

Bury the Dead

- ²⁰ Now after these things it was told to Abraham, "Behold, Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor:
²¹ Uz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram,
²² Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel."
²³ (Bethuel fathered Rebekah.) These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother.
²⁴ Moreover, his concubine, whose name was Reumah, bore Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

Genesis 23:1 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."
¹⁰ 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,
¹¹ "No, 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."
¹² Then Abraham bowed down before the people of the land.
¹³ 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."
¹⁴ Ephron answered Abraham,
¹⁵ "My lord, listen to me: a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that between you and me? Bury your dead."
¹⁶ Abraham listened to Ephron, and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver that he had named in the hearing of the Hittites, four hundred shekels of silver, according to the weights current among the merchants.
¹⁷ So the field of Ephron in 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
¹⁸ to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the Hittites, before all who went in at the gate of his city.
¹⁹ 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.
²⁰ The field and the cave that is in it were made over to Abraham as property for a burying place by the Hittites.

Genesis 22:23-23:20

Bury My Dead

There are many stories of people burying the dead in the Bible. But in only two of them do the words “bury” and “dead” appear in the same verse. It happens in six different verses in our story today ([Gen 23:4](#); [6](#); [8](#); [11](#); [13](#); [15](#)). They also appear together in Matthew and Luke’s retelling of a saying of Jesus ([Matt 8:22](#); [Luke 9:60](#)).

Jesus is up in Capernaum, a city on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. He is healing and teaching and a crowd began to accumulate around him. So he gave orders to go over to the other side of the lake, anywhere from 3-12 miles by boat, a trip that would have taken some time. The command was obviously meant to thin out the crowds. One man said he would follow the Lord anywhere he went. But Jesus said he has no place to lay his head. Another man said he would follow him, but he had to go and bury his father first. Jesus said, “[Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead.](#)”

In our story, Abraham tells the Hittites that he needs some property for a burying place “[that I might bury my dead](#)” ([6](#)). Three times he says he needs to bury his dead. Three times they tell him to go and bury his dead. In light of Jesus’ comments to this disciple, was Abraham sinning? Should he have left the bones uncovered and unburied? Should he have let someone else do the burying? Such are the absurd kinds of questions that are raised when we take Jesus out of context. And many people have indeed taken many things that Jesus has said out of context.

First Things First

Our passage today is a lengthy chapter telling us about the burial of Abraham’s beloved Sarah. But I have not yet spoken about a few verses between this story and the near sacrifice of Isaac, and it needs to be mentioned. We learn that after Abraham returned with Isaac, he lived in Beersheba for many days ([Gen 22:19](#)). Many years later, someone came to him with word of his last living brother Nahor. We met [Nahor](#) back in Ch. 11 where we learned that he married a woman named [Milcah](#).

Now word gets to him that Nahor has had [children](#). Many children. In fact, he has [twelve](#) of them. All boys, just like Ishmael will have ([Gen 17:20](#)) and Jacob too ([35:22](#)). Eight of these boys are born to Milcah, his wife. [Uz](#) and [Buz](#) are the first two mentioned. They are great sounding names, but they also may very well be related to the book of Job. Job comes from the land of Uz ([Job 1:1](#)) and Elihu is a Buzite ([Job 32:2](#)). This would explain how both of them knew of the Living God, as they may have been related to Abraham.

Nahor is up north by Haran in southern Turkey. Uz is probably a little farther south. But the location here is not the focus. The sons are. Obviously, Nahor has been fruitful and multiplied. And Abraham's two sons pale in comparison. There is nothing particularly striking about any of these names, save one. It is one not among the twelve, and it is neither Nahor's child nor a son. It is the name **Rebekah**. Rebekah is the daughter of Bethuel ("separated for God"), granddaughter of Nahor. In actuality, she is the reason for this genealogy, because she will become a very important a chapter from now. The purpose of this genealogy here seems to be to let us know that both Abraham and Sarah were alive to know and plan for Isaac's future, a future that would not see the boy marry from among the Canaanites or Egyptians, but from among his own kin.

