

# Honouring the Lord in Bereavement

Genesis 23:1-20

Halifax: 6 December 2015, 10:30 AM

## Introduction:

One of the great benefits of the Old Testament scriptures is the way we get to see examples of how the LORD deals with His people in the common affairs of life.

- We see both His faithfulness as well as the faithfulness (or unfaithfulness at times) of His people.

We certainly have this privilege with Abraham and with all that is written about him.

- Much about his life, of course, is quite extraordinary,
  - but as we have seen, even these extraordinary affairs have much to teach us, and there are many ways that we can relate to them...
    - as, for example, when Abraham was called to offer Isaac as a burnt offering—that was extraordinary, but we can immediately relate to those times when obedience to God calls us to do something that we do not want to do...
    - And above all things, as believers we can relate to and rejoice in God’s promise to provide the sacrifice that He requires for us that we are not able to provide.
- But today as we come to chapter 23, we come to an experience in Abraham’s life that is common to all of us—bereavement!
  - Children, do you know what the word bereavement means?
    - You are bereaved when something or someone that you love is taken away from you, especially when someone you love dies.
    - On Friday, my family experienced bereavement when our little dog Felicity died.
  - Everyone who lives in this world experiences bereavement because we live in a world that fell into sin where everyone dies.
    - And every time someone dies, all the people who were close to that person experience bereavement.

In Genesis chapter 23, Abraham experiences bereavement.

- So I am going to preach about bereavement today and we will see that there is much for us to learn as we read about Abraham’s experience.
- Please give me your attention now as I read Genesis 23 to you. It is the word of God.

**Genesis 23:1-20:** Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; *these were* the years of the life of Sarah. <sup>2</sup> So Sarah died in Kirjath Arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. <sup>3</sup> Then Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying, <sup>4</sup> “I am a foreigner and a visitor among you. Give me property for a burial place among you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.” <sup>5</sup> And the sons of Heth answered

Abraham, saying to him, <sup>6</sup> “Hear us, my lord: You are a mighty prince among us; bury your dead in the choicest of our burial places. None of us will withhold from you his burial place, that you may bury your dead.” <sup>7</sup> Then Abraham stood up and bowed himself to the people of the land, the sons of Heth. <sup>8</sup> And he spoke with them, saying, “If it is your wish that I bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and meet with Ephron the son of Zohar for me, <sup>9</sup> that he may give me the cave of Machpelah

which he has, which *is* at the end of his field. Let him give it to me at the full price, as property for a burial place among you.”  
<sup>10</sup> Now Ephron dwelt among the sons of Heth; and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the presence of the sons of Heth, all who entered at the gate of his city, saying, <sup>11</sup> “No, my lord, hear me: I give you the field and the cave that *is* in it; I give it to you in the presence of the sons of my people. I give it to you. Bury your dead!” <sup>12</sup> Then Abraham bowed himself down before the people of the land; <sup>13</sup> and he spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, “If you *will give it*, please hear me. I will give you money for the field; take *it* from me and I will bury my dead there.”  
<sup>14</sup> And Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him, <sup>15</sup> “My lord, listen to me; the land *is worth* four hundred shekels of silver. What

*is* that between you and me? So bury your dead.” <sup>16</sup> And Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed out the silver for Ephron which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, currency of the merchants. <sup>17</sup> So the field of Ephron which *was* in Machpelah, which *was* before Mamre, the field and the cave which *was* in it, and all the trees that *were* in the field, which *were* within all the surrounding borders, were deeded <sup>18</sup> to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who went in at the gate of his city. <sup>19</sup> And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre (that *is*, Hebron) in the land of Canaan. <sup>20</sup> So the field and the cave that *is* in it were deeded to Abraham by the sons of Heth as property for a burial place.

And there we will conclude the reading of God’s holy word.

- Thanks be to God for giving us His word.

Now let us consider from this account what we can learn from the word of our gracious heavenly Father about bereavement so that we will be prepared when we experience it.

## **I. First of all, that bereavement is a time for mourning before the LORD.**

A. Abraham provides us with a good example here.

1. If you look at the first two verses we read, you can see that he deliberately **came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her**.
  - a. It is uncertain what it means when it says that he “came to mourn” for her...
    - if he was out of town when she died or it means that he came to where her body was laid...
    - probably the latter...
      - but what it definitely means is that mourning and weeping was something he set out to do.
  - b. It has become popular in the modern world, at least among some, to suppress our tears and our sorrow when we lose a loved one.
    - Sometimes Christians can feel as if they are compromising if they weep, or that they ought to be ashamed of their tears and try to suppress them,
      - but this is not consistent with scripture.
    - In the scripture, the godly are seen mourning in their bereavement.
      - And to make it certain that this is acceptable, we are even told in John 11 that our Lord Jesus Christ wept at the tomb of Lazarus, even though He knew that He was going to raise him up in a moment.
      - Now of course you don’t need to feel guilty if you are one who does not typically shed tears about anything, but rest assured that mourning is proper before the Lord.

