

Genesis 25A (2011)

- As we start Chapter 25, we officially reach the halfway point in the study of Genesis
 - That's halfway in terms of chapters, but I think we'll find that in terms of time, we're actually closer to two thirds done
 - Our study will pick up from this point, since the narrative revolves around two patriarchs and their children
 - Like any good drama, the pace quickens
 - We've already studied the life of Abraham, and in today's chapter we learn of Abraham's death
 - We've already begun our study of Isaac, the child of promise
 - He's married and living in the land
 - And in this chapter, he has his first children, twin boys
 - And before the chapter is over, questions of the promised child will become an even greater focus in the story
- But first, Moses ties up some loose ends in the life of Abraham

[Gen. 25:1](#) Now Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah.

[Gen. 25:2](#) She bore to him Zimran and Jokshan and Medan and Midian and Ishbak and Shuah.

[Gen. 25:3](#) Jokshan became the father of Sheba and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim and Letushim and Leummim.

[Gen. 25:4](#) The sons of Midian were Ephah and Epher and Hanoch and Abida and Eldaah. All these were the sons of Keturah.

[Gen. 25:5](#) Now Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac;

[Gen. 25:6](#) but to the sons of his concubines, Abraham gave gifts while he was still living, and sent them away from his son Isaac eastward, to the land of the east.

- Sometime after Sarah's death, Abraham has found a second wife, named Keturah
 - Abraham lived 38 years after Sarah died, which was plenty of time to marry and father six more sons, plus an unknown number of daughters
 - He marries Keturah, which means perfume or incense

- She is a concubine (see v. 6) as was Hagar
 - Concubines are slave women who have married their master
 - She does not cease being a slave nor does she share in the Master's inheritance
- Similarly, the children remain slaves in the home and do not have the same inheritance rights
- Their plight is similar to that of Ishmael earlier
- But remember, God's promises to Abraham were unconditional
 - No matter who Abraham married and no matter how many children he fathered, they were all assured to be blessed
 - Abraham would be a father of many nations
 - But the blessing to Abraham extended only to his first generation except for the seed promise
 - The child with the seed promise would see all the blessing continue through to later generations
 - Isaac was this seed promise child, the one God chose
 - And as with Hagar and Ishmael, Abraham understands that this promise was solemn and couldn't be transferred
 - God chooses who receives His grace and His promises, and God designated that Isaac would be the child of promise
- So Moses lists the sons of Abraham from Keturah to ensure we see God's faithfulness in this relationship
 - Of the six names listed, we can trace six Arabian nations
 - Like Ishmael, these children became forerunners of Arabs
 - Most notably, the land of Midian came from Abraham's son of the same name
 - This was the land in southern Arabia where Moses lived for 40 years after before returning to lead the Israelites to freedom

- References to Midianites are found throughout the OT, and often they are seen intermarried with Ishmaelites
- Eventually they are assimilated into the Ishmaelites
- Whatever we might make of Abraham's decision to marry Keturah, the key verse to remember is v.5
 - Everything God gave Abraham was transferred to Isaac
 - Before Abraham died, he assigned his wealth to Isaac
 - For Isaac was Abraham's only heir, according to the Lord
 - Remember, Isaac has been assigned as a picture of Christ, while Abraham is a picture of the Father
 - And just as the Father in Heaven has only one begotten Son, similarly Abraham will have only one son and one heir
 - So Abraham arranged for the concubine and her sons to be sent away with gifts prior to Abraham's death
 - This is similar to what Abraham did for Hagar and Ismael
 - Perhaps God appeared to Abraham to instruct him of the need to do so, but I doubt it
 - I'm sure Abraham was already clear on God's desires
- Notice in v.6 that the concubine children receive their gifts while Abraham was still living, and then they were sent away
 - Abraham wanted to be sure they were gone before his death to avoid any possibility that they might fight with Isaac over the inheritance
 - So Abraham required that his concubine and her children leave the household
 - He gave them parting gifts as a sign that they were to receive no inheritance
 - But Isaac, the child of promise, would receive all that was Abraham's
 - Yet Isaac didn't receive his inheritance at that time
 - He couldn't receive the birthright and the inheritance until after the death of his father

