

Passing Through with the Eternal God

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[0 : 00] I invite you to turn in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 21.

! And you will land at Genesis chapter 21.

And we're going to jump in the middle of this chapter and read down through the end of the chapter.

So we're going to start at verse 22 and run all the way to the end of Genesis chapter 21.

And so I want to invite you guys, as you turn there and find your place in your Bibles, I'd like to invite you to stand in honor of the Word of God as we read together. We're told, I will swear.

When Abraham reproved Abimelech about a well of water that Abimelech's servants had seized, Abimelech said, I do not know who has done this thing. You did not tell me, and I have not heard of it until today.

[1 : 36] So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two men made a covenant. Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock apart. And Abimelech said to Abraham, What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs that you have set apart?

He said, These seven ewe lambs you will take from my hand, that this may be a witness for me that I dug this well. Therefore that place was called Beersheba, because there both of them swore an oath.

So they made a covenant at Beersheba. Then Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, rose up and returned to the land of the Philistines. Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God.

And Abraham sojourned many days in the land of the Philistines. Father, we thank you that this event from the life of Abraham is recorded for us. And that we can see even here, your hand of mercy at work in the life of Abraham.

And we can see as a reflection of that how your mercy works, and your grace extends into our lives as well. So teach us, we ask, from your word now.

[2 : 52] We pray in Christ's name. Amen. You guys take a seat. A few weeks ago, I had lunch with a missionary. And this particular missionary, for the last few years, he and his family have been in India.

And they've been serving there, trying to help plant churches and communities that do not have a real church and a true Christian witness. But to do that, he has to go as a businessman.

He can't go as a missionary because the country of India has said that Westerners, particularly Americans, cannot come into the country for the purpose of proselytizing, for the purpose of evangelizing and spreading Christianity or any other religion.

And so he has to go there and he has to set up a business and he has to, to outward eyes appear to simply be running a business there. But what he's really doing is the work of trying to plant churches in communities and in villages in the region in which he's located.

But he said that he may not be able to return there. His family is here in the States. They've been here for several months. And they are praying about and trying to decide what they're going to do next because the situation on the ground there has become very difficult, has become dangerous even for he and his family to return.

[4 : 10] Because people in the community have caught on to what he's doing. They know what he's up to. So not long ago, while he and his family were gone and they weren't there on a particular given Sunday, they were out traveling in another place.

There were a group of men who came in looking for the white guy, trying to find him, asking around and asking where he was. They just showed up on a Sunday to this gathering that wasn't a largely publicly announced gathering, but they showed up and there they were looking for him.

There have been in other places, there have been attacks on churches, attacks on missionaries, attacks on pastors. And things, he said, are getting more and more difficult. It's difficult, he said, for Westerners to be there at all, but particularly to be there for the purpose of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I think oftentimes because we're so far removed from those types of situations, we forget what it is like to be in a hostile country. We forget or we've never known what it's like to be in a land and in a place where it is dangerous for you to even conduct your normal life and your normal business and to do the things that you need to do, much less to be on mission for the cause of Christ and to be trying to accomplish things for the sake of the kingdom of God.

Many of us have no idea what that is like. We don't know what it's like to live in a hostile place, a place where they are trying to catch you, trying to catch you in some sort of situation where you can be removed or dealt with in even worse ways.

[5 : 48] We don't know, we don't understand. And so sometimes as we read through the story of Abraham, as we've been doing over the last several months, sometimes there is a bit of a disconnect between us and Abraham.

Sometimes we have difficulty understanding his decisions, understanding why he acts the way that he does, why he says the things that he does, and why he responds in certain ways.

But we've seen over and over that Abraham, though he is a wealthy man, though he's gained a lot of goods, and though he has some clout, and he even has some authority and power that he takes with him from place to place, Abraham still lives much of his life in fear.

Because Abraham is, he's a foreigner in the land where he's dwelling. He's a sojourner, he's a traveler, he's a visitor, he's an alien in the land. And that's dangerous for him.

