

# GENESIS 17

## God Reaffirms the Covenant

2/21/2023  
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### KEYWORD

### REVERANCE

God (Plural)  
God (Singular)  
LORD  
GOD  
Lord  
lord  
El Olam  
Bara  
Asah  
Beth  
Numbers

Elohim (The Trinity)  
El  
Jehovah & or Yahweh (YHWH)  
Jehovah & or Yahweh  
GOD the Master (Kurios), Adonai  
Man the Master  
Everlasting God  
God creating from nothing  
God making or assembling from existent materials  
House

- 1 - Unity between God the Father & His Son Jesus (John 10:30)
- 2 - Represents union, division, and verification
- 3 - Harmony, New Life & completeness (467 times)
- 4 - Creation & The creative ability of God.
- 5 - God's grace, goodness and favor toward humans (318)
- 6 - Imperfection of man and the sin and weakness he has
- 7 - Perfection
- 8 - New beginnings
- 9 - Divine completeness or conveys the meaning of finality (49)
- 10 - God's authority, completeness, order, and divine perfection
- 11 - Disorder, chaos and judgment (11 - 24 & "11th" - 19)
- 12 - God's power and authority (187)
- 13 - Rebellion
- 40 - Represent completeness or wholeness.
- 70 - Perfect spiritual order carried out with all power.

### Keywords

“create” (bara), “make” (asah), and “form” (yatsar). In Isaiah 43:7 – All the three are used.

*Jehova means the becoming one as God relates to man and man's needs and becomes to man whatever man may need*

### PRAYER

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**Father we thank you for the privilege of studying your word together.**

Thank you for the records Jesus, that lead us to you and eternal life in you.

**Jesus let thy Holly spirit now implant upon our hearts your truths.**

Thank you Jesus that revelation knowledge will flow freely, uninterrupted & un-hindered by satanic or demonic forces.

**In Jesus's name and everybody say Amen!**

# GENESIS 17

## REVIEW

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One of the most influential names in human history is the name of Abraham a man whom Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all claim as a patriarch.

In this chapter God changes Abram's name to Abraham and establishes circumcision as a symbol of their covenant. Right now Abram is 99 years old and Sarai is 89 years old.

Twenty-three years have passed since God first promised to make him a great nation and to give to him and to his descendants the land of Canaan. During that time, Abram grew wealthy, and God appeared to him several times to restate and expand on the initial covenant promises.

Still, Abram has only one son Ishmael who is now 13, born to him by his wife's servant Hagar.

At this point, they likely assumed that God's promises and blessing to Abram would pass through Ishmael. After all, at 99 and 89, they were well past the window for conceiving or bearing children.

God appeared to Abram again and commanded him to walk with Him and to be blameless. That he would be the father of nations and that kings would come from him.

To confirm that fact, God changed Abram's name to Abraham.

- Abram means **exalted father**
- Abraham means **father of a multitude**.

As a sign of keeping this covenant he and every male of his household, born or bought, and every male in every generation to come, must be circumcised. This is the ritual removal of the foreskin. Those who were not circumcised would not be included in this covenant between God and Abraham's people.

God again surprised Abraham by telling him that Sarai's name must also be changed to Sarah, and she and Abraham would have a son.

In reverence, or gratitude, or pure surprise, or perhaps all three, Abraham fell facedown and laughed. He was shocked at the mere suggestion of Sarah conceiving and bearing a child.

Then Abraham got another thought:

What about Ishmael? God again promised to bless Ishmael abundantly.

God tells Abraham that Isaac the promised son will be born in 1 year.

That very day, Abraham went home and circumcised himself, Ishmael, and the hundreds of other males in his large company.

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## GEN 17: 1

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And when Abram was ninety years old and nine,

(Abram's story jumps ahead 13 years from the end of the previous chapter 16. Abram had not heard from God since the birth of his son Ishmael to Sarai's servant girl Hagar.

- Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran (Genesis 12:4).
- He was 86 years old when the son Ishmael was born of Hagar, the servant girl (Genesis 16:15-16).
- He had waited some 25 years for the fulfillment of God's promise to give a son through Sarai.
- It had been some 13 years since his last recorded word from God.)

the LORD appeared to Abram,

(After thirteen years of silence, Abram must have been greatly encouraged by this encounter with God.

In times past, God had only been said to have spoken to Abram (cf. 12:1) or come in a vision (15:12-17).

Here, after 24 years, God revealed Himself; He appeared to Abram. Abram had seen God for the first time.

Undoubtedly, this was an appearance of Jesus, who took on a temporary human appearance before His incarnation on earth as with Hagar in Genesis 16:7-9.

This also could be the time Jesus referred to when he was talking to the Jews in John 8:56 when he said to them that "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad")

and said unto him, I am the Almighty God

(For the first time in Scripture God refers to Himself as "God Almighty," as *El Shaddai*. This is a name meant to establish God's power on earth, even over nature, and in the life of Abram and Sarai.

The word "shad" in El Shaddai is breast in Hebrew and is the place of life and nourishment for the babe. So, God is telling Abraham that He is the place of his life and nourishment.

However, there is some debate as to what exactly the name *El Shaddai* means.

- Kidner: "A traditional analysis of the name is 'God (*el*) who (*sa*) is sufficient (*day*).'"
  - Clarke: "*El shaddai, I am God all-sufficient; from shadah, to shed, to pour out. I am that God who pours out blessings, who gives them richly, abundantly, continually.*"
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- Donald Barnhouse took the approach that the Hebrew word *shad* means “chest” or “breast.” It may have in mind the strength of a man’s chest (God Almighty) or the comfort and nourishment of a woman’s breast (God of Tender Care).
- Leupold explained that *Shaddai* comes from the root *shadad*, which means “to display power.”
- The Septuagint – a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek before the time of Jesus – translates **Almighty** with the Greek word *pantokrator*, the “One who has His hand on everything.”)

walk before me,

(God told Abraham to walk “before” Him.

- We read earlier that Enoch walked “with” God.
- In Deuteronomy, God told Israel to walk “after” Him.
- In Colossians 2:6, Paul says, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye “in” him.”

There are four different prepositions used for the walk of God.

1. Walking “before” God is walking in His presence, conscious that God is watching me, looking out for me, and caring for me.
2. Walking “after” God is the position of the servant. When God tells Israel to walk after Him, He is actually telling them to serve Him.
3. Walking “with” God, as Enoch and Noah, indicates that beautiful communion and fellowship as we walk with God.
4. Walking “in” Him signifies that complete union and oneness that is ours with God. Christ in me, the hope of glory!

Walk before “Me,” How? “...Be thou perfect,” or blameless. )

and be thou perfect.”

(After the proclamation of His name *El Shaddai*, God then told Abram what was expected of him.

It was first revelation and then expectation.

This communicates the principle that we can only do what God expects of us when we know who He is.

God would not require anything less than perfection and you should always know that this is God’s ideal for you.

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When Jesus finished the Sermon on the Mount in Matt.5:48, He again required the same thing, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

When you tell me that God requires me to be perfect,

- I would say, “Thank you, but I can’t.” “I would love to, I have tried to, but I am far from perfect.” “I would love to fulfil God’s divine ideal, but I can’t.”

Sin has as its root meaning “missing the mark” and the Bible says all have sinned. A lot of people get upset when you tell them that they are sinners.

Some will justify themselves by saying, “I’m not too bad.” “I do what I can.” “I help the needy”

But, what is the mark? It’s evidently perfection.

Is there anyone who can say, “I’m perfect?”

Because man could not fulfil God’s divine requirement, He sent His only begotten Son; who took our sins (our missing of the mark) and died in our place so that God’s actual requirement for me now; because, I’m not perfect and could not be perfect, is that I believe in His Son whom He sent.

In the Gospel of John, when the people came to Capernaum seeking for Jesus, they asked Him this question.

“Then said they unto him, What shall we do that we might work the works of God?”

Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.” (John 6:28-29).

So, God’s actual requirement of me today is that I believe in Jesus Christ. By my believing in Him, God accounts me righteous.

