

## **Genesis in Biblical Perspective: The Gospel of Christ from Genesis – The Last Words and Deeds of Abraham**

### **Genesis 25**

By [Dr. Harry Reeder III](#)

We are going to bring to a conclusion the life of Abraham as we come to the Lord's Supper in Genesis 25. Genesis 25:1–18 says

*[1] Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah. [2] She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. [3] Jokshan fathered Sheba and Dedan. The sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim. [4] The sons of Midian were Ephah, Ephher, Hanoch, Abida, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah. [5] Abraham gave all he had to Isaac. [6] But to the sons of his concubines Abraham gave gifts, and while he was still living he sent them away from his son Isaac, eastward to the east country.*

*[7] These are the days of the years of Abraham's life, 175 years. [8] Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people. [9] Isaac and Ishmael his sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, east of Mamre, [10] the field that Abraham purchased from the Hittites. There Abraham was buried, with Sarah his wife. [11] After the death of Abraham, God blessed Isaac his son. And Isaac settled at Beer-lahai-roi.*

*[12] These are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's servant, bore to Abraham. [13] These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, named in the order of their birth: Nebaioth, the firstborn of Ishmael; and Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, [14] Mishma, Dumah, Massa, [15] Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. [16] These are the sons of Ishmael and these are their names, by their villages and by their encampments, twelve princes according to their tribes. [17] (These are the years of the life of Ishmael: 137 years. He breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people.) [18] They settled from Havilah to Shur, which is opposite Egypt in the direction of Assyria. He settled over against all his kinsmen.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

We come to the end of our study on the life of Abraham and that sets us up for the study of the life of Isaac. Abraham and Sarah now replace the next step of the work of redemption through Isaac and Rebekah. From the text we see Abraham was an “old” man, not even politically correct by using “older” but it says old. Do you know how you know when you’re getting old? It’s when men go to the barber shop and they say to their barber “Thin it on the sides and thicken it on the top.” You’re getting older when Easter comes, you hide your own Easter eggs and you still lose.

In the last study we took the time to see how Abraham finished strong. He is not perfect. He is saved by grace but grace that has taken him from the land of his fathers, brought him to the land of the promise and God’s grace has disciplined, grown him, and developed him. This same grace has now brought him to the end of his age and he is finishing strong. When a believer finishes strong they catapult or give a head start to the next generation. When Abraham finished strong he propelled forward Eliezer, the head of his household, his servant and Abraham propelled forward Isaac by giving him a Godly wife, marriage and inheritance.

Now, one more time we’re looking at the end of Abraham’s life and we’re actually at his obituary. That’s when you know you’re really getting old. It’s when you wake up in the morning, fix your coffee, pick up the paper and the first thing you turn to are the obituaries and you start knowing a lot of people listed there. This is Abraham’s obituary that is given for us in Genesis 25. We have just finish covering the life of Abraham and therefore how many years have we covered in the Bible? We have covered 100 years. How old was Abraham when he was brought out of the land of the Chaldeans? He was 75 years of age. When he dies it says he is 175. So we have been looking at him over the last 100 years and the work of grace in his life. When you finish strong you not only give a head start to the next generation but you also leave behind a legacy of a vibrant witness that echoes for eternity.

In this study I want to give you the last four deeds of Abraham as he finishes strong and the last four words of Abraham as he finishes strong. Notice how this text is put together. Genesis 25:1–5 gives us his concubine, Keturah, who became his wife after Sarah’s death and he had six sons by her. People tend to ask me a lot about this because of Abraham having more than one wife and whether he was really a Christian. He was but you have to remember that when sin came into this world polygamy was introduced by a man named Lamech. Then polygamy began to be spread throughout all of the cultures as sin began to take the culture into a death spiral. God reaches in and starts a work of redemption with Abraham, but if you went on the mission field and stepped into a culture and they had something like polygamy, what’s the first thing you do? Do

you start teaching them about marriage right away? No, you start with the Gospel and then you start discipling them about Biblical doctrines like that of the family.

That's what God is doing here with Abraham. He saves him by grace. He is redeeming him. He gives him "a" wife, Sarah and now Abraham still has some cultural stuff left onto him and God will eventually bring all of that out. Also remember that Abraham doesn't have a Bible to turn to. The Bible won't come until the first author comes which is Moses and those won't be until another 430 years. So he is working off of special revelation as God speaks to him and God is getting first things first. Then He'll move through this matter of a correct doctrine of the family. So after Sarah's death, Abraham has Keturah as a wife and has six sons with her. He takes care of these six sons with gifts that are given to them. All of these six sons will become nations and four of these sons will come back again in the Bible in relationship to Israel.

