

99-07-19a

Let's begin our worship this morning with a word of prayer. Father, we thank you for the wonderful circumstances we find ourselves in. We have freedom.

We have provision. We have respite from the outside influences of despots or others who would curtail freedom and oppress. We have every opportunity to progress and to grow in your plan, to grow in grace, to apply the things that we've learned.

We thank you for the blessings that you've bestowed on us. We thank you for the fellowship of believers of like mind. We thank you for the preservation of our nation in spite of the vagaries of human nature and human leadership.

We continue after more than 200 years to have an environment in which to live where we can pursue our faith without fear of reprisal. We thank you most of all for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, and for the standing we have before you in him. And we pray this morning as we worship together, as we fellowship in the study of your word, that God the Holy Spirit will give us a fresh appreciation of him.

We know that in him dwells all the fullness of deity and bodily form. And we know that it is through him that we come to know you. And in him our relationship to you exists.

He is our righteousness, our wisdom, our peace, our sanctification. We pray that through the study of your word, through not only the learning of these things, but meditation upon them and having them become the objects of our faith, that our relationship with you will be strengthened and the ability to fulfill your purpose and your calling for us will be enhanced day by day. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. For scripture reading this morning, turn with me to the book of Ecclesiastes. It seems fitting perhaps with the events that have taken place this weekend.

You cannot look anywhere or turn anything on without seeing that the nation's attention has been turned to the loss of John F. Kennedy Jr. And it is another one of those phenomena that rather inappropriately I think captivates everyone's attention. But the word of God is a wonderful place to find perspective and to remember our priorities and the nature of life on this earth. If you look at Ecclesiastes chapter 3, that very famous section at the beginning of chapter 3 that talks about the fact that there are different phases of life.

There are times when we engage in one activity and there are other times when we find ourselves doing just the opposite. There are times when we enjoy great fellowship. There are other times of solitude.

God works in and through all of those circumstances. Less attention has been focused on what follows the first eight verses of Ecclesiastes chapter 3. And that's going to be our

scripture reading for this morning. After reviewing the different areas of life and the different types of endeavor that are contrasted in the first eight verses, it continues in verse 9, What profit has the worker from that in which he labors? I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied.

He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end. I know that nothing is better for them than to rejoice and to do good in their lives, and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor.

It is the gift of God. I know that whatever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it.

God does it so that men should fear before Him. That which is has already been, and what is to be has already been. And God requires an account of what is past.

Moreover, I saw under the sun, in the place of judgment wickedness was there, and in the place of righteousness iniquity was there. I said in my heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work. I said in my heart, concerning the condition of the sons of men, God tests them that they may see that they themselves are like animals.

For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals. One thing befalls them, as one dies, so dies the other. Surely they all have one breath.

Man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity. All go to one place, all are from the dust, and all return to dust. Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and of the spirit of the animal, what goes down to the earth? So I perceive that nothing is better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, for that is his heritage.

For who can bring him to see what will happen after him? One of these days we're going to study the book of Ecclesiastes and discern the meaning of a lot of these statements. But the larger point here is discernible even on the surface, and that is that it is only the works of God, it is the things that are associated with the work and the plan of God that are eternal. The things associated with man, the things under the sun, what man sees at the surface of his works.

If you're disconnected from the eternal things, the most you can hope for is to enjoy, eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. This is what takes place under the sun. But in the earlier section when he talks about the things that God does that are eternal, and that God will require an account of life at the end, this is a truth that we learn also in the New Testament, that there will be an account given for our words and our deeds.

There will be a judgment that takes place. We know for the church this is the judgment seat of Christ. The wonderful thing is that when those negative aspects, the failures and

the sins and the wrong steps come up at the judgment, there is an answer for us, and it is the blood of Christ.

It reminds me, I mentioned this to Patty when I was looking at her earrings. I like them, at least to me. I just made up my own symbolism for them, but it has a clear stone that's in the shape of a heart, but it's on a stem like an apple or a piece of fruit.

So to me it suggests it's like a living heart, and it's clear. It's zirconia. It's crystal clear.

It's got light that shines and reflects in and through and off of it. But at one corner of the heart, in the upper portion, there's a little round ruby, and it's red. Every time I see those, it reminds me of the believer's heart, because we start out utterly corrupt, no ability to redeem ourselves, to better ourselves, to cleanse ourselves.