Paul the Apostle said, as he talked about his past life and how he attempted to keep the law of God and his accomplishments as a legalistic Jew, “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

Yes, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.

And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” (Phil.3:7-9).

That “believing faith,” in Christ, is the faith by which God accounts me righteous.

Does that mean that God’s giving up on you and that you’ll never be perfect? No, the whole idea of walking “in” Christ is that now I might receive that power of the indwelling Spirit of God to conform me into the image of Christ and to bring me into that ideal requirement.

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As Paul the Apostle said in Phil.3:12:

“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.”

Now, there are some people who believe in, what they call, “Sinless Perfection” and there are those who claim they have attained it. I have talked to a few of these people and as I challenged them, they got angry with me. There went their “Sinless Perfection.”

As Paul was pressing toward perfection he said in Phil.3:13-14:

“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

So the LORD appeared to Abraham and told him that He was God Almighty, and to walk before Him blameless. The power, of walking before Him blameless, comes to us through walking “in” Jesus Christ.

Note that God told Abraham what He was going to do for him, before Abraham went out and did it in the flesh. God said He would give Abraham an heir and Abraham tried to produce it, by Hagar, in the flesh.

God said the work of the flesh would not be the heir of the promise, but Sarah would have a child.

So, you find that the flesh and the spirit were fighting against each other and unfortunately the descendants after the flesh and the descendants after the spirit continue to strive with each other unto the present day.)

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The last time God spoke to Abraham, he was eighty-six years old. There has been an intervening time of thirteen years. When he was eighty-six years old, he was complaining to God that, even though He had blessed him with great wealth, he had no heir to leave the wealth to.

His chief servant, Eliezer, was the one who would be in line to inherit all the wealth that God had given to him.

God had said to Abraham,

“I’m your exceeding great reward,” and Abraham had said, “Yes, but, I don’t have anybody to leave it to except my servant, born in my house.”

The LORD had said that Eliezer would not be his heir, but one from his own body would be the heir. Then God took Abraham outside and showed him the stars and said, “So shall thy seed be.”

Abraham believed God and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

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Immediately after this, there was a lapse of faith in Abraham's life. He took Hagar, the Egyptian handmaiden of Sarah, to be his wife and she conceived and bore Ishmael. When she became pregnant, she began to despise her mistress, Sarah.

Then Sarah tried to put the blame on Abraham, although she was the one who suggested it. Abraham told Sarah to do with Hagar what she pleased and she was driven out. Hagar started back to Egypt and met the LORD at the well called "Beer-lahai-roi." He sent her back to Sarah and told her to submit herself to her mistress.

The LORD said that she would bare a son and his name would be called "Ishmael" and that he would multiply her seed exceedingly.

God is silent during a thirteen year period and then when Abraham is ninety-nine years old, the LORD speaks to him. God is speaking to Abraham again to inform him that Ishmael is not the child that He had promised to give him.

God said He would give him a son through Sarah. In Romans 4:19, it declares: "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb."

The indication was that Abraham had become impotent. The deadness of Sarah's womb is a statement of the fact that she had gone beyond the age of a woman bearing children.

God waited until Abraham couldn't do anything about the promise himself. God didn't want Abraham trying to fulfill the promises in his own strength or capacity.

He allowed Abraham to get to the place, where it was impossible for him to do anything concerning the fulfillment of the promise; it would take an absolute miracle of God for the promise to be fulfilled. God allowed him to get to the place of human impossibility.

Many times as God works with us, He does this very same thing to us. He allows us to come to the end of our resources or to that place of hopelessness, before He works. When God works, He wants the glory for what He has done. When He works in your life, He doesn't want you boasting that you have done this marvelous work.

Paul said to the Corinthians, "For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (1Cor.4:7).

We're so prone to take credit for God's work. We cry out to God for help and when He helps us, we take the credit for it. We're like Saul, the first King of Israel. When Jonathan, his son, smote the Philistine garrison in Geba, Saul blew the trumpet throughout the land and all Israel heard that Saul had smitten the Philistines.

