

January 14, 2007 AM

DEATH AND BLESSING OF THE NATIONS
GENESIS 25.7-18

Structure: Twelve sons (22.20-24//25.12-18); Two deaths (23//25.7-11); Seed stands in the middle with marriage (24) and separation from the “Gentiles” (25.1-6).

1. THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF ABRAHAM (25.7-11)

Abraham is gathered to his people (7-8): death described: “he expired and he died.” “emptied of breath and dead”

“in a good old age, and old man and full” - lived long, yes, but more than this. “Full” = “satisfied” or “sated.” Abraham lived a “complete” life; i.e., he fulfilled his vocation in life.

“gathered to his people” - Gordon Wenham: “This could just mean that his body now rested with his relatives in the family tomb. But since this is said explicitly in v 9, it would seem more likely that the reference is to the soul of Abraham being reunited with his dead relatives in the afterlife. ‘It can only denote the union of the soul, the transfigured personality, with the souls of the forefathers.’”

Scriptural presentation of life after death: we live in a conscious existence between death and resurrection.

Cf. 1 Sam 28 (Samuel called from the dead); Luke 16 (parable/story of rich man and Lazarus); Phil 1.23 (departing and being with Christ which is far better); 2 Cor 5.1ff. (absent from the body is to be present with the Lord); Heb 12.23 (spirits of just men made perfect); Rev 6.9ff (souls of the martyrs under the altar; resting)

Abraham is inserted into the land (9-10): cave in the Promised Land. Abraham already buried Sarah in faith; i.e., in light of the promises of God concerning the land (ch. 23). He is promised the land as inheritance.

He is inserted into the land something like a seed is inserted into the ground (an analogy that Paul uses in 1 Cor 15): he fully expects his death will sprout unto new life. (Cp. our being inserted into Christ, true land, w/ expectation of resurrection.)

Summary: (1) Between death and resurrection you are in a conscious state of existence even though you are not incarnate (i.e., embodied). (2) This state of rest is not permanent but will give way to the final hope of the resurrection, reunification, and transformation of our bodies.

Cf. 2 Cor 5: we groan to be clothed with our transformed body (i.e., a body like Jesus’ body in heaven). Here Paul explicitly says that our groaning, our desire, is not that we would be “unclothed”—i.e., desire to exist eternally as a disembodied spirit—but “clothed” in this transformed body. Cf. also Phil 3.21; 1 Cor 15.

The emphasis laid on “heaven” as (implicitly) our final hope results from a bad biblical theology of creation and the nature of redemption. Creation’s God ordained purpose is fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus and our resurrection. While we rest, we rest in anticipation of our final hope.

Isaac and Ishmael, the two sons of Abraham, anachronistically, Jew and Gentile, coming together to bury their father.

Sarah is the only wife mentioned as being buried in the Promised Land. She is *the* mother of the promised seed, the one that will have the mission to defeat the enemy and reconcile the world to God.

The other wives and sons have different vocations in the world and there must be a separation until the mission is complete.

Isaac is blessed after the death of Abraham (11a): Chronology: Abe = 100 when Isaac is born (21.5). Abe is 175 at death, which would make Isaac 75. Isaac = 60 when Esau and Jacob are born (25.26). Abe = 160 when grandchildren are born. (They are 15 when he dies.) What happens in the rest of ch. 25 occurs *while Abraham is living*.

At the death of Abraham, Isaac inherits the full blessing of Abraham in order to carry it on. But the blessing of Isaac comes *through* the death of Abraham. Blessing and death are inseparably linked here.

Already est. by birth of Isaac from the dead (cf. Rom 4), and his sacrifice (Gen 22; cp. Heb 11.17-19).

Isaac settles in Beer-lahai-roi (11b): cf. ch. 16: Hagar’s temporary exile from household of Sarah.

This was a well that was located on the way to Shur. There God saw Hagar and the well was named “Well of the Living One who sees me.” There God promised and named Ishmael. God “saw” and was merciful to Hagar.

Isaac’s dwelling: (1) this is outside of the Promised Land, and (2) this, in some sense, embodies the mission of Isaac.

Inheritor of the blessing of Abraham. See Gen 12.1-3, blessing to the nations.

In order to be a blessing the promised seed must go outside of the land—he must be in exile with the nations—standing in their place for the Living One to see him, judging him, so that from him the springs of the water of life might flow to the nations.

Isaac is a substitute, as it were, for Hagar and her children. He is their priest. God will see him and remember him and be merciful and bless the nations. He will make this place a holy mountain, a temple, from which the waters of life will flow.

2. THE TWELVE PRINCES OF ISHMAEL (12-18)

Hagar’s son (12): Ishmael is not the promised seed. But note, one day Egypt will be called “My people” (Isa 19.16-25).

Twelve sons (13-16): parallel to Nahor’s sons in 22.20-24. Twelve = foundation for nation (cf. Rev 21-22)

Ishmael’s sons represent the formation of new nations. He is the father of twelve princes in fulfillment of what was promised to Abraham in Gen 17.20.

Sons of Ishmael and Keturah act together to “harvest the world” and glorify God’s Temple: cf. Isa 60.1-7, “... All the flocks of Kedar [son of Ishmael] shall be gathered together to you, The rams of Nebaioth [firstborn of Ishmael] shall minister to you; They shall ascend with acceptance on My altar [these are sacrifices], *And I will glorify the house of My glory.*”

Ishmael is gathered to his people (17): Ishmael and Abraham’s deaths similarly described. Ishmael dies a believer’s death.

Settling in Havilah (18): Havilah, cf. Gen 2.11-12; there is gold here, “And the gold of that land *is* good. Bdehlium and the onyx stone *are* there.”

The expectation of taking dominion over the earth seems to have been originally to follow these four rivers to the ends of the earth, harvest the world, and bring a tithe back to glorify the house of God.

Ishmael seems to be given that task in relationship to Isaac, who will be the protector of God’s garden. That is, the Gentiles will go out and bring all of the glory of the earth back to God’s Temple-Garden for it to be glorified.

The place of the wilderness wanderings after Exodus from Egypt. Collected gold and incense there.

Note: Not arid, “sandy” desert. Moses pastures flocks in this area (cf. Exod 3; i.e., around Mt. Horeb/Sinai). Flocks of children of Israel coming out of Egypt will need to pasture as well.

Ex 15.27 - palm trees and wells at Elim where they wandered.

Bdehlium is mentioned in Gen 2 and the manna is described as looking like bdehlium in Num 11.7. This is that same region.

Cp. 25.18 with 16.12 and the prophecy concerning Ishmael.

(1) “Fullness” of life is a faithful life.

(2) Upon our deaths we will go to our rest.

(3) Our rest after death is not the end. Rather we anticipate the hope of the resurrection.