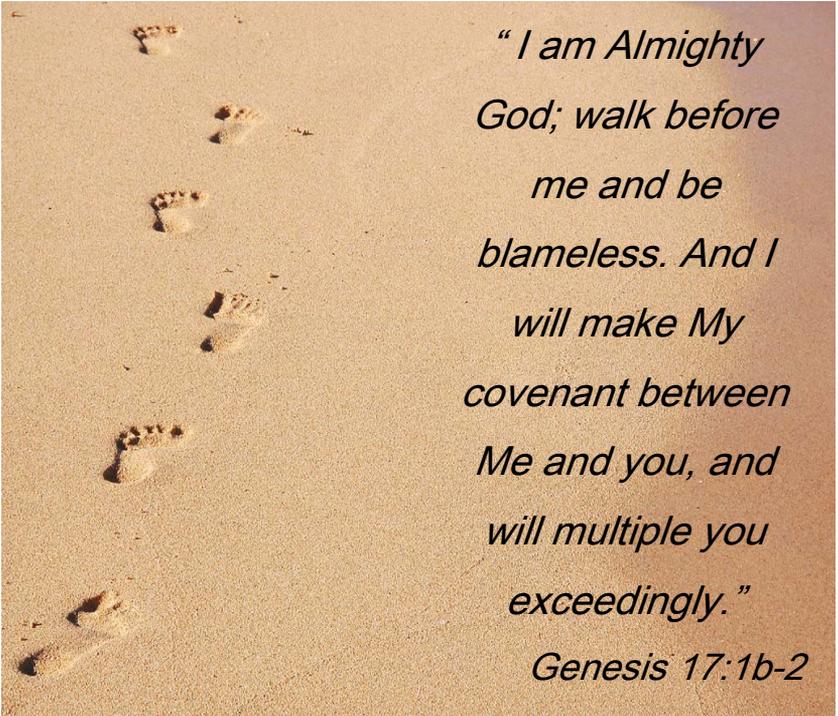




Sowing the Word



*“I am Almighty
God; walk before
me and be
blameless. And I
will make My
covenant between
Me and you, and
will multiple you
exceedingly.”*

Genesis 17:1b-2

Genesis 16-17

February 18th, 2009

So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped *them* to understand the reading.

(Nehemiah 8:8)

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Helpful Study Links:

Additional Commentary: (Great Resource!)

http://preceptaustin.org/genesis_commentaries.htm

Further Research Sources

<http://www.answersingenesis.org/>

Ken Ham's Website. Great resources, articles. Also a great source for books and videos you can get a hold of. (we have these in our library too)

<http://www.drdino.com/>

Kent Hovind's website. Another great site, with lots of answers, and another great video series you can get a hold of. (We also have these in our library)

<http://www.creationscience.com/>

Walt Brown's website. Very helpful, detailed, but not too hard for a non-science major to read. Has a book you can order that has all that is on this website if you prefer it in your hands.

<http://www.discovercreation.org/>

The Alpha Omega Institute's website. This institute is dedicated to teaching the Biblical and scientific evidence of creation throughout the world.

<http://www.icr.org/>

The Institute for Creation Research.

Helpful Study Resource:

Explore the Book by J. Sidlow Baxter

Commentary:

The commentary used with permission throughout this booklet is:

With the Word Bible Commentary

by Warren W. Wiersbe.

ISBN 0-8407-9108-9

Outline

VI. Abraham 12-25

- A. Abram's Call, Journey & Egypt (12)
- B. Abram splits from Lot (13)
- C. Abram rescues Lot – meets Melchizedek (14)
- D. Abram encouraged by God, covenant reaffirmed (15)

E. Abram and Hagar (16)

- a. The Patience Problem (v.1-6)
 - i. Patience- waiting for something (1)
 - ii. Patience- takes time (3)
 - iii. Impatience- can see God an Enemy (2)
 - iv. Impatience- can become desperate (2)
 - v. Impatience- has consequences (4-6,15)
- b. Hagar's Flight (v.7-14)
 - i. Hagar flees (6)
 - ii. Hagar found by Angel (7-8)
 - iii. Hagar told to return (9)
 - iv. Hagar blessed by Angel (10-12)
 - v. Hagar names well (13-14)
 - vi. Hagar returns, has Ishmael (15-16)

