

# Genesis 23-25 - Faithful unto Death

## I. Introduction

### A. This week we are finishing the story of Abraham

1. I still have two weeks left before Dan starts the story of Isaac/Jacob in chapter 25
2. But the next two weeks we are going to go back and look at the story of Lot and why he is in Abraham's story

### B. This week we are going to cover a lot of ground - going over chapters 23, 24 and part of 25

1. These are the remainder of the third section of Abraham's story - the section on faith
2. Each of these three stories has much good that we could focus on, but I'm going to go over each of the stories relatively fast
3. So we are not going to cover everything that is in each chapter - we aren't going to exhaust the teaching I could do from each of these stories
4. As a side note, I hope you don't think that I have exhausted the teaching on any story from this section on Abraham - go back and learn more from Abraham - but I have tried to hit some big important points and show how Abraham's story points to Christ and therefore spurs us on

### C. So, this week, I want to make two faith is statements and three Christ is statements out of these last chapters

1. But, before I get to my faith is and Christ is statements, I'll have a brief point talking about how Abraham's story finishes
2. During this point, I'll give a fly-by overview of everything happening in these chapters, so we can place the faith is and Christ is statements in context against the background of the stories

### D. Proposition and Outline

1. Proposition: Abraham finishes his life in faith, yearning for and pointing to Christ.
2. Outline:
  - a. Finishing Abraham's story
  - b. Faith is... (because Christ is ...)
  - c. Faith is... (because Christ is ...)
  - d. Christ is...

## II. Finishing Abraham's Story

### A. As we go through the last three chapters of Abraham's story, trying to figure out where each new story starts isn't as easy as it might seem

1. Usually I refer to three stories here
  - a. Genesis 23 - the death of Sarah
  - b. Genesis 24 - a wife for Isaac
  - c. Genesis 25 - the death of Abraham
2. But there may be other ways to separate these stories
  - a. But before I split up the stories, I want to point out what each of these stories does for us
  - b. Each story helps us close off the story of Abraham and move toward the story of Jacob, the generations of Isaac
  - c. So, the burden of this section is that we are moving on, Abraham has received the promises and now it is time to give the promises to the next generation
  - d. If we look at it in that light, we may decide to split the stories up differently
3. There are actually four stories in these last three chapters, if we're going to be detailed
  - a. In Genesis 25, first there is the story of Abraham's other descendants
  - b. And then there is the story of Abraham's death
  - c. So, there are four stories, but we might pair these up into two sets of two
  - d. So Genesis 23 (the death of Sarah) and 24 (a wife for Isaac) go together and have one theme
  - e. And the two stories of Genesis 25 (Abraham's other children and the death of Abraham) go together and have one theme
4. We can clearly see this organization in the first two stories
  - a. When we look at the text, Sarah's death and Isaac's wife are closely tied together
  - b. The story of Sarah's death actually starts with the genealogy of Rebekah
    - i. Genesis 22:20-24 - *Now after these things it was told to Abraham, "Behold, Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor: Uz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram, Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel." (Bethuel fathered Rebekah.) These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother. Moreover, his concubine, whose name was Reumah, bore Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.*
  - c. Then we have the story of the death of Sarah
  - d. Then we have the story of a wife for Isaac
  - e. But, then, the wife for Isaac story ends with a pointer back to the death of Sarah
    - i. Genesis 24:67 - *Then Isaac brought her into the tent of Sarah his mother and took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.*
    - ii. Isaac took Rebekah into Sarah's tent, and Isaac was comforted after the death of his mother
  - f. The stories are obviously meant to be taken together
5. The second two stories obviously go together as well, in fact it is somewhat hard to separate them
6. These two story sets work together to push us toward Genesis 25:19 - the generations of Isaac
  - a. One story in each set details the death of the matriarch or the patriarch
  - b. And the other story in each set details the appointing of a new matriarch or patriarch