So we look back on some of the incidents in Abraham's life, and we scratch our heads and we think, why in the world would he do that? Twice he has lied about Sarah being his wife and said, she's only my sister.

[6 : 55] Because he was afraid, he put his own wife's life in jeopardy on two occasions, because he was afraid. He was afraid because he knew that as a foreigner, as a sojourner in those lands, he could be attacked.

He could be attacked because of his wife. They might want to take her from him. And because of that, he simply lied. He passed her off as being merely his sister. We know that she is his sister, his half-sister, but he simply lied and misled them so that they wouldn't know that she was actually his wife because he was living his life in fear.

It doesn't excuse his actions, but it helps us to have a little bit of a better understanding of just how great this and dark this cloud of fear and doubt that hungover Abraham really was.

And this morning we're looking here in a passage where Abraham's status as a foreigner, his status as a sojourner, is highlighted by Moses in the passage.

In fact, I struggled a bit this week with this passage because this story just appears to be almost a random story from the life of Abraham. I mean, it's sandwiched in between significant events.

[8 : 06] You have the birth of Isaac at the beginning of chapter 21. Right after that you have Ishmael expelled from the covenant family. These are major events in the life of Abraham, major events even in the history of God's dealings with his covenant people.

And then in chapter 22, we will come to that chapter next and we will encounter the incident in which God calls Abraham to lay his son Isaac upon the altar to sacrifice him.

A seminal moment in the life of Abraham, a major moment in the history of God's dealings with his covenant people. And sandwiched in between all of these major moments in Abraham's life, we have this story where he enters into a covenant with a foreign king.

They have a little bit of a dispute about a well and that's sort of the end of the story. And I struggled a bit this week asking over and over the question, what's the point of this story?

Why is it included at this particular point in the life of Abraham? Obviously, it's chronological, but why even bother with it? Why not just move from the expulsion of Ishmael to God's calling of Abraham to lay down his son's life?

[9 : 16] Why not move from one major event to another? Why put this seemingly insignificant event in the middle of these two? Why include it at all? And I scratched my head and I thought and I prayed and I studied throughout the week.

And the clue, I think, is found at the very end of the passage. Really, after the story's already been told, you have a little note at the end in the last two verses of the chapter that I think are key to us understanding why this story is here in this book.

Look down at the last couple of verses, starting in verse 33. We are told what also seems at first to be a random fact. Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God.

And Abraham sojourned many days in the land of the Philistines. There's some things happening here, some things that are told to us in these two verses that I think will show us why this story is here.

First of all, Abraham, we are told, sojourned many days in the land of the Philistines. That's a significant note there. We already know that. We already know he's an outsider.

[10:31] We already know that he is a sojourner and an alien in the land of the Philistines, in the land known as Gerar. We know that because that's been the theme throughout Abraham's life. His entire time, all the decades that he's been in the land of Canaan have been decades that he's lived as a foreigner.

You can see it highlighted throughout the story of Abraham. Turn back a few pages. Go back to chapter 12 where we're first introduced to Abraham. In chapter 12, we read about Abraham in verse 10.

There was a famine in the land, so Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there. It's the same word that we find at the end of chapter 21. Abram sojourns in Egypt.

Everywhere Abraham goes, he's an alien and he's a stranger. But not only in Egypt, even in the land of promise, Abraham is an outsider.

Chapter 15, we're told that not only Abraham, but his descendants and his offspring will also be sojourners in the land of Egypt for some time.

[11:37] Over and over there's highlighted this fact throughout the life of Abraham that both he and his descendants are strangers. Sojourners and travelers in a land that does not yet belong to them.

And that's how Abraham's life was lived. That's how Abraham viewed himself. And so when you come to the very beginning of chapter 21, where we come to the beginning of chapter 20, I'm sorry, in chapter 20, where we read this, from there, Abraham journeyed toward the territory of the Negev and lived between Kadesh and Shur and he sojourned in Gerar.

