exodus, almost half the book discusses the construction of the tabernacle to be built by the Israelites. One of the materials used in the construction was ram skins, died red.
 - a) These ram skins were used as a roof covering (Exodus 26:14, et.al.)
 - b) This roof material is a word picture of sacrificial blood. To enter the tabernacle one has to be “covered” with the blood of this animal.
 - v) The word picture in Exodus ties back to this story in Genesis as the ram-substitute, “dyed red” (symbolic of killing it for its sins). It is a reminder of the substitute offering for sins! By the way, this is the second time we read of the shedding of the blood of an innocent animal for the forgiveness of sins. The first time was when Adam & Eve died, God provided for them “coats of skins” (Genesis 3:21).
 - b) The main point for Christians to learn from this is no human sacrifice is needed other than Jesus offering, past-tense, present tense or future tense, period! Abraham didn’t have to offer Isaac, as God-himself has, is, and will provide atonement for our sins himself.
 - i) All of the animal sacrifices we read about in the bible are “temporary”. The Old Testament emphasizes how these animal sacrifices “covers” their sins, but never takes away their sins. Only Jesus on the cross takes away our sins.
11. Verse 14: So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."
- a) My favorite word in this verse is the word “will”. It is very important to note that this is future tense. God will (future tense to Abraham) provide.
 - b) We as Christians say, God “did provide” in the past tense. We look back to the cross just as Abraham looked forward to the event.
 - c) Jesus made an interesting comment about Abraham to the Pharisees:
 - i) “Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.” (John 8:56 NIV)
 - ii) I am convinced Jesus is talking about this specific event in Genesis 22.
 - iii) Abraham knew He was acting out prophecy on Mount Moriah when he was about to sacrifice Isaac and God provided the substitute. That is why Abraham named the location “The LORD Will Provide”.
 - iv) That same location of Mount Moriah is where Jesus was crucified.
 - v) The main purpose of this whole section is to give a word-picture of the cross and the resurrection. By God providing “himself” as a sacrifice, Isaac “lived” again!
12. Verse 15: The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time ¹⁶ and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, ¹⁸ and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

- a) There is a two very important principals taught in this paragraph:
 - i) 1) We are saved only by our trust in God and the sacrifice He has provided for us.
 - ii) 2) Our eternal rewards are determined by our obedience to God.
 - a) I will further add that we often receive rewards during our lifetime based on our obedience. They are not always material rewards, but by passing God's tests, we draw closer to Him and grow in our "spiritual richness".
 - b) Remember that God knows all things. He knew in advance Abraham was going to past this test. He "thought out" these promises to Abraham in advance knowing that Abraham was going to past this test. It was all part of God's eternal plan.
 - i) Announcing these benefits again to Abraham was for Abraham's benefit and our benefit. The descendants of Abraham owe some gratitude to Abraham.
 - ii) God worked on building Abraham's faith over his lifetime. Abraham reached a point of maturity that He was willing to trust God in something that is extremely difficult: To trust God more than the love for one's own family.
 - c) The specific promises made in this paragraph have already been stated elsewhere in Genesis (e.g., Genesis 13:16, 15:15, and 16:10).
 - i) Here God is saying to Abraham essentially, "Look, I know this test was difficult, but it was necessary. Let me explain to you why you have to go through this test. I have great plans for your future. I needed you to act out prophecy so millions of people can read this story! ☺ I know you don't understand why I had to put you through this, but there was a purpose."
 - ii) I have yet to meet one person who was greatly used by God who has not gone through incredible trials in order to be used by God.
 - a) Remember it starts with a willingness to be obedient. From there, God can use you anyway He sees fit, and does it for your benefit as well as others. Remember that God is in charge and we are not. The triumph of Abraham was his willingness to do what God commanded Him to do.
 - d) Genesis places a high emphasis upon the descendants of Abraham inheriting the Promised Land. This is the fourth time (in my reckoning) that God goes out of his way to list the stated promises to Abraham. These promises are now unconditional. You never read anywhere in the Old Testament that the land of Israel is theirs "only if". That land belongs to the Jews, period, because God said so. If we can't trust God's promises to the descendants of Abraham, how can we trust his promises to us through Jesus? It is impossible for the Jewish people to "forfeit" their promise of that land.
 - e) The promise is not only of the land, but of the Messiah himself. Notice the phrase "through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed". That is the promise that through Abraham, a specific offspring will be the Messiah himself.
13. Verse 19: Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba.
- a) Verse 19 happens to be my favorite verses in the chapter. Here is why:
 - i) Notice who is not mentioned in this Verse: Isaac!
 - ii) There is no mention of Isaac coming down off the mountain to meet his servants. It is "implied" that Isaac returned, but he is not mentioned by name!
 - iii) This was done to "complete the word picture". Isaac is now "resurrected". We don't read of Isaac again until Chapter 24, when a bride is prepared for him!
 - iv) In the New Testament, after the resurrection, Jesus "disappears" for most of the book. There are a few times when he speaks to Paul from heaven, but he is visibly gone after his immediate post-resurrection appearances. The next time everyone sees Jesus is in the Book of Revelation, where a marriage is "arranged" for him between the bride of Christ (the church) and Jesus himself. (Rev. 19:7-9)