### B. Genesis 23-24 - The matriarch Sarah dies and a new matriarch is appointed

1. The emphasis of transition in these two stories can be seen when we juxtapose the last verses of Genesis 23 and the first verses of Genesis 24 - *After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah east of Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan. The field and the cave that is in it were made over to Abraham as property for a burying place by the Hittites. Now Abraham was old, well advanced in years. And the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he had, "Put your hand under my thigh, that I may make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell, but will go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac."*

- a. When you read the text, it appears that Sarah's death prompted Abraham to look for a wife for Isaac
  - b. This is confirmed by the timeline - Sarah dies when Isaac is about 37 and marries Rebekah at 40
  - c. Now, you might say that there was several years difference, but remember that they had to journey back and forth from Ur and there probably was substantial preparation for the journey - it is easy to imagine that the story of Genesis 24 spans more than a year in time
  - d. So, there may have been some delay to mourn for Sarah, but the text and the timeline call us to see that Abraham knew there needed to be a new matriarch in the promised line
2. As I consider the importance given to finding a new matriarch, I think there are several things we could learn, but the first thing that strikes me is that Genesis is not 'Patriarchal' as some detractors make it
    - a. Many critics of the Bible and, in another sense, many critics of 'traditional' roles for men and women, disparage Genesis and the Old Testament as being Patriarchal - only considering men and what men do and ignoring the contributions of women
    - b. But here we see that Genesis doesn't ignore the women, in fact, when one woman is lost, basically everything is put on hold until a new woman is joined to the promised line
    - c. The matriarchs of the Bible are just as important as the patriarchs - now, on the other hand, the Bible and the Old Testament does support 'Biblical' roles for men and women, so the matriarchs and patriarchs take different roles, but they are both very important - Genesis doesn't focus on the patriarchs to the neglect of the matriarchs
  3. But, aside from responding to detractors, there is a bigger reason for seeing this, and its something I've pointed to a couple of times as we've gone through Genesis
    - a. The reason the woman is so important in Genesis traces back to Genesis 3
    - b. Genesis 3:15 - *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."*
    - c. God tells us that His promise is going to be propagated through the woman
    - d. Sarah bore the promised son, Isaac, but now that Sarah is dead, we need a new woman who will continue the promise - a new woman to join herself to the line of promise and bear the promised son
    - e. This pattern continues throughout Scripture, highlighting important woman who are joined to the line of promise to continue the promise made in Genesis 3 - Rebekah, Leah, Rahab, Ruth, and finally Mary
    - f. And Paul highlights this important role of women in I Timothy 2:15 - *Yet she will be saved through [the] childbearing---if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.*
      - i. Many of your versions may not have the 'the' that I added, but it is there in the Greek indicating Paul is referring to one noun - one childbearing that has already happened
      - ii. This comes in the section that points back to Eve's failure to support male headship, but Paul ends by saying that the woman not only failed in Eve, but the woman also became the vehicle of promise as well - the woman was deceived but the woman brought hope as well
  4. I say all this to show that Genesis doesn't demean women, instead it gives them great dignity in their role
    - a. Women in Genesis were the propagators of the promise
    - b. They were not despised, instead they were honored for their role given to them by God
    - c. So, when we respond to those who say that Biblical roles demean women, we can respond, no they honor women - women were given a special place of honor in propagating the promise

### **C. Genesis 25 - The patriarch Abraham dies and a new patriarch is appointed**

1. I'm going to make fewer remarks about this hand off, other than to point out the roles of the story of Abraham's other children - why does Moses record all of Abraham's other children for us
2. First, it points out that God's promises are coming true - Abraham is becoming the father of a multitude, even though he was childless even into old age - God is doing the impossible
3. But, more importantly, it provides a chance to highlight verses 5-6 - *Abraham gave all he had to Isaac. 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.*
4. Abraham had other children, but Isaac was the son of promise, so when Abraham dies, we have a clear vision who the new patriarch is as well - Abraham gave all he had to Isaac
5. So, two pairs of two stories that highlight the new matriarch and the new patriarch, those who will continue as the recipients of God's promises