F. Abraham! Circumcision, Sarah! Isaac! (17)

- a. God – El Shaddai (v.1-3)
 - i. Abram is 99 yrs old (v1a)
 - ii. I am Almighty God (v1a)
 - iii. Walk before Me & be Blameless (v1b)
 - iv. I will make my covenant with you (v2)
 - v. Abram fell on his face (v3)
- b. Abraham! (v.4-8)
 - i. New name-Father of many nations (v4-6)
 - ii. Covenant affirmed (v7-8)
- c. Circumcision (v.9-14)
- d. Sarah! (v.15-16)
 - i. New name-Mother of many nations(v15)
 - ii. God will bless, give son by (v16)
- e. Isaac (v.17-22)
 - i. Abraham laughed (v17)
 - ii. Abraham offers Ishmael (v18)
 - iii. God promises Isaac (v19)
 - iv. God will bless Ishmael (v20)
 - v. God's covenant is with Isaac (v21-22)
- f. Circumcision begun (v.23-27)

Booklet Notes

Chapter 16 Highlights and Helps by Pastor Jim

Time – It has been ten years.

Abram and Sari have been in the land of Israel for ten years. It was ten years before they finally left Haran, although God had called Abram even before that. Ten years is a long time to wait, and it is obvious that they are beginning to get worried about God's promise to them. In the previous chapter, Abraham asked God about this, wondering if it was going to be through his servant that God fulfilled His promise. God affirmed that Abram would have a son, but it had not happened yet.

Hagar is an Egyptian maidservant.

It is interesting to wonder if Hagar was part of the product of the time that Abram and Sari ran off to Egypt in chapter 12. If so, it has an interesting lesson. Abram is back walking with the Lord, back walking in obedience. God has restored and forgiven them. Yet, sin, always leaves stuff in our lives. We can be forgiven, restored, but always have to watch out for the ramifications of our sin later in our lives. It is interesting that Hagar's name even means "flight", which would be a reminder of their flight to Egypt

The Angel of the Lord

This is the first time in the Bible we come across this title: "The Angel of the Lord. It is used almost 70 times in the Bible, with most of those times (at least 45), referring to Jesus. This is what is called a Theophany – meaning an OT appearance of Jesus. It is fascinating that God chose this account to be the first time we see this title, The Angel of the Lord. Consider some of the significance. It is a picture of Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, pursuing one who is running away from the family of faith. Jesus calls her to return and submit. Hagar is extremely touched. She is amazed that the Lord sees her and cares. What Jesus does here with Hagar....He has done repeatedly throughout history, leaving the ninety nine to pursue the one. (Mat 18:12)

Chapter 15 Highlights and Helps by Pastor Jim

Time - Abram is ninety-nine years old.

It has been 24 years since he entered Canaan. Twenty four years is a long time. Think about it for a moment, where were you twenty four years ago? It is also interesting to note that there is a thirteen year gap between the end of chapter 16 and the beginning of chapter 17. If you read the end of chapter 16 and the beginning of chapter 17 in a row, you cannot help but miss the emphasis of the time difference. Why is there a thirteen year gap? Is it a mark of God's discipline for the sin of Hagar? I think it is a true understanding that disobedience brings distance between us and God. This I know. It is a warning to us. We don't want to waste such time in our lives.

God - "El Shaddai"

As God meets with Abraham again, He reveals Himself with a new name – El Shaddai. It is the first appearance of this wonderful title of God that reminds us that He is almighty, all powerful, and can do anything. Abram needed to be reminded of God's power and ability.

Abraham

God changes Abram's name to Abraham. Abram meant "exalted father". Abraham means "father of a multitude". In many ways, this name change is amazing, because God is still calling Abraham this...when he has no kids by Sari yet. There is a sense of faith here – calling what does not yet exist, as though it did. God renews His promises to Abraham here:

- Nations and kings come from you.
- Promise of God's everlasting covenant with his descendants
- Promise to give the land as an everlasting possession
- Promise to be their God

Circumcision

God gives him the covenant of circumcision. Circumcision means the cutting off of the flesh. It becomes a powerful picture of truly being marked out as a child of God, that we too are to cut off the flesh in our lives. It is interesting that it would be on the eighth day after birth that a boy would be circumcised. Eight is the number of new beginnings in the Bible.

Sarah

God changes Sari's name to Sarah. Sarah has the idea of "mother of many nations". One thing God does in this, is He lets Abraham know – this is

where the promise is coming from: It is not Ishmael, but Isaac.