- a) To summarize: The next we read of Isaac is a bride being arranged for him in Chapter 24. The “next” we read of Jesus post-resurrection “in a sense” is the marriage of Jesus to his bride.
 - b) If this word-picture is confusing to you, don’t panic, ☺ I’m going to discuss it more when I talk about Chapter 24 in the next lesson.
 - v) My argument is that the fact that Isaac is “missing” from Verse 19 is a “word-picture” to again, tie us to Jesus. Remember, “For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” (Rev. 19:10b, NIV)
 - b) Back to the text itself, for Abraham himself, life just “goes on”. The next we read of Abraham is some time later in the next chapter at the death of his wife.
 - i) Sometimes after “peak moments” life just goes back to routine. Not every moment of our lives requires great moments like this. We are reading selected events from Abraham’s long lifespan. Sometimes we forget there are large time gaps in-between these specific tests given to Abraham.
14. Verse 20: Some time later Abraham was told, "Milcah is also a mother; she has borne sons to your brother Nahor: ²¹ Uz the firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel (the father of Aram), ²² Kesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph and Bethuel." ²³ Bethuel became the father of Rebekah. Milcah bore these eight sons to Abraham's brother Nahor. ²⁴ His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also had sons: Tebah, Gaham, Tahash and Maacah.
- a) In the last 4 verses of this chapter, we now switch stories.
 - i) Some time after the events of Abraham offering Isaac, Abraham hears about the descendants of his brother Nahor.
 - ii) It shows that among other things, there is still some contact between Abraham and his brother Nahor despite the fact they live about 450 miles apart! Maybe Abraham and Sarah sent them a birth announcement. ☺
 - iii) God called Abraham to “separate” himself from his family, yet there is still family contact. “Separation” for Christians means to make God a priority over non-saved family members. It does not mean we are to cut off contact.
 - b) At first, these 4 verses of this chapter seem like they have nothing to do with the first story of Chapter 22, nor with anything else in Chapter 23. So why list it here?
 - i) The key is the mention of Rebekah in verse 23. She was to be the wife of Isaac.
 - ii) The answer to the “why are these verses here ” question is to show “God is working out his plan for our lives in ways we cannot see”.
 - a) While God was busy testing Abraham, He is also aware of “other people” including a specific bride for Isaac.
 - iii) More importantly, I think this ties back to the concept of the “bride of Christ” being arranged. Prophetically speaking, we are seeing a word-picture of a “Gentile bride” being prepared for Isaac. More on this in Chapter 24!
 - c) Many of the commentators pick up on the number “12” in this paragraph.
 - i) Abraham’s brother Nahor had 12 sons, 8 through his wife and 4 through his concubine.
 - a) Ishmael had 12 sons who became the leaders of 12 tribes (Genesis 25:16).
 - b) Abraham’s grandson had 12 sons, who lead the 12 tribes of Israel.
 - ii) For whatever reason, God is establishing this “pattern” of the number 12 as representing leadership.
 - iii) The only thing to have to remember about this fact is simply the number “12” in Scripture is established as representing “perfection in the governing sense”.

