

## Genesis Ch. 17

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V: 1 Abram is still living by the terebinth trees of Mamre at Hebron, dwelling in richness and communion with the Lord.

- He's had his ups and downs, but God is faithful.
- Now Abram is 99 years old, having dwelt in the land of Canaan for 24 years, waiting on the Lord.

**Psalm 6:1-4** “<sup>1</sup>O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your anger, nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure. <sup>2</sup>Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are troubled. <sup>3</sup>My soul also is greatly troubled; but You, O Lord – how long? <sup>4</sup>Return, O Lord, deliver Me! Oh, save me for Your mercies' sake!”

- After 13 years of silence God appears and speaks to Abram.

**Psalm 119:130-131** “<sup>130</sup>The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple. <sup>131</sup>I opened my mouth and panted, for I longed for Your commandments.”

“*the Lord appeared to Abram...*” 2<sup>nd</sup> time this has happened.

**Genesis 12:7** “Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, to your descendants I will give this land. And there he built an altar to the Lord, who appeared to him.”

- As God appears to Abram, he / we learn something new about God – He reveals something new about Himself.
- God describes Himself as “*Almighty God*”.
- The phrase used here is essentially the same as “God Almighty” – which is El Shaddai in Hebrew.
- Shaddai mean “all mighty”, “most powerful”.
- The order of the words here changes the meaning of this title slightly:

Literally translated: “The Almighty of God”.

- When we think of “Almighty God” or “God Almighty” we often think of God the Father, or the Trinity, but “the Almighty of God” implies someone else besides God the Father, a representation of God, but who else could be “the Almighty” of God? No other could be except our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Paul speaking of Jesus:

**Colossians 2:9**

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“For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;”

Jesus tells us:

**John 14:9b** "... He who has seen Me has seen the Father;"

- After identifying Himself, proclaiming to Abram who He is; God tells Abram:

*"walk before me and be blameless"*

- There are different ways to walk in relationship to God:
  1. Walking after God; is as a servant, serving God.
  2. Walking with God, as Enoch & Noah, having fellowship with God.
  3. Walking in Him, signifies complete oneness and union with Him. Christ in me, the hope of Glory, through Jesus Christ. **Colossians 2:6**
  4. Walking Before God; means walking in His presence, aware that God is watching and observing.

*"walk before me and be blameless"* KJV – *"perfect"*

- **Blameless** / perfect: (H8549) "tamiym" – "without blemish", "without spot" used in describing the animal sacrifices required by God.

Brings into focus:

**Romans 12:1** "I beseech you brethren that you present yourselves a **living sacrifice**, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

- When that same word is used in a moral sense, it refers to truth, virtue, uprightness, and righteousness."

The problem is, is that we are all born sinners, we are born blemished, spotted, sinners.

**Romans 3:10** "As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one;

**Romans 3:23** "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"

- God's requirement is perfection. Impossible!
- Some people think that – well that's the Old Testament, it's kind of harsh.
- The New Testament dispensation is better, God's grace is in force.
- After Jesus completed the Sermon on the Mount – He again required the same thing!

**Matthew 5:48** "Be perfect therefore, even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

- Which is impossible for us to fulfill on our own apart from God.

Jesus said: Matthew 19:26

**Matthew 19:26** "... with men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Job, a contemporary of Abram:

**Job 9:32-33** <sup>32</sup>For He is not a man, as I am, that I may answer Him, and that we should go together in judgment. <sup>33</sup>Nor is there any mediator / daysman between us who may lay his hand on us both."

The gap between a Holy God & sinful man is too great for us to bridge.

**1 Timothy 2:5** "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus."

Trade: our sin for His righteousness...

- The cool part is that Abram has already done this, met this requirement of God.

**Genesis 15:6** "And he / Abraham believed in the Lord, and He / God accounted it to him for righteousness."

- This is all before the Law, before circumcision, or any other requirements.

Later, after the Law was established:

**Deuteronomy 10:12** "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul."

**Micah 6:8** "He has shown you O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"

V: 2 God is going to fulfill His covenant with Abram, He is going to multiply him exceedingly.

1. "*I will make...*" God is the One who is going to do the work.
2. It is God's covenant.
3. It is between Me / God and you / us. - Notice the order, God first, then us.