That's the place where he is now. Gerar is the land of the Philistines. He's sojourning there. He's an alien. He's a stranger. He's an outsider. Everywhere that Abraham goes, he's an outsider.

And he has reasons to be afraid. He has reasons to be nervous. He doesn't quite fit in. And yet, despite the fact that he is a sojourner, we are told here that he planted a tree.

In fact, he planted, we are told, a tamarisk tree, which almost seems like a pointless little note to put in there, until you realize that a tamarisk tree was actually a fairly large tree to plant.

[12:51] He's not going to reap any of the benefits of this tree for a number of years. It's going to take a while for it to grow large enough to be a significant shade tree for him and for his family.

And yet, he plants this tree which tells us that while he is an outsider, and while he is, in a very real sense, just passing through the land of Gerar, the land of the Philistines, he also knows that he's going to be there for a while so that in some sense he has to put some sort of roots down.

He's not going to be constantly on the move, at least not for this next stage of his life. He's going to be well planted. He's going to be in one particular location for quite a while.

So on the one hand, he's an outsider and an alien and a stranger and a foreigner who's just passing through. But then on the other hand, he's got to put down some roots and he's got to remain in place for quite a while.

That reality for Abraham is something that is reflected not only in various events of his life, but we also see it in his descendants.

[14:04] Isaac, his son, is called a sojourner. Isaac's son, Jacob, is called a sojourner in the book of Genesis. And then as you move through the Old Testament, over and over, the people of Israel are reminded that their fathers were aliens and strangers and sojourners not only in the land of Canaan, but also in the land of Egypt.

And that fact for the people of Israel looms large. It weighs heavily upon them and it is supposed is expected that it will influence the way that they now treat foreigners around them.

You have to remember that the people of Israel always had in their minds that they were people who had come out of slavery. They were people who had escaped and who had been delivered by God from a life of slavery and hardship in a foreign land.

And they had been brought into a land that was not originally theirs, but that had been given to them, had been granted to them by God's grace. And that reality shapes the way, or at least the Bible tells us it's supposed to shape, the way that they view others around them who are outsiders. In fact, I want to show you just a handful of those places. They're all over the place in the Old Testament and we don't have time to cover all of them, but I want to show you a handful. So if you'll turn over to Exodus chapter 6. In Exodus chapter 6 verse 4, and if you don't want to have to flip too quickly, these should all be on the screen as well.

[15 : 40] In Exodus chapter 6 verse 4, God says this to Moses. He says, I established my covenant with them, that is, with your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

I established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. That's simply how they were viewed.

That's who they were. That's how they understood themselves. And God wants Moses to pass on to the people of Israel. This is who your fathers were. Yes, I gave them the land that they're going to dwell in, but they were foreigners.

They were first sojourners there. And then as you begin to move through the law and further into the prophets, you see that that reality affects their own behavior.

So, for instance, in Exodus chapter 22 verse 21, God says in one of His commandments, you shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.

[16 : 41] And then He goes on and says, you shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. In other words, because of their background, because of who their fathers were and because of who they were as aliens and sojourners, now God lumps into one category sojourners, outsiders, widows, and orphans.

We are accustomed to seeing this language about widows and orphans over and over in the Bible. We recognize that. We see that. We're accustomed to seeing God show a special concern for widows and orphans.

And we know that that's repeated a number of times in the New Testament. And that we, as the people of Christ today, have an obligation to care for widows and orphans. We kind of know that, accept that, have recognized that.

But over and over throughout the Scriptures, do you recognize that the foreigner and the alien is set right alongside of widows and orphans?

not just here in the law, but elsewhere. Let me show you two other places, though, in the law. Turn over to, if you will, to Leviticus chapter 19. Now this, I think, in Leviticus chapter 19 is one of the most telling instances.

[17 : 53] In Leviticus, we're going to look at verses 33 and 34, but the thing that you have to keep in mind before you read those verses is that Leviticus chapter 19 is also the chapter in which we are given the commandment to love your neighbor as yourself.