When we relate stories of the victories and goodness of God, we often put ourselves in it. It's because of "my" trust and "my" faith that it worked out. God honored "my" consecration.

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So, God lets us get into those situations where we are completely desperate, then He works and there is no way we can boast that we did it. The glory all belongs to God and He won't share it with man.

And so the Lord appeared to Abraham and told him that He was the Almighty God or El Shaddai. The word "shad" is breast in Hebrew and is the place of life and nourishment for the babe. So, God is telling Abraham that He is the place of his life and nourishment and that Abraham is dependent upon Him.

God told Abraham to walk "before" Him. We read earlier that Enoch walked "with" God. In Deuteronomy, God told Israel to walk "after" Him. In Colossians 2:6, Paul says, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye "in" him."

There are four different prepositions used for the walk of God.

- Walking "before" God is walking in His presence, conscious that God is watching me, looking out for me, and caring for me.
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- Walking "with" God, as Enoch and Noah, indicates that beautiful communion and fellowship as we walk with God.
- Walking "in" Him signifies that complete union and oneness that is ours with God. Christ in me, the hope of glory!

Walk before "Me," How? "...Be thou perfect," or blameless. God's ideal requirement for man is perfection and you wouldn't really expect anything less from God. I'm not surprised that God would require me to be perfect, but I would be shocked if He said to be slipshod or cruddy.

That would not be in the keeping with the nature of God. God would not require anything less than perfection and you should always know that this is God's ideal for you, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect."

When Jesus finished the Sermon on the Mount, He again required the same thing, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt.5:48).

When you tell me that God requires me to be perfect, I would say, "Thank you, but I can't." "I would love to, I have tried to, but I am far from perfect." "I would love to fulfill God's divine ideal, but I can't."

Sin has as its root meaning "missing the mark" and the Bible says all have sinned. A lot of people get upset when you say, "Well, you're a sinner, man," and they will say, "Just a minute!" "I'm not too bad." "I do what I can." "I help little ladies across the street." But, wait! What is the mark? It's perfection.

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Have you missed that mark? Is there anyone who can say, "I'm perfect?" Because man could not fulfill God's divine requirement, He sent His only begotten Son; who took our sins (our missing of the mark) and died in our place so that God's actual requirement for me now; because, I'm not perfect and could not be perfect, is that I believe in His Son whom He sent.

In the Gospel of John, when the people came to Capernaum seeking for Jesus, they asked Him this question. "Then said they unto him, What shall we do that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." (John 6:28-29). So, God's actual requirement of me today is that I believe in Jesus Christ. By my believing in Him, God accounts me righteous.

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And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." (Phil.3:7-9). That "believing faith," in Christ, is the faith by which God accounts me righteous.

Does that mean that God's giving up on you and that you'll never be perfect? No, the whole idea of walking "in" Christ is that now I might receive that power of the indwelling Spirit of God to conform me into the image of Christ and to bring me into that ideal requirement. as Paul the Apostle said, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." (Phil.3:12).

Now, there are some people who believe in, what they call, "Sinless Perfection" and there are those who claim they have attained it. Maybe you come from that school and would say that you have attained "Sinless Perfection." I have talked to a few of these people and as I challenged them, they got angry with me. There went their "Sinless Perfection."

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God said the work of the flesh would not be the heir of the promise, but Sarah would have a child. So, you find that the flesh and the spirit were fighting against each other. The descendants after the flesh and the descendants after Abraham continue to strive with each other unto the present day.

Now, God is going to talk about what He is going to do.

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## GEN 17: 2-5

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And I will make my covenant between me and thee,

(Though it had been 25 years since the promise was first made, and though it may seem like God forgot Abram, God didn't forget anything.

The last time we are told the LORD communicated with Abram directly was some 13 years before (Genesis 16:15-16).

Seemingly, Abram had 13 years of "normal" fellowship with God, waiting for the promise all the time. It would be understandable if, at times during those 13 years, Abram felt that God forgot His promise.