The Death of a Matriarch

Sadly, the next thing we learn is that **Sarah dies**. I am always struck when I read the death of a Matriarch like Sarah or Rebekah or Rachel in Genesis. It makes me so sad, like I'm losing my own grandmother. No matter how many times I read these stories, the same feeling washes over me. These are the wives of the great men of Genesis, the fathers' of our faith. Curiously, their passing always happens first; the husband always has to bury his wife. This causes a profound melancholy to linger in the air over them and over us. The Patriarch is left alone in the world of wandering, his companion going before him to meet her maker. The picture it paints of so very sad. Such is the horror that is death, the great curse which we are all doomed to inherit. Perhaps this very thought is deliberately important to Genesis, even as our story is, for it brings us back to the Garden, and the Fall, and sin, and death.

Sarah lived to the ripe old age of **127 years** (Gen 23:1).¹ This means that Isaac is now probably over 30. He knew his mother for a good long time, considering how old she was when he was born. She died in a town called Kiriath-arba. A scribe after Moses inserts the name "Hebron" into the text here in order to help his own readers know where this place was, because it is no longer called that in his day.

Kiriath-arba was named, as Joshua tells us, after **Arba**, "**The greatest man among the Anakim**" (**Josh 14:15**), a race of **giants** that were still around in Joshua's day and had to be killed. Arba was the father of Anak (**Josh 15:13**), who was the father of three giant sons named Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmai (**15:14**). Numbers says that "**the sons of Anak ... come from the Nephilim**" and the spies of Israel

¹ "The midrash saw symbolism in it: 100 stands for great age, 20 beauty, and 7 blamelessness. The number 127 also lends itself to easy arithmetic analysis like the patriarchal ages: $127 = 2 \times 60 + 7$." Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, vol. 2, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 125.

seemed like grasshoppers in the sight of these behemoths (Num 13:33). So we know that Abraham is hanging around in giant country.

The meaning of Arba is either “perfect in stature” or “foursquare.” Kiriath-Arba is literally “city of four” and may have been named after the four cities of Aner, Eschol, Mamre and Hebron. We have seen Hebron once. “So Abram moved his tent and came and settled by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron” (Gen 13:18). In other words, the place where Sarah died is well known to Abraham. In fact, it is the very place where God came with two angels and promised them both their son Isaac. Since Abraham was down in Beersheba and Sarah has died here in Hebron, it is reasonable to assume that he took her back to the place she loved most, so that she could see it one last time before her days were at an end.

But the most important feature of this place is that it is “in the land of Canaan” (Gen 23:2). This statement is actually the key that explains why so much time is spent on the subject of Abraham’s acquiring a place for Sarah to be buried. For there has to be some reason, other than that Moses simply wanted to tell us about where Sarah was buried. He isn’t just rambling on to take up space on an expensive piece of parchment. He could have done this all in a sentence and moved on. Instead, we get an entire chapter that tells us about her burial.

Abraham Buys a Cave

Bemoan

Two different aspects of the man Abraham come into view in our story. The first is simply that of a husband who loved his wife. Oh how we need more of this in our world today. “And Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her” (Gen 23:2). Matthew Henry writes,

He came to her tent, and sat down by the corpse, there to pay the tribute of his tears, that his eye might affect his heart, and that he might pay the greater respect to the memory of her that was gone. Note, It is not only lawful, but it is a duty, to lament the death of our near relations, both in compliance with the providence of God, who thus calls to weeping and mourning, and in honour to those to whom honour is due. Tears are a tribute due to our deceased friends. When a body is sown, it must be watered. But we must not sorrow as those that have no hope; for we have a good hope through grace both concerning them and concerning ourselves.²

² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 54.

This ought to tell us immediately that Jesus is not talking about being heartless with our dead friends. He himself wept for Lazarus, who was, coincidentally, buried in a tomb.