Then in Genesis 25:6–11 it talks about Abraham's death, the obituary. Then in Genesis 25:12–18 Abraham had another concubine, Hagar, who had a son named Ishmael and he will have 12 sons who will all become princes. Eight of those sons will have interactions with their nations with Israel in the future. The focus I want to look at is in Genesis 25:6–11, the death of Abraham. Four things happen in the death of Abraham.

The first thing Abraham does before he dies, is he finishes strong by establishing clearly Isaac as his heir, not his six sons with Keturah or Ishmael or Ishmael's sons. He gives all that he has to Isaac. He blesses him and makes sure he has a Godly wife. He makes sure he has an inheritance and then God affirms that blessing. So Isaac is established by Abraham and confirmed by God as the heir of the blessings of God in the covenant.

The second last deed is Abraham acts responsibly and takes care of all of his children. Genesis 25:5,6a says *[5] Abraham gave all he had to Isaac. [6] But to the sons of his concubines Abraham gave gifts, and while he was still living...* So he took care of those whom he was responsible for. The Bible says that if a man does not provide for his own he is worse than an infidel. Abraham takes care of all whom he is responsible for.

The third last deed is while he is still living he makes sure that Isaac is the unrivaled heir of God's promises. Genesis 25:6 says *[6] But to the sons of his concubines Abraham gave gifts, and while he was still living he sent them away from his son Isaac, eastward to the east country.* Abraham did not want Isaac to have a wife from the Canaanites. He wanted him to have a wife of the covenant and to marry in the Lord. Secondly, he didn't want his son to leave the land to get his wife. Isaac stays in the land. Then he wants the wife brought to Isaac for Isaac to live in the land and now that Isaac lives in the land Abraham makes sure that he has no rivals in the land. He sends all of his sons from his concubines

away. He took care of them but he sends them away. So he is unrivaled in the recipients of the promises of God including the land.

The fourth deed is a proper burial is assured. He is full of years which means content, at peace and is laid aside in the cave of Machpelah. While God has promised him the land he doesn't have the land yet. He leads Isaac there and clears the land of any rivals knowing that God will fulfill His promises and give him that land. Right now the only thing he owns is a burial plot. Abraham is set aside in that burial plot with Sarah in the land. An interesting thing happens at this burial. It is a reunion of Isaac and Ishmael at the burial. Now those are the last deeds of Abraham. What are the last words?

I love the last words of various people. I have a book titled Unshakeable Faith which is the last words of Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, Teddy Roosevelt and it's their interesting last words. The last words of Abraham though, he didn't utter. The last words of Abraham were said two thousand years after his death and we're reading them another two thousand years later. They were uttered by three men – the writer of Hebrews, Paul, and James, the half-brother of Jesus. Even more importantly they are uttered by the Holy Spirit. What are the last words about Abraham given by the Holy Spirit?

Let's start by looking at Romans 4. The first last word of Abraham, in which I deeply appreciate the insight of Kent Hughes on these matters, is from Paul inspired by the Holy Spirit concerning Abraham. Romans 4:1–5, 23–25 says

*[1] What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? [2] For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. [3] For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." (quote from Genesis 15:6) [4] Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. [5] And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness... [23] But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, [24] but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, [25] who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.*

What is it that Paul gives as a last word about Abraham? He was saved by faith alone. Sinners are saved by faith alone in Jesus Christ. Some say that you have to be circumcised to be saved. No, Abraham was saved when he believed according to Genesis 15:6 and Romans 4:3. When was Abraham circumcised? It is found in Genesis 17. When was he saved? That is in Genesis 15. He is saved by faith alone. That is the first thing to learn from the life of Abraham – the word of faith. You are saved by faith alone.

What is a second word about Abraham? Let's look at Galatians 3. Paul again gives us a last word from the life of Abraham. This time the last word is Christ. Here we are told that the life of Abraham is a life in which he is saved by faith in Jesus Christ. Galatians 3:6–9, 25–26, 29 says

*[6] just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”? [7] Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. [8] And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles (covers everybody else) by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” [9] So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith... [25] But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, [26] for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith... [29] And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.*

It's not in faith that saves you. It's faith in Christ that saved you. So the second word from the life of Abraham is faith in Christ alone.