But symbolically, at least, all it takes is the touch of the Savior's blood to wash us white and clear and make something ugly into something beautiful. The ugly parts of our lives, and all of us have those. It's in our memory, and it's going to come up at the judgment seat.

There will be an account for every thought, every word, every deed, for every human being. The wonderful thing is that we have a pleading. We have a piece of fact that will come forward.

It's just like a trial. I noticed today they're starting two or three new TV shows in the next season of television that all have more to do with the law. They seem to run in cycles for a while.

You had nothing but westerns. Then you had nothing but cop shows. Now it seems like we have nothing but lawyers in all different guises.

There are two or three more lawyer shows coming on. Going back to Perry Mason or all the way through to the present, and if you've ever actually sat in a jury or been in a courtroom, there's a point at which facts are given that are damaging to the defendant, and then there is a defense given. There are reasons that are extenuating or mitigating circumstances, or there's an explanation.

The prosecution can paint a very dark picture of the defendant, but then the defense attorney stands up, and he brings his evidence, and he brings his witnesses. In some cases, this evidence will be completely exculpatory. It will completely clear the client.

Perry Mason, of course, did this every week but one. He only lost one case in all his years on TV. Even that one was interesting because he came back in the second episode and got that one reversed.

But the point here is that it can instill in us a sense of foreboding about the judgment

seat. When we read passages such as this in verse 15, God requires an account of what has passed. Paul tells us there will be an account given for every word and every thought.

But the comfort is we have as our special possession union with the Lord Jesus Christ, and his blood is the absolute pleading on our behalf. When these things come up, it is the work of Christ that cleanses. The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from all sin, not only from the effects and from the guilt, but also from the penalty and from the judgment that attaches thereto.

It's a wonderful thing to keep in mind. Anytime I attend a funeral or see the attention that is paid to the death of a celebrity, as we have this weekend, it is a reminder of the brevity of life. People inevitably start to weigh the value of the life that someone has led up to this point and what contribution they have made or what their potential was that may or may not have been fulfilled.

It is a healthy thing to reflect from time to time on the course of our own lives, on what is being accomplished in our lives, and what the proper measure of that accomplishment is. Even in the Old Testament, it is clear that there is something beyond the mortal measure that is at stake. Look at chapter 4 of Ecclesiastes.

Solomon says, I returned and considered all the oppression that is done under the sun. Just to give you a hint, anytime you see under the sun, Solomon is talking about the nature of things on this earth, the human perspective. This is not human viewpoint, *per se*.

I've often heard people say, Well, this is Solomon when he was a reprobate, when he was a backslider, and when he was out seeking the things of the world. That's, in my opinion, a near miss. But when he says under the sun, what is under the sun? Under the sun is here on the surface of the earth.

This is human life, human circumstance. So Solomon is here considering the oppression that takes place here on the earth, here in human culture and civilization from generation to generation. He says, Look, the tears of the oppressed, but they have no comforter.

On the side of their oppressors there is power, but they have no comforter. Therefore I praise the dead who are already dead more than the living who are still alive. Yet better than both is he who has never existed, who has not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.

Remember Job saying, It would have been better if I had never been born, if I had died at birth and they had buried me out from my mother's womb so that I would not have seen the oppression. In verse 4, Again I saw that for all toil and every skillful work a man is

envied by his neighbor. This is also vanity and a grasping for the wind.

The fool folds his hands and consumes his own flesh. Better a handful with quietness than both hands full, together with toil and grasping for the wind. Then I returned and I saw vanity under the sun.

There is one alone without companion. He has neither son nor brother. Yet there is no end to all his labors, nor is his eye satisfied with riches.

But he never asks, For whom do I toil and deprive myself of good? This also is vanity and a grave misfortune. This is something we're going to see in the forward progress of our study in Genesis this morning when we come to Esau. To grasp and to seek and not to ask the question, What is the point? What is the purpose? This is as far as we're going to go in Ecclesiastes this morning because if you go very far in this book you have to start trying to interpret it and we're not at liberty to do that this morning.