That should sound familiar. Jesus repeated that, Paul repeated that, James repeated that. Over and over, we see that command repeated in the New Testament. But this chapter here in Leviticus explains for us what it looks like to love your neighbor as yourself.

And so when we get down to verse 33, it's almost striking. This is what we read. When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

I am the Lord your God. You recognize there the echo of love your neighbor as yourself. You are to love him, the stranger, the foreigner, the sojourner.

Love him as yourself. So the immediate application that we're offered here of how to love your neighbor as yourself is to, when you see a stranger, when you see someone who's in your land, who's from another land, how do you treat them?

[19 : 13] You love them. They're to be treated no differently than your neighbor. In fact, they have in many respects become your neighbor.

Turn over to the book of Deuteronomy. I'll show you one more here in the law. In Deuteronomy chapter 10, verse 18, speaking of God himself, we are told that he executes justice for the

fatherless and the widow.

That shouldn't surprise us. We see that all the time. And though, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Now notice the command that follows.

Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. This is not, this is not a rare theme that we're happening upon in Genesis chapter 21.

This is not something that doesn't occur frequently in the Bible. It's all over the place. This idea, this theme that we ought to reach out toward and love the alien and the stranger, to love the sojourner who is among us.

[20 : 26] It's all over the place. Even later in the Old Testament in the prophets. The last place we'll turn here. I want you to turn to in the Old Testament.

I want you to turn to Zechariah. It's near the end of your Old Testament. Zechariah chapter 7, starting in verse 9. Thus says the Lord of hosts, render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another.

Do not oppress the widow, there's the widow again, the fatherless, there are the orphans, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against one another in your heart.

These are broad-ranging commands. Take care of widows. Take care of orphans. Take care of poor people. Do good to each other. And sandwiched in the middle of all of that, also take care of the sojourners.

Take care of those who are displaced among you. Who are outsiders. Who do not belong. See, as the people of God, Israel had a calling.

[21 : 33] They had a calling not merely to be separate and different from the world, though that was a part of their calling, but they had a calling to reach out to those among them who were separated and different from themselves.

In fact, one of the things that we see repeated frequently in the law, in the law of Moses, is a statement that there shall be one law for yourself and for the sojourner.

One law. Not two separate laws. Not a group of laws to govern the citizens of the country and a group of laws to govern the strangers and the foreigners who are there in the land. No. Over and over, God says through Moses, there shall be one law.

And some of us today might have a tendency to go, yeah, that's right, they need to follow the law. But that's not the point. It's not why it's written. It's written because it was the custom in those days to have harsher, stricter punishments for foreigners.

There's a reason that Abraham is afraid. Because everywhere that he goes, he's a foreigner. And everywhere that he goes, he faces the possibility of being treated like an outcast.

[22 : 45] The laws in the ancient Near East were not kind to outsiders. But, God says, my people shall not have a separate law that treats them more harshly.

My people shall treat them as they would treat one another. My people shall apply the same laws to others that they apply themselves. Indeed, the supreme law, love your neighbor as yourself, even applies to the strangers among you.

This is a prominent theme that we find throughout the Bible. Not scattered here and there, not mentioned once or twice, but it runs through the Scriptures.

Treat strangers and foreigners with love and with kindness. Care for them and look out for them and reach out to them. Abraham is living his life here throughout these chapters, but now highlighted for us in Genesis chapter 21 as a stranger.

And the reality is that even for those of us who've never traveled to a foreign land, even for those of you who've never been in a place where it's dangerous for you and where you have to be fearful that you might be mistreated or that some other laws might be applied to you, special rules to deal with you in a more harsh way, even those who've never experienced that, we have to face the reality that if we are followers of Jesus, our entire lives are being lived out as strangers and foreigners in a land to which we do not belong.

[24 : 26] This is part of the reason why these Old Testament statements don't need to be left behind in the Old Testament, but carried over into the New because we ourselves are foreigners.