15. Chapter 23, Verse 1: Sarah lived to be a hundred and twenty-seven years old. ² She died at Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went to mourn for Sarah and to weep over her.
- a) Chapter 23 now switches topic's again: The death of Sarah.
 - i) We have jumped from Abraham's offering of Isaac, to the mentioning of Isaac's future wife Rebekah, to the story of the death of Sarah.
 - b) Sarah is the only woman in the bible whose age is listed at her death.
 - i) That's pretty amazing to think about. It is not said of either of Jacob's wives. The death of Ruth is never mentioned, nor Esther, nor even the mother of Jesus!
 - ii) Yet the specific time of Sarah's death is recorded in Scripture.
 - c) Peter tells why Sarah is "so special" as an example to Christians:
 - i) "For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear." (1st Peter 3:5-6 NIV)
 - ii) Notice Peter says Sarah was beautiful because they were submissive to their husbands. Not that their husbands deserved that effort ☺, but because that act of submissiveness was pleasing to God.
 - iii) Peter also says of Christian women, "You are her (Sarah's) daughters...."
 - a) (By the way, nothing like that is ever said of the Virgin Mary!)
 - b) Peter is teaching that Sarah is the ultimate female example of submissiveness and obedience to God.
 - (1) Give Sarah some credit. Twice she agreed to be sold off as a concubine in order to save her husband's life (in his opinion). She was obedient to God to have children despite her own doubts.
 - iv) Yes we all need to look to Abraham as the "father of the faithful", but Sarah deserves some credit as an example for us as well. That is what Peter talked about. Also, Isaiah gives Sarah a little credit as well:
 - a) "Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn; look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth. When I called him he was but one, and I blessed him and made him many." (Isaiah 51:1-2, NIV)
 - d) The text mentions Abraham's grief. I have not experienced the pain of losing a spouse, nor do I hope to for a long time. Abraham and Sarah were married for close to a century.
 - i) A widow-friend told me that when her husband died, part of her died as well. I suspect that sense of emptiness was going through Abraham's mind as well.
 - ii) God knew the promise of the land was to the descendants of Abraham and Sarah. She was a part of him. Don't take that aspect lightly.

16. Verse 3: Then Abraham rose from beside his dead wife and spoke to the Hittites. He said, ⁴ "I am an alien and a stranger among you. Sell me some property for a burial site here so I can bury my dead."

 - a) The rest of Chapter 23 lists the details and cultural rituals of Abraham buying a cemetery plot for Sarah. The big question is "why"? Why give all of these details? Why not just say, "Sarah died, Abraham mourned for her, and then moved on with his life"? Why spend a whole chapter discussing the business deal of her burial plot?
 - i) Since we don't have direct answers, I get to speculate. ☺
 - ii) The book of Genesis as well as the bible in general spends a lot of time emphasizing that the land where Abraham was, belongs to his descendants. To spend all of this text showing how Sarah was buried in this land, and how Abraham will one day be buried with her, is about trusting that promise.

- iii) In fact, Abraham's grandson Jacob also requested that after he died, that he be buried in the Promised Land (Genesis 50:5).
 - b) With that in view, we can now discuss the details of this chapter.
 - i) The "Hitties" were the dominant tribe of this area and controlled this area. For you history buffs, there is evidence of a "Hittite Empire around this time era.
 - ii) Notice Abraham didn't say to them, "God promised me this land, so get out of the way and let me dig up the ground". ☺
 - a) Abraham knew that God made this promise to him, but that promise works on God's timing and not on Abraham's timing.
 - b) In the meantime, God called Abraham (and us!) to be a witness to the world around us. God says that we as believers inherit all things. (See Matt. 5:5, Rev. 5:10). That doesn't mean we have to right to go steal things because eventually they will belong to us! The same applies to Abraham.
17. Verse 5: The Hittites replied to Abraham, ⁶ "Sir, listen to us. You are a mighty prince among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will refuse you his tomb for burying your dead."
- a) Some of the history-expert commentators believe that this was a "ritual" greeting. The argument goes that before one haggles out a price, you first compliment the person by saying in effect, "You are a great person, and I don't want to charge you anything". It is meant as a greeting of respect, and not a promise to give the land for free.
 - b) The term "mighty price" can also be translated "prince of God".
 - i) Give Abraham credit for being a good witness for God to those around him.
18. Vs. 7: Then Abraham rose and bowed down before the people of the land, the Hittites. ⁸ He said to them, "If you are willing to let me bury my dead, then listen to me and intercede with Ephron son of Zohar on my behalf ⁹ so he will sell me the cave of Machpelah, which belongs to him and is at the end of his field. Ask him to sell it to me for the full price as a burial site among you."
- a) The specific burial plot that Abraham wanted belonged to a guy named Ephron. Abraham was speaking to a crowd of people, as to have a public witness to this exchange of money for the burial lot.
19. Verse 10: Ephron the Hittite was sitting among his people and he replied to Abraham in the hearing of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of his city. ¹¹ "No, my lord," he said. "Listen to me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. I give it to you in the presence of my people. Bury your dead."
- a) Ephron then states that not only he will give Abraham the cave he wants, but also the adjoining field.
 - b) Getting back to the historical-commentators, they believe the part of the reason that Ephron wanted to give Abraham the field as well as the cave he wanted, had to do with taxes and responsibilities. To sell someone that land also meant they were responsible for paying the taxes for that land.
20. Verse 12: Again Abraham bowed down before the people of the land ¹³ and he said to Ephron in their hearing, "Listen to me, if you will. I will pay the price of the field. Accept it from me so I can bury my dead there."
- a) I'm purposely going through this chapter fairly quickly in order to pick up the main points: The main concept to get is that Abraham wanted to bury Sarah in the "Promised Land", and that Abraham refused to accept it as a gift, and insisted on paying for it.
 - b) There is a parallel of this story to that of the end of Chapter 14 of Genesis:
 - i) In that chapter the King of Sodom wanted to give Abraham a great reward for rescuing him and his city. Abraham refused the money in order to show that essentially, "I do this for God and not for money's sake".
 - ii) Here we have Abraham also refusing to get "something for free".

