

## **SALT Church**

Genesis 17

### ***“The Big Picture”***

December 10, 2025

### ***“In the Beginning”***

***17 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, “I am El-Shaddai—‘God Almighty.’ Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life. <sup>2</sup> I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to give you countless descendants.”***

**It had been a while since God had spoken to Abram.**

- You recall that in Genesis 15 God had appeared to Abram.
- He promised Abram two things:
  - God promised that Abram would have many descendants
    - ***<sup>5</sup> “Then the Lord took Abram outside and said to him, “Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That’s how many descendants you will have!”***
  - God also promised a massive piece of land (from Egypt to the Euphrates River) to be given to Abrams family.
    - Property that Israel has never fully possessed. (meaning that one day God will keep His promise)
      - God also told Abram that these promises would come through difficulty and hardship as He foretold of Israels slavery in Egypt for at least 400 years.

- Chapter 15 closed with Abram believing and God making a covenant with Abram in the strangest of customs.
- Chapter 16 brings doubt as Abram and his wife are beyond child barren years.
  - Then Sarai gets the bright idea that God needs help.
    - So, she approaches Abram with the idea of sleeping with her servant girl Hagar.
      - This has disastrous results.
        - Ishmael is born and essentially gives birth to the enemies of the nation of Israel.
- 13 years after the birth of Ishmael God speaks once again to His servant Abram.
  - God again confirms His commitment to the covenant that He made with Abram 13 years ago.
    - But this time God calls Abram to demonstrate his belief by calling him to circumcision.

### “The Big Picture”

- As we look at tonight’s text it is important to see “The Big Picture”
  - God is at work in the salvation of the whole world.
    - Genesis 3 He promised that the seed of the woman would come and destroy Satan.
    - Genesis 12 God promises that Abram will be a blessing to the whole world, meaning that it is one of his descendants that will come and destroy Satan and his evil work.

- Genesis 12 is the first steps of the great faith journey for Abram and his family.
- Along the way Abram fails and has great victories.
  - His great faith is strengthened through both the failures and victories.
    - All of which are used by God to prepare Abram for his greatest act of faith in offering his son Issac as a sacrifice.

### *Chapter 17 is about a lot of important things:*

- **Names for example:**
  - God identifies Himself as “***El-Shaddai***” God almighty!
    - God will change both Abram and Sarai’s names.
      - This will become a common practice for God as He will continue to change people’s names as He uses them for His purposes.
- **It’s a reminder of how important covenants are to God the Father:**
  - God shows up 13 years after Abram and his wife make a huge mistake and reaffirms His covenant promise with Abram.
    - In short, we should see that God keeps His word because His name is at stake, His glory is at stake, and His character and reputation are at stake.
      - In other words, it’s not about Abram and Sarai, it’s about God!
- It’s a reminder that God determines how He will be worshiped.
  - This is so important

- For decades we (the church) have been designing “seeker friendly churches” when worship should be designed for the One worshiped and not the one doing the worshiping.
  - Here is the crazy thing about worship:
    - The very first murder ever committed was motivated by corrupt worship.
      - Cain killed Able because God would not accept his corrupt worship.
        - Cain was jealous of Able because God accepted his pure worship.
          - God will always determine how He is worshiped.

Jesus made this abundantly clear when He responded to those who claimed that they had performed miracles, cast out demons, and prophesied in His name.

- “Be gone from me you evil doers for I do not know you!”

As we move forward notice Abram’s response to God’s command to how He will be worshiped.

- Notice how God identifies Himself
- Notice how many times God says, “I will...”
- Ask yourself, “why would God require such an odd thing?”
  - Why only the males?
    - What is God doing?

***17 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, “I am El-Shaddai—‘God Almighty.’”***

- This is the 1<sup>st</sup> time in scripture God identifies Himself as “El-Shaddai”
  - Why is it important that God identify Himself in this way?
    - Because only an “almighty God” could follow through with the promises that He has made.
      - This by the way was not for God’s benefit; this was for Abram’s benefit.

Now here is the call or expectation on Abram’s life:

***Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life.***

- In the Hebrew it is “Walk before me and be blameless”
  - Notice Abram says nothing.
    - Abram had already failed God so many times.’
      - What do you say to God when He says, “Walk before me and be blameless”?
      - What do you say to God when He says, “Be Holy as I am Holy”?
        - I can’t Lord.
          - I can’t, I am so messed up!
            - God knows, this is why He made the covenant and not Abram.

