

GENESIS

Genesis 17-18 | "The Token of the Covenant"

I. THE TOKEN OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT (17)

A. (v. 1)

1. **"And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect."**

a. "when Abram was ninety years old and nine"

- 1) This is 24 years after Abram entered the Land of Canaan (Gen. 12:4), and 13 years after the birth of Ishmael (Gen. 16:3, 15-16).
- 2) **NOTE:** There is a gap of 13 years between chapters 16 & 17.

b. "Almighty God" - - Heb. *El-Shaddai* - "All-Sufficient God; All-Powerful God"

- 1) *El-Shaddai* - LXX Gr. *pantokrator* - "Almighty; One who has His hand on everything"
- 2) The Hebrew word *Shaddai* comes from the Akkadian word *Shaddu*, which means "breast" or "mountain".

a) This term could refer to the strength of a man's chest (like a mountain), or the comfort and nourishment of a nursing mother's breast. I believe it could be both!

b) **KEY:** This speaks of God's POWER and TENDER CARE!

i. God is tender and caring, and like a loving mother nursing her child, He is the Sustainer of life.

a. There have been those that erroneously use this to say that God is referring to Himself as a female.

b. **KEY:** Cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:7 - The Apostle Paul used the picture of a nursing mother as an illustration of his

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ministry, but he was not claiming to be a woman!

- 3) *El-Shaddai* does NOT mean:
 - a) That God is female.
 - b) That God is a multi-breasted deity, male or female.
 - i. There is nothing in the ancient languages that would give that idea.
 - ii. Even Liberal theologians say that there is no way to get that from the language.

- 4) *El-Shaddai* DOES means that:
 - a) God is the place of life and nourishment, and that we can depend on Him and be satisfied by Him.
 - i. Since God is All-Sufficient, He must be totally Self-Sufficient.
 - ii. God is more powerful than anything, and we can depend on His majestic strength.
 - b) **KEY:** *El-Shaddai* describes God as the One Who is *Self-Sufficient* and the *Satisfier* of His people, and speaks of His *Power* and *Majestic Strength*.

- c. "walk before Me, and be thou perfect"
 - 1) "walk" - Heb. *halak* - "act; move; proceed"
 - a) Cf. **Genesis 5:22, 24; 6:9; 24:40; 48:15; Deuteronomy 10:8; 18:17; Judges 20:28; 1 Kings 1:2; 10:9; Jeremiah 52:12; Ezekiel 44:15**
 - 2) "before" - Heb. *paneh* - "in the presence of; in front of"

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- a) Abram was to *walk in His presence*, conscious that God is watching.
- d. "perfect" - Heb. "complete; sound; blameless; unblemished"
 - 1) Cf. **Genesis 6:9; 25:27**
 - 2) **NOTE:** This is God's requirement for each one of us - PERFECTION!
 - a) Cf. **Matthew 5:48** - Jesus said, "*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*"
 - b) **Q** = How many of you would say that your *perfect*? Even as *perfect* as God?...
 - 3) "*Sin*" means "*to miss the mark*", and the Bible says that we've all sinned. (**Rom. 3:23**)
 - a) A lot of people get upset when you tell them that they are sinners. They'll say, "I'm not that bad! I'm a good person!"
 - i. **Q** = What's the mark?... *Perfection!*
 - ii. **Q** = Is there anyone that can say that they have always been perfect?!... Nope! So we're all sinners!
 - 4) Because we could not fulfill God's requirement, He sent His only begotten Son to take away our sins (our missing of the mark), and died in our place to fulfill the penalty of our sins as our substitute! He lived the *perfect* life that we couldn't live!
 - a) Cf. **John 6:28-29** - The people came to Jesus and asked him, "*What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*"
 - 5) There are some people that believe in, what they call, "Sinless Perfection."

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- a) There were some students when I was in Bible College that were holding to this doctrine, and when I showed them some Scriptures, they got really angry at me! I guess I messed them up, and there went their "sinless perfection."
- b) Cf. **Philippians 3:12-14** - Paul the Apostle, in writing to the church at Philippi, said, "*Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*"

B. (v. 5)

1. "Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee."

- a. "Abram" - Heb. Avram - "Exalted Father"
 - 1) For 85 years, he was called "Exalted Father," yet he had no children!
 - a) Any time he would introduce himself, he would say, "My name is *Exalted Father*, and I have no kids." That must have been embarrassing!
 - 2) God renames *Abram* ("Exalted Father") and calls him *Abraham* ("the Father of A Multitude"). Both are strange names for a man who is 99 years old with no legitimate children!!!
- b. "Abraham" - Heb. Avraham" - "The Father Of A Multitude"

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- 1) God added the "Ha" (i.e. the sound of breath) to *Abram*, thus *Abra**Ha**m*.
 - a) The Hebrew word for "breath" is *ruach*, which also means "spirit."
 - b) Thus, it's as if God put His *Spirit*, His *Breath*, into the name of *Abraham*.
 - i. **NOTE:** It was probably around this time that Abraham's body was revitalized, as well as Sarah's womb.
 - ii. Cf. **Romans 4:18-22** - Paul the Apostle, in speaking of Abraham, said, "*Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.*"

C. (v. 7)

1. **"And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee."**
 - a. "an everlasting covenant"
 - 1) "everlasting" - Heb. *olam* - lit. "the vanishing point"; "up to the end (of a period of time); the end of time"
 - a) In other words, this covenant will be UNTIL THE END OF TIME (i.e. HUMAN HISTORY)!