Abram was becoming a great man of faith, but you don't make a great man of faith overnight. It takes years of God's work in them, years of almost mundane trusting in God)

and will multiply thee exceedingly

- (At first glance we assume this is the same covenant God made from the beginning.
- The one announced in Chapter 12 and confirmed in Chapter 15 with the covenant ritual.
- The one that promises to multiply Abram's descendants
- But this language speaks of a different covenant
- First, the language is in the future tense: God says this is a covenant that **will be** established
- Secondly, this covenant is "**between Me and you**": This term implies both parties have a role in keeping the covenant
- So God is promising a new covenant, one that has yet to be established a two-way covenant requiring commitments from both parties.),

And Abram fell on his face;

(The person first went down on his knees, and then lowered his head to his knees, and touched the earth with his forehead. This is a very painful posture that signifies great humiliation and reverence.

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Later in verse 17 when God provides details on how He will accomplish His promises, Abram will once again fall on his face although then it will be in laughter and disbelief.)

and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.

(While God had promised before this to give Abram countless offspring, this however is the first time God describes Abram as the patriarch of multiple nations.)

Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

(This is the first time in the Bible where God changed someone's name.

There are many wonderful name changes in the Bible, such as when God changed Jacob's name to Israel in Genesis 32:28, and when He changed Simon's name to Peter (Mark 3:16).

God promises a wonderful new name to every overcomer in Him in Revelation 2:17.

God gives us many names in faith (saint, righteous, chosen, royal priesthood, sons of God, and so forth), and He knows He will accomplish the meaning of the name in us – even if it seems somewhat crazy.

God changed Abram's name to match this destiny.

Nowadays parents typically choose names based on how they sound or how they look in writing.

The "meaning" of names is almost never an important consideration.

However in ancient times, names were often given by parents to describe the lives they hoped their children would fulfill.

In other cases, they were used as declarations of past events.

Changing names was also a common feature of covenants. Two people who entered into a covenant might take parts of each other's name and add it to their own name.

We still follow this same practice today in the way a woman takes the man's last name. It was a way of saying I am in covenant with you and we are made one by that covenant.

In this case, Abram receives a part of God's name.

God inserted the Hebrew Letter "H" into the name of Abram and the letter "H" is made with the sound of breath.

The word "ruach" means breath or spirit and so God inserted the spirit into the name of Abram.

In Changing Sarai's name to Sarah, God did the same thing. He added the "H" or the Spirit and thus God brought them into this new dimension of life.

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Abram is now a man who carries a part of God's name

The name Abram, given by Abram's father Terah, means "exalted father." It was likely meant to suggest that Abram came from a royal line or perhaps was a reference to Abraham's father Terah being exalted.

However this new name, Abraham, means "father of a multitude," exactly matching God's revelation of what Abram would become.

You need to understand that this name change required another act of faith from Abraham.

Would he feel foolish telling people his new name, as a 99-year-old man with just one son born of a servant girl? Or would his new name increase his confidence that God's promise was reliable?)

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## GEN 17: 6-8

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And I will make thee exceeding fruitful,

(Earlier in Genesis 1:28 & Genesis 9:1, God commanded men like Adam and Noah to be fruitful and multiply.)

Here however God tells Abraham that He will make him fruitful and cause him to multiply.)

and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

(Unlike those earlier encounters, God has now taken on Himself the responsibility to create nations out of a single patriarch.)

At this point in the conversation, Abraham most likely still believes that Ishmael, his only son through his servant girl Hagar, is meant to be the fulfillment of these promises in Genesis 16:2, 16.

It won't be until later, when God renames Abraham's wife as Sarah, and declares that she will be the mother of many nations, that Abraham realizes that God is predicting a newborn baby for a 99-year-old man and an 89-year-old woman in Genesis 17:16-17.)

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

(In establishing this forever covenant between Abraham's offspring and Himself, God is making for Himself a people of His own, a people set apart as His people. These people will eventually become the nation of Israel.)

And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

(God concluded by saying, "I will be their God.")

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Throughout the rest of Genesis and the rest of the Bible, God claimed His right to be Israel's God both in blessing and judgment.