But to remember the fact that there are two perspectives. There's a human perspective even as a believer. The evidence that is presented to our senses, how much impact, how much good that can be viewed by the average person that has been accomplished in a life or in a particular endeavor by a church or by a ministry is at odds with the eternal perspective from God's point of view and what will come to light in God's judgment.

This is the contrast that Solomon brings to light in Ecclesiastes and his meditations on that are so deep that the book is easily misunderstood. As I say one of these days soon I hope we'll be in that book and try to understand it more clearly. Let's return now to our study in Genesis.

There is nothing more gratifying to me than to work hard and to seek to understand what God is communicating in Scripture, to draw a conclusion that may be difficult to sustain in the face of a lot of scholarship and a lot of theology that seems to contradict or to take a different tack in a passage. It's very gratifying that after having done the best that I can do with my limitations and with the progress that I have made, whatever it may be, to find that there is somebody qualified, somebody who is esteemed and of note, that has drawn the same conclusion. It's comforting to feel like if you're in the weeds at least you're not there alone.

Somebody else took the same path and came to the same conclusion. It is not often that I would actually recommend a book or an author in the area of commentary on the Scriptures. It's difficult, for me at least, to find someone that I think really has a good approach and has rightly divided the word of truth in a consistent way and in a way that is not only accurate but helpful.

There are a lot that are generally helpful. You can look at the Bible Knowledge Commentary from Dallas Seminary and I don't think it makes many missteps at all. I

think in general it hues right down the line.

It's conservative, it's evangelical, it's a wonderful commentary, but it stays on very safe, solid ground. There's always the hard-packed ground right in the very center of the road that has been so well-trodden and it's very safe ground. But if you get to anything where you really have a question or you really say, well, I wonder about this or I wonder about that, you don't find any departures from the well-trodden ground.

There's no real, what I would consider, imagination or willingness to be controversial or to take the evidence of Scripture and run very far with it. So the things that you can pretty much see for yourself are going to be affirmed there, but when you're looking for answers and you're looking for the deeper truth of a passage, it's not often to be found there. But I will say that when it comes to the first books of the Bible, the commentary by C. H. Macintosh called Notes on, Notes on the Book of Genesis, Notes on the Book of Exodus, Notes on the Book of Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, these are wonderful books and it is a credit to Mr. Macintosh that he wrote these in the period of history.

He was an Englishman, he wrote in England, but this is back in the 1860s and 70s. These are well over 125 years old and it is a tribute that before all of the modern scholarship and all of the Alexandrian texts of the New Testament and all of the scholarship done on the Dead Sea Scrolls and so forth, that men of God who sat down with their Bible and the resources that God provided them and searched the scriptures diligently, I think, were capable of coming to wonderful conclusions that meet and often surpass what is done today. It's almost like we have more information and we have less wisdom today.

I say all of that to say that it was not until after we had completed our study of Genesis Chapter 24, I usually check Macintosh because his insights are very wonderful, but I didn't check his commentary on Chapter 24 until this week. You may recall last week that when we were talking about the significance of the chapter not only for its content, but in the larger sense what it illustrates about the relationship of Israel and the Church and God's plan, the picturing of the work of the servant of Abraham in going and presenting the unseen groom to the potential bride and her response, her willingness to, on faith, leave her kindred and her people and follow spiritually the path of Abraham in coming to the land, her meeting with the groom and their happy and fruitful marriage as a result, and the foreshadowing of Christ and the Church, the setting aside of Israel pictured by Sarah. It's when Sarah is off the scene that Rebekah comes in and dwells in the tent of Sarah.

You almost can't help but see the larger illustration that these things foreshadow. But I was careful to point out the necessary caution that you can quickly step into allegory if you begin to take these details and push them too far. After all, if Isaac here represents Christ as the groom, well, what about Isaac's failures later on? Isaac and Rebekah have children.

Is there going to be some further issue from Christ and the Church? You have to not take these things and push them beyond the limits. But, Macintosh, I wanted to read you just a little bit of what he has to say. This is something I very rarely do, but I think it's worthwhile.

He's much more eloquent than I am. But in his commentary on Chapter 24 in Notes on Genesis, the English edition of this was published in 1879. Writing and thinking and general conversation, I think, were of a far higher quality in those days than in this.