V: 3 "*Then Abram fell on his face,...*"

- The last time God appeared to Abram – Genesis 12:7 – Abram's response was to worship God. Abram built an altar to the Lord.

- Again, God appears to Abram – and Abram falls down on his face – the position and posture of worship.
- As Abram’s heart is inclined to the Lord, he’s in a place of worship – God speaks to him.

V: 4 God again affirms or re-iterates His promise to Abram in the present tense:

*“My covenant **is** with you...”*

V: 5 God gives Abram a new name.

Abram: Exalted father. Abraham: Father of a multitude, many nations.

Just like other name changes, there is significance to the meanings of the names:

- **Isaac** = laughter, being born of the spirit, he never changed.
- **Jacob** / heal catcher to Israel / governed by God. (Gen. 35 – God Almighty / El Shaddai).
- **Esau** / red & hairy – stayed Esau.... No born again experience.
- **Isaac** = laughter, being born of the spirit, he never changed.
- **Naomi** / pleasantness to **Mara** / bitterness (1X) – last seen as Naomi.
- **Simon** / shifting sand, unstable to **Peter** / stone, pebble.

**Matthew 16:13-18** <sup>13</sup>“When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? <sup>14</sup>So they said, some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets. <sup>15</sup>He said to them, but who do you say that I am? <sup>16</sup>Simon Peter answered and said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. <sup>17</sup>Jesus answered and said to him, blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in Heaven. <sup>18</sup>And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”

- **Abram** / exalted father to **Abraham** / father of a multitude / father of many nations.

[In Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in John Ch. 3](#)

**John 3:3-7** <sup>3</sup>“...most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. <sup>4</sup>Nicodemus said to Him, how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born? <sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup>That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup>Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again.”

**1 Corinthians 3:16** “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”

- The added letter is the “H” in Hebrew, the “ruach”, or the “breath of God”, the Spirit of God.

**2 Corinthians 5:17** “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

V: 6-7 God is going to make Abraham and Sarah a walking one couple population explosion.

- God says that this will be an “everlasting” covenant, not only with Abraham, but with all the generations and descendants after him.
- The covenant that we’re talking about extends to this present day, to the nation of Israel.
- There isn’t an exclusion or anything in the “fine print” that excuses God from completing this covenant.
- If God is bound to it by His own righteousness, what can man do to negate it?
- What worldly circumstance can invalidate God’s word? NOTHING.

**Galatians 3:17-18** “And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. <sup>18</sup>For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.”

V: 8 God also give Israel the Land – covered under the same covenant.

- Not intended to be a mere foot note, even though it is pretty straight forward.
- How many wars have been fought and how many have lost their lives over the years for a lack of understanding of this simple promise?
- Even to the point that as Israel has miraculously been restored to their land – even they over the passage of time seem to be confused on this issue.

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V: 9-14 The sign of the covenant: circumcision

- There are different things described here about circumcision:
  1. Purpose / intent.
  2. Practical application.

Purpose & intent:

- This is not a condition that is added to God's covenant, nor is it a new co-existing covenant.
- Circumcision is a sign, a token, and identification as being party to the covenant.
- They didn't partake in circumcision to obtain God's promise, they were circumcised because they had already received God's promise.
- Just like we don't perform good works to get salvation, we do them because He has saved us, we respond to His love for us by loving Him!

**1 John 4:19** "We love Him because he first loved us."

**Deuteronomy 10:12-16** <sup>12</sup>And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, <sup>13</sup>and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good? <sup>14</sup>Indeed heaven and the highest of heavens belong to the Lord your God, also the earth with all that is in it. <sup>15</sup>The Lord delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as it is this day. <sup>16</sup>Therefore circumcise the foreskins of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer."

- Circumcision like baptism is an outward expression of an inward change.
- Commanded as a sign of God's covenant.
- A sign not only to the individual concerned, his parents, and eventually his wife.

**Parents:** showed they had been faithful and that God had blessed their union, and that they were following God's will.

**Wife:** She had assurance that he was a descendant of Abraham, to whom she could joyfully submit.

**Man:** had a daily testimony and reminder that he and his family were consecrated to God.

- Physically and symbolically there was a cutting or removal, a complete separation from the sins of the flesh.

#### Practically:

1. Every male child.
2. The flesh of the foreskin.
3. Eighth day.
4. Every male, born into the house or brought into the house as a servant, including foreigners.

