

## Genesis 15:17 - 17 – Thursday, January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2008

17 And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. 18 On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates --19 the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites, 20 the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, 21 the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."

- Some have suggested that this was because God can't break it because He's God, and Abram can't break it because he didn't sign it.
- God appearing as a smoking oven and burning torch is reminiscent of how He leads the Israelites, cloud of smoke by day, fire by night.
- God recites the terms of the covenant in that He is giving all this land to Abram and his descendants.

"For a very brief time, under Solomon (1 Kings 8:65) and possibly again under Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:25), the children of Israel ruled all this territory, as a token of the final and permanent possession they will have in the future." (Morris)

**16:1** Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. 2 So Sarai said to Abram, "See now, the LORD has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her." And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai.

- There is a 10 year gap between chapter 15 and chapter 16. 10 years is a long time to wait for God's promise to be fulfilled.
- Sarai will, out of her impatience, make the worst decision of her life.
- She's impatient with God, and now will try to help God out and take matters into her own hands.

How much better it is to receive God's help than to try and help Him out in the flesh! "Those who are truly zealous for God frequently reach for fruit without first dying. Unfortunately much Christian work is done in this way, and while there is conception, the child that is born can never be the heir. Christian work that is done merely through the zeal of human effort without counting the body as dead, and Sarai as good as dead, may produce great revival campaigns with but a few genuinely saved, large church memberships with many tares among the wheat." (Barnhouse)

Sarai is not alone in thinking that "God helps those who help themselves;"

- Jacob tried to help God out by deceiving his father to get the blessing.
- Moses tried to help God out by murdering an Egyptian to deliver the Israelites.

3 Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan. 4 So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes.

- When we take matters in our own hands in our impatience with God and disbelief of God, it will always end in this way.

5 Then Sarai said to Abram, "My wrong be upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. The LORD judge between you and me."

- It's like Sarai is admitting that she's wrong, but is basically saying that it's Abram's fault.
- The consequences of what both Abram and Sarai did with Hagar are still being realized today.

6 So Abram said to Sarai, "Indeed your maid is in your hand; do to her as you please." And when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence.

- Abram doesn't handle this right at all. He basically tells Sarai to deal with Hagar however she wants.
- This is just the beginning of all the problems that will come as a result of what they have done.
- We're told that Sarai deals harshly with Hagar, and she flees from Sarai's presence.

When I don't wait for God to do it in His time...

- I will create tension with others (There is tension between all of them now)
- I will despise others (Hagar despised Sarai)
- I will blame others (Sarai blames Abram)
- I will deal harshly with others (Sarai deals harshly with Hagar)
- I will break fellowship with others (Hagar flees from Sarai's presence)

7 Now the Angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. 8 And He said, "Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from, and where are you going?" She said, "I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai." 9 The Angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand." 10 Then the Angel of the LORD said to her, "I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude." 11 And the Angel of the LORD said to her: "Behold, you are with child, And you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, Because the LORD has heard your affliction."

- After Hagar flees, the pre-incarnate Lord comes to her and because of His great love for her, tells her that He's going to bless her.
- He tells her to go back to Sarai and submit herself to her and Abram, and that He's going to multiply her descendants exceedingly.

- He then tells her that she will have a son and that she is to name him Ishmael because it means the Lord hears her affliction.
- Interesting that Ishmael was the first one in the Bible to be given a name before he was born. He is the forefather of the Arab people.

12 He shall be a wild man; His hand shall be against every man, And every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." 13 Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, "Have I also here seen Him who sees me?" 14 Therefore the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; observe, it is between Kadesh and Bered. 15 So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. 16 Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

- God now tells Hagar what's going to happen to Ishmael and his descendants in the future, and it's not good.
- This isn't God cursing Hagar or Ishmael, it's God telling Hagar about Ishmael and how it's going to be for all generations to come.
- So, Ishmael is born, but because he's a work of the flesh, will cause unspeakable problems that are still seen in the Middle East today.

**17:1a** When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram

- Again, a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ to Abram who is now 99 years old. The last time was when Abram was 86 years old.
- In other words, if you do the math, it's been 13 years since the last time that God spoke to Abram. That's a long time to wait!

WHEN GOD WAITS – "God spoke to Abraham when he was eighty-six years old ...and then waited thirteen more years before He spoke again. Why do you suppose God waited so long? God often chooses to wait until we have exhausted every possible resource before us. He waits until we reach a point of hopelessness. That is where Abram was, finally. Had God spoken any earlier, Abram probably would have tried to help God perform His promise. While training to be a lifeguard, I learned that when someone is drowning, you don't approach them directly. If you come too close while they are still strong and flailing, they might take you down with them. You have to wait until they are exhausted. I think God works on this same principle. As long as we are flailing about, God waits. When we finally give up, God can begin to work out His glorious plan. 'Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His marvelous works!' Many times we are prone to give some rationalistic explanation or say how lucky we are when things work out. We don't give God credit for the work He has done. Maybe you are in a situation that looks impossible. You did your best and failed. Hey, are you ever in good shape! For man's impossibilities are God's opportunities. God will do for you what you can't do for yourself!"

Pastor Chuck Smith "Wisdom for Today" Genesis - Revelation. Daily Devotional. January 5<sup>th</sup>

**1b** and said to him, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.

- When the Lord appears to Abram, He says to him that He is God Almighty.
- God Almighty, is El Shaddai which could either mean the powerful chest of a man, or the nourishing breast of a woman, or both.
- When God tells Abram to walk before Him and be blameless, He is saying I want you to be whole, or I want all of you with before me.