I think we all know that the Bible says that there is “a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance” (Ecc 3:4). As short a time ago as the 1960s, our culture still understood that, as the Birds came out with a song to this very text. But as another rebel prophesied, “But times, they are a changin’.” And today, it seems like there is **only time to laugh and dance** in our culture. Weeping and lamenting are so passé, especially in what should be the more serious and somber times of life.

Too many **churches** are little more than having weekly parties. There is almost no confession of sin, no time for silence, no place for introspection. It is just move, sing, be loud. And so we drown out the sound of silence and voice of God with lots of noise and buzz. The same goes for the **Lord’s Day**, which is now busy, busy, busy and full of the thrills of this life, in many cases to the exclusion of the life to come. And then there are actual **funerals**. Even funerals are now turned into parties? *We must not weep*. We must not think about death. We must not consider our own mortality. We most certainly must not tolerate a preacher who will talk about such things. We must have a party. We must be happy. We must put these things out of our minds.

And yet, ours is a culture ironically obsessed with death in movies, television, and video games, but in utter denial at church, funerals, and other places where once people went in and were somber, lamenting, mourning, crying over their sin, weeping over death. Beloved, we must stop this madness and call people to their senses. Look at how Abraham acted towards his beloved wife, his treasured friend, his true companion, the beautiful Sarah—Princess of Israel.

Listen to the traditions found throughout the Bible that people would do in front of the dead corpse. They would rend their garments, disheveling their hair, cut their beard, scatter dust on his head, and fast for many days (Lev 21:5, 10; 2 Sam 1:11, 12; 13:31; Job 1:20; 2:12; cf. “Burial and Mourning,” *NBD*, 170–72). This is how cultures not obsessed with stalling the inevitable treat death, and it is a very appropriate response. May Matthew Henry’s words find a place in your heart.

Barter

The other side of Abraham that comes out in this story is **his faith**, but on the surface it is **not so easy to see how**. So let us consider the bulk of the story and how Abraham buys land for the burial of his beloved. It takes the form of **three separate**

speeches, where Abraham will repeat the idea of burying his dead in each, and the responses will say something about the same in each. “Abraham rose up from before his dead and said to the Hittites...” (Gen 23:3). These Hittites come many centuries before the great Hittite sea-faring culture of 1,200 B.C. They may be a forerunner (Walton), or they may be unrelated (Wenham).³

Whatever the case, Abraham speaks to a whole group of them, publically, perhaps in some kind of formal political or covenantal transaction. “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” (Gen 23:4). The words “sojourner” (*ger*) and “foreigner” (*toshab*) are both found in the Law of Moses. The former is an alien living in a place that does not belong to them—such as Israel living in Egypt. Israel is urged to protect them in the Law (Deut 14:29), because the natural tendency of man is to treat the alien poorly.

The later is probably a synonym, however, unlike the sojourner, they could not participate in the Passover, even if they were circumcised (Ex 12:19, 45-59). That puts them on the fringe of society. I’m not sure that a “green card” or “visa” alien vs. an illegal alien is exactly equivalent with these two words, because they didn’t have such things, but the way Americans view the two is probably similar to how these people were viewed in that culture. In other words, Abraham is setting himself up as someone much lower than the Hittites. He is asking them to give him a piece of property. It is interesting that at this point, he basically asks them for a gift, a handout if you will.

Their reply has to be read into this context. “Hear us, my lord⁴; 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” (Gen 23:6). Rather than treat him an alien or an illegal, he is viewed as the very opposite in their eyes. He is “a prince of Elohim” (the verbs make it singular: “God”). Abraham has gained a very favorable reputation among these foreigners. They regard him as being blessed by the High God such that God the King regards Abraham as his very son the prince. This is a demonstration that the promises made to Abraham were being made known to many people.