- c) Here is the key point (That means pay attention! ☺). Abraham knew that God wanted to give this land to him. Therefore, Abraham was not going to allow anyone but God to give him any part of the Promised Land. Abraham would not allow the Hittites to give him this plot for free as only God will give him this land.
 - i) Any part of the land that Abraham “gets” prior to his descendants inheriting the land must be paid for by the money he has been blessed by through God.
 - ii) This is about Abraham being a “witness” to the fact that God is giving him this land, and no one else. If Abraham gets any part of this land now, it must only be through God’s financial gifts to Him.
 - iii) The application to us is there are times in our lives we must turn down free gifts if it interferes with our public witness as a representative of God.
21. Verse 14: Ephron answered Abraham, ¹⁵ "Listen to me, my lord; the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver, but what is that between me and you? Bury your dead." ¹⁶ Abraham agreed to Ephron's terms and weighed out for him the price he had named in the hearing of the Hittites: four hundred shekels of silver, according to the weight current among the merchants.
- a) Some of the commentators believed that Ephron wanted to haggle, and the 400-shekel figure was a starting point. Abraham didn’t argue, nor haggle, but just paid the price.
 - i) If that is true, the lack-of-haggling by Abraham became a public witness of how important it was to Abraham to purchase this land and not get it for free.
 - ii) Notice the emphasis in these verses on the fact this was a public transaction. This is emphasized in Verses 16 and 18 that it was done in front of a large group.
22. Verse 17: So Ephron's field in Machpelah near Mamre--both the field and the cave in it, and all the trees within the borders of the field--was deeded ¹⁸ to Abraham as his property in the presence of all the Hittites who had come--to the gate of the city. ¹⁹ Afterward Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave in the field of Machpelah near Mamre (which is at Hebron) in the land of Canaan. ²⁰ So the field and the cave in it were deeded to Abraham by the Hittites as a burial site.
- a) We eventually read that Abraham was buried in the same cave (Genesis 25:8) as well as Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob and Leah! (Genesis 49:29-31)
 - b) Another reason so much text gets spent on this cave-transaction is that it eventually becomes the burial ground for all the patriarchs.
23. Let’s end by tying the events of this chapter in with the big picture.
- a) Genesis as a whole emphasizes two main promises: The promise of the Messiah and the promise that “land” belonging to the descendants of Abraham.
 - b) As a reward for Abraham passing the test of offering Isaac, God reminds Abraham of how the whole world will be blessed by the coming of the Messiah.
 - c) As a more direct reward, Abraham’s descendants will also inherit the land where he is living. Abraham acted on that promise by purchasing a burial plot for himself and his family. He refused to be given an inch of the Promised Land by anyone other than God.
 - d) God makes promises to us, and God likes to work through us. God expects us to act according to the promises and commands given in the bible. That is obedience.
 - e) What we read in Chapter 23 is Abraham being obedient to the promises made by God. Chapter 23 is a practical illustration of obedience, on how we are to act on God’s promises.
 - i) God does not expect us to follow the exact customs of Abraham’s time in business transactions. God expects us to “work within the customs of our times” and at the same time be obedient to God, be a witness for God and act in accordance with what God commands us to do.

24. Let's Pray: Father, we thank you for these word-pictures. You wrote them to teach us about what you have done for us and about our relationship to you. Out of gratitude, help us to live a life of obedience. During our tests, give us the comfort, courage and boldness to know that those tests are there for your glory and for your purpose. Help us to abide in you, in Jesus name we pray, amen.