

## Then Abraham Breathed His Last: A Full Life – *Genesis 25:1-11*

**Introduction** – What is the measure of a full life? The words, “*of years*” (v8) is not actually in the Hebrew and may misdirect the meaning, for the word “*full*” could be translated “*satisfied*” or “*content*” as at the end of a fabulous meal, or a “*full*” life. “(T)he fulness of Abraham was that of a wealth which death could not touch. The fulness which men gain who live by sight and not by faith is a fulness of which they are emptied in death. They leave their possessions behind them. The men of faith carry their fulness with them. It is a great thing thus to die – full” (G.C. Morgan).

**Another Marriage and More Names** (vv1-6) – After Isaac took a wife, Abraham married again and over the next 35 years had six sons by Keturah. Keturah is mentioned as a concubine in 1 Chron 1:32 and so the “*concubines*” of v6 are probably Keturah and Hagar. In ancient Israel, a concubine was an “*unendowed wife,*” and I appreciate James Jordan’s insights into this. Notice that when Isaac’s servant engaged Rebecca to Isaac that he gave her “*jewelry of silver, jewelry of gold, and clothing*” (24:53). This was probably a downpayment of the endowment that would be given to Rebecca upon her marriage. An endowment was given to the wife (and not the father, not a bride-price) and would be her possessions and wealth to build her home economy (consider the virtuous wife of Proverbs 31).

These sons and grandchildren of Abraham seem to have little significance to us, but we read too quickly. Notice Midian, Sheba, and Ephah for instance. The Midianites were a problem in Joseph’s days, and throughout the stories of the Judges. Centuries later, Moses (who is probably the editor of Genesis) marries the daughter of a Midianite priest. The Queen of Sheba came and honored Solomon. In v8 we are told they all received gifts from Abraham and were sent eastward, not in exile, but separated from Isaac and the land-promise that was particularly his. But in the prophesies of Isaiah, prophesies of the Gospel going to all the Gentiles, we find these names, along with two of Ishmael’s descendants as well (Isaiah 60:1-7). Those descendants of Abraham will, in later generations, be a part of the Gentiles who will come flowing into the New Jerusalem and they will do so with the faith of their distant father, Abraham.

**Abraham’s Obituary** – He died “*in a good old age*” as promised, for God kept and keeps all His promises (Gen 15:15). He was a friend of God for a century (Gen 12:4, James 2:23). He remained a sojourner his entire life, seeking a heavenly country (Heb 11:13-16) but rooted in the promise that this land in which he was buried was only a downpayment for the world which he would one day inherit along with his kin-by-faith (Rom 4:13, Gal 3:29). The Lord had made him the father of many nations (Gen 17:5, 25:2-4, 12-14). He died full, satisfied, trusting the Lord all the way to the end.

**Abraham’s Will** – Abraham left his material wealth to his family and his spiritual wealth to the whole world, to all who would believe in Jesus Christ. He left a clear witness to the way of salvation through faith (Rom 4:1-5). He left a clear example of a faithful life, or rather, a lively faith (James 2:14-26). True faith is our obedient response to the Word of God (Heb 11:8). “*The pith, the essence of faith lies in this: a casting oneself on the promises*” (Spurgeon) – and I would add, “*on the Person of those promises.*” That is what Abraham left us in his will.

**The Slideshow** – At a reception after a funeral, there is often a slideshow, pictures of the deceased with family and friends, remembrances of special times. But not the boring, mundane, daily events so much. Consider how much we have missed in the 175 years of the life of Abraham. Consider the decades that passed between hearing from the Lord and then waiting and waiting. “*(The life of faith) is a sequence of crises, key moments, or periods, usually relatively brief, separated by longer periods of plateau or stasis*” (Rayburn). Did Abraham have exciting times in his life? You bet. Life-changing moments. Yep. But most of his years were relatively uneventful, tending flocks and herds, caring for his household, stewarding his wealth and time. And your life of faith is similar. Events that change everything, great peaks and valleys in life, forceful moments of the Spirit’s work upon your soul. And then there is also longer times of simply plodding along, but these are also times of spiritual growth and testing for these are times when it often seems God is distant and faith seems a struggle (“*maybe we should have a son by Hagar...*”). Those days are great tests of obedience by faith in the Person of the promises. Abraham had such faith and so do the sons of Abraham.

**Gathered to His People** – Although Abraham was buried with Sarah, this phrase, “gathered to his people” is not referring to that. This is the first use of the phrase and means his spirit went to the realm of the dead. The Hebrew refers to this place as “Sheol” and the Greek NT refers to it as “Hades.” Hades had two compartments, a place of torment and a place that was known as “Abraham’s bosom” (Luke 16:22). The Greeks and Romans also knew of two places, Elysium and Tartarus, a place of rest and a place of torment. This place, “Elysium/Abraham’s bosom/Paradise” ascended with Christ as He went up into heaven (Eph 4:8-10) which is why those who have the faith of Abraham are with Christ in heaven when they die (2 Cor 5:6-8, Phil 1:23).

**End with Faith** – It is natural to long for a life full of years and with blessings abounding. And nothing wrong with praying for that blessing. But that is not always the story God writes, and it is not promised. Remember, none of the apostles had that kind of end, and so it is not where our ultimate hope is to land. Rather, it is to long to be with Christ and with His people – and yours – but only if your faith is in the crucified and resurrected Jesus Christ.

Courage and joy in this life are granted in this life not by denying death, but rather by looking at it square in the face knowing that death is not the end. On the morning of his execution at Flossenbürg concentration camp, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was led away after conducting a brief worship service. He turned to a fellow inmate and said, “*This is the end – for me, the beginning of life.*”

And so, what is a full life? It is not measured by years, not by the number of amazing events. It is not measured by whether or not you were on the list of “Who’s Who?” It is not measured by bank accounts and land holdings. It is measured by fat-souled satisfaction, contentment in the Lord Who gave you your particular story; it is measured by trust in His utter faithfulness to the promises He has given you. God grant us and grow us up in such a fullness of faith, that we might die – full.

*Psalm 16:11 - You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

*Psalm 116:15 - Precious in the sight of the LORD Is the death of His saints.*

*John 11:25–26 - Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”*

*Dave Hatcher – October 19, 2025*

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