### III. Faith is believing in the promise past death (23/25)

#### A. The death of Sarah not only moves us forward in the narrative, but it is also a story of faith as well

1. It is catalogued in the stories of faith at the end of Abraham's story
2. And in Abraham's actions at the death of Sarah, we see Abraham's faith strongly
3. Sarah's death was a mournful blow to Abraham - in verse 2 it says that Abraham mourned and wept for her
4. But her death didn't deter Abraham from focusing on the promises - instead Abraham uses Sarah's death to continue testifying to his faith in the promises

#### B. In the face of death, Abraham emphasized his identity

1. Genesis 23:3-4 - *Abraham said to the Hittites, "I am a sojourner and foreigner among you;"*
2. After weeping for Sarah, the first thing Abraham does is reaffirm who he is in the promises
  - a. He is a sojourner and a foreigner - these names recall the promise that God made to Abraham to go to a land not his own - these names testify that Abraham is still living in those promises
  - b. Even in the face of death, Abraham testifies that he is still a sojourner and foreigner in the land
  - c. His hope wasn't now because the promise wasn't now
3. When Abraham emphasizes his identity, he calls us to remember ours as well
  - a. I Peter 1:1 - *To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion...*
  - b. I Peter 2:11 - *Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.*
  - c. Like Abraham, we are sojourners waiting for the promise of God in a land that is not yet ours
  - d. And, honestly, this is how we face death in this world - recalling that this isn't our world - we are only strangers and exiles in it, we are looking forward to a better city, a heavenly city whose author and builder is God
  - e. When we recall our identity, we can respond to death with the same faith Abraham did - we are strangers in this world, and when we leave it, we leave it in hope of a better resurrection

#### C. In the face of death, Abraham looked forward to the promise

1. Genesis 23:19 - *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.*
2. As we continue to think about Abraham's actions here, we might be tempted to misinterpret his statement that he is a sojourner and foreigner in the land as despairing of the promise
3. But his continuing actions instead point to his great faith in the promise, when Sarah died he insisted on having her buried in the land that was promised to him so when the promise was fulfilled, she'd be there
4. Sarah's death wasn't a loss of the promise for Sarah, instead when Sarah died, Abraham kept looking forward to the promise - her death didn't hamper the fulfillment of the promise
5. Abraham looked past death to the future promise and kept his hope there
6. His hope wasn't in his or Sarah's current life, it was in God's future promise

#### D. In the face of death, Abraham sacrificed to testify to the promise

1. Genesis 23:16 - *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.*
2. A large part of the narrative in chapter 23 is detailing how Ephron tries to cheat Abraham
  - a. The surprising thing, though, is that Abraham doesn't react to Ephron's scheming - he doesn't try to haggle or barter with him, he doesn't try to expose his ill intentions
  - b. Instead, he simply agrees to pay the price Ephron tries to extort from him
  - c. It appears that, for Abraham, the opportunity to testify to his continuing faith in the promise is worth any price - he will sacrifice an enormous amount of money - and it was enormous, more than six pounds of silver - in order to get a burial plot in the land of promise
3. Abraham's actions testify that the future promise of God was worth more than present worldly wealth
  - a. And we are called to the same thing - to seek the promises of God, not the wealth of this world

- b. So, we must be ready and willing to sacrifice earthly treasure in order to testify to the promises
- c. As Christ tells us, *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* And, *"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."*

