"A Time to be Born and a Time to Die"

(Life is brief: Live Wisely!)

Genesis 22:20-23:2

9/20/98

Introduction:

** Life is brief: Live Wisely!*

I. A Time to be <u>BORN</u> (Genesis 22:20-24)

(The Significant Birth: **Rebekah**, Abraham's Grand-niece; Who would become Isaac's wife)

II. A Time to <u>DIE</u> (Genesis 23:1-2)

(The Significant Death: **Sarah**, Abraham's wife; Who was the mother of Isaac and matriarch of the Jewish Race)

Sarah's death, like any death of any loved one, reminds us of…

A. The Importance of <u>Relationships</u>

(People matter more than money or material things)

B. The Reality of <u>Death</u>

1. Death eventually strikes the most <u>"important"</u> people

(Sarah's significance: Genesis 18:9-14)

2. Death eventually strikes the most <u>"beautiful"</u> people

(Sarah's beauty: Genesis 12:11,14)

3. Death eventually strikes the most <u>Godly</u> people

(Sarah's godliness: I Peter 3:5-6)

C. The <u>Shortness</u> of <u>Life</u> (on Earth)

See: Psalm 90

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Introduction:

Solomon, who wrote much about the brevity of life, said: Eccles. 3:1-2

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: [2] A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

Russian pastor Georgi Vins writes that he “once saw a painting of a man at three different stages of his life. At the left is a baby who can only crawl. The child is trying to stand, to life himself from the floor. In the center is an adult shown in motion, with his head proudly held high. His body is filled with vitality, strength, and physical might. With confidence his eyes look straight ahead to the future. In his pose and in his gaze there is the feeling of flight. Above his head is a bright sun. On the right in the painting is a decrepit old man. His back is bent, almost doubled over. He leans on his cane with trembling hands and tries, with wobbly legs, to walk. His eyes are dim, almost unseeing. I think the artist’s goal was to portray the brevity of man’s earthly life, to show how fleeting it is and to challenge people to value their time!” (“Prisoner Bulletin”)

<u>Time spent in a 35-year life</u>:

If one lives to be 35 years of age and is the average person, he spends:

--10 years sleeping

--10 years working

--3 years eating

--3 ½ years playing

--2 ½ years dressing

--6 months on the telephone

--1 year 9 months smoking

--1 year 9 months in bed

--1 ½ years waiting for somebody

--2 ½ months tying shoes

--1 year 9 months for other things (including 9 months in church)

New "Bank" Account Daily

If you had a bank that credited your account each morning with $86,400, that carried no balance from day to day, allowed you to keep no cash in your account, and finally every evening cancelled whatever part of the amount you had failed to use during the day, what would you do? Draw out every cent – of course!

Well, you have such a bank, and its name is "Time." Every morning it credits you with 86,400 seconds. Every night it rules off – as lost – whatever of this you have failed to invest to good purpose. It carries no balances. It allows no overdrafts. Each day the bank named "Time" opens a new account with you. Each night it burns the records of the day. If you fail to use the day's deposits the loss is yours."

--Robert G. Lee

** Life is brief: Live Wisely!*

I. A Time to be BORN (Genesis 22:20-24)

(The Significant Birth: **Rebekah**, Abraham's Grand-niece; Who would become Isaac's wife)

It is no accident that God describes the births and children of Abraham's relatives in the East and then in the next breath records for us the death and burial of Sarah.

One generations comes and another goes, as time marches on.

Theologically it is quite significant that God describes the descendents of Abraham's brother. With the passing of Sarah, Isaac's mother, the Lord is setting the stage to describe someone who would come into Isaac's life and comfort him over his grief and loss (Gen. 24:67) – namely, Rebekah, Abraham's grand-niece.

The primary reason for what seems to be an unusual ending to chapter 22 is to provide a transition from one generation (that of Abraham and Sarah) to a new generation (that of Isaac and Rebekah). Rebekah (v. 23), therefore, is the key name mentioned in this concluding paragraph, and interestingly enough, she is the only female child mentioned.

II. A Time to DIE (Genesis 23:1-2)

(The Significant Death: **Sarah**, Abraham's wife; Who was the mother of Isaac and matriarch of the Jewish Race)

v. 1

127 years is a long time, but it is nothing when compared with eternity.