***<sup>2</sup> I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to give you countless descendants.”***

- When we encounter such a command there is only one response that is proper.
  - We fall before Him, like Abram, like John.

***<sup>3</sup>At this, Abram fell face down on the ground.***

- The contrast between this response and those who remind God what they have done for Him and the Kingdom is very different.
  - One reminds God as if God has issues with His memory.
  - The other falls speechless as he ponders his sin and this impossible call to holiness.

***Then God said to him, <sup>4</sup>“This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of a multitude of nations!”***

- Think about what God has just said:
  - “I will make you the father of a multitude of nations.”
    - Abram cannot do that.
      - Only an ALMIGHTY GOD can do that.
        - What is Abrams required response?
          - Belief, Faith, Trust

***<sup>5</sup>What’s more, I am changing your name. It will no longer be Abram. Instead, you will be called Abraham, for you will be the father of many nations. <sup>6</sup>I will make you extremely fruitful. Your descendants will become many nations, and kings will be among them!***

- Why would God change Abram’s name?
  - The covenant with Abram was between Abram and God.
  - Sarai knew but did anyone else?
    - By changing Abram’s name two things will occur:
      - 1<sup>st</sup> every time calls his name, he will be reminded of what God Almighty said that He would do therefore

everyone would now know what God had promised and would wait to see if the God of Abraham could actually do what He said He could do.

- This would also lead to the ability of God to do what He said He would do concerning the land.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> His name being changed at 99 years old would scream to all that know Abraham that Almighty God is the only one who could pull this off.
  - Sarai is 88 years old, there is no way she could ever have a child without God's intervention.
  - Can you imagine the 1<sup>st</sup> time Abraham heard someone call him by his new name.

***7 “I will confirm my covenant with you and your descendants after you, from generation to generation. This is the everlasting covenant: I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you. 8 And I will give the entire land of Canaan, where you now live as a foreigner, to you and your descendants. It will be their possession forever, and I will be their God.”***

- What is the covenant promise?
  - God will always be Abrahams God
  - God will be the God of Abrahams descendants “generation to generation”
  - The land will be given to Abraham's descendants
  - The land will be theirs forever

- God will be their God forever

### ***The Mark of the Covenant***

***<sup>9</sup> Then God said to Abraham, “Your responsibility is to obey the terms of the covenant. You and all your descendants have this continual responsibility.***

- Don’t miss that, they have the responsibility to obey (the greatest form of worship)
  - This is the responsibility for all who follow the One true God.

***<sup>10</sup> This is the covenant that you and your descendants must keep: Each male among you must be circumcised. <sup>11</sup> You must cut off the flesh of your foreskin as a sign of the covenant between me and you.***

- What an odd thing for God the Father to require.
  - This was already being practiced and was not a new thing but now God was giving it a new meaning.
    - Just like Jesus gave crucifixion a new meaning.
- This “sign” was a mark among God’s men that said I believe in the promises of the almighty God of Abraham.
  - Hebrews 9:22 “without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness”
    - We also know that the “fleshly nature” is how the Bible describes our sinful nature.
      - So, what does the sign of circumcision symbolize?



- There must be a tearing away of the flesh and the shedding of blood in order for man to be forgiven.

***<sup>12</sup> From generation to generation, every male child must be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. This applies not only to members of your family but also to the servants born in your household and the foreign-born servants whom you have purchased. <sup>13</sup> All must be circumcised. Your bodies will bear the mark of my everlasting covenant. <sup>14</sup> Any male who fails to be circumcised will be cut off from the covenant family for breaking the covenant.”***

- What is God doing here?
  - The sign of the covenant was to be upon every male within the household.
  - This did not guarantee salvation or even acceptance from God, it simply pointed to this covenant promise that God had made to Abraham and those that would be faithful and obedient to Abraham's God.
    - The little 8-day old boy would not understand what was happening so why would God have it done so early in the baby's life?
      - Whose faith would be the motivation of obedience for circumcision?
        - The parents and particularly the dad.
        - This would force the dad to into his role as priest of his home.

- This would naturally overflow into all of the males that were under the authority of the priest of the home.
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- But why that part of the body?
  - Sexual immorality was common among the ancient world.
  - This would serve as a reminder to those born into the covenant people that God the Father had called them to a higher standard.
  - It would also serve as a real-life example of what must take place in the believer's heart as it relates to sin.