Because he is so important and powerful, they offer to simply give him whatever tomb he might want. They will not try to stop him. They will not try to cheat

³ On the association of the Hittites to the giants, see Num 13:27. Given that the later Hittite culture was not gigantic, perhaps Abraham is dealing with a different (giant?) clan, unassociated with them (or perhaps, later, taken over by them).

⁴ Abraham called Yahweh his “*adonai*.” Now they call Abraham their *adonai*.

him. They will not withhold from him anything he wants. They are blessing Abraham, and those who bless Abraham will be blessed.

Abraham shows the custom of **bowing** to the Hittites (**Gen 23:7**), repaying their kind words with actions of his own. This begins the **second exchange**. “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; 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” (8-9). Abraham has his eye on a very particular plot. He knows the owner. He knows the place. And, he knows that this kind of a transaction has to be done publically and with permission, so that he does not get himself into trouble later on. Notice also that Abraham now says that **he will pay** for the land. Ah, he wasn’t looking for a handout. He was simply opening up negotiations.

Ephron was sitting among the Hittites (10), for he was a Hittite, and an obvious leader in the community. He answered in front of everyone (which happened to be at the gate of the city), “No, 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” (11). Ephron embodies the same kindness as the larger group, or at least it appears that way. It is not entirely clear, though, that this is what is going on.

As we keep reading, we find **Abraham bowing again** before the people of the land (12). Now the **third dialogue** begins. Abraham says to Ephron in the hearing of the people, “But if you will, hear me: I give the price of the field. Accept if from me, that I may bury my dead there” (13). There are at least three possibilities at this point for what I think may be happening.

First, Ephron has **honestly offered** his field free of charge to Abraham because his reputation has preceded him. Or perhaps the two men know each other and are friends. Or perhaps Ephron is afraid of what God might do to him if he does not give Abraham what he wants? Any of these are possible motives if Ephron is truly offering Abraham his field for free.

A second option is that Ephron has a **sinister agenda** in mind. If he offers the land for free and Abraham takes it, Abraham will be beholden to him in the future. Abraham would be a powerful ally to have in the event of a future war. Or, if things went sour between the two of them, Ephron could call down a war because this arrangement has been made in the presence of so many others. It is quite possible that this is what was going through his mind. The text is not clear.

The third option may be the best, based on what happens next. Abraham clearly will not take the land for free. He is smarter than that. But he is also more

righteous than that. Many years later, a similar kind of transaction will occur between King David and a man named Araunah who owned a threshing floor that David needed to appease God's wrath. When offered to him for free David replied, "No, but I will buy it from you for a price. I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing" (2 Sam 24:24).

People today need to remember a good kind of pride, one that says, "I won't take that handout from you," because not only does it cost me nothing, but it hurts you as well. Clearly, taking Araunah's or Ephron's land would have hurt them to one degree or another. And this is not good. Also, it seems to me that there is an inherent dignity that is stolen when people just take things. Something is lost inside of us. Probably more than just one thing.

We live in a culture where politicians make their living giving people whatever their hearts desire, for nothing. It creates corruption in the hearts of both the giver and the receiver. There is something in all of this that is orbiting around the commandment not to steal, even when it is offered for free. That's why I say Abraham is more righteous than that. I could go on and on about this point, because of how destructive such behavior can become to a person or a culture when this slippery slope is traveled, but it isn't really that important to the story, so we will return to the story.

My point here is that this whole exchange could be nothing more unusual than the typical dickering and posturing of a barter society that engages in flattery and, in my opinion, dishonesty in the things they say to one another, all to make themselves look more generous. OK, so I'll return to one more social commentary. Frankly, I'm glad that I live in a country where the price is the price. I've been to bartering cultures, and they make me uncomfortable, not just because the way they do it isn't the way I do it, but because of what I just said. It just seems so fake to me. You have to go through this huge game just to get your product. The seller is interested in making as much money as possible, which is fine I guess, but at what cost?