But listen to what C. H. Macintosh has to say. We cannot suppose that the Spirit of God would occupy an unusually long chapter, Chapter 24, with the mere detail of a family compact, were that compact not typical or illustrative of some great truth. Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.

This is emphatic. What therefore are we to learn from the chapter before us? I believe it furnishes us with a beautiful illustration or foreshadowing of the great mystery of the Church. It is important to see that while there is no direct revelation of this mystery in the Old Testament, there are nevertheless scenes and circumstances which in a very remarkable manner shadow it forth.

As, for example, the chapter before us. As has been remarked, the Son being in a figure offered up and received again from the dead, the original parent stem, as it were, being laid aside. This is Sarah, of course.

The messenger is sent forth by the Father to procure a bride for the Son. Now, in order to the clear and full understanding of the contents of the entire chapter, we may consider the following points. First, the oath.

Second, the testimony. Third, the result. It is beautiful to observe that the call and exaltation of Rebecca were founded upon the oath between Abraham and his servant.

She knew nothing of this, though she was in the purpose of God so entirely the subject of it all. So it is exactly with the Church of God as a whole and each constituent part. He quotes Psalm 139, verse 16 here.

In thy book were all my members written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there were none of them. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. That's, of course, Ephesians 1, 3 and 4. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Moreover, whom he did predestinate, then he also called. Whom he called he justified, and he justified he glorified. Romans 8, 29 and 30.

MacIntyre says, These scriptures are all in beautiful harmony with the point immediately before us. The call, the justification, and the glory of the Church are all founded on the eternal purpose of God, his word and oath, ratified by death, resurrection, and exaltation of the Son. Far back, beyond the bounds of time, in the deep recesses of God's eternal mind, lay this wondrous purpose respecting the Church, which cannot by any means be separated from the divine thought respecting the glory of the Son.

This is a wonderful observation of what we studied at great length in Romans, isn't it? When we came to Romans 8 and talking about the predestination, that we are predestined in him, it is being in Christ that establishes our predestination, not some individual designation of how we will choose. It is the fact that the Church, those who come to faith in Christ, have a destiny assigned to them as a group, as a corporate entity, just as the bride, whoever it may be, that the servant finds, Abraham swears on oath, compacts with the servant to bring this bride back and make her the mother of all of Abraham's grandchildren. The oath between Abraham and the servant had for its object the provision of a partner for the Son.

It was the father's desire with respect to the Son that led to all Rebekah's afterdignity. It is happy to see this, happy to see how the Church's security and blessing stand inseparably connected with Christ and his glory. Quote, For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man.

Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man. That's 1 Corinthians 11, 8 and 9. So it is in the beautiful parable of the marriage supper. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king which made a marriage for his son.

Matthew 22, 2. The Son is the grand object of all the thoughts and counsels of God. And if any are brought into blessing or glory or dignity, it can only be in connection with him. All title to these things, and even to life itself, was forfeited by sin.

But Christ met all the penalty due to sin. He made himself responsible for everything on behalf of his body, the Church. He was nailed to the cross as her representative.

He bore her sins in his own body on the tree, and went down into the grave under the full weight of them. Hence, nothing can be more complete than the Church's deliverance from all that was against her. She is quickened out of the grave of Christ, where all her trespasses were laid.

The life which she has is a life taken up at the other side of death, after every possible demand had been met. Hence, this life is connected with and founded upon divine righteousness. Inasmuch as Christ's title to life is founded upon his having entirely exhausted the power of death, and he is the Church's life, thus the Church enjoys divine life.

She stands in divine righteousness, and in the hope that animates her is the hope of righteousness. Then he gives a whole series of New Testament scriptures that illustrate that truth. These scriptures most fully establish the three points, the life, the righteousness, and the hope of the Church, all of which flow from her being one with him who was raised from the dead.

Now, nothing can be so calculated to assure the heart as the conviction that the Church's existence is essential to the glory of Christ. The woman is the glory of the man. And again, the Church is called the fullness of him that filleth all in all.

That's Ephesians 1.23. This last is a remarkable expression. The word translated fullness means the complement, that which being added to something else makes up a whole. Thus it is that Christ the head and the Church the body make up the one new man, Ephesians 2.15. And he goes on to talk about the Church at some length in that regard.