**E. If the resurrection of the dead is not clearly taught in the Old Testament, it is everywhere anticipated**

1. Genesis 25:8 - *Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people.*
2. The death of Sarah and the death of Abraham should cause us to ponder the nature of the promises
  - a. Sarah and Abraham both died without seeing the promise fulfilled - what good was it to them?
  - b. Hebrews actually emphasizes this in the conclusion to Hebrews 11, Hebrews 11:39 - *And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised*
  - c. Yet they both die with a sense of hope - the narratives do not mourn overmuch at Sarah or Abraham's death - instead they continue to look forward to the promise
3. This calls us to see that Sarah and Abraham still had personal hope in the promises even past their death
  - a. The phrase used of Abraham, 'and was gathered to his people,' calls us to see this continuing hope
  - b. Abraham isn't snuffed out of existence, he is gathered to the faithful to wait for the fulfillment of the promise - there is some seed of a hope of resurrection here
  - c. I point this out because many good biblical scholars would argue that the idea of resurrection is foreign to the Old Testament and only becomes a topic of the New Testament
  - d. But Abraham's death and Sarah's death can't make sense without a hope of resurrection
4. And I don't say this on my own authority, the author of Hebrews agrees with me
  - a. Hebrews 11:13-15 - *These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.*
  - b. Sarah and Abraham were looking forward to something better than what they had in this life
  - c. I don't know how Sarah and Abraham thought about resurrection, but somehow they had hope past death - their deaths didn't end the promise and their deaths didn't end their share in the promise
  - d. So Abraham testifies to his faith in a future promise in his and in Sarah's death

**F. Because Christ is the one who conquered death**

1. The Old Testament anticipates a resurrection, even when it doesn't directly teach it, but part of the reason it doesn't teach it clearly is that it cannot yet clearly explain how a resurrection could happen
2. How will the curse of death be conquered? How can God's people look past death to the promises of God?
3. But, we can - so any discussion of faith past death now must be incomplete without pointing to Christ
4. Hebrews 2:14-15 - *Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.*
5. I Corinthians 15:54-57 - *When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*
6. We can look to the promises past death because Christ has passed through death into life and promises that to us as well - death is no barrier to the promises of God, in fact death has become to us a blessing in Christ because it no longer holds any sting

## IV. Faith is being a separate people in order to be joined to the promise (24:1-9)

### A. Abraham was insistent on living as a separate people

1. As we've already seen, after Sarah dies Abraham is insistent that Isaac needs a wife
2. But, Abraham isn't only seeking a wife, he's very specific about who qualifies as a wife for his son
3. Actually, Abraham is almost more specific on who doesn't qualify - no Canaanite women need apply
4. Although we might think of a lot of good reasons for Abraham to do this, Abraham isn't just being a responsible dad for 40 year old Isaac, his focus is on the promise
5. Abraham was promised that his family would inherit the land of Canaan, in fact he would dispossess them
6. If Abraham's line gets mixed with the Canaanite line this would endanger the promise - there might be a shortcut to inheriting some of the land and maybe they could even gain some sort of control over the land that way - but the land wouldn't be theirs by the hand of God
7. So, Abraham needed for his family to be separate so that they could receive the promise of God
8. But, as we look at the text, I think we can define two ways or two reasons Abraham separated himself

### B. Abraham's separateness was for separating himself from those devoted to destruction

1. This is the first degree of separateness that Abraham sought in verses 3-4 - *"Put your hand under my thigh, that I may make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell, but will go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac."*
  - a. Abraham knew that the Canaanites were dedicated to destruction - their line had been cursed in the days of Noah and God told him directly that his family would dispossess them
  - b. Abraham wanted nothing to do with this line, he knew what their end was
2. Like Abraham, we also are called to this separateness as well
  - a. Ephesians 5:6-7 - *Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.*
  - b. II Corinthians 6:14-17 - *Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you..."*
  - c. I Peter 4:3-5 - *For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.*
  - d. We are called not to live like the world because they are headed for destruction - our lives shouldn't be marked by the loves of the world, the desires that the world has, walking in lockstep with those under the wrath of God
  - e. So, like Abraham, we must be careful not to join ourselves to the Canaanites and love worldly things
  - f. I John 2:15-17 - *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world---the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions---is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.*

### C. Abraham's separateness was for separating himself to the promises

1. Abraham not only separated himself from something, he separated himself to something in verses 6-7 - *"See to it that you do not take my son back there. The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my kindred, and who spoke to me and swore to me, 'To your offspring I will give this land,' he will send his angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there."*
  - a. Abraham's goal wasn't just to not get involved with those 'ungodly' Canaanites - he had his eye on