Sarah's death no doubt reminded Abraham of his own mortality. Although he would outlive his wife by 48 years and live to be 175, he too would meet her in death (25:7).

Sarah's death, like any death of any loved one, reminds us of…

A. The Importance of Relationships

(People matter more than money or material things)

v. 2

The verbs are strong in imagery: mourn means "to beat the breast," And weep means to "lament with grievous sorrow."

Abraham's expression of grief was unrestrained and unapologetic. Some of us today, however, feel guilt over our grief. We want to rush past the deaths of our loved ones, to recover quickly, and go on with life. We feel that it is somehow unspiritual to mourn. But Scripture never condemns grief. Tears are valuable. They are God-given relief mechanisms." (Swindoll, p. 137-8)

"The woman who had shared Abraham's life – his departures and arrivals, gains and losses, highs and lows, encouragements and corrections, promises and disappointments – is gone." (Swindoll, p. 137).

B. The Reality of Death

1. Death eventually strikes the most "important" people

(Sarah's significance: Genesis 18:9-14)

The Lord Himself, visibly appeared to and visited Sarah's tent home and spoke specifically of her bearing a son in her old age.

She would become the matriarch of the entire Jewish race.

A very significant person indeed!

Yet one who would experience death.

2. Death eventually strikes the most <u>"beautiful"</u> people
(Sarah's beauty: Genesis 12:11,14)

At the age of 65, Sarah's beauty caught the attention of Pharaoh of Egypt; several years later, her beauty caught the attention of Abimelech of Gerar.

Yet physical beauty and attractiveness also one day ends in wrinkles, gray hair (which has its own beauty), and death.

The youthful figure and the unblemished face eventually fade as age takes its toll on all of us.

3. Death eventually strikes the most <u>Godly</u> people
(Sarah's godliness: I Peter 3:5-6)

When giving an example of a godly, submissive wife, of all the women Peter could have cited, he chooses Sarah.

1 Peter 3:5-6
For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: [6] Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

C. The <u>Shortness</u> of <u>Life</u> (on Earth)

See: Psalm 90

This psalm, written through <u>Moses</u> who lived to be 120 years old, unveils a theme that Moses saw vividly portrayed before his eyes, as 1.2 million of his people perished in a brief 40 years: namely, the brevity of life.

Psalm 90 is the <u>oldest</u> of all Psalms. Interestingly enough, the <u>age</u> of this psalm corresponds to the theme of it - namely, the shortness of life on earth.

Every day 130,000 people die somewhere in the world. Every hour 5,417 people go to meet their Maker.

That's 90 per minute. That's nearly 2 people every second.

***Three truths to remember about time from Psalm 90 -**

1. God is not bound by time (v. 1-6)

V. 1

"Dwelling place" - God is pictured as a house that has never gotten old, decrepit or ruined. As Paul said to the philosophers at Mars Hill, "In him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

V. 2

"Were brought forth" - the picture is of the mountains being "born."
Mountains are always viewed as that part of creation which is majestic, strong (powerful), and old.
"From everlasting (in the past) to everlasting (in the future), God remains the same. He is immutable. He never changes.

V. 3

"Thou turnest man to destruction - It is God who takes life, who decides when we breathe our last (Heb. 9:27).
"Return, ye children of men" - meaning, to return to the dust from which we came (Gen. 3:19).

V. 4

II Pet. 3:8 - "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."
When a thousand years have expired, they are like "yesterday" to God. His perfect remembrance of them makes them such.
As far as God is concerned, it was only two days ago that Christ died.
God describes time (1,000 years) using four analogies:

1) A "watch" - the brief hours of the night when a guard would stand duty over a city to protect it
2) A "flood" - as the flood waters quickly carry along debris, etc. (as it moves past), so this is the perspective God has for history. he sees the successive ages (and the details of them) just quickly passing by down the currents of time.

3) A "sleep" - as quickly as it seems for many to fall asleep and wake up, so is time to God

4) The "grass" - in the morning, it is vibrant, moist, and growing, and by evening (after the desert winds have passed by), it is dry, scorched, and withered (cp. James 1:10-11 - "the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways."