Much of Israel's suffering in the Old Testament occurred when they failed to honor God, either in their worship or their actions (Jeremiah 7:13; Malachi 1:6-7).

And yet, despite those failings, and despite God's correction, He maintained His promises.

The descendants of Abraham, through Isaac and his son Jacob became the nation of Israel: God's chosen people—*forever* (Malachi 3:6).

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## GEN 17: 9-14

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And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.

(Abraham was not the first person on earth to practice circumcision, but the way God implements this ritual is unique.)

Circumcision involves the removal of the foreskin, a circular flap of skin covering the end of the penis.

The symbolism of this act relates to crucial aspects of Jewish and Christian theology.

The foreskin is a natural-born part of the person, but needs to be deliberately shed (under circumcision) in order for the people of Israel to honor God.

This is symbolic of the need to set aside sin and other in-born urges in favor of God's will.

The removal involves a circular shape: circles are frequently used as symbols of permanence and eternity, and this covenant is said to be everlasting.

Also, the means of human reproduction, male sperm, would literally pass "through" this circle, symbolizing the influence of God on the very existence of His people.)

And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.

(The ritual of circumcision presents several important symbols of our relationship to God. The process involves a circle, a common symbol of eternity and continuity. Through this circle, the next generation would pass via reproduction.

It involves the "setting aside" or removal of a naturally-born part of the person. It creates a permanent change in the person making that commitment. It's an outward, visible representation of a spiritual covenant.)

And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you,

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(God commanded the circumcision of children to take place on the eighth day because this is the day when an infant's immune system is at the optimum level for such a procedure.

Newborn children have a peculiar susceptibility to bleeding between the second and fifth days of life.

It seems an important blood-clotting agent, vitamin K, is not formed in the normal amount until the fifth to seventh day of life.

Another blood-clotting agent, prothrombin, is at its highest levels in infants on precisely the eighth day of life, making the eighth day the safest, earliest day to circumcise an infant.)

every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised;

(This basically applied to absolutely everyone who is part of the household; even male slaves, not related to Abraham by blood or marriage, must be circumcised.

This requirement from God is given to Abraham centuries before the Law of Moses. Covenant circumcision is one of the foundational aspects of God's relationship with Israel.

Take Note:

Not only Abraham and Isaac were to be circumcised, but also Ishmael and the bond-servants.

It sealed not only the covenant of the land of Canaan to Isaac's posterity, but of heaven, through Christ, to the whole church of God.

This covenant literally stretched beyond Abraham & Isaac to the entire gentiles)

and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

(Those who rejected circumcision rejected the **sign of the covenant**. It wasn't that circumcision made them a part of the covenant (faith did), but rejection of circumcision was a rejection of the covenant.

i. Unfortunately, through the centuries, the Jews began to trust more in the *sign* of the covenant (circumcision) than in the *God* of the covenant, believing that circumcision by itself was sufficient and necessary to save. Paul refutes this idea extensively, especially in light of the finished work of Jesus in Galatians 5:1-15.

ii. Therefore, Christians are free to either circumcise or not. One may do so for social or hygienic reasons, but it doesn't get us any closer to God:

In Galatians 5:6 the bible says: *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.*

iii. Again, Paul spoke of circumcision and baptism in Colossians 2:11-12, connecting them without saying they are the same things. In this sense, at least, they are connected:

Circumcision did not save a Jewish man, but refusing to be circumcised meant disobedience to the covenant, and perhaps rejection of it.

In the same sense, being baptized does not save us, but no Christian should refuse baptism)

Amen ...

You need also to understand that the covenant God established with Abraham which was marked by circumcision signified not to live or walk after the flesh.

The cutting off of the life of the flesh in order that you might live the life of the Spirit.

God said if they would not have the rite of circumcision then they were to be cut off from being the people of God. You cannot be a man of God and walk after the flesh. It is only as you walk after the Spirit that you are truly a man of God.

In time to come, the 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. That was the rite by which you entered into national life. It indicates that you are to walk after the Spirit.