- something better than mere separation
- b. This is made obvious when the servant asks if he should take Isaac back - Abraham reacts almost violently, "NO! God gave this land to me!"
  - c. Abraham's separation wasn't merely or primarily to be separate from the world, although that was the effect - the goal was to be separated to the promises, which is why Isaac couldn't go back
  - d. To go back to Ur would be to abandon the promises, to lay aside the promise of land
  - e. But Abraham says that all of his hopes in separation are to gain the promises
2. Again, we are called to this separation as well
- a. Psalm 45 is a Psalm full of typological imagery of the greatness of the Davidic king, and in verse 10 the psalm turns from praising the Davidic king to calling the potential princess to react
  - b. Psalm 45:10-16 - *Hear, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear: forget your people and your father's house, and the king will desire your beauty. Since he is your lord, bow to him. The people of Tyre will seek your favor with gifts, the richest of the people. All glorious is the princess in her chamber, with robes interwoven with gold. In many-colored robes she is led to the king, with her virgin companions following behind her. With joy and gladness they are led along as they enter the palace of the king. In place of your fathers shall be your sons; you will make them princes in all the earth.*
    - i. The psalm doesn't call the daughter to leave her fathers house because of how bad it was
    - ii. Instead it points to the beauty of the king and the promise of joining him
    - iii. The psalm calls us to see ourselves in the place of the daughter - we can leave and be separate in order to join ourselves to Christ and his people
    - iv. We don't separate in order to be separate, we separate in order to join something better
  - c. II Corinthians 6:16-7:1 - *For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty." Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.*
    - i. This passage also calls us to focus our eyes on the promises - 'since we have these promises' and the specific promise 'then I will welcome you and be a father to you'
    - ii. We separate ourselves to the promises, laying aside everything else, everything that would detract from the promises of God

#### D. Because Christ is our separateness

1. The ultimate reason for separation, though, is not because we need to be but because we are separate
  - a. Although it's not clear in the text, we can't discuss separation without looking at its ultimate purpose
  - b. We must be separate because we are separate, and we are separate because Christ is separate
2. Christ is our separateness, He is our sanctification
  - a. I Corinthians 1:30 - *And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,*
  - b. One of the things Paul tells us that Christ has become for us is sanctification - our set-apartness
  - c. We are set-apart because Christ has been set apart, and we clearly see that Christ was separate
  - d. Hebrews 7:26 - *For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.*
  - e. I Peter 2:22 - *He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.*
3. And so, we must be separate in Christ
  - a. We are separate because we are in Christ who is separate
  - b. Hebrews 13:12-14 - *So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.*
  - c. Our separation is ultimately a recognition of who we are in Christ and a testimony that we want Christ
  - d. So separation isn't a statement of self-righteousness, a statement of judgment, a statement of merit, it is a statement of desire - we desire to be with Christ so we go where He is, which happens to be where the world is not

## V. Christ is the sole recipient of the promises (25:12-18)

### A. When we come to the end of Abraham's story, we notice that there is a new 'generations' section

1. Remember that each story in Genesis starts with the statement, "these are the generations of" - there are ten of these generations, half before the Patriarchs and half about the Patriarchs
  - a. First half - 2:4 - *These are the generations of the heavens and the earth*, 5:1 - *The book of the generations of Adam*, 6:9 - *These are the generations of Noah*, 10:1 - *These are the generations of the sons of Noah*, 11:10 - *These are the generations of Shem*
  - b. Second half - 11:27 - *Now these are the generations of Terah*, 25:12 - *These are the generations of Ishmael*, 25:19 - *These are the generations of Isaac*, 36:1 - *These are the generations of Esau*, 37:2 - *These are the generations of Jacob*
2. But, each of these stories is not the same
  - a. Actually, in the second half of Genesis, the story of the Patriarchs, the stories in Genesis alternate between a very long story (like Abraham) and a very short story (like Ishmael)
  - b. The small stories serve as break points in the story, indicating we're starting a new section in Genesis
  - c. But that is not their only purpose - you'll notice that the small generation stories are all off promise - they all concern people who were descended from the promise line but were not the heirs
  - d. In other words, they show that the promise is narrowing toward its intended recipient