Our citizenship is not here. Paul says in Philippians 3.20, our citizenship is in heaven and so like Abraham, we find ourselves as foreigners and sojourners in a land to which we do not belong.

In fact, I want you to hear these words from the first letter of Peter. He says, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul.

Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. What is Peter's concern here?

Peter's concern is that though we be outcasts, though we are, as he says, sojourners and exiles, even though this is not our home, we are to conduct ourselves in such a way that others around us won't be able to speak against us as evildoers.

[25 : 35] Others who around us won't have reason to charge us with anything, but they will see the overwhelming goodness of the ways in which we live before them and they will themselves glorify God on the day of His visitation.

I think that that is one of the core messages of Genesis chapter 21. Because what Abraham is having to deal with while he lives as a sojourner in the land of Gerar is the fact that he has not always lived an exemplary life in the midst of that country.

He has not. In chapter 20 where we are first told that he went to sojourn in the land of Gerar, we are told the story, the second incidence of when Abraham lied about Sarah saying, she's my sister. And he endangered the people of that nation. God Himself intervened and prevented Abimelech, the king of that nation, who had taken Sarah into his household. He prevented Abimelech from doing any harm or even touching Sarah.

But that was God in His kindness protecting Abimelech from his own sinful nature. That was God in His kindness protecting Abraham and the covenant promises that He had made to Abraham despite the fact that Abraham had acted foolishly.

[26 : 53] But now here we are at the end of chapter 21 and this incident arises because Abimelech does not trust Abraham. He doesn't trust him because Abraham has acted in a way in the past in which he has not earned Abimelech's trust.

We are probably about four to five years removed from that particular incident when Abraham first arrived in the land of Gerar to now we have a time when Abimelech reaches out to Abraham. He reaches out to him because he needs to establish some grounds upon which he might trust Abraham. Look at the beginning of our passage here. Verse 22.

At that time that probably means just after the events of the birth of Isaac and then a few years after that the expulsion of Ishmael just after that sort of series of events Abimelech and Fickle the commander of his army now that right there is already an indication that there is some sort of tension at least from Abimelech's point of view.

Abimelech brings the commander of his army with him a witness and not just any witness but a witness who could call to arms if necessary. At that time Abimelech and Fickle the commander of his army said to Abraham God is with you in all that you do.

[28 : 09] Now that's why Abimelech feels the need to approach Abraham because while he doesn't trust Abraham while he has reason in fact to distrust Abraham he knows that Abraham has a power that is beyond his ability to proceed because God has visited Abimelech God has told Abimelech do not do anything to harm Abraham remember the promises to Abraham begin with those who bless you I will bless those who curse you they will be cursed and God has made that reality known to Abimelech and Abimelech himself has a reason to be afraid not of Abraham himself but of the God of Abraham this is indeed a powerful God and he knows that that God is with Abraham he doesn't trust him but in a sense he fears his God so he comes before him to make a deal God is with you

I know that I know that reality now therefore verse 23 swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my descendants or my posterity but as I have dealt kindly with you so you will deal with me and with the land where you have sojourned there it is you're the outsider here but I've dealt kindly with you now the reality is is that Abimelech has dealt kindly with Abraham because Abraham's God has something to say about it but he's dealt kindly with him in fact the word used here is the word chesed which is the word used over and over throughout the Old Testament to describe God's covenant love towards his people so Abimelech is making a great claim here I I have demonstrated loving kindness toward you I have treated you as if you were a covenant partner with me that's how I've treated you I've I've treated you like a loved one Abraham now I need to know that you're not going to lie to me again I need to know I need some sort of assurances here swear to me promise me you're not going to lie to me now if Abimelech felt that he had absolute power in the situation as he ought to have felt as the king of the land he could have simply come to Abraham and said I want you to get out of here take your things take your family take your baby pack them up and go somewhere else I don't trust you and I don't want to

deal with you but he's not speaking from a place of power he himself is speaking from a place of fear because of Abraham's God so he simply says just swear to me just promise me make an oath to me that you're not going to lie anymore I need to be able to trust you you've got a large entourage a large caravan you're here right in the middle of my people and I need to know that you're not going to do anything to them or to me I need I need to know that Abraham and so Abraham just gives him the simple answer okay