2. In fact, we may even say that mourning ought to occur when we are bereaved.
  - a. It arises out of the love that we have for the one who is taken from us.
    - We are meant to love one another—not only to do good to one another, but also to delight in the company of each other.
    - What would it say about Abraham’s marriage to Sarah of perhaps 100 years or even more—if he had not mourned when she died?
      - In many ways, it would be a great dishonour to Sarah!
    - Wicked King Herod, anticipating that people might rejoice in the day of his death, tried to assure himself that there would be mourning by ordering the death of others on the day of his death...
      - His orders were not followed because he was not there to enforce them, but even he saw the shame in having no one to mourn for him.
    - Rejoicing at one’s death shows enmity and contempt for that one.
      - Weeping shows that you miss the one who has died.
  - b. Mourning also properly arises out of our reverence for God.
    - Death is not natural—it is a punishment from God for the sin of mankind.
      - Death is a disruption of the natural order that God created.
      - It is a curse, and it is supposed to hurt. It is an enemy.
    - It is the way of a hardened child to be punished by his father and to pretend that it does not hurt!
      - We are to smart—to feel the hurt—when we experience the curse.
    - We are certainly not to grow bitter or angry at God, for we deserve to be punished and the punishment is for our good,
      - but we are to cry as those who are broken because of what the sin of the human race has justly brought upon us.
      - There is no place for a hard heart or for an artificial smile.
        - Bereavement is a time for a broken heart and for weeping.

TRANS> But of course it is important to compose our thoughts in a way that pleases the Lord when we mourn.

- Mourning is not an excuse to do whatever you want or to abandon self-control.
- B. The LORD has given us guidance in His word about our mourning for the dead in His word. Let us consider some things He has told us to avoid...
- And then we will look at some things that we ought to do when we mourn...
1. First of all, we are not to engage in any superstitious or idolatrous rites in our mourning.
    - For example, in Leviticus 19:28, it says, **Le 19:28 ‘You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I am the LORD.’**
    - Sadly, the old pagan practice of cutting oneself in time of distress has made a comeback in our day, but such things are not pleasing to the Lord.

- Sometimes, people will want to pray for the dead or they will want to burn candles for them or talk to them.
    - There is a poetical way to talk to them that is not idolatrous, as David did when he said, “O Absalom, Absalom...”
      - but this is an expression of sorrow, not an attempt to actually communicate with his dead son.
        - Speaking to the dead is expressly forbidden in scripture.
2. Secondly we must not mourn in an excessive way, in which we become bitter toward God and curse Him.
- Job is a shining example in this matter—
    - After all of his children were taken away from him, we are told that he definitely mourned, but not so as to become bitter toward God.
      - In Job 1:20-21 it says: **Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD.”**
    - You see how he resigns himself to the LORD’s sovereign will...recognising that God has brought his calamity and mourning, but accepting what God has done with meekness and humility.
      - We are told for sure that this was the right response because in verse 22 it says: **In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.**
        - See that you do not charge Him with wrong when you mourn.
- C. Now let us look at some things that we *ought* to do when we mourn...
1. First of all, it is a time to seek to be comforted by the LORD.
    - 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 calls Him **the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulations.**
      - That is who He is and that is what He does.
    - Paul goes on to explain in 1 Corinthians 1 how God sustained him in all the sorrows he experienced—
      - and if you know anything about Paul, you know that he had many troubles that were extremely difficult things...
        - yet he says that even **as the sufferings of Christ abounded in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ (v. 5).**
    - This is wonderful—the more trouble you experience, the more God Himself will comfort you if only you will look to Him!
      - Mourning is a time to know Him in ways that you have not known Him before!
  2. And not only that, but you are also to use mourning as a time to comfort others.
    - That is something that Paul speaks about in 2 Corinthians 1 as well, for he says that one of the reasons the Lord comforts us is,
      - verse 4... **that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.**

