

Genesis

Memorize the TRUTH!

Lesson 8 The Sign of the Covenant Genesis 17

I am God Almighty;
walk before me and be blameless.
Genesis 17:1b

God Appears to Abram – Genesis 17:1-8

Day 1

1. Read Genesis 12:1-4.
 - a. How many years have passed since God first promised to make Abram's descendants into a great nation?
 - b. What problems did Abram face in the fulfillment of this promise?
2. What was the purpose of the Lord's appearance to Abram at this time?
3.
 - a. What two commands did God give Abram in these verses?
 - b. Explain what you think these commands mean.
 - c. How would your life change if you began to obey these commands?

Learn the TRUTH!



Thirteen long years pass after the birth of Ishmael while Abram and Sarai grow older. When hope is faint, God appears to Abram to confirm His earlier promises despite their skepticism. As you study this week, remember to give praise and thanks to our God who is mighty enough to keep His promises to all of us.

A New Name – Genesis 17:1-8 continued

Day 2

4.
 - a. What does the word *covenant* mean?
 - b. In this passage, who was making a covenant, and what did it include?
5.
 - a. Why did God change Abram's name at this time?
 - b. What name did God call Himself in verse 1?
 - c. How does this name reassure Abram that God is able to keep His promises?

Abraham's Part
Genesis 17:9-14

Day 3

6. a. What would Abraham and his descendants have to do to qualify as recipients of this covenant?

 - b. What purpose did this requirement serve?

 - c. Read Romans 2:28-29. What spiritual symbolism did God intend circumcision to have?
7. According to John 1:12, what must we do to be included in God's New Covenant?

Sarah's Part
Genesis 17:15-22

Day 4

8. What specific promise did God make in this passage regarding Sarah?

9. How did Abraham first react? What does this tell you about faith?

10. a. Which of God's promises are hard for you to believe?

- b. How does God want you to respond to these "hard-to-believe" promises?

11. What clues do we have that show Abraham was still assuming God would fulfill the covenant through Ishmael?

Abraham Obeys
Genesis 17:23-27

Day 5

12. How was Abraham's response to God in these verses an example for us to follow?

13. a. Review Genesis 17. Name at least three attributes of God illustrated in this chapter.

- b. Which of these attributes is most meaningful to you? Why?

Live the TRUTH! 

Our true character is revealed by the way we act when no one is watching. What would I do if I were given change for a \$50 bill instead of a \$5 bill and walked out of the store in a strange town before I discovered it? Would the thought that no one would ever know cross my mind? Character matters! We represent God to the world. Ask God to transform you to be the same person inside and out.

Commentary Genesis Lesson 8

For over a decade, God has not made Himself known to the chosen family, but finally is seen again by Abram. Abram will have a son, and the promised heir will come from Sarai's womb. Abram's responsibility is to "walk before [Him] and be blameless" (17:1). God is calling on Abraham to live a life that will pass inspection from God Himself, a standard considerably higher than man's. Godly believers are always conscious that God is watching. Blameless in this context does not mean sinless but lacking an obvious fault. In the Job stories, the noun form of the word blameless may appear as integrity (Job 27:5). Abraham is to walk before God in a consistently blameless way, even in the areas that only God sees.

Abram falls facedown in submission. If he'd had any thoughts that God had abandoned him, they were now answered. His name will now be *Abraham* — the father of Israel and also of many nations. God adds a new pledge: Kings will be among Abraham's offspring. God's generous promises can be summarized under two headings: Abraham will have great numbers of children, and God will be faithful to Abraham and those children forever. As a pledge of His covenant, God ensures that the very land where Abraham camps as an alien will one day belong to his descendants.

Abraham must keep God's covenant and be a role model. God calls for Abraham and his male offspring to undergo circumcision as a "sign of the covenant" (17:11). Unborn generations will submit to it on the eighth day after they are born, designating them as holy and members of the covenant family. It did not guarantee them a righteous standing before God. God views neglect of this rite as nothing less than a capital crime. The offender "will be cut off from his people" (17:14), meaning execution. It was intended to express union with the community, but later generations wrongly saw it as the sole condition of righteous standing with God.

What lesson can believers today learn from circumcision? In Colossians 2, Paul points out that a spiritual cutting away of fleshly, worldly attitudes and actions takes place in us when we trust Christ. Circumcision is a God-given illustration; it addresses the removal of the old corrupt nature which is in rebellion against God. Dealing with that old corrupt nature may be very painful — as is physical circumcision.

In Genesis 17:15, God finishes His second speech by describing its effect on Sarai. She will now be known as *Sarah*, meaning simply *princess*. It is highly significant. Sarah had been despised by Hagar, and perhaps others, for her failure to produce an heir. Now she will become a princess to the world at large, as she becomes the mother of nations and kings. Sarah is the only woman in the Bible whose name is changed and whose age is given at her death.

Check It Out:

When we become followers of Jesus Christ, old habits, attitudes, or lifestyles may have to be changed or eliminated. As with physical circumcision, the longer we wait, the more painful the surgery. If God tells us to stop doing something, to change our behavior — or our thinking — the sooner we do it, the better off we will be. For some, an entire lifestyle must be changed. For others, a long, stubbornly held view must be honestly re-examined. If God convicts us of bad habits, a bad attitude, or unacceptable behavior, then it has to go! Products of that old corrupt nature must be cut away. Our hearts must be circumcised. Remember, Abraham didn't wait. He acted that very same day. Sometimes God asks us to wait for Him to fulfill a promise He has given, but when He gives a command, He expects immediate obedience.

At the staggering promise he has just heard, the Patriarch again falls on his face with an outburst of laughter—a mixture of joy, amazement, and at least a degree of disbelief: “Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old?” (17:17). Abraham’s unbelief seems to be mild and secondary. His main concern is Ishmael, now about 13 years old. He expresses an intense wish that Ishmael might be the promised heir, instead of reacting with total joy at the long-delayed prospect of a son through Sarah. The son to be born will be named *Isaac*, Hebrew for *he laughs*, or *he will laugh*. God will have the last laugh, and Sarah’s skepticism will be turned to joy.

God will not abandon or neglect Ishmael; he will become the father of large numbers of children. Twelve rulers will come from him, and he will become known as a patriarch himself. Yet he will remain outside the terms of the Abrahamic covenant. Those blessings will be reserved for Isaac and his offspring. On the same day the promise is delivered, Abraham circumcises all the male members of his household, beginning with himself. Once God’s expectations are clear, the best time to obey is always immediately.



Sarah was miraculously protected in the harem of Pharaoh, and now she is supernaturally enabled to conceive a child well past childbearing age. She is imperfect. She encourages Abraham to follow current custom to obtain an heir by sleeping with Hagar rather than waiting for the known will of God. She then complains bitterly to him because he does what she suggested. She is unable to handle Hagar’s bad attitude and treats her harshly. At times she seems unstable and other times merely irritable, but God never gives up on her. God looks beyond her failings with a higher calling — “mother of nations” (17:16). God does not give up on us, either. He has a high calling in Christ for us as well. God is patient, but we must not try His patience. Let’s cooperate fully in the work that He has begun in our lives.



What is the modern “seal of the covenant” for Christians? What does this “seal” do for a believer?

Ephesians 1:11-14