When we get to the New Testament, Paul begins to show the folly of trusting in a ritual. He says in Romans 2:25-29,

*"For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law; but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."*

God is interested that your heart is after the Spirit and not after the flesh. Circumcision doesn't avail a man anything if he is not walking and living after the Spirit.

If God accounts the walk after the Spirit as true circumcision, then it isn't the fleshly rite that does anything; therefore, the gentiles, who are not circumcised, are considered the people of God because in their heart there is that circumcision and walking after the things of the Spirit.

It is a rite of the Jews by which they entered into the national life and became a Jew.

The equivalent of circumcision in the New Testament is water baptism and the significance is the exact same thing.



# GENESIS 17

Water baptism signifies the death of the life after the flesh and a life governed by the flesh.

There is the burying of everything that was done in that life of the flesh and the beginning of the new life in the Spirit.

The resurrection and the newness of life in Christ Jesus to walk now after the Spirit as you come up out of the waters or out of the grave.

Later on, in the Book of Exodus, God almost killed Moses.

We find Moses, on his way to Egypt to deliver the children of Israel, and with him are his two sons who had not been circumcised.

There was an indication that his wife was opposed to it, but for the sake of the life of Moses she circumcised them and she was angry about it.

When the children of Israel came into the Promised Land, they had not all been circumcised and so, Joshua circumcised them before they came into the land.

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## GEN 17: 15-16

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And God said unto Abraham, as for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be.

(There is only a subtle difference between **Sarai** and **Sarah**, but it is an important difference.

**Sarah** indicates a higher standing and status than **Sarai**.

Basically:

*Sarai* signifies *my lady*, or *my princess*, which confines her dominion to one family; but *Sarah* signifies either a *lady* or *princess*, simply and absolutely without restriction, or *the princess of a multitude*.)

And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her; yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.

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(This is the first time the text reveals that Sarah is the one through whom God will keep His covenant promise to make Abraham into a great nation.

God reveals that Sarah will, in fact, give birth to a son of her own with Abraham even though she was 90 years old and it was past her time in life to do so, a notion Abraham and Sarah had completely abandoned.

Sarah became the mother of Isaac who had Jacob and Esau. Esau became the nation of the Edomites and Jacob became the nation of Israel.)

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# GENESIS 17

## GEN 17: 17

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Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed,

(Abraham's laugh didn't seem to be one of cynical doubt, but instead of rejoicing in something he knew was impossible by all outward appearance, but that God could perform.

Now it was that Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day; now he saw it and was glad, even as Jesus stated it to the Jews in John 8:56.)

and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? And shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?

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Abraham knew both he and Sarah were well past the time people normally have children. Yet Abraham believed, and in Romans 4:17-21, Paul wonderfully described Abraham's faith in this promise.

*In the presence of Him whom he believed; God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be." 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. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. (Romans 4:17-21).*

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## GEN 17: 18

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And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!

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It was beyond imagining that a 100-year-old man and a 90-year-old woman could have a baby. In Abraham's mind, it was also unnecessary. He had a son, though not through Sarah.

Ishmael is about thirteen years old and Abraham is already attached to him. Abraham said to God. "If only Ishmael could live under your blessing!"

It would seem that Abraham didn't really understand God's promise completely. He perhaps thought God simply meant Ishmael would be Sarah's spiritual son.

Abraham – like all of us – found it hard to trust God for more than what he could conceive of.

However considering the intercession of Abraham God gives us leave in prayer to be particular in making known our requests.

Whatever is our care and fear should be spread before God in prayer.

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# GENESIS 17

It is the duty of parents to pray for their children, and the great thing we should desire is, that they may be kept in covenant with Him, and may have grace to walk before him in uprightness.

Common blessings were secured to Ishmael.

Outward good things are often given to those children of godly parents who are born after the flesh, for their parents' sake.

However Covenant blessings are reserved for Isaac, and appropriated to him.

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## GEN 17: 19

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And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac;

(Isaac means "he laughs." Abraham's first response to the idea of having a son with his 90-year-old wife was to laugh.