He illustrates it more fully. I commend that to your attention. But we shall now look, and I'm skipping forward a little bit, at the second point for consideration.

He's talked about the oath and everything that comes out of the oath relative to Isaac and Rebekah or Christ and the Church. He now says the second point for consideration is the testimony. Abraham's servant carried with him a very distinct testimony.

He said, I am Abraham's servant, and the Lord hath blessed my master greatly, and he is become great. He hath given him flocks and herds, and silver and gold, and menservants and maidservants, camels and asses. Sarah, my master's wife, bare a son to my master when she was old, and unto him he hath given all that he hath.

He reveals the Father and the Son. Such was his testimony. He speaks of the vast resources of the Father and of the Son's being endowed with all these, in virtue of his being the only begotten and the object of the Father's love.

With this testimony he seeks to obtain a bride for the Son. All this, I need hardly remark, is strikingly illustrative of the testimony with which the Holy Ghost was sent from heaven upon the day of Pentecost. When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.

Again, howbeit, when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth. For he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak. And he will show you things to come.

He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine. Therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.

John 16, 13-15 The coincidence of these words with the testimony of Abraham's servant is instructive and interesting. It was by telling of Isaac that he sought to attract the heart of Rebecca. And it is, as we know, by telling of Jesus, that the Holy Ghost seeks to draw poor sinners away from a world of sin and folly, into the blessed and holy unity of the body of Christ.

He shall take of mine, and show it unto you. The Spirit of God will never lead anyone to look at himself or his work, but only and always at Christ. Hence, the more really spiritual anyone is, the more entirely will he be occupied with Christ.

Some there are who regard it as a great mark of spirituality to be ever looking in at their own hearts, and dwelling upon what they find there, even though that be the work of the Spirit. This is a great mistake. What he's talking about is the introspection.

He's writing 125, 130 years ago, but isn't this what we have going on today? A lot of introspection. He says, even when you look inside your heart and you see the work of the Holy Spirit, to dwell on that is a great mistake. So far from it being a proof of spirituality, it is a proof of the very reverse.

For it is expressly declared of the Holy Ghost that he shall not speak of himself, but on the contrary, he shall take of mine, and show it unto you. Therefore, whenever one is looking inward and building on the evidences of the Spirit's work there, he may be assured he is not led by the Spirit of God in so doing. It is by holding up Christ that the Spirit draws souls to God.

That is very important. The knowledge of Christ is life eternal, and it is the Father's revelation of Christ by the Holy Ghost that constitutes the basis of the Church. He goes on to illustrate and demonstrate that for several more paragraphs.

But let me skip forward again. Let us now look in the last place at the result of all this. Truth and the practical application of truth are two very different things.

We just saw this in our study in Luke on Friday night, the difference between knowledge and wisdom. Macintosh makes the same point. It is one thing to speak of the peculiar glories of the Church, and quite another thing to be practically influenced by those glories.

In Rebecca's case, the effect was most marked and decisive. The testimony of Abraham's servant sank down into her ears and into her heart and entirely detached her heart's affections from the scene of things around her. She was ready to leave all and follow after, in order that she might apprehend that for which she had been apprehended.

It was morally impossible that she could believe herself to be the subject of such high destinies and yet continue amid the circumstances of nature. If the report concerning the

future were true, attachment to the present were the worst of folly. If the hope of being Isaac's bride, joint heir with him of all his dignity and glory, if this were a reality, then to continue to tend Laban's sheep would be practically to despise all that God had in grace set before her.

But no, the prospect was far too bright to be thus lightly given up. True, she had not yet seen Isaac, nor yet the inheritance, but she had believed the report, the testimony of him, and had received, as it were, the earnest of it. Remember the gifts that the servant gave.

These were enough for her heart, and hence she unhesitatingly arises and expresses her readiness to depart in the memorable words, I will go. She was fully prepared to enter on an unknown path in companionship with one who had told her of an object far away and of a glory connected with him, to which she was about to be raised. I will go, said she, and forgetting those things which were behind and reaching forth toward the things which were before, she pressed toward the mark for the prize of her high calling.

