

Gen. 17:1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, *I am* the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

Gen. 17:2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.

Gen. 17:3 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,

Gen. 17:4 As for me, behold, my covenant *is* with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.

Gen. 17:5 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.

Gen. 17:6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

Gen. 17:7 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.

Gen. 17:8 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.

Thirteen years later the Lord appears to Abram again. He comes to confirm His covenant with him. (God first promised to bless Abram when he was 75, and he is now 99.)

He emphasizes to Abram that He is “Almighty God.” Abram came out of an idolatrous heritage and is surrounded by idolators. God has chosen to test Abram’s faith by having him wait a long time for the fulfillment of His promise to give him a child. He wants Abram to stay strong in his faith and recognize that he is in covenant with the God of ALL power. He also encourages Abram to “walk before Me” (in faith and obedience) and be perfect (morally unblemished). (That’s exactly what He wants from each of His children. If we would but choose to walk in faith and obedience, then the result would be “perfection.”)

He again tells him he will have many descendants and be the father of many nations. (He is the father of many nations other than the Jews through Ishmael, Esau and his sons with Keturah, his second wife.) God then changes his name to Abraham, which means “father of many.” God also confirms that His covenant extends to Abraham’s descendants through Isaac. He promises to give Abraham and his descendants the “whole” land of Canaan as an “everlasting possession.” Then, most important of all, He promised to be their God (father, protector, defender, judge, counselor, provider, etc.)

A note from Jon Courson: v5 – “have I made thee” – The tense used is past tense; the deed is considered done when God said it. His promise is sure!

Gen. 17:9 And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.

Gen. 17:10 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.

Gen. 17:11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.

Gen. 17:12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, 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.

Gen. 17:13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

Gen. 17:14 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.

The sign of the covenant between Abraham and his seed and God was to be circumcision of the males. God even directed the specific time for each boy's circumcision—when he was eight days old. (Previous teaching has enlightened me that this is the perfect day for this surgery since it is the day that the clotting factor in the blood is at its highest in the newborn. The detailed instructions God provides for His people always have wisdom and purpose.) The attitude of the heart is most important. Those who were circumcised at this time were recognizing God as Lord. They weren't forced into obedience. It was a choice. If they chose not to obey, they were to be "cut off." (Does this mean killed? It sounds more like excommunicated. I'm not sure.) God expects obedience; when we choose to disobey, we place ourselves out of fellowship. This covenant was everlasting, for all time.

(9/06) I think it is significant to note that the parents were responsible to circumcise their children as an act of commitment and consecration to the Lord—much as we do by infant dedication. The important difference is that their obedience to God's command was the significant issue. After obeying one would hope that the parents would follow through with the loving instruction needed to instill into the hearts of their child that same desire to obey God. It's also significant that this command is directed to the men of Israel. Godly men (husbands, teachers, etc.) are key to God's established hierarchy for families and nations.

(1-05) I listened to a teaching by Jon Courson recently that introduced some new thoughts to me which I will phrase in my own words. Circumcision is a cutting away of the flesh. It is a pointed illustration of what is accomplished at salvation. Through the new birth, we put off the old man, the man of flesh, and become a clean, righteous new man by putting on Christ Jesus.

Eph. 4:20-24 But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Gen. 17:15 And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah *shall* her name be.

Gen. 17:16 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.

Gen. 17:17 Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, 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?

God also changed Sarai's (lady or princess) name to Sarah (princess of the multitude). He said that she would give Abraham a son and would be the mother of many nations.

Abraham cracked up at the thought of he and Sarah having a child at ages 100 and 90. He was careful to fall face down and think his thoughts to himself. (As if God didn't know what he was thinking!)

Gen. 17:18 And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!

Gen. 17:19 And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, *and* with his seed after him.

Gen. 17:20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.

Gen. 17:21 But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

Abraham loved his son Ishmael very much and wondered why the blessing could not come through him. But God is sovereign. His plan will not be thwarted no matter what choices we make. His choice for His promise would be Isaac. God did promise to bless Ishmael as well. Ishmael would be fruitful and would become a great nation and the father of twelve rulers.

God again confirmed that His blessing would come through Isaac who would be born the following year to Sarah.

Gen. 17:22 And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.

Gen. 17:23 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.

Gen. 17:24 And Abraham *was* ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

Gen. 17:25 And Ishmael his son *was* thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

Gen. 17:26 In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son.

Gen. 17:27 And all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him.

Verse 22 affirms that God was speaking personally to Abraham; He left when He was through having His say.

Abraham didn't wait even one day to obey God re the instruction to circumcise all the males in his household (those born as part of his household and those that had been bought). They were all circumcised that same day—Abraham was 99 and Ishmael was 13.