### **Colossians 2:9-15**

*<sup>9</sup> For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, <sup>10</sup> and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. <sup>11</sup> In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self-ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, <sup>12</sup> having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. <sup>13</sup> When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, <sup>14</sup> having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup> And having disarmed the*

*powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*

### ***Sarai Is Named Sarah***

***<sup>15</sup> Then God said to Abraham, “Regarding Sarai, your wife—her name will no longer be Sarai. From now on her name will be Sarah.***

- There is some debate as to the meaning of Sarai but there is no debate as to the meaning of Sarah (princess)
- This makes sense to me as she would give birth to a boy who would eventually have kings come from his lineage.
  - King David
  - King Solomon
  - And eventually King Jesus

***<sup>16</sup> And I will bless her and give you a son from her!***

- Both Abraham and Sarah had went down the path of thinking that the promises of God were only for Abraham, but this was not so.
  - God had saved her twice from being violated by other kings because she was a major part of the testimony to the power of God.

***Yes, I will bless her richly, and she will become the mother of many nations. Kings of nations will be among her descendants.”***

- Wow, put that on **ancestry.com**

***17 Then Abraham bowed down to the ground, but he laughed to himself in disbelief.***

- This is where the NLT let me down.
- In the Hebrew Abraham bows down and laughs but not in disbelief.
  - That disbelief is not in the Hebrew.
    - In fact, he laughs in belief!
      - Abraham is processing all that God has said and he's thinking how ridiculous all this seems and yet he believes all of it.
        - He laughs because he wasn't sure that Sarah would ever get to experience all of this (she is 89 years old)

***“How could I become a father at the age of 100?” he thought.  
“And how can Sarah have a baby when she is ninety years old?”***

- In the Hebrew it reads more like this:
  - A son, I'll be 100 and Sarah will be 90, wow!

***18 So Abraham said to God, “May Ishmael live under your special blessing!”***

- I love a good daddy.
  - Abraham knew that Ishmael was not the promised son, but he still loved him deeply.
  - So, he asked God if somehow Ishmael could share in this special blessing.

***19 But God replied, “No—Sarah, your wife, will give birth to a son for you. You will name him Isaac, (Laughter) and I will***

***confirm my covenant with him and his descendants as an everlasting covenant.***

- We must remember God determines how He is worshipped.
- Ishmael was not the promised son
- Ishmael was the fruit of acting outside of God's will.
  - But just as God had said in Genesis 12 (all people will be blessed because of you) Ishmael was a son of Abraham and he and descendants would receive a type of blessing but not the blessing of Issac.

***<sup>20</sup> As for Ishmael, I will bless him also, just as you have asked. I will make him extremely fruitful and multiply his descendants. He will become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. <sup>21</sup> But my covenant will be confirmed with Isaac, who will be born to you and Sarah about this time next year."***

- Only God the Father could predict with accuracy how many princes would be born to Ishmael.
  - You might say, well how would Abraham or Ishmael even know if it ever can true?
    - Here's how:
      - God tells Abraham that Isaac will be born this time next year.
        - When Isaac was born it was confirmation that the future prophecy would become truth as well.

***<sup>22</sup> When God had finished speaking, he left Abraham.***

***<sup>23</sup> On that very day Abraham took his son, Ishmael, and every male in his household, including those born there and those he had bought. Then he circumcised them, cutting off their foreskins, just as God had told him. <sup>24</sup> Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised, <sup>25</sup> and Ishmael, his son, was thirteen. <sup>26</sup> Both Abraham and his son, Ishmael, were circumcised on that same day, <sup>27</sup> along with all the other men and boys of the household, whether they were born there or bought as servants. All were circumcised with him.***

- This is faith in action for it says “on that very day”
  - Abraham @ 99 years old was circumcised.

#### **Romans 2:25-29**

**<sup>25</sup> The Jewish ceremony of circumcision has value only if you obey God’s law. But if you don’t obey God’s law, you are no better off than an uncircumcised Gentile. <sup>26</sup> And if the Gentiles obey God’s law, won’t God declare them to be his own people? <sup>27</sup> In fact, uncircumcised Gentiles who keep God’s law will condemn you Jews who are circumcised and possess God’s law but don’t obey it.**

**<sup>28</sup> For you are not a true Jew just because you were born of Jewish parents or because you have gone through the ceremony of circumcision. <sup>29</sup> No, a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not merely obeying the letter of the law; rather, it is a change of heart produced by the Spirit. And a person with a changed heart seeks praise<sup>[d]</sup> from God, not from people.**