Perhaps every culture in the Middle East has been like this since before the reckoning of time. Western cultures increasingly moved away from that model, but apparently, so does Abraham. Notice what happens next. Ephron answers Abraham (14), "My lord, listen to me: a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that between you and me? Bury your dead" (15). Honestly, this sounds just like the game to me, not like a man who is diligently trying to give away his land.

No one knows quite how fair 400 shekels of silver would be for land in those days. We have examples all over the map for the price of land in the Bible. "David paid only one-eighth that amount—50 shekels of silver—for the purchase of the

temple site from Araunah (2 Sam 24:24). Jeremiah paid 17 shekels of silver for his cousin's field in Anathoth (Jer 32:9). Omri paid fifteen times as much as Abraham—two talents of silver (6,000 shekels)—for the large hill of Samaria (1 Kgs 16:24). In another patriarchal land transaction Jacob paid 100 *q'si'á* (value unknown) for a piece of land in Shechem (Gen 33:19).⁵ Based on these things, my guess is that Ephron is suggesting a very high price, but notice that it is only an innuendo. “What's 400 shekels between friends, eh?” Uh huh.

Buy

As Abraham listened to Ephron, he began weighing out the silver that he had named in the hearing of the Hittites—four hundred shekels of silver—according to the weights current among the merchants (16). Abraham would not dicker or barter or posture for a better price. If that's what the man wants, that's what he gets. He short circuited everything about that system of exchanging goods that repulses me so much. Why? Again, I think it is because Abraham is a righteous man. He has no interest in such games, at least not here. The field belongs to Ephron, so he'll pay his price. He didn't come here to get a good deal. He came here to bury his wife. That is what it means to have one's priorities on straight. I believe in this particular story, Abraham is acting about as classy and honorable as he does in any story we have of him, and there is much we could learn from his example here.

The result of this transaction is that Abraham has now bought the field. “So the field of Ephron in 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” (17-18). It is most probable that this very piece of land now has a Mosque on top of it, it is still there to this day, though the body almost certainly is not.

But the purchase of *this* land is the reason, I believe, that this story is in the Bible. Abraham is acting in faith, faith in the promise. Recall the promise, “Go to the land I will show you” (Gen 12:1). Abraham “set out to go to the land of Canaan” (5). “To your offspring I will give this land” (7). “I will give to you and to your seed after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession” (17:8). The land that Abraham has now purchased for his wife's body is in the land of Canaan (23:2, 19). “The acquisition of the land is one of the most significant aspects of the covenant agreement.”⁶ Abraham now owns a tiny

⁵ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 18–50*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 135.

⁶ John H. Walton, *Genesis*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 534.

piece of the land, not to live in, but to die in, to be buried in. Through **legal** means (“The field and the cave that is in it were made over to Abraham as property for a buying place by the Hittites;” vs. 20), through the **fear** of God (“you are a prince of God among us; vs. 6), and through **Abraham’s faith** and righteousness, the promise is now starting to be fulfilled.

This is of the greatest importance to you, not because God promises you the land of Canaan, but because **God has fulfilled his promises to Abraham** in time and space. Therefore, you may trust him. It seems to me that the greater application is not to ask how God can do for you what he did for Abraham. This is often to mis-apply Scripture. Rather, it is to ask, has God really done what he said that he would do? **Can he be trusted?** Is Christianity really worth believing? The is the greater question because it is more faithful to the intent of the Scripture, and it helps you answer a much longer lasting question, a question of placing faith and trust in the God of Abraham. It is not a coincidence that Sarah was buried in Canaan. It was the decree and will of God according to the promises made by him. Historical fulfillment, a promise keeping God, and trust in something objective is what differentiates the Christian religion from all others. It is why you must believe what is said throughout the Scripture concerning God and his Son Jesus. Do you believe what they have told you to believe?