I promise I swear I swear I'm not going to do anything and then immediately Abraham takes advantage not I believe in a negative way but he takes advantage of this sort of new relationship status that he has here with Abimelech now the ESV begins verse 25 with the word when when Abraham reproved Abimelech as if this is a separate event taking place later from their initial conversation but I don't think that's the best way to translate this if you're reading another translation you might notice it just says and Abraham reproved Abimelech it's just a simple word that just means and most of the time it can mean when it can also mean but it can mean all sorts of things any sort of conjunction of work but I think it's just a continuation of the conversation that they're having so I would say and Abraham reproved Abimelech about a well of water that Abimelech servants had seized I think it's as if Abraham says I promise now given that I made this promise to you I need to let you know about something that's happened some of your very own servants came and took my well and I don't know that we

I don't know that the bells go off for us when we hear that but that would have been a significant a significant breach of any sort of trust that could have existed between them because a well is necessary for life this is this is an arid region they had to find water he's not near a river at this place he's not over there by the Jordan river where he can make some canals he's not down in Egypt where the Nile just floods and fills everything with fresh water every year once a year no he's in an arid region and you have to dig your well and it takes a lot of work and it takes a lot of care and once you've dug your well you've got to protect your well now Abraham experiences what he expects to experience in the land as a foreigner some of the servants of the king have come and they've taken his well that's a big deal how's he going to survive how's he going to get water for his family and for all of his animals what's he going to do so he says now that we've made this deal [33 : 22] I need to let you know something your servants have already taken my well so what are you going to do about it and Abimelech's response is I didn't know why didn't you tell me before I didn't know about this I had no idea Abimelech doesn't want to offend Abraham he knows those who come against Abraham have to deal with the God of Abraham he doesn't want that he doesn't want to deal with any of that why didn't you come and tell me this sooner Abraham probably because Abraham was afraid probably because he didn't feel as if he had firm ground upon which to stand to negotiate and say anything with the king but now that the king has come to his door step so to speak he brings it up and that initiates something beyond just I give you my word something beyond just I swear that initiates between these two men a covenant ceremony!

A time in which they take not make not just a promise but they take solemn oaths to one another and pledge that this belongs to you this belongs to me this is how we will treat each other this covenant will work as a contract that governs our relationship for all the time that you are here in this land and so significant is this covenant oath that they name that place where Abraham had dug the well!

They name it Beersheba which means the well of oaths which is kind of a play on words because it also means the well of seven because Abraham gave seven lambs to Abimelech as sort of a sign saying listen I'm going to give you these so I've rightfully purchased this this is now mine this is my well and they come to an agreement between the two parties now what's happening here happening is Abraham is conducting his life as a sojourner and as a foreigner he's conducting his life and he's doing what's necessary to survive and even thrive in a land where he knows he has to put down some roots for a while and I think that's what Peter is expecting us to do when he tells us that we are supposed to conduct ourselves and live in such a way even as sojourners and exiles that others will not have any cause to accuse us others will not have any reason to look at us and assume or think that we're doing anything unbecoming now the truth of the matter is that we're sinners like

Abraham the truth is that sometimes we're even as we try we endeavor to live a life of good works in this world and in a sense be on this world for the cause of Christ we're going to have to deal with the reality that we're going to stumble and make some mistakes and sometimes people will be able

to rightly accuse us of having done something wrong because we're going to mess up just like Abraham messed up we're going to stumble and when that happens we need to make things right the way that Abraham makes things right we need to be able to say to people look yes I did that yes I made a mistake but I promise you I swear to you I will do all that I can to live uprightly among you not because I want to impress you not because I want to court your favor but because I am a representative of someone far greater than myself you see that's how Abraham is seen in the eyes of Abimelech God is with you he is with you Abraham is in the eyes of Abimelech a representative of this incredibly powerful God I don't think we're seeing in the life of Abimelech any sort of conversion experience I don't think Abimelech ever confesses that there's only one true God and he's the God of!

