

Genesis 17 – A Sign Given

God's Plans cannot be Stopped

Section 1: 17:1-2 - Relationship

*When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him, saying, “I am God Almighty. **Live in my presence and be blameless.** ²I will set up my covenant between **me and you**, and I will multiply you greatly.”*

God is establishing a relationship with Abram.

- God begins His conversation with Abram by declaring who He is: “*I am God Almighty*”.
- God outlines His covenantal expectations: “*live in my presence and be blameless.*”
- God confirms that the covenant that is being established is His covenant: “*I will set up My covenant.*”

Discussion Questions

- ❖ How should the statement, “God wants a relationship with us”, impact our faith?
- ❖ Why is it important to remember that God is the God Almighty?
- ❖ How does God declaring “I will set up My covenant” reveal His grace and mercy towards us?

Section 2: 17:3-16 – 3 Statements Concerning God’s Relationship Covenant

Statement 1: Live in My Presence

*³Then Abram fell **facedown** and God spoke with him: ⁴“As for me, here is my covenant with you: You will become the father of many nations. ⁵Your name will no longer be Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I will make you the father of many nations. ⁶I will make you extremely fruitful and will make nations and kings come from you. ⁷I will confirm my covenant that is between me and you and your future offspring throughout their generations. It is a **permanent covenant** to be your God and the God of your offspring after you. ⁸And to you and your future offspring I will give the land where you are residing—all the land of Canaan—as a permanent possession, and I will be their God.”*

The focus of the covenant is centered upon a relationship. God is establishing a permanent covenant to provide a permanent possession with God at the center. This is an eternal covenant that uses a temporary nation to point us to the eternal Kingdom of God. This covenant to establish the nation of Israel is just a type of the Kingdom to come. Revelation 21:3-4.

Statement 2: Be Blameless

*⁹God also said to Abraham, “As for you, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations are to **keep my covenant**. ¹⁰This is my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you, which you are to **keep**: Every one of your males **must be** circumcised. ¹¹You must circumcise the flesh of your foreskin to serve as a sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹²Throughout your generations, every male among you is to be circumcised at eight days old—every male born in your household or purchased from any foreigner and not your offspring. ¹³Whether born in your household or purchased, he must be circumcised. **My covenant** will be marked in your flesh as a **permanent covenant**. ¹⁴If any male is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that man will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”*

God wants us to live in His presence but not just any way we desire. God requires us to be blameless. To show their commitment to the covenant they were required to be circumcised.

Again, like the establishing of the nation of Israel is a picture of the eternal Kingdom of God...circumcision of the flesh is a picture of the circumcision of the heart. Romans 2:25-29.

All the males were called to participate in taking the sign of the covenant. Thus, anyone rich or poor or slave or free could experience the covenant. Romans 2:11; Acts 10:34-36; Revelation 7:9.

Statement 3: Abraham's Partner

¹⁵ God said to Abraham, "As for your wife Sarai, do not call her Sarai, for Sarah will be her name. ¹⁶ I will bless her; indeed, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she will produce nations; kings of peoples will come from her."

Abraham and Sarah receiving new names speaks to the transforming power found in the covenant of God. We get a deeper understanding of this in 2 Corinthians 5:16-19.

In Christ we are new creations. We are given (1) a new name, (2) a new identity and (3) a new mission.

To explain in further detail: (1) we are children of God, (2) who are reconciled while being clothed in the righteousness of Christ and (3) we have been sent out to proclaim the gospel to all people.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ How are you seeking to "live in the presence" of the Lord on a consistent daily basis?
- ❖ Are you obedient to the Word of God? What are some practical steps you can take to become more obedient to the Word of God?
- ❖ Have you embraced your new reality in Christ...that you are a child of God, reconciled and clothed in the righteousness of Christ and sent out on a mission to share the gospel?

Section 3: 17:17-27

In response to the details of the covenant...we see Abraham again facedown worshiping before the Lord and then he responds to God.

Abraham questions God about the possibility of fulfilling the covenant and then just wants Ishmael to be good enough. This is a classic human response. If it requires waiting or work...we are out. We, especially as Americans, are always looking for the quick easy solution. Ishmael would be the quick easy solution that wouldn't require any more patience or work from Abraham.

God reaffirms to Abraham that Isaac is the son of promise not Ishmael. Ishmael will be a son of the flesh that has no permanent covenant and Isaac will be the son of promise that does have a permanent covenant. This points us to the truth given to us in the gospel...there are those of the flesh (lost) and those of the Spirit (saved). One (the lost) will be facing judgement and the lake of fire, while the other (the saved) will be facing grace and a new Jerusalem.

After God reaffirms the covenant to Abraham...we see that Abraham is obedient. Abraham does all that God has commanded him. He understood that obedience was necessary. John 15:9-10.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ Why do we often find ourselves questioning our circumstances rather than seeking opportunities to glorify God in our circumstances?
- ❖ How do we abide in Christ?