2 And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.

- God now reminds Abram of His covenant between Him and Abram, that He will multiply him exceedingly.
- It has been some 25 years since God make the original promise. God's delays are not God's denials.

Why does God wait so long to fulfill His plans for us and His promise to us?

1. He's preparing us for that which He has been preparing for us.
2. He's teaching us to walk by faith not by sight no matter what our circumstances.
3. He's exhausting us of our own resources and options so we surrender to Him.
4. He's bringing us to the place where it's impossible for us so He can do it instead of us.
5. He's showing us that He will do it in His way, in His time, and for His glory.

"3 Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: 4 "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations.

- Abram falls on his face as the Lord tells him to see that His covenant is with him, and that he will be the father of many nations.

The Scriptures declare, "Abram fell on his face" as the Lord talked with him (Genesis 17:3). Abraham was reverent and submissive. Probably there is no better picture anywhere in the Bible of the right place for mankind and the right place for God. God was on His throne speaking, and Abraham was on his face listening! Where God and man are in relationship, this must be the ideal. God must be the communicator, and man must be in the listening, obeying attitude. If men and women are not willing to assume this listening attitude, there will be no meeting with God in living, personal experience.... Yes, Abraham was lying face down in humility and reverence, overcome with awe in this encounter with God. He knew that he was surrounded by the world's greatest mystery. The presence of this One who fills all things was pressing in upon him, rising above him, defeating him, taking away his natural self-confidence. God was overwhelming him and yet inviting and calling him, pleading with him and promising him a great future as a friend of God!

Men Who Met God, pp 21-22 January 3<sup>rd</sup>

Today's "Insight for Leaders" is taken by permission from the book, *Tozer on Christian Leadership*, published by WingSpread Publishers

5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations.

- God is changing Abram's name to Abraham. This is significant because if the name describes the nature, this doesn't describe Abram.
- Abram means father of many, Abraham means father of many nations; this is absurd to say the least, because he's the father of none.

- What's even more interesting than God changing Abram's name, and subsequently Sarai's name as well, is how He does it.

- One has suggested that God took the 5<sup>th</sup> letter in the Hebrew alphabet, and inserted it in the 5<sup>th</sup> place in both their names.

- What's so significant about the number 5 is that it's the number of grace. The implication is that God's grace changes the name/nature.

6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. 7 And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. 8 Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

- Not only is God reiterating His covenant with Abraham, He's repeating the specifics of His covenant with Abraham.

1. Its God's covenant with Abraham, not Abraham's covenant with God.

2. Its God's covenant with Abraham's descendants, not just Abraham.

3. It's an everlasting covenant with no conditions, God can't be through with the Jew.

4. It's a covenant for approximately 300,000 square miles of land, most of which Israel has never possessed.

9 And God said to Abraham: "As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. 10 This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; 11 and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. 12 He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. 13 He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. 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."

- God tells Abraham to circumcise the flesh of all the male's foreskins as a sign of His covenant with him.

**Romans 4:11** And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.

- God also tells Abraham to specifically circumcise all newborn males on the eight day. Why circumcision, why 8 days?

- Because circumcision was symbolic spiritually dealing with the cutting away of flesh. Why 8 days for newborns?

"When western physicians began circumcising babies, they did it during the first few days of life while the baby was still in the hospital. Occasionally one would bleed severely. Rarely a boy would bleed to death. For a long time, physicians were puzzled by this serious bleeding. ...Finally, in the early 1900s scientists began to solve the chemistry of blood clotting and they found the answer. The body needs vitamin K to make clotting proteins. Newborn babies, however, don't start making vitamin K until they are five days old. As a result, by a baby's third day one clotting protein (Prothrombin) drops to 30 percent of normal. In a pediatric journal we read, 'The greatest risk [of bleeding] occurs between two and seven days of life.' According to a textbook, bleeding at this time 'may produce serious damage to internal organs, especially to the brain, and cause death from shock and exsanguinations. Soon after birth, the baby begins to produce vitamin K. By day eight, prothrombin levels jump back to 110 percent of the adult level. Thus the safest day for circumcision in a baby's life is day eight.' ... Who do you think is more likely to have picked the eight day: an ancient medical genius or the Creator of Vitamin K?"

"None of These Diseases" S.I. McMillen, M.D. & David E. Stern, M.D. pp 82-84

15 Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. 16 And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her."

- God now changes Sarai's name to Sarah the same way He did with Abram back in verse five.

- Again, the name is the nature, and the change describes how Sarai, will now change to Sarah.

"*Sarai* signifies *my lady*, or *my princess*, which confines her dominion to one family; but *Sarah* signifies either a *lady* or *princess*, simply and absolutely without restriction, or *the princess of a multitude*."

Matthew Poole

17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" 18 And Abraham said to God, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!"

- Abraham falls on his face and laughs, then says in his heart I'm a 100 year old man and Sarah's 90, we're going to have a son?

- Abraham then says to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before You!"

19 Then God said: "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him. 20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. 21 But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year. "22 Then He finished talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.

- God tells Abraham that it will not be Ishmael, it will be his and Sarah's biological son and his name will be Isaac, meaning laughter.

- God also tells Abraham that He will still bless Ishmael, but that His covenant is with Isaac, whom Sarah will give him in one year.

23 So Abraham took Ishmael his son, all who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very same day, as God had said to him.

24 Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 25 And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 26 That very same day Abraham was circumcised, and his son Ishmael; 27 and all the men of his house, born in the house or bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.

- Abraham believed, and it's evidenced by his obedience. He obeys God's command and has all the males circumcised.

- His obedience is complete, all were circumcised, and his obedience was immediate, it was done that very day, he, himself included.