

Genesis 17 - 13 years have passed since chapter 16 that we don't know anything about.

Now God appears to Abram yet again with what appears to be yet another affirmation of the covenant. But appearances can be deceiving. This is a different version of the covenant. It contains the promises we've heard before that he'll be the father of many nations and that his seed will inherit the land.

Here's the difference:

This is the covenant that while it promises many nations and kings, it mainly focused on the future chosen people, just one of those many nations.

Verses 1-3

Notice the first difference is in the name of God used: No more shield and great reward, now he is El Shaddai, the God Almighty, the All powerful, irresistible one capable of destroying.

(Incidentally, this name for God is only found six times in Genesis and 36 times in the book of Job.

Notice also that there is no "Fear not" this time, instead we have a command to walk before God and be perfect.

Notice another case where a person in the presence of God falls on their face.

The Covenant – verses 4-16

1. Names are changed
2. nations and kings will come from them
3. everlasting covenant made between God and seed of Abraham and they're given the land of Canaan
4. Circumcision given as sign of covenant

Reading other people's mail

Most of this part of the covenant doesn't apply to us because we're not Jewish.

but does that make us Dispensationalists? Or, if those verses do apply to us, does that make us Covenant Theologians? Or, who ever said that we had to be one or the other?

Some Important Things for Us:

the change of name for Abram and Sarai. The name change is usually described as either a final break from their ancestral past or a way of showing their dependent relationship on God who could rename at will or of giving them more appropriate names or showing that they were entering a new phase in their lives. All of those may be partially correct, but they all share one thing in common: they seem to miss the main idea!

These are the old and new names of Abram and Sarai:

אַבְרָם – Abram

אַבְרָהָם – Abraham

סָרַי – Sarai

סָרָה - Sarah

יְהוָה - Jehovah

הּ - symbol of breath of God (traditional) or the Holy Spirit (messianic)

from the book: In His Own Words – messianic insights into the Hebrew alphabet

blood covenant - formal contract - like blood brothers in westerns (circumcision for Abraham but how could God shed his own blood), persons would make promises, then adopt a syllable of each other's name in their own name, then cut animals and walk between them.

God took two syllables of h from his name that symbolized the Holy Spirit or breath of God and sealed the covenant, just as today Holy Spirit seals us. h is also feminine representing creation and birth - Abraham and Sarah could conceive after this was added to them. today we get fruit after we get the Spirit. It also acts as a definitive just like "the" changes from "a man" to "the man" adds individuality and character and uniqueness

to something. what Holy Spirit does for us.

One other thing we're to see from verse 15 is that not only Abraham is included in the covenant now, but Sarah is also included as party to the covenant and a full partner in it and in the blessing
Verse 17 – Abraham laughed but wasn't rebuked like Sarah will be.

Why not?

Remember, Ishmael was legally as much a son of Sarah as of Abraham, so it seems from verse 18 that Abraham thought that Ishmael was the promised seed. Perhaps he was just laughing at the thought of a 100-year-old man and 90-year-old woman (evidently neither of their parts in this area were working very well) having a baby and not in disbelief at the promise of an heir.

If that's the case, it may be that he interpreted God's "I will provide you an heir through Sarah" as already having been done in Ishmael and his laughing was along the lines of "Remember when we thought that Sarai and I would have a child to be the heir? Wouldn't that be a hoot?"

The other possibility is that he laughed as in "rejoiced" whereas Sarah will laugh as in "sneered"
Verse 18-22

Abraham presents Ishmael as the promised seed but is corrected by God. Ishmael will be blessed and will present Abraham with many heirs, but the covenant will be through Isaac, who will be born next year.

Paul will pick up on this idea in the 4th chapter of Galatians – presenting the Church as the new heir of the spirit as opposed to the heir of the flesh

Verses 23-27

As soon as God leaves Abraham, he gets busy and he and Ishmael and all the males of household are circumcised.

Ishmael is 13 years old, that'd make him a freshman at Canaanite High.

Can't you imagine when he went back to school and his friends:

"Hey, Ish, what'd you and the old man do during Spring break?"

"Yeah, and how come you're walking funny, dude?"

"Well, you ain't gonna believe this, but Pop got out this flint knife and ...well, I'll show you in gym."

Paul also thought that it was important the Abraham received the portion of the covenant that promised a Seed that would be a blessing to all nations and would make him a spiritual father to more descendants than could be counted before he received the portion of the covenant that required circumcision as a sign of the covenant with Israel.

He said that showed the Messiah was for a blessing to all people, not just to Israel. (Romans 4:11)

Application for today:

Obviously, as we've already said, we are not bound by this requirement literally, but since circumcision was seen as a symbol of obedience and surrender to God, we are called to different types of symbolic circumcision:

of ear – Jer. 6:10, Ac. 7:51

of heart – De. 10:16; Dec. 30:6; Lev. 26:41; Jer. 4:4; Eze. 44:7-9; Ac. 7:51

of lips – Ex. 6:30

of salvation – Col. 2:11