

# THE ORIGINS OF IT ALL!: A STUDY OF GENESIS XX.) THE EVERLASTING COVENANT ACCEPTED GENESIS 17:1-27

**INTRO:** We 'left off' with God confirming His covenant to Abram. We recognized that this was a covenant that God made with Abram based strictly on what He (God) would do and confirmed by a sign of God's passing through the split sacrifices. Between the end of this account in chapter 16, and where we pick up this morning in chapter 17, thirteen years have past and still no heir through Sarai.

*Q: Do you really think that, even though God clearly established His covenant based on what He would do, that He would not expect anything of Abram? Why or why not?*

*Q: Would it be fair, 13 years later, for God to 'suddenly' issue requirements from Abram and his tribe that are necessary for it's eternal fulfillment?*

*Q: WHY might God wait another 13 years after such a dramatic making of such an eternally important covenant?*

## A.) THE COVENANT **RESTATED** (vv. 1-8)

- We have already seen 4 occasions (12:1-3; 12:7; 13:14-17; 15:5-21) in which God spoke His covenant to Abram.
- Nevertheless, on those occasions He only used the actual word “*covenant*” (*berith*) once (15:18).
- Now, in this chapter alone, God speaks the word “*covenant*” (*berith*) 13 times!
- 9 times He says “*My covenant*.”
- 3 times He calls it an “*everlasting covenant*”
- Once, He describes it as “*a covenant between you and Me*”

### 1.) A Call To **Faithfulness** (vv. 1-3)

- First God re-introduces Himself with a new name: “*El Shaddai*” (God Almighty)

*Q: So what?*

It emphasizes His omnipotence – the One powerful enough to produce and guarantee this promise!

- Next, God commands Abram to “*Live in My presence,*” literally “*walk continuously before Me.*”

*Q: What does this mean? What is God Almighty really commanding Abram to do?*

To live openly and honestly, to conduct oneself in such a way that would please Him and deserve His favor, to enjoy His constant Presence.

- Then, God Almighty commands Abram to also “be devout” - “perfect,” “whole,” “complete,” “without fault.”
- Finally, God reaffirms the covenant He for the fifth time.
- Notice Abram's response! He bows down and worships – submission and devotion.

## **2.) A New Name To Go With The Covenant (vv., 4-8)**

- To go with the changes that are imminent as God begins to bring the Covenant into fruition, He changes the patriarch's name from “*Abram*” (exalted father) to “*Abraham*” (father of a multitude).

*Q: What's the big deal with a simple, seemingly minor change of name?*

- To change a name is to change one's status or circumstances and to assert a claim of authority and ownership over that which is named.
- Of greater significance, God Almighty declares that this not only a covenant between Him and Abraham, but between Him and all of Abraham's offspring! Likewise, it is not just a covenant for this time, but it is an everlasting covenant for all time!

## **B.) GOD'S REQUIREMENT (vv. 9-14)**

- Here, God commands that Abraham and all those who follow after him in faith as covenant-heirs must demonstrate their acceptance through a very physical and intimate sign – circumcision.

*Q: Why circumcision?*

- 1.) The promise was for a human seed, the instrument of planting that seed is the male organ.
- 2.) Though physical, man's reproduction is dependent on God's blessing.
- 3.) Circumcision ensures greater cleanliness. The seed of God's blessing must be pure, so must the instrument.
- 4.) The surgical procedure itself is one of cutting around the whole in a circular fashion. God's covenant is an assurance of the complete enclosure of His protective and productive will for His chosen.

The surgical procedure resulted in a complete separation of the flesh. So, God's blessed ones are to live their lives separated from the desires and nature of the flesh.

- 5.) The instrument of so much of man's fleshly sins, especially those which would most directly oppose the covenant (adultery, fornication, sodomy), is the male organ.
  - 6.) It was a covenant to be between the LORD and His people, an intimate, private covenant. A sign of humble and complete submission with full devotion to God and disregard for self. *Not* something to display or wear as a public sign of significance, honor or pride.
  - 7.) The ultimate choice between self and the LORD.
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- Circumcision, therefore, is a perfectly appropriate sign of this covenant and refusal to accept the sign an indisputable choosing of flesh over God!
  - Refuse to voluntarily cut off an unnecessary part of the flesh for the LORD, and He will cut you off from His everlasting covenant of promise and blessing.

### C.) THE LINE OF THE **COVENANT** (vv. 15-22)

- The Lord then re-confirms His chosen line of this covenant – not only through the seed of Abraham but begun in the womb of Sarai.
- And, so, He renames her “*Sarah*” (princess) for she will be the mother of a royal line.

*Q: Abraham “laughs” - why?*

Disbelief. It's unreal.

- God, therefore, gives another naming. Not in anger over Abraham's disbelief, but a playful reminder of His mighty power. The son will be named “*Isaac*” (he laughs).
- God then again reaffirms the fullness of His covenant through Isaac – the seed of Abraham & Sarah.
- Yet, He will not forget Ishmael or his seed.

### D.) THE **ACCEPTANCE** OF THE COVENANT THROUGH **OBEDIENCE** (vv. 23-27)

- Immediately, on that very same day that God spoke to him, Abraham accepted by faith the Lord God Almighty's promised covenant and demonstrated his allegiance through obedience for himself and all his son and tribe.
- Note, he even had Ishmael circumcised.