Isaac

Abraham's response to God's promise is interesting. He laughs. It seems incredible, beyond hope that such a promise could be fulfilled. He does not talk out loud, but in his heart he asks if it is even possible for a hundred year old guy and a ninety year old gal to have a child. Abraham offers to God to accept Ishmael. There is much here, but it is a real picture that we are often willing to settle for less than God's best in our lives. We are often willing to settle for works of the flesh, when God desires life of the Spirit. Wonderfully, God refuses – showing us that He will not settle for Ishmaels in our life.

walk with him through the animal halves. He waited all day, and into the evening hours... Until finally, as he was nodding off, God appeared in the form of a burning torch and smoking censor. Instead of walking with Abram down the corridor – God walked it by Himself, all Abram did was wake up and believe in God's work.

In affirming His covenant with Abram in this way, God was reminding and declaring this to be an unconditional covenant – not based on Abram but entirely based on God and His faithfulness.

And here's the lesson for us. Salvation is not a tag-team effort. It's not up to us to meet God half-way. The blessing of God is not received by God doing half the work, and the recipient doing half the work. God does all the work! He takes sole responsibility for earning the blessing. All I have to do is wake up and believe.

Q & A With Pastor Phil

What is the purpose and meaning of circumcision?

God promised to make Abram a great nation. He was 75 years old when he obeyed God's command to leave Haran and go to the land of Canaan. Ten years later, Abram and his wife Sarai were still without an heir. Believing that perhaps she could obtain children by another, Sarai convinced Abram to take her servant Hagar. Hagar conceived, but her pregnancy created intense strife and Hagar sought to run away. God intervened and met Hagar and she returned and bore Ishmael to Abram when he was 86 years old.

God's Covenant Reconfirmed

Thirteen years passed by and God again appeared to Abram. He reveals Himself to Abram as Almighty God (El Shaddai) as if to say that He is the God of the impossible. Nothing is too difficult for Him. God then reaffirms His covenant to bless him and make him exceedingly fruitful. God also reveals that Sarai will bear Isaac and that the covenant will be established with him and his descendants. Initially Abram asked that God would allow Ishmael to fulfill God's promise, but God refused. God promised to bless Ishmael, but the covenant would be established with Isaac. As God reconfirmed His covenant He changed Abram's name to Abraham which means father of a multitude.

Circumcision Instituted by God

God promised to multiply Abraham's descendants, make his name great and give him the land of Canaan. Although God's covenant with Abraham was entirely one sided, Abraham is charged to keep the covenant by circumcising the male children (Gen 17:10-13). Circumcision is the procedure of removing the foreskin of the male child. Initially this was done with crude instruments like flint knives and was a very painful experience. Although it may seem awkward to discuss, circumcision was instituted by God and plays a significant role throughout scripture. Those who did not take the command seriously were to be cut off from the people (Gen 17:14). It is important to notice the immediate obedience of Abraham. The very day that he received these instructions he circumcised all males of his house. He was also circumcised that same day at the age of 99.

The Sign of the Covenant

Circumcision was instituted by God to be a physical sign of the covenant between Him and His people (Gen 17:11). In other words, circumcision pointed to the promise of God's blessing. For the descendants of Abraham, circumcision signified that they were partakers in the everlasting covenant. By cutting away the flesh, they were identifying with Abraham. It also served as a lifelong reminder of God's promises. With this sign a distinction was made between God's people and the gentiles apart from God. Circumcision took on a far greater meaning than the procedure itself. It became a symbol of purity. In the same way, that which was unclean was said to be uncircumcised. Thus when God speaks of uncircumcised hearts (Lev 26:41) and ears (Jer 6:10) he is referring to those who do not walk in His ways. Although circumcision was ordained by God, there were times when the practice was neglected. God was very angry with Moses because he failed to have his son circumcised (Exo 4:24). This occurred when Moses was preparing to meet with Pharaoh the first time. Also, before the Israelites could enter the land of Canaan, the Lord commanded Joshua to have them circumcised because they neglected this while they were in the wilderness. Again, God wanted them to be reminded of His covenant and to identify with His promises.

Circumcision in the New Testament

The Jewish people came to take great pride in circumcision and for many it became a symbol of national superiority. Instead of moving them to become witnesses to gentile world, they became more and more exclusive. This became very apparent in the New Testament. Jesus as well as his early Jewish followers were circumcised. However, when the gentiles began to follow Christ, controversy divided the early Church. The Judaizers taught that unless a gentile was circumcised, he could not be saved (Acts 15:1-2). The apostles concluded that gentile believers coming to Christ should not be burdened with this requirement. Nevertheless, the Judaizers continued to contend with and persecute gentile Christians over this matter.