What's the third word from Abraham? Let's look at James 2. James 2:14–16, 21–24 says

*[14] What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? [15] If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, [16] and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? [17] So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. [21] Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? [22] You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; [23] and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God. [24] You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.*

Is this a contradiction? No, you're saved by faith alone in Christ alone. He is not saying that faith must have your works for your salvation but he is telling you that saving faith works. He is not saying it is faith plus works in Christ but it is saving faith in Christ works and the works are not what saves us. Christ saves us by faith but a faith that unites you to Christ will always have evident to it obedience and a commitment to follow the Lord. So, authentic saving faith is never alone. I'm saved by faith alone in Christ alone but authentic saving faith is never alone. So the first word was faith, the second word was Christ and the third word is authentic faith works attached to faith.

What is the last word? The word is faithfulness. Let's look in Hebrews 11. Here is this list of these Godly men and women who are our witnesses of the power of the Gospel of grace, who lived by faith and died in faith. The one given the most attention and the most space in Hebrews 11 is Abraham. Hebrews 11:8–9, 17–18 says

*[8] By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. [9] By faith he 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. [17] By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, [18] of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named."*

By faith, he died in faith because he lived by faith and the last word from Abraham that shouts from eternity, as an evidence of the authenticity of faith, is faithfulness. He was full of faith. Faith is not the act of a moment, like when you sign a card or go forward in a meeting. Faith is the acquisition of a life. We live by faith. I want to close with a couple of thoughts as we come to the Lord's Supper.

The first thing is an inheritance. What's a good inheritance? I think Biblically when you do a good inheritance for your children you give them a spiritual legacy attached to your name. You give them a good education that is Christ centered. You give them property as they move into life but most of all you lay down your life to give them Christ. Now Isaac is the seed of promise. The trajectory ends in Christ. Abraham gives all to Isaac but the Father of Christ at the resurrection gave all to His Son. He has inherited everything and if you know Jesus you are a joint heir with Jesus Christ. You have inherited all. Not only have you inherited forgiveness of sins and a new life but you have inherited all. You are a joint heir with Christ. You have all with Him for eternity and you will rule and reign with Christ.

The second word is separation. Did you notice what happened in the text? The children of the flesh were separated from the child of the promise, Isaac. There is coming a day of separation. That day of separation is that those who do not know Christ will be banished from eternity with Christ into a Christ-less eternity. I want you to be gathered and not separated.

That's why I love this last piece, an invitation. It said in the text that Abraham died and then was gathered to his people. Then it says he was buried with Sarah. When people read the part about Abraham being 'gathered to his people' they think it means his bones were put in a grave with Sarah. The word 'people' is plural and the name Sarah is singular. So 'gathered to his people' is not describing him being buried in the grave with Sarah. 'Gathered to his people' is

an Old Testament peeling back of what we find in the New Testament that when believers die they are gathered with their people.

Who are your people today? Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones the great preacher, when he was converted, before he became a preacher was still a doctor. He was going through London his first Christmas as a Christian and he was invited to this marvelous banquet. As he was going through the banquet hall he passed a rag tag band of Salvation Army trumpet players, playing all off key. As he looked at all the ritz and glamour he pointed to these believers (the band players) and said to his wife bearing witness of Christ, "Those are my people."

There will come a day when you will breathe your last and may I today, while you are breathing now, invite you to Christ and the breath of Life, so that you will be in that Day gathered with His people, all who know Christ, from every nation and tribe. I'm very thankful I was born in the country I was born in and I'm going to be a Christian citizen but as much as I love it, it's not my people. My people are believers from every tribe and nation and on that Day we will be gathered up.

It is interesting that this day we're going to gather around the Table with a large number of tribes and languages because we are including our ethnic congregations. This is just a little taste, but that Day we'll be gathered together singing praise to God with all who know Him. I pray your people are His people from every tribe and nation. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together as we gather together around Your Table. We anticipate that glorious Day when we gather at the Table of the Lord that marriage feast in which this multifaceted bride of Christ comes forward from all the nations. Lord, we want to be gathered with Your people. Your people are our people. Father, as we come to this Table we who were not a people, who have become the people of God, it is because of Jesus who gave His body to bear our sins, who shed His blood that we are forgiven. So we come to the Table to fix our eyes on Jesus. Encourage Your people and any who don't know You, O Holy Spirit, You invite them now to Christ who saves. I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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