A most touching and beautiful illustration, this, of the church under the conduct of the Holy Ghost going onward to meet her heavenly bridegroom. This is what the church should be, but alas, there is sad failure here. There is little of that holy alacrity in laying aside every weight and every entanglement in the power of communion with the holy guided companion of our way, whose office and delight it is to take of the things of Jesus and show them unto us.

Just as Abraham's servant took of the things of Isaac and showed them to Rebekah, and no doubt, too, he found his joy in pouring fresh testimonies concerning the Son into her ear as they moved onward toward the consummation of all her joy and glory. Thus it is, at least with our heavenly guide and companion, he delights to tell of Jesus. He shall take of mine and show it unto you, and again he shall show you things to come.

Now this is what we really want, this ministry of the Spirit of God unfolding Christ to our souls, producing earnest longing to see him as he is and be made like him forever. Not that this will ever detach our hearts from earth and nature. What, save the hope of being associated with Isaac, would ever have led Rebekah to say, I will go, when her brother and her mother said, Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at least ten? And so with us.

Nothing but the hope of seeing Jesus as he is and being like him will ever enable or lead us to purify ourselves even as he is pure. I think those are great words. I think it's a great insight by a wonderful man of God and a very able interpreter of scripture.

And he reiterates what we have already seen in our own study of Genesis 24 in a far more eloquent way. But I do recommend, if this is available, I've seen it in reprint in Christian book distributors and it's a wonderful book to pick up. I think this is published

now in a single volume.

I have a very old copy given to me by a dear friend who taught the word of God in his day and in his generation. But these commentaries are available in a single volume and I do commend those to your attention. But let's resume now in Genesis chapter 24.

We just have a little bit of the chapter left to cover. We've actually moved forward in verse 67. Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent.

He took Rebekah and she became his wife and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death. This is then interrupted with the account that we reviewed last time.

Abraham taking a wife named Keturah. She bears these sons. We spent some time looking at the names and the fact that these became historic clans and tribes and lent their names to regions in the areas surrounding Israel there in the Middle East.

And the fact that if you count these, you count the descendants, there are many. And there are a lot of things you can do with numbers in the Bible. Let us content ourselves with saying that this is an evidence of the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham that he would be the father of many nations.

And these are those many nations. It's also interesting, stepping back once again and looking at the symbolic value of these things, how many different women does Abraham have children with? There are three. Hagar, Sarah, and Keturah.

With Hagar, he has the one son, Ishmael. With Sarah, he has the one son, Isaac. With Keturah, there is the bounty of sons and grandsons that are detailed here in these first four verses of chapter 25.

When you think about the larger significance of this and you realize that from one perspective we see Sarah representing the nation of Israel in marriage relationship to God, as it were, and in that union you have the son, Isaac, who the symbolism of Mount Moriah is not lost upon us. And yet the nation of Israel is set aside in favor of the bride of Isaac, Rebekah, representing the church. And she comes to dwell in the tent of Sarah.

But there was something that preceded all of this. There was an earlier union that went awry. And you have Ishmael, who himself becomes the father of twelve princes.

And you have sort of an alternate Israel there composed of twelve tribes. But it was illegitimate. The choices made and the union are a shadow of the real things, the things that were to come.

And we're going to see this echoed. We'll review this more fully when we get down to the life of Esau. And we're going to see some interesting parallels between Esau and

Ishmael.

And we'll revisit that issue of Ishmael at that time. But in verse 5, Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac. But Abraham gave gifts to the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had.

And while he was still living, he sent them eastward, away from Isaac his son, to the country of the east. And we realize that the promise that Abraham would be the father of many nations is here fulfilled. Verse 7, This is the sum of the years of Abraham's life, which he lived one hundred and seventy-five years.

Then he breathed his last, and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people. And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the field of Ephraim, the son of Zohar the Hittite, the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth. There Abraham was buried, and Sarah his wife.

And it came to pass, after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac, and Isaac dwelt at Bir Lahai Roy. There is a lot that we could say about this, but what we will notice for our purposes is that this notice of the death of Abraham and his lifespan is chronologically out of order. Because we are going to see that he lives well into the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah.

He actually was alive when Jacob and Esau were born, and they were 15 years old when he finally passed away. But from a literary point of view, and from a point of view of telling the story, the scene is going to shift, and we are actually entering a new section of the book of Genesis here, which is defined by Jacob. From chapter 25 all the way to chapter 50 of Genesis, Jacob is on the scene.