### B. There is a pattern in Scripture of narrowing the recipients of the promises

1. The promise is for the whole race in Adam
2. The promise is then narrowed to the line of Seth, then Noah, then Shem
3. The promise is narrowed to the line of Abraham and then to Isaac and to Jacob and to Israel
4. We have a hint that the line is narrowed to Judah and eventually the line is narrowed to David

### C. All this narrowing points to something

1. We started with one man in Genesis 1 - but as the race grew, the promise kept being cut back to one man
2. And the promise keeps being cut back until we only have one man left
3. So Paul can say, "*For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.*"
4. The narrowing promise points to the one man who will be the antithesis of the first man - the man who will keep every stipulation of every covenant and receive every promise
5. The story of the Bible is bookended by two men - Adam and Christ
  - a. Side note: this tells us something about when we are living, if Adam and Christ are the bookends of history, then we are living in the last days because Christ has come and will continue until His return
  - b. I'm not going to expound on that this morning, but think about it, history is bookended and anchored by these two men - the first Adam and the last Adam - our view of history should represent that

### D. So, once again, the Bible testifies that Christ is the center

1. He is the only one with whom the covenants are truly made
2. He is the only one who is bound by their commands and the only one who truly receives their promises

### E. This statement has enormous implications for us

1. It means we must see Christ at the center - all of this is pointing to Christ!
2. But, it also means we are not the primary recipients of the Old Testament
  - a. Genesis is the story of how all these people that might have been party to the covenant are cut off
  - b. Ishmael might have been party to the Abrahamic covenant, but he was sent away, Esau was sent away
  - c. If all of these people were sent away, then we can't just imagine that we can put ourselves into the story and pretend that we are part of it - we can't read ourselves into the story without warrant when the story is focused on reading people out of it
3. It means that we aren't party to the covenants of the Old Testament, we have no share in their promises and we are not bound by their commands

- a. We are, as Paul says, "*separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.*"
- b. Even a Jew can't claim to be party to the promises anymore because the line of promise has continued to narrow to only Christ, so Paul can say, "*But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. Then you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear.*"

**F. So Gentiles have never been part of the promise and the Jews have been cut off, but there is hope**

1. Paul says about the Jews, continuing in Romans 11, "*And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.*"
2. And he says about the gentiles, continuing in Ephesians 2, "*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.*"
3. Everyone has been cut off but Christ, but in His great mercy God has chosen to find a new people in Christ
4. The covenants are not made with us, but in Christ we receive the benefits of them, as it were by inheritance - He earned the blessings and bequeathed them to us
5. We aren't members of the covenant, but we have received the promises, because we are heirs of Christ
  - a. Romans 8:16-17 - *The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*
  - b. Hebrews 9:15-17 - *Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive.*
  - c. I Peter 1:3-4 - *According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,*

**G. So all the covenants of the Old Testament are with Christ not with us**

1. We aren't party to them and we aren't bound to them, but that doesn't mean they are meaningless to us
  - a. They teach us about Christ, who He is and what He has done
  - b. They assure us of their promises because Christ has earned them
  - c. And since we are in Christ, they teach us about who we are and therefore must be in Christ
2. The covenants are important, not in binding us to specific commands but teaching us who we are in Christ
  - a. So we aren't bound to all of the holiness laws in Leviticus, but they do show us the radical holiness of Christ and therefore how holy we are and must be (I Peter 1:14 - *but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,*)
  - b. And we aren't bound to the command of circumcision given to Abraham, but it does show us that we are circumcised in Christ (Colossians 2:11 - *In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,*) and therefore we must live as though we were circumcised in heart
  - c. The covenants tell us who Christ is and therefore who we are and must be

**H. I chose to end here with my exposition of Abraham because this is what Abraham's story ends with, but also because it highlights my main premise in Abraham**

1. Abraham's story is not primarily an example of faith, Abraham's story is primarily a promise of and to Christ
2. Only as we see Christ in the story of Abraham can we begin to have faith like his
3. The promise was Christ. The response was faith.