- That's how an inheritance works...you cannot receive an inheritance until the one who grants it has died
 - Therefore, the grants Abraham gave to Keturah's children were not an inheritance, they were merely gifts
- The inheritance given to Isaac included Abraham's vast wealth, but even more importantly, Isaac was to receive the birthright to God's promises
 - God gave Abraham a special set of promises found in the Abrahamic Covenant, called the birthright
 - God made these promises to Abraham and to his descendants, but it would only transfer to the descendants that God chose
 - Just as God chose Abraham in the first place, God would continue to designate who may receive His grace in the form of the birthright
 - As we studied earlier in Genesis, God has made clear that Isaac would be the child of promise, that is the child to receive the birthright
 - By that birthright, Isaac would carry the promise of God forward after Abraham
 - We know another son, Ishmael, had been born before Isaac, and according to wisdom and customs of men, Ishmael should receive the birthright
 - But God would never permit such a result
 - The promises of God are a testimony to His grace and mercy and sovereignty to carry out His plan of redemption
 - As such, God's promises will rest on only those He chooses
 - And in the first three generations after Abraham, God is careful to demonstrate over and over again that He is the One Who chooses the recipients of grace
 - And the clearest way God can demonstrate this truth is to go against man's ways and man's expectations, by assigning the birthright to an unexpected child
 - For Abraham, the surprise was to father a child in his old age and then to see God assign the birthright to the second born son rather than to Ishmael

- But Ishmael was a child of flesh, a child born by the work of human sin
 - God's mercy doesn't come to those who work, but to those who have faith in God's work
 - So the promised child who received the Abrahamic covenant was Isaac and Isaac alone, according to God's will
- God is still moving His promises of blessing from generation to generation in this same fashion
 - Hebrews explains it this way

[Heb. 9:15](#) For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

[Heb. 9:16](#) For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it.

[Heb. 9:17](#) For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives.

- The writer says that those who have been called by God are to receive the promise of eternal inheritance
 - This is the same promise that Abraham received
 - The basis for that promise was a covenant God made with Abraham
 - And the fulfillment of that covenant is found in the blood of Christ
 - The word the writer uses for covenant is *diatheke*, which means will or testament
 - The covenant made with Abraham was a testament or will
- When we make a will we are making a determination, in advance of our death, of who will receive our inheritance
 - The person who receives it does nothing to earn it
 - They don't even have to ask for it
 - We designated them to receive the blessing

- But the blessing of that inheritance can only come after we have died
 - The writer in Hebrews says where there is a covenant (or a will), there must be a death of the one who made it
 - For that covenant or will is only valid when men are dead
 - For it is never in force when the one who made it is still alive
- So the covenant made with Abraham was the last will and testament of Jesus Christ
 - It was a grant to Abraham and to certain descendants of Abraham whom God selected
 - That grant included the promise of eternal life and an inheritance in the kingdom to come
 - But those promises found in that testament can only come true after the death of the one who made the testament, that is Christ
- When Christ died, His will went into effect and the inheritance for those He invited into the covenant was made sure
 - As Paul described:

[Eph. 1:9](#) He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him

[Eph. 1:10](#) with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him [Eph. 1:11](#) also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,

[Eph. 1:12](#) to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.

[Eph. 1:13](#) In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, [Eph. 1:14](#) who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

- Not only are we like Isaac in that we are the recipients of God's mercy according to His gracious choice, but we are also to receive an inheritance
 - In fact, we've already received a downpayment on that inheritance, in the form of the pledge of the Holy Spirit in our hearts

- This is a valuable deposit, to be sure
- Having access to the wisdom and power of God within us is no small matter
 - And if this is a downpayment on what God is prepared to give us in the eternal realm, how much greater will that inheritance be?
- But have you noticed that not everyone who receives a great inheritance knows how to make use of it responsibly?
 - With all the recent hoopla over the huge lottery jackpot, I found several interesting stories online about what's happened to people who've won huge lotteries
 - One man won well over \$100M and a few years later he was serving time in prison for writing bounced checks
 - Another man committed suicide
 - Others have fallen into addictions, been embroiled in endless court battles with spouses or family members
 - Many have been defrauded by con men
- Likewise, not every Christian who receives the grace of God and enters into Christ's inheritance will handle these riches with wisdom
 - Some will abuse the grace of God, using it as license to go on sinning
 - Others may choose to ignore it or even doubt its existence
- God's promises and our inheritance are not in doubt
 - It's not like winning the lottery where the chances of being struck by lightning are greater than receiving the prize
 - The news reported this story

A Kansas man was struck by lightning hours after buying three Mega Millions lottery tickets, proving in real life the old saying that a gambler is more likely to be struck down from the sky than win the jackpot. Bill Isles, 48, bought three tickets in the record \$656 million lottery Thursday at a Wichita, Kan., grocery store.

On the way to his car, Isles said he commented to a friend: "I've got a better chance of getting struck by lightning" than winning the lottery.

Later at about 9:30 p.m., Isles was standing in the back yard of his Wichita duplex, when he saw a flash and heard a boom -- lightning.

"It threw me to the ground quivering," Isles said in a telephone interview on Saturday. "It kind of scrambled my brain and gave me an irregular heartbeat."