- If you are around godly people in their bereavement, you know that they often say things that are extremely encouraging.
    - You go to try to comfort them, and they end up encouraging you and those around them, even in the very midst of their mourning.
3. Besides that you should use mourning as a time of thanksgiving to God for the dead.
- It is very natural to do this because you are thinking about them and all that they did and all that they meant to you.
  - When David lamented the death of Saul and Jonathan, he expressed much grief because of their death,
    - and in a sense he heightened his grief by expressing how thankful he was for them and how precious Jonathan was as his loyal friend.
      - Of King Saul he says, **2 Sam 1:24** “**O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with luxury; who put ornaments of gold on your apparel.**”
      - And of Jonathan he say, **2 Sam 1:26**: “**I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; you have been very pleasant to me; your love to me was wonderful, surpassing the love of women.**”
  - Do not hesitate to remember how special your loved one was—it is only natural to do this in your sorrow...
    - It honours the LORD for you to acknowledge what you had in the relationship, and how good the LORD was to give you such a companion.
    - Your sorrow is a part of your gratitude to Him for His goodness.
4. And on top of all of this, mourning is also a time for repentance.
- As you remember the dead person, there are often regrets that arise—regrets about the way you treated the one who died...
    - You remember your neglect or your harshness, or perhaps there was even deception or wrongs that you never made right.
    - Ideally, you should deal with such things before the person dies, but if you did not, these things will come up now that they are gone...
  - And mourning is the time for you to own up to your sin—to confess your faults to God and perhaps to others—
    - Do not go on trying to suppress your wrongs—
      - Suppression is no way to deal with your sin—repent of it before the LORD and come to Jesus for forgiveness.
        - **Pr 28:13: He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.**
      - You can’t justify yourself, but He can justify you!
5. And yes, if you have been harbouring resentment or bitterness toward the dead for what the wrongs that they have done to you, let that go too...
- It doesn’t matter, as far as you are concerned, that they did not repent.
    - If you want to flourish in the LORD, you have to let go of the wrongs they did to you.

- God will deal with them about it, and you should have left it to Him long ago.
  - You are even supposed to do that for an enemy!
    - Rom 12:19 says: **Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.**
      - That means, leave it to God to deal with them!
  - If you keep hanging on to your bitterness, it will eat you up and bring trouble to the people around you that you might have been a blessing to.
    - Hebrews 12:15 says: **looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;**
      - Why would you hold on to what will only bring destruction to you and to others?

TRANS> So yes, do not settle for shallow mourning...

- Bereavement is not a time to gloss over things—it is a time to enter into appropriate sorrow before the LORD.
- Now let us move on to look at what else we learn about bereavement in our text.

## **II. Secondly, that bereavement is a time for us to remember that we are pilgrims and strangers in the earth.**

- Do you know what it means to be a pilgrim and a stranger?
  - A. A pilgrim and stranger is someone who is not a citizen of the place—
    1. He is someone who is just there temporarily.
      - He realises that he does not yet have a permanent abode in the land of his sojourning.
      - He is only there for a time.
    2. What better time to remember this than when a loved one dies!
      - a. In their passing from this world, we have the stark reminder that we are not here forever—only for a short time!
        - As the one we love has gone, so too, will we go.
        - This world is not our permanent habitation.
      - b. Psalm 90 brings this out very powerfully in words that we would do well remember when someone dies...
        - Psalm 90 begins by talking about how the LORD who is everlasting is our dwelling place...He is the only permanent thing!
        - But as for us, we are destroyed because of God’s wrath...
          - Verses 9-11 say: **For all our days have passed away in Your wrath; we finish our years like a sigh. <sup>10</sup> The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. <sup>11</sup> Who knows the power of Your anger? For as the fear of You, so is Your wrath.**

- What then are we to do when we see loved ones swept away because of God's curse of death?
    - Verse 12 says it all...**So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.**
  - What does it mean to *number our days*?
    - It means that we are to see how short our life is upon the earth!
      - We are gain a heart of wisdom—a heart that does not suppose that this is our final destination!
    - A heart that realises that this is only a blip in eternity,
      - Yet that what we do during our brief time here will count for all eternity!
    - This is the testing ground—this is the place where we grow fruit for eternal life—
      - Then comes the judgement for what we have done here.
      - The judgement is the harvest and then eternity comes.
    - A wise person will take this to heart because a wise person considers how his present actions will affect his future!
      - Whenever loved ones are taken from you, it is a time to remember that you are only a stranger and a pilgrim upon the earth!
- B. You can see in our text in Genesis that Abraham confesses this to the people around him when Sarah dies!
- Verse 3-4 say: **Then Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying, "I am a foreigner and a visitor among you. Give me property for a burial place among you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight."**
1. You see how, although God had promised to give him the very land he was standing upon, he declares that presently he is a foreigner and a visitor.
    - He knows that he has not yet received the land that God had promised to him; and now that knowledge has been reaffirmed by Sarah's death.
    - We know that God was pleased with this confession because Hebrews commends Abraham and his sons for this as an expression of their faith...
      - In Hebrews 11:13-16, it says: **These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.**
      - Their faith is seen in that they recognise that they do not yet have what God has promised, and they have their eyes set not on what they have now, but on what He has promised.
  2. We also know that the LORD wants us to know and live as if this present world is not our final destination.