V: 14 Disobedience by the individual does not terminate the covenant with the nation, but the individual would be put out and excluded.

- In time to come, a child that was born was not considered a Jew until he was circumcised.
- You weren't a Jew by natural birth, but became a Jew the day you were circumcised.

**Romans 2:28-29** “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; <sup>29</sup>but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.”

- We cannot be a man of God and walk after the flesh, they are mutually exclusive.
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V: 15-16 Sarai's name is changed to “Sarah” – consistent with Abraham's name change.

- She too is a new creature in Christ Jesus.
- The breath of God, the Holy Spirit, being breathed into her life.
- Sarah is promised that she will be blessed with a son.
- Her reproach is removed from her.

Sarah's blessing started with her husband.

Single woman, divorced, widow – God is your husband, God is your covering.

V: 17 “*Then Abraham fell on his face....*” When did he get up from the last time?

- Abraham laughed: Not a lack of reverence or belief, evidenced by the fact that God does not rebuke him.
- Abraham's laughter is a joyful response, miraculous amazement.

Paul, speaking about Abraham:

**Romans 4:19-21** “<sup>19</sup>And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. <sup>20</sup>He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, <sup>21</sup>and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.”

- Said in his heart: God knows the thoughts & intents of our hearts.
- God waits until Abraham and Sarah are well beyond child bearing years to show His power and grace. Basically He waits until there is nothing Abraham or Sarah can do.

The answer to Abraham's question is "yes!"

V: 18 Abraham might have thought "why go to all that trouble, why not just bless Ishmael – he's here now.

- Abraham loved Ishmael and didn't want him to be excluded.
- His pain in this is part of the consequence of his sin with Hagar.
- God has already said that He will bless Ishmael as well, that his descendants would be multiplied exceedingly (Ch. 16).

V: 19 God re-iterates that Sarah will bear Abraham a son, the son of promise.

- Isaac is the promised son, not Ishmael. 

Son of promise / son of flesh.
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- God's covenant is with Isaac, and his descendants after him.
- "Isaac" means "laughter"

V: 20 Ishmael, the son of the flesh is indeed blessed by God.

V: 21 "But" – contrast & distinction: "My covenant is with Isaac"

- My covenant: 9<sup>th</sup> time in this chapter – key phrase.
- God is the One who is going to do this work, we are limited to being benefactors, the object of His love.

**Ephesians 2:8-9** "8For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9not of works, lest anyone should boast."

- Abraham & Sarah are given a specific time – 1 year from now.

V: 22 When they were done, God didn't just disappear, He "went up from him".



- God ascended back into Heaven.
- God always condescends, reaches down; God has to lower himself – to talk with us or to intervene in the affairs of men.

Sheds more light on:

**John 1:14** “And the word became flesh, and dwelt amongst us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Philippians 2:5-8

**Philippians 2:5-8** “<sup>5</sup>Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, <sup>7</sup>but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup>And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”

Why? Why would God do this?

**John 3:16** “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

V: 23-27 A picture of obedience!

1. Abraham didn't wait, he didn't need to pray about it – he just did it!
  2. Abraham's obedience was immediate.
  3. Abraham's obedience left him vulnerable, open to worldly attack.  
All the men were circumcised, meaning they were all in-capacitated for a few days.
- Abraham demonstrated good leadership. He didn't just tell his 13 year old son to go get circumcised.
  - Abraham personally took Ishmael and circumcised him.
  - We shouldn't just tell our kids to pray, or to read their Bibles.
  - We need to take them, and pray with them, and read with them.
  - Abraham didn't just say, go and do this – He did it first – Abraham was 99 years old and either he did it to himself or some one else at his direction did it for him.
  - He didn't tell his son to do something that he wasn't willing to do as well.
  - Abraham demonstrated good leadership.

- Abraham's faith was real, it was manifest in his actions.

**James 2:18** "But someone will say, you have faith, and I have works. Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works."

**John 14:21a** "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me."

- All of Abraham's family and servants complied on the same day – a testimony to Abraham's witness to / of God.
- Later when Lot goes to his family and tries to get them to leave Sodom, they just laugh at him.

What was the difference?

- Abraham fell on his face, he built altars, he obeyed God, because he believed God.
- If God's word isn't important to us, then it won't be to our families.