2. Man's life is short, and sin makes it sorrowful (v. 7-11)

V. 7-9
Moses, who saw the unbelieving Israelites (from 20 years old and upward) die int hew wilderness, was reminded of the price ("wages") of sin.

V. 9
Our life is like a "tale that is told"
From introduction through the chapters, and to the conclusion, man's life is short.

V. 10
The average life span is 70 years, which is only 840 months, 3,640 weeks, or 25,200 days.
It's not much when viewed against the backdrop of eternity.
Life is short, but it is not always sweet. "Labor and sorrow" - the results of sin and the curse.
"It is soon cut off, and we fly away" - SEE: Eccles. 12:1-7

V. 11
Not many people consider God's wrath against sin. And that sin is the reason for misery and judgment.

3. We need God to give us wisdom to make the most of our lives (v. 12-17)

V. 12
"So" - in light of what was previously said (v. 1-11)
"Teach us" - only God can place within man an accurate value of each minute of time.
"To number" - to truly consider that life's days are few.

God likens the swiftness of our lives unto:

1) A weaver's shuttle (Job 7:6)
2) A breath of air (Job 7:6)
3) A runner (Job 9:25)
4) Swift ships (Job 9:26)
5) A flower (Job 14:1)
6) A shadow (Job 14:2)
7) As evaporating water (Job 14:11-12)
8) A shepherd's tent (Is. 38:12)
9) A vapor (Ja. 4:14)

The reason given for numbering our days is <u>not</u> so that we can miserably lament the brevity of life, but so that we will both learn and experience the art of <u>skillful living</u>.

"Wisdom" - is truth put into life. it is applied knowledge. Our heart (the core of our being) needs to <u>know</u> God's truth, then <u>live</u> it in order to make the most of our lives.

Sawyer's paraphrase: "So teach us to understand the shortness of life, so that we may live for what really matters."

How to make the most of your life:

1) Live in light of the Lord's <u>return</u> (v. 13)

"Return" (cp. Ps. 6:4, 80:14) - has the idea of "come to my rescue and deliver my life from futility and misery." The Messiah's return is no doubt implied.

2) Experience the Lord's <u>merciful salvation</u> (v. 14)

3) Let God bring <u>joy and fulfillment</u> into your life, rather than spending your life trying to find it

4) Trust God to work in and through your life (v. 16-17)

Life is vain without God doing it through you (Jn. 15:5)

5) Make wise decisions

Words of Wisdom regarding our time:

1. <u>Wake up</u> out of your spiritual lethargy (Rom. 13:11-14)
2. <u>Prioritize</u> your life
   a. Our # 1 love (Mk. 12:28-31)
   b. Our # 1 goal (Mt. 6:33)
   c. Our # 1 job (I Tim. 2:1)

3. Make your plans by seeking God's will (Ja. 4:13-15)
4. Seek to make every moment count for God (Eph. 5:16)
    a. Invest your life in the eternal, not the temporal
    b. Take advantage of every opportunity to be a blessing
    c. Schedule your time and discipline your life
    d. Live each day as if it were your last

Ephes. 5:15-16
See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, [16] Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

People talk of "saving time." The moments of time cannot be saved. Time is either spent wisely or wasted.

The 16th Century reformer Philip Melanchthon kept a record of every wasted moment and took his list to God in confession at the end of each day (cited by J. MacArthur, Ephesians, p. 223).

Everyone has certain seasons of teachable moments and tender hearts. Redeem those moments!

Shakespeare wrote: "There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries." (Julius Caesar, 4:3, 217).

Napoleon said: "There is in the midst of every great battle, a ten to fifteen minute period that is the crucial point. Take that period, and you win the battle; lose it, and you will be defeated.

We will never have this life to live over again. We will never pass this way again. Once we are in heaven, we will never have the privilege of glorifying God by fighting against sin, overcoming Satan and the flesh, winning souls, etc.

"Boast not thyself of tomorrow…"

"The clock of time is wound but once,
And no man has the power
To tell just when the hands will stop,
At late or early hour.

Now is the only time you own;
So live, love, toil, with a will [doing God's will]
Place no faith in tomorrow,
For the clock may then be still."