[37 : 36] I don't think any of that Abimelech is probably like anybody else any other king of the time who if he sees that the God of some other nation is more powerful than his then he will defer to them he will work out some kind of deal with them I think that's what he sees in Abraham who's living in the midst of him your God is more powerful than anything and we're not really any different and I think what's happening at the end of this story where we are reminded not only of Abraham's life of a sojourner but also of his semi permanent status in this foreign land what's happening is that we're also being reminded that the God we serve he rules over all and if he's going to be with us we need at all times to live as those who live under his rule verse 33

Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and called there on the name of the Lord the everlasting God what was surprising to me as I studied this week is this particular name or title for God it's kind of rare it's actually hard to find you can find some similar titles to this scattered here and there throughout the Old Testament this particular title for God is extremely rare the everlasting God or the eternal God I think that it's introduced here to remind us that this God is the very same God of Genesis chapter 1 who spoke all things into existence this is the God that Abraham serves this is the God to whom Abraham belongs this is in fact the God who is with Abraham and Abraham has to remember and remind himself over and over that the

God that is with me is not a tribal deity he is the God of the universe he is the one who has made all things and if he has given me these very great promises he will fulfill his word and while I wait for the fulfillment of his word not only is he going to be with me but I have to live with him and before him this is Abraham's calling and this is our calling we live in a world to which we do not belong but in which we have to put down some roots and remain in place for a while we are not going anywhere anytime soon or at least not by our own determination we are here but we are here serving the God who made all things and who will ultimately fulfill all of his promises one of the places where we see the reality of

God's being the everlasting the eternal God highlighted not with the exact same language but the idea highlighted is at the other end of your Bible in the book of Revelation so I want to invite you to turn there in Revelation chapter 1 we come back to this idea and we are reminded of just who God is we need to be reminded at the beginning of the story we need to be reminded at key points throughout the story but we need to be reminded as we look toward the end of the story and where things are headed John chapter 1 verse 8 God speaks I am the Alpha and Omega says the Lord God who is and who was and who is to come the Almighty this is the God upon whom Abraham calls at Beersheba the Alpha and the Omega one who is one who was one who is to come the everlasting

God but as you move down a few more verses we are shown something about this God that is paradigm changing changes the way that we ought to think and reflect upon these things move down to verse 17 this is John when I saw him I fell at his feet as though dead but he laid his right hand on me saying fear not I am the first and the last and the living one I died and behold I am alive forevermore and I have the keys of death and Hades the eternal God the Alpha and Omega he is the first and the last and he is the one who has died and come and lives again this is the God that Abraham worshipped at Beersheba this is the God who walked with Abraham who protected Abraham who guarded Abraham who directed Abraham who reprovved Abraham and corrected him when necessary this is the God who was with Abraham and he lived and he died he died for Abraham's sins he died because Abraham was a liar and a deceiver and Abimelech couldn't trust him and so he died he died because we are sinners and we don't always live in such a way that the world around us would look at us and say wow look at them go they are amazing we don't we stumble and we fall and we mess up just like Abraham and because of that he died for our sins and

the good news of the gospel continues on and tells us that he lives forever more never again to taste death never again never again will he be in the grave but he lives forever more to intercede for us and we are told that he himself now possesses the keys of death and Hades this is the Alpha and Omega this is the first and the last this is the everlasting one this is the one we serve as strangers and aliens and exiles whose home awaits us in the future this is the one that we serve and this is the one in whom we trust to make a way for us to finally at some point in time step foot on the new heavens and new earth and spend it forever and eternity with him we will not always be strangers and aliens there is coming a day when we will be with him in his land in his world in his kingdom that is held out for us that is promised to us and that means that in the here and now we need to live as those who have a certain future let's pray for you
[45 : 24] Thank you.