- a. In Colossians 3:1-2, Paul says: **If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.**”
    - As I told the youth in Moncton last week, you need to have an eternal perspective!
      - Live in a way that counts for eternity!
  - b. Hear also how Jesus warns us not to set our affections on this present world so that we lay up treasures here, but in the world to come:
    - **Matthew 6:19-21: Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**
    - He spells out plainly what He means in Matthew 6:24-25: **Matthew 6:24-25: No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?**
      - Instead of concerning yourself with gaining the things of this world, you need to concern yourself with doing the will of King Jesus!
- C. When you see that this world is not your home, it will make it much easier for you to treat others in a way that pleases the LORD.
1. You can see that this was true of Abraham.
    - a. Though he called himself a foreigner and a stranger, the men of Heth called him a prince among them!
      - They have come to highly regard him because time had shown that he was not out to get what was theirs.
      - It is very evident that in him there is no scheming, no grasping, no hostility or intent to seize what belongs to them.
      - He respects them as the rightful owners of the land at this time because he knows that God has not given it to him yet—he is fine with that.
    - b. Hence, they are happy to offer him their own tombs to bury Sarah...
      - And you see how Abraham shows great courtesy toward them, how he bows to them in respect and politeness, and how he insists upon paying the full price for a tomb for Sarah.
        - I will have more to say about that in a moment...
          - But for now I just want you to see how a man lives toward others when he does not regard this present world as his destination.
        - It is hard to say for sure if Ephron is actually offering to give the land to Abraham without charge...
          - Probably, he is just following the customary manners of the day when gentlemen transacting business would make such comments, knowing full well that the other was going to pay.



- Some have witnessed these customs even in more recent times in those countries.
  - But what is clear is that Abraham is highly respected, courteous, and dealing uprightly.
  - He knows that this present world is not his home—that it is but for the moment.
- c. Do you respect what belongs to others?
  - Parents, do you teach your children to respect what belongs to others?
    - One thing we need to be much more careful about is the way we treat this building—it is not ours—God has given it to others.
- 2. This is the way of true wisdom!
  - a. When we are bereaved of one that we love, we see in a fresh and vivid way that we are just passing through...and that helps us to be generous.
  - b. As Paul reminds us in 1 Timothy 6,
    - verse 6-7: **godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.**
      - You truly cannot take it with you so let others have it!
        - Step out the way and let them have the last piece of cake—you can pass it by because you have great treasure in heaven.
    - In verses 9-10, Paul goes on to warn us against the dangers of covetousness: **But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.**
    - In verse 11 he tells you what to focus on instead: **But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.**
    - And in verse 17-18 he tells you what to do if you are rich, like Abraham was—he tells you how to lay up treasure in heaven: **Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.**

TRANS> And this brings us to our next point...

- When you see that this world is not your final destiny, it is time to set your hope on that which is your eternal destiny...and that is our third point today:

### III. Thirdly, see that bereavement is a time to bury our dead in hope of our eternal inheritance from the LORD.

- A. You can see in our text that Abraham is very concerned about burying Sarah in the land that God has promised him.

1. He is not interested in burying her in one of the tombs of the sons of Heth.
  - He insists on purchasing a tomb of his own for his family.
    - He is not concerned about securing property for his livestock or for growing crops...
      - It is most obvious that his concern is to secure a place of his own to bury his dead.
  - He makes negotiations before the elders of the city to purchase Ephron's tomb, and he pays full price before them all.
    - You can see all of this spelled out in verses 16-20:
      - That he pays in full: **v. 16: And Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed out the silver for Ephron which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, currency of the merchants.**
      - That he receives clear title to the land before the elders: **v. 17 &18: So the field of Ephron which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field and the cave which was in it, and all the trees that were in the field, which were within all the surrounding borders, were deeded to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who went in at the gate of his city.**
      - And that the purpose of acquiring the land is for burial in the land of Canaan: **v. 19-20: And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan. So the field and the cave that is in it were deeded to Abraham by the sons of Heth as property for a burial place.**
- But why was Abraham so insistent about acquiring a burial place for his Sarah and for his family in the land of Canaan?
2. It was because Abraham buried his dead in hope of the promise that the God of heaven would give him this land as an everlasting possession!
  - a. Burying his dead here was symbolic of his trust in the promise of God that this land would be his land.
    - Not just the land of his descendants, but that he and Sarah would be raised from the dead to possess this land.
    - God did not tell Abraham that He would raise him from the dead in so many words;
      - instead He told him that He would give him this land as an everlasting possession—
        - and that meant that Abraham would live again—
          - and Abraham believed this!
    - He wanted his descendants to believe this promise too, so it was not only a personal expression of his hope to bury Sarah in a purchased tomb here,
      - but also a testimony to his posterity that they would inherit this land...
  - b. Years later, Abraham's great grandson, having hope in the same promise, makes Israel swear to him that they will bring his bones to Canaan...