Sarah, too, will laugh at the idea in Genesis 18:12.

Their son's name will serve as a permanent reminder of how God can fulfill promises which our limited experience says are impossible as we read in Mark 10:27)

and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

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## GEN 17: 20

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And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee; Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly;

(Ishmael *will* be blessed. God would answer Abraham's prayer for blessing on Ishmael, making **him fruitful** and to **multiply him exceedingly**.)

Nevertheless, the covenant and its promises would pass only through the son to come, the son of promise.)

twelve princes shall he beget,

(In Genesis, chapter 25, we will read of Ishmael's descendants. There are twelve princes, even as there are twelve tribes of Israel.)

and I will make him a great nation.

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# GENESIS 17

## GEN 17: 21-22

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But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year, And He left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.

(For the first time, we're told about God's departure from one of these meetings. He "went up" from Abraham.

Perhaps this detail is included to emphasize that God's appearance to Abraham really happened.

It wasn't something Abraham imagined. God came. God spoke. God left.

The words here suggest the idea of Abraham being left with a choice: will he believe, trust, and obey?

Abraham's willingness to follow God's instructions, and to do so immediately, is a key aspect of his character.

This is the attitude which leads to Abraham being a model of godly faith: trusting obedience in the face of doubt as we read in Romans 4:3.)

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## GEN 17: 23-27

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And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him.

(Abraham immediately demonstrated his faith in the God who appeared to him by obeying God's command.

Abraham kept his part of the covenant God had initiated by circumcising himself and every male in his extensive household.

He did so on the very day God appeared to him, starting with Ishmael, his 13-year-old son.)

<sup>24</sup>And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

(Abraham must have been the oldest man ever to be circumcised.

Circumcision symbolically represents many aspects of our relationship to God. It requires setting aside, or removing, a naturally-born part, just as our sinful desires need to be set aside in favor of following God.

The area affected is more or less circular, which is a common symbol of eternity and constancy; this covenant was meant to be a permanent practice by Israel.

It also represents the eternal and unchanging nature of God.

# GENESIS 17

Likewise, this ritual affects the organ of reproduction, signifying the passing of truth from generation to generation.

In fact, circumcision creates a ring around the point through which passes the man's contribution to reproduction.

Circumcision is not required for believers in Christ, even though it is still part of God's unchanging covenant with the nation of Israel.

In fact, in the New Testament era, the term "circumcision" will become shorthand for those who think their good deeds can earn them salvation in Galatians 5:1-6)

And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son.

(Abraham demonstrated his faith in God and his eagerness to keep the covenant with God by obeying the command immediately.

This willingness to obey God is a hallmark of ancient patriarchs such as Abraham in Romans 4:3 and Noah in Genesis 6:22.

In fact, Abraham's trust in God will make him a prime example of faith used in the New Testament in Hebrews 11:17-19)

And all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him.

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Abraham's obedience was *complete* (**every male among the men of Abraham's house**), it was *prompt* (**that very same day**), and it was *daring* (**to virtually incapacitate all his fighting men at the same time**).

Abraham didn't need to pray about this.

He didn't need to grow or transition into this. God said it, and he did it. This is a wonderful example of obedience from a great man of faith.

In conclusion they all established this covenant, with God, to be people that would walk and live after the Spirit.

But let us also remember in Romans 2:28,29 that the true circumcision is that of the heart & by the Spirit.

We will start from Chapter 18 next week ...

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**IF YOU HAVEN'T RECEIVED JESUS CHRIST AS YOUR PERSONAL SAVIOUR, I WANT YOU TO PRAY THIS PRAYER WITH ME RIGHT NOW**

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➤ Heavenly Father, I realize that I'm a sinner

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## GENESIS 17

- But right now I repent of my sins
- I make you my Lord
- I receive the free gift of forgiveness of sin
- I need you, Jesus
- Be my savior
- So right now I declare by faith that I am saved in Jesus' name. Amen & Praise God

If you just prayed that prayer with me online, please let us know through our website and we shall send you a free eBook as a gift to you today.

Otherwise, welcome to the family of God. Amen!