- And no, he didn't win the lottery
- While we wait to receive the inheritance we know is assured, let's do our best to honor it by our obedience to the Father and to recognize the responsibility that comes with it
 - Scripture teaches that we may see our eternal reward diminished or increased according to how we serve the Lord here and now

[Luke 16:10](#) "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much.

[Matt. 25:29](#) "For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.

- These are references to God's system of accounting for determining eternal reward
 - We shouldn't be ignorant of these truths, but let them have their intended effect in influencing how we live our lives
 - As we make decisions and take actions to serve Christ or avoid that service, remember you're not working for the praise of men or the comforts of this life
 - You're working for the praise of your Lord in Heaven and the reward of an eternal inheritance that cannot perish
- We'll study much more about the importance of the birthright and inheritance in coming weeks, especially in the lives of Isaac's children
 - But for now, let's conclude the story of Abraham and his descendants

[Gen. 25:7](#) These are all the years of Abraham's life that he lived, one hundred and seventy-five years.

[Gen. 25:8](#) Abraham breathed his last and died in a ripe old age, an old man and satisfied with life; and he was gathered to his people.

[Gen. 25:9](#) Then his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, facing Mamre,

[Gen. 25:10](#) the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth; there Abraham was buried with Sarah his wife.

[Gen. 25:11](#) It came about after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac lived by Beer-lahai-roi.

[Gen. 25:12](#) Now these are the records of the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's maid, bore to Abraham;

[Gen. 25:13](#) and these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, in the order of their birth: Nebaioth, the firstborn of Ishmael, and Kedar and Adbeel and Mibsam

[Gen. 25:14](#) and Mishma and Dumah and Massa,

[Gen. 25:15](#) Hadad and Tema, Jetur, Naphish and Kedemah.

[Gen. 25:16](#) These are the sons of Ishmael and these are their names, by their villages, and by their camps; twelve princes according to their tribes.

[Gen. 25:17](#) These are the years of the life of Ishmael, one hundred and thirty-seven years; and he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people.

[Gen. 25:18](#) They settled from Havilah to Shur which is east of Egypt as one goes toward Assyria; he settled in defiance of all his relatives.

- Abraham lived 175 years before he died
 - As we discussed during the flood, this is a literal description of his age
 - He lived about 100 years longer than the normal life expectancy of men today for reasons we learned back in our study of Noah
 - More importantly, Abraham died satisfied with life
 - We know he was a very rich man, but do you think that was what made him satisfied?
 - Contrast Abraham's situation in his last days with those of another very rich man in the Bible, King Solomon

[1Kings 11:1](#) Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women,

[1Kings 11:2](#) from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, "You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods." Solomon held fast to these in love.

[1Kings 11:3](#) He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away.

[1Kings 11:4](#) For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.

[1Kings 11:5](#) For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites.

[1Kings 11:6](#) Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not follow the LORD fully, as David his father had done.

- I think it's safe to say that Abraham's contentment wasn't created by earthly riches
 - Instead, he was content with knowing that God's promises were everlasting and His faithfulness was without limits
 - And so as Abraham approached the end of his life, he could truly be satisfied with life because it had met its purpose in preparing him for his eternal existence
 - First and foremost, Abraham was righteous before God by faith in God's promises
 - Secondly, Abraham's life was a testimony to that faith
 - And by that testimony, Abraham died confident that he would receive an inheritance
- Abraham's buried in the cave he bought for Sarah, and so they rest together
 - And his spirit, which lives on eternally, is gathered to his father's
 - Meaning, Abraham's spirit went into the care of the Father in eternity waiting for the day of resurrection when Abraham would receive his new body
- And then notice in v.11 that following Abraham's death, God's blessing transferred to Isaac
 - The testament of Abraham became effective upon his death and the birthright and blessing transferred to the son of promise
 - But what of the other son, Ishmael?
 - Moses gives us the accounting for Ishmael so that we can put an end to Ishmael's line and focus squarely on Isaac
 - The 12 sons of Ishmael are listed here, and each will be the father of a different Arab tribe and nation

- Among Ishmael's descendants are men who began many of the Arab nations who persecuted Israel in centuries to come
 - Notice they all settled in the east, a clear sign that they were not recipients of God's grace, but instead were enemies of God and God's people
 - Just as God said, they lived in defiance to their relatives, that is Israel
- None of these sons are under the seed promise
 - They are not a part of Israel and therefore until the promise was made available to Gentiles following Christ's death, they and the rest of the Gentile world were outside God's grace
 - But in this time of mercy, the Gospel has been extended to the world by virtue of the Church
 - We have that opportunity to know the truth and receive the Lord's mercy and have salvation by faith in God's promises
 - The promise that Christ died for our sake and paid our price for sin
 - Don't let that promise pass by and don't forfeit your eternal life and inheritance