The birth of Jacob is going to take place in this chapter, and Jacob will not die until the end of the book of Genesis. So the story is not going to be interrupted with the chronological notice of Abraham's death. The story of Abraham and the focus upon him ends here in the early part of chapter 25.

And so these things are presented out of order. Now there are some who take this piece of evidence and say, well, since this is out of order, other things may be out of order, and maybe Abraham was actually married to Keturah much earlier, and he didn't marry her after Sarah's death. This was something that could have taken place during Sarah's lifetime or even back in the Hagar days, and it's just been placed here for convenience.

I don't think that's the case, because when it says Abraham again took a wife, and her name was Keturah, the construction of this in Hebrew indicates to us that this is after the death of Sarah. This is indeed after the marriage of Isaac. And it is significant that it's placed where it is.

But it also serves to round off and close out the story of Abraham. We find out that Abraham's promises, even in his own lifetime, the fulfillment of them was in evidence. And he lived 175 years.

When you calculate this out, as I said, this will be when Isaac is 75 years old that Abraham passes away. Then, very interestingly, we have in verse 12 the genealogy of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar, the Egyptian Sarah's maidservant, bore to Abraham. And once again, this is by way of rounding out the story of Abraham.

These are the sons of Ishmael by their names according to their generations. You have the names given there. They are the 12 sons, and it tells us in verse 16 that there are towns and settlements that bear these names, and you can go into the historical records, similar to what we did with the names of Abraham's sons by his concubine, and find these in the historical record.

These, again, are going to be neighbors, ones with whom the nation of Israel will be cognizant in having dealings with later in their history. And this is the explanation of where they came from. In verse 17, there are 12 of them again.

These are the years of the life of Ishmael, 137 years. He breathed his last and died and was gathered to his people. Once again, Ishmael is a number of years older than Isaac.

And so, obviously, his death notice here is chronologically out of time with the birth narratives of Jacob and Esau and so forth. But they're given here to round out because there's going to be no further mention of Ishmael in Genesis. Finally, in verse 19, we have the genealogy of Isaac, Abraham's son.

Abraham begot Isaac. And here, for the first time, we have Isaac's age at the marriage with Rebekah. Isaac was 40 years old when he took Rebekah as wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian, of Paddan Aram the sister of Laban the Syrian, or the Aramean would be more accurate.

Now, if we needed one last nail in the support for the larger interpretation of these things that we've studied in the last couple of weeks and that we just reviewed this morning from Macintosh, how old was Jesus when he was crucified, when he was resurrected and ascended into heaven? He was 33, wasn't he? The clock of the Lord Jesus' life ticked from beginning to end. At what age? It's the age of Israel, right? Jesus spent no time whatsoever in the church age. In fact, he was separated from it by some days.

How many years are left to run in the clock of Israel? There are seven years remaining, aren't there? So in the clock of Israel, how old will Jesus be when he comes back and is united with his bride and begins to rule on the earth? The wedding supper of the Lamb to which Israel is invited is pictured in the parables that Jesus told. In terms of human chronology, Jesus will be 40 years old in his humanity when he begins to reign with his

bride on the throne of Israel at day one of the millennial kingdom. I find this also interesting that Isaac is 40 years old when he took Rebekah as wife, the daughter of Bethel, the Syrian, of Padanerim, the sister of Laban, the Syrian.

And the reason these things are mentioned is this anticipates what we're going to see later because we are by no means finished with Laban and his household. And so that is reviewed for us here in verse 20. Isaac pleaded with the Lord for his wife because she was barren.

It's fascinating to me that in these stories we've seen that Sarah prefigures the nation of Israel. We've seen in the large sense that Jesus as the God-man with God as his father and with coming from humanity in terms of his mother. This makes sense to us.

But in every case here in the patriarchal narratives, Sarah has a problem with barrenness. Rebekah has a problem with barrenness. We're going to see later that Rachel and Leah from this same household, they're all related, aren't they? They all come from the same household.

Sarah, Rebekah, Leah, and Rachel all come from the same. And every one of them has problems with barrenness at some point or another.