A Changed Heart

The apostle Paul points out that Abraham was justified by faith before he was circumcised and that the ritual alone is powerless to save (Rom 4:9-12). Mankind is prone to focusing on the external marks of righteousness, but missing the heart of the matter. Jesus used the example of washing the outside of a cup and leaving the inside unclean. He spoke of the Pharisees as being whitewashed tombs – attractive on the outside but full

of dead men's bones. Clearly, God wants us to focus more on the inward things. The book of Galatians reveals that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything (Gal 5:6). The outward removal of the flesh does not cause one to be right with God. Instead there must be a change of nature – a new creation (Gal 6:15). We must be born again and be changed on the inside.

A Powerful Picture

Although circumcision doesn't save us, it provides for us a powerful picture. It symbolizes the purging away of the flesh. Paul uses this analogy in Col 2:11:

In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ.

The real circumcision is a supernatural work done in our hearts and one necessary for salvation. We can therefore understand the penalty for the disobedient given in Gen 17:14:

And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.

The person who has not been born again has no place in the people of God because he is alienated from Christ and is not a spiritual descendant of Abraham. The physical rite of circumcision has been abolished by the gospel, but the inward work that it pictures is absolutely necessary for all who desire to be partakers of Christ and His heavenly kingdom.

With the Word Bible Commentary

Genesis 16

Faith and patience always go together (Heb. 6:12; James 1:1–5). Isaiah declared, “Whoever believes will not act hastily” (Isa. 28:16). We must trust God not only for His plan but also for His timing. Before He could send the promised son, God had to wait until Abram and Sarai were as good as dead (Rom. 4:19–21; Heb. 11:11–12). Sarai leaned on human understanding instead of God’s promises (Prov. 3:5–6). She trusted a woman from Egypt instead of the God of heaven.

Sarai was not a strong *believer*, but she was a capable *blamer*. She blamed God for her barrenness, then blamed Abram when Hagar created problems in the home. The wisdom from God is pure and peaceable, but the wisdom of the flesh is always divisive (James 3:13–18). Abram abdicated his spiritual leadership in the home, and the result was confusion.

When we walk by sight and not by faith, we get impatient; we scheme and blame others. Then when things go wrong, we try to get rid of our mistakes. God sent Hagar and Ishmael back to Abram and Sarai, and they had to live with their mistake for at least another seventeen years.

Abram and Sarai greatly wronged Hagar, and they suffered for it; but God stepped in and cared for her and her son. Abram obeyed God and gave the appointed name to his son: “Ishmael—God shall hear.” Had Abram and Sarai waited on God instead of running ahead of God, they would have avoided all that pain.

—Wiersbe, W. W. (1997, c1991). *With the word Bible commentary* (Ge 16:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Genesis 17

New revelations. As far as the record is concerned, God waited thirteen years before He revealed Himself again to Abram. During those quiet intervening years, Abram continued to walk with God and serve Him. He did not need constant special revelations to do God's will, nor do we. God reaffirmed His covenant and then gave Abram the sign of circumcision as the mark of that covenant. How unfortunate that many of the Jews trusted in the sign rather than in the Lord (Acts 15:5; Rom. 4:10; Gal. 5:6)! God wanted an inward change of the heart, not just surgery on the body (Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4).

New names. In Bible history, a new name means a new beginning, a step forward in faith. (See Gen. 32:28; John 1:40–42.) *Abram* means "exalted father"; it became *Abraham*, "father of a multitude." *Sarai* ("contentious") became *Sarah*, "a princess." God even revealed a new name for Himself: God Almighty. The only name that did not change was Ishmael, for what is born of the flesh remains flesh and cannot be changed (John 3:6).

New joy. At last, the long-awaited son would be born, and his name would be "Isaac—laughter." No wonder Abraham laughed (John 8:56). Abraham wanted to cling to his past mistake (v. 18) instead of looking to the future miracle that God would perform. Abraham and Sarah's impatient act of unbelief had brought sorrow and division into the home, but God's miracle of faith brought joy and peace (Rom. 15:13). It pays to trust God's way and wait for God's time.

God Almighty!: *The Bible affirms our need to rely on God, for whom nothing is impossible (Luke 1:37): "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Gen. 18:14). "There is nothing too hard for You" (Jer. 32:17); God is "able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). So, we may say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13). Lay hold of God's power!*

—Wiersbe, W. W. (1997, c1991). With the word Bible commentary (Ge 17:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