- In Genesis 50:24-25, we read: **And Joseph said to his brethren, “I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.” Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.”**
  - And that is exactly what they do according to Exodus 13:19 when Moses leads them to the promised land.
    - All this confirming the hope that this land will be given to Abraham and his seed as an everlasting possession...
    - It is a promise of resurrection and of eternal life!
3. And you see that it is when bereaved of Sarah that Abraham fixes his eyes upon this promise.
- Burial itself is an ancient and universal custom that expresses the hope of the resurrection...
    - The hope that the body that is buried will be raised up by God to inherit the earth.
    - Yes, Sarah and Abraham will stand up again from the grave to inherit the land as an everlasting possession in a literal way.
      - God means what He says, and that is what He has promised.
- B. My brothers and sisters, this is similar to your hope if you are in Jesus Christ!
1. When you are bereaved, do not sorrow as those who have no hope!
    - a. The LORD has assured us as His people that we shall inherit the earth!
      - In Psalm 37, we are told that meek will inherit the earth...
        - Ps 37:9-11 says it twice: **For evildoers shall be cut off; but those who wait on the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; indeed, you will look carefully for his place, but it shall be no more. But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.**
        - And likewise Psalm 37:22: **For those blessed by Him shall inherit the earth, but those cursed by Him shall be cut off.**
      - Jesus repeats that promise to us in the Sermon on the Mount when He says, **“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth!”**
        - There is no question about it; this is what God has promised to us.
        - We honour Him by believing His promise, and bereavement is one of the times this promise ought to be especially precious to us.
    - b. We read in 1 Thessalonians 4 that we are to comfort one another with this assurance.
      - 1 Thess 4:13-17: **But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend**

**from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.**

- And I need to explain to you that the word “meet” that is used here (when it says that we will meet the Lord in the air) is a word that is used of those who meet a dignitary to escort him into their community...
  - My brothers and sisters, we will meet Jesus to escort Him to the earth!
    - He is given the earth as His inheritance—the whole earth—and we will meet Him when He comes to receive it!
- c. Even the very creation itself will be restored in that day...
  - Romans 8:19-23 explains how the creation eagerly waits for this glorious day when we are resurrected to inherit the earth.
    - **Rom 8:19-23: For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.**
  - Dominion will be restored, the full beauty of the earth in all its glory without the curse and without death will be ours...
    - It will be an everlasting possession for us!
- 2. How comforting and encouraging it is to meditate on this promise when we are bereaved!
  - It is so hard to be separated from our loved ones, but it is so encouraging to know that it is not the end when they leave us...
    - Not at all—it is only another step closer to obtaining the promised inheritance...
    - Already they are gathered to the risen Christ and soon the day will come when the trumpet sounds and their bodies and our bodies will go to meet Him in the air...
      - And He will come and to inherit the whole earth for His people and will reign with Him forever and ever,
        - all because of His grace who came to redeem us from our sins that we might be with Him forever!
  - Here is what the LORD Himself declares to us about this inheritance in Revelation 21:5-8:
    - **Rev 21:5-8: Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.” And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely**

**to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”**

- This is our marvellous hope when we bury our dead...
  - He will make all things new and we will inherit the earth with Him and with Abraham and Sarah and with all who have drunk at the fountain.
- But oh what a dreadful thing it would be to miss this glorious inheritance!
  - to instead spend all eternity in lake of fire!
- 3. Do you want the glorious inheritance?
  - He says that He will give the fountain freely to whoever thirsts!
    - It doesn't matter how great a sinner you may have been—
    - If you want to be forgiven and transformed, come to Jesus and drink of His salvation...
    - Hear His gracious call:
      - **Rev 22:16-17: “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.” And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.**
    - You have no good reason to refuse Him—it is only our wickedness and corruption that keeps you away...
      - And that is the very thing He promises to take care of, if only you will come to Him.