

Genesis 17:3 - 18 – Thursday, January 17th, 2008

"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. 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 3rd

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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 5th letter in the Hebrew alphabet, and inserted it in the 5th 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 then 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.

18:1 Then the LORD appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. 2 So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, 3 and said, "My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant. 4 Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. 5 And I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant." They said, "Do as you have said."

- This is a Christophony, God in the person of Jesus Christ, the second person of the trinity who appears to Abraham.
- What's interesting is what Abraham does in response to this appearance of the Lord and two the men with Him.
- It's important to understand that this season in Abraham's life is very difficult as he and Sarah go through this trial.

7 Lessons that can be learned in a fiery trial

1. Know that God will appear in the midst of the trial. (Vs 1 The Lord appears to him in the heat of the day)
2. Look and lift up your eyes to the Lord. (Vs 2 Abraham lifts up his eyes and looks)
3. Run to, not from, the Lord. (Vs 2 Abraham runs to meet them)
4. Bow down in humble worship of the Lord. (Vs 2 Abraham bows to the ground before them.)
5. Rest under the finished work of the cross. (Vs 4 Abraham tells them to rest under the "tree.")
6. Feed on God's Word the bread of life. (Vs 4 Abraham brings them bread to eat.)
7. Know that God can do the impossible. (Vs 14 God asks if there is anything too hard for Him)

6 So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, "Quickly, make ready three measures of fine meal; knead it and make cakes." 7 And Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave it to a young man, and he hastened to prepare it. 8 So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate.

- Abraham hurries to the tent to Sarah and tells her to quickly make three fine meals, then gets a good calf and has it quickly prepared.
- This kind of hospitality was the custom in that culture then, as it is in the Middle-East now.
- Everything sort of centers around food particularly in the Arab culture.

9 Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" So he said, "Here, in the tent." 10 And He said, "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son." (Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.)

- The Lord tells Abraham, within earshot of Sarah, that Sarah his wife will give birth to a son.
- God has remained silent about the promise for some 13 years, and now repeats the promise twice in about three months.
- It seems that God knows we need to continually hear His promises so we continue to walk by faith.

Romans 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. NKJV

11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. 12 Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, "After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?"

- Sarah laughs to herself saying that she and Abraham were "stricken in years," and too old to have intimate relations let alone children.
- One has noted that Abraham and Sarah were probably married very young, maybe even when they were teenagers.

13 And the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?' 14 Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son." 15 But Sarah denied it, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid. And He said, "No, but you did laugh!"

- The Lord hears Sarah laughing to herself and asks Abraham why she laughed, not because the Lord didn't know.
- The Lord asks Abraham; "Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time, nine months, Sarah will have a son."
- We're told that Sarah was afraid so that she denied laughing. The Lord says, "No, but you did laugh!"

- Notice that this dialogue that the Lord is having is with Abraham and not Sarah. Why? because Abraham is the spiritual leader.
- It's interesting that God keeps His promise to Sarah in spite of her lack of faith.

2 Timothy 2:13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself. NKJV

16 Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on the way. 17 And the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, 18 since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? 19 For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him."

- Because the Lord is going to make Abraham a mighty nation and bless the world in him, He lets him know his plans.
- He will reveal to Abraham the coming judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah where his nephew Lot still resides.

20 And the LORD said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, 21 I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know."

- The Lord tells Abraham that the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great because of their unthinkable sin.
- This means that there were people who were crying out to God to do something about Sodom and Gomorrah's wickedness.
- What was so wicked and grave about their sin? The prophet Ezekiel has that answer for us.

Ezekiel 16:49 "Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy.

22 Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD. 23 And Abraham came near and said, "Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?"

- Abraham, who's still before the Lord, comes near Him, a good posture to take, and asks if He will destroy the righteous with the wicked.
- It's interesting that Abraham doesn't ask Him to take Lot out first before He destroys Sodom he genuinely cares about all of them.
- The Lord is just and fair and never punishes the righteous with the wicked, He didn't do it with Lot, and He won't do it with us.

2 Peter 2:9 the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment; NIV

24 Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous that were in it? 25 Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

- Abraham now knows that the Lord won't destroy the righteous with the wicked.
- What Abraham doesn't know is how many righteous does there need to be before He would spare Sodom for the sake of the righteous.
- It's interesting that Abraham is very specific, and very persistent in his petition before the Lord. There is a lesson to be learned in this.

26 So the LORD said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes." 27 Then Abraham answered and said, "Indeed now, I who am but dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: 28 Suppose there were five less than the fifty righteous; would You destroy all of the city for lack of five?" So He said, "If I find there forty-five, I will not destroy it." 29 And he spoke to Him yet again and said, "Suppose there should be forty found there?" So He said, "I will not do it for the sake of forty." 30 Then he said, "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Suppose thirty should be found there?" So He said, "I will not do it if I find thirty there." 31 And he said, "Indeed now, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose twenty should be found there?" So He said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of twenty." 32 Then he said, "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose ten should be found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of ten." 33 So the LORD went His way as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.

- Interesting that Abraham never questions the Lord or asks for an explanation from the Lord, he just petitions the Lord.
- Also, notice that the Lord is seemingly drawing this praying, petitioning and caring heart out of Abraham.
- The question is asked; why did Abraham stop at 10 and not 4, Lot, his wife and their two daughters. Did he think there were six more?