Bury

Though receiving as a possession the very thing he was promised to possess is the main reason this story is in the Bible, there is one other thing in the story that contributes to the climax. “**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**” (Gen 23:19). **Abraham buried Sarah**. These simple words tell of profound truth. They tell of the **love** of a husband for his wife, especially after all he went through to secure just the right place for her. They tell of the Jewish and Christian respect for the human body. This deserves a little attention, especially in our day.

It is becoming increasingly popular to incinerate human remains, thus emulating the pagans. As our culture gets increasingly more pagan, it should not surprise us to see the revival of all sorts of pagan practices. Now, I’ve spoken about this before. I do not believe there is something eternally damning about cremation. I also understand the pragmatic cost of burial vs. cremation, especially in big cities. This can be a legitimate factor in deciding what to do about a loved one or yourself in the future. I would add two points to think about with Abraham in this regard. First, he **did not consider the cost**, but rather paid a huge sum for the sake of his wife’s burial. Second, Abraham also had a lot of money, as have learned from other stories. So I

don't think we can use his actions as an argument for either side of this difficult question.

But I get asked about this question more than most. What I would say is simply that you should think about why pagans do what they do, and why Christians have always done what they have done. Pagans do not see the body as a good thing, but rather as something to be escaped. Spirit is what matters to them (pun intended), and it doesn't matter if you are a Christian Gnostic, a Greek Platonist, or an Odin worshiping Viking. On the other hand, Christians (and some non-Christians like the Egyptians or the Chinese) take the body as equally important to the spirit. It is worthy of dignity.

The thing to think about here, is that there can easily be a [theology](#) that is conveyed in what we do with our dead, and we must be on guard that we do not unwittingly 1. Accept bad theology or 2. Convey support of that theology to others through the choices we make. If we cremate, we ought to tell people why we are doing it.

God is certainly capable of resurrecting the scattered remains of the ashes of a burnt body. That is not the question. The question is, what are we saying about the body, if anything? And notice here a further bunny trail. It doesn't say Abraham buried "the husk of his wife's life force," either. He buried Sarah. When we bury a person or burn *their* body, we are burying them and burning *them*. Most of my relatives are really under the ground in Craig, CO in at least some sense of the word.

True, human beings are more than just bodies.⁷ We have an immaterial part of us that lives on after death. But we are also [not less than our bodies](#). And the great hope of Christianity is that our *bodies* will be raised from the dead. We will not be floating iridescent phantoms or ghosts forever. We will be united with our bodies when they are made new, transformed like our Lord Jesus himself.

Speaking of him, we ought to consider that Jesus was buried like Sarah was, in a tomb like Sarah. They took great care of his deceased body when they took him down from the cross. And it was that very body that was raised to newness of life, as Thomas learned when he touched Jesus' hands and side. Thus, the burial of Sarah in the Promised Land foreshadows, as any burial in Israel in the OT would have, the death and burial of the Savior.

As we saw in the previous story with Abraham and Isaac, they looked forward to the resurrection of the dead. This was not a made up doctrine by the Apos-

⁷ Though, there is a monistic view of the human being called "Materialism" that has been defended by the likes of Greg Bahnsen. This argues that "soul" and "spirit" and "body" are all synonymous. I do not agree with this position, however.

bles of Jesus. It was a long awaited hope that goes back to the earliest of all biblically written stories—Job who said, “Even after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God” (Job 19:26). I was told in Seminary by a professor not to read the NT into the OT here to make it say something it never meant. I rather believe this kind of idea comes from a very skeptical view of resurrection and of where Jesus and the Disciples got the idea from in the first place.

But as we saw with Isaac, the Scriptures—the OT—foresaw the resurrection of Jesus on the third day. So they obviously knew about the concept. A future resurrection was certain something Abraham awaited, either in this life or in the next. But such a hope is only found in Christ, who was dead, buried, and raised to new life by the power of God. God considered his own Son worthy of greater dignity than Sarah, and in his mercy, he offers the very life of Christ to Sarah or Abraham or any who will trust in him by faith alone.