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- i. **NOTE:** The End of Human History will be at the end of the Messianic Kingdom and the Lord will create a New Heavens and New Earth in which we will dwell in the Eternal State.
- ii. Cf. **Jeremiah 31:35-37** - *"Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD."*

D. (v. 11)

1. **"And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you."**
 - a. "token" - Heb. "sign; symbol"
 - 1) Circumcision was an OUTWARD SYMBOL of that which was to be a REALITY IN THE HEART.
 - a) Cf. **Deuteronomy 10:16** - *"Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked."*
 - b) Cf. **Deuteronomy 30:6** - *"And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."*
 - c) Cf. **Jeremiah 4:4** - *"Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings."*

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- 2) The *symbol* of Circumcision was that of CUTTING OFF THE LIFE OF THE FLESH IN ORDER THAT YOU MIGHT LIVE THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT.
 - a) **KEY:** You cannot be a man of God and walk after the flesh. It is only as you walk after the Spirit that you are truly a man of God.
 - b) In the New Testament, Paul the Apostle talked about the folly of trusting in an outward ritual.
 - i. Cf. **Romans 2:25-29** - "*For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*"
- 3) **KEY:** God is interested that your heart is after the Spirit and not after the flesh.
 - a) In the New Testament, as Christians, our *symbol* of discipleship in following Christ is WATER BAPTISM, and the significance is the exact same thing!
 - i. We go down into the water, burying the old life, and come out of the water in resurrection and new life in the Spirit.

b. NEW TESTAMENT View of Circumcision:

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- 1) Physical circumcision has NO SPIRITUAL VALUE. It does not bring salvation to anyone, and the act itself has no spiritual value (1 Cor. 7:19; Gal. 5:6).
 - 2) Spiritual circumcision "*of the heart*" is what is emphasized (Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 6:12-15; Col. 2:11-13).
 - 3) Paul the Apostle taught that for Abraham, circumcision was a *sign* or *seal* of righteousness, which God already imputed to him 13-25 years earlier (Gen. 15:6). It didn't make him righteous, not did he gain righteousness by it (Rom. 4:9-12).
 - 4) The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) clearly decided that circumcision was not mandatory for Gentile believers. However, it did not say that it was not still mandatory for Jewish believers.
- c. **NOTE:** Because the Mosaic Law has been rendered inoperative with the death of Christ, there is no basis for circumcision under the Law, whether Jew or Gentile. However, the Abrahamic Covenant is a continuous covenant until the end of human history, thus Jews are still required to circumcise their sons on the eighth day — even Jewish believers in the Church. Not for righteousness, but obedience to the Abrahamic Covenant that is still operative.
- 1) Cf. Acts 15-16 - Paul argued against Titus being circumcised because he was a Gentile, yet Paul had Timothy circumcised because of his Jewish heritage. That put Timothy under the Abrahamic Covenant.
- d. **KEY:** The Abrahamic Covenant is currently still in effect, thus I believe that National/Biological Jews should still keep this token of the covenant, not for righteousness before God, but obedience to God.

II. ABRAHAM VISITED BY THE LORD (18)

BATTLE IN THE VALLEY OF SIDDIM (v. 1-12)

A. (v. 2)

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1. ***"And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground,"***

a. *"three men"*

1) One is *"the LORD"* (v. 1)

a) This is a Theophany of Jesus Christ before the Incarnation.

2) The other two were angels (Gen. 19:1).

a) Rabbinic tradition was that the two angels were Michael and Gabriel.

b) Cf. **Hebrews 13:2** - *"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."*

B. (v. 11)

1. ***"Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women."***

a. Sarah had gone through MENOPAUSE already.

1) Cf. **Romans 4:19** - *"And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb:"*

b. God waited until Abraham couldn't do anything about the promise himself.

1) God didn't want Abraham trying to fulfill the promises in his own strength or capacity.

2) He allowed Abraham to get to the place where it would be impossible for him to do anything concerning the fulfillment of the promise, and it would take an absolute miracle of God for the promise to be fulfilled. God allowed him to get to the place of human impossibility!

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- c. **NOTE:** God waited until it was humanly IMPOSSIBLE before He fulfilled His promise!
- 1) **Q** = Why?... So that He alone would get the credit!
 - a) God loves to bring people into impossible situations so that when He does a work, they can't boast about how great they are!
 - 2) Many times, God will work this same way with us!
 - a) He allows us to come to the end of ourselves, the end of our resources, or that place of hopelessness, before He works.
 - i. **Q** = Why?... So He gets the credit and I know it wasn't me!
 - b) We're so prone to take credit for God's work. We cry out to God for help, and when He helps us, we take the credit for it.
 - i. Cf. **1 Corinthians 4:7** - Paul said to the Corinthians, "*For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?*"
- d. **KEY:** God will so often let you get to the place of impossibility, so that when He does it, you will only give Him the glory and the credit!

C. (v. 14)

1. **"Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son."**
 - a. "Is any thing too hard for the LORD?"
 - 1) Cf. **Jeremiah 32:27** - "*Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?*"

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- 2) **NOTE:** Too often, we have the wrong concept of God. We have a limited view of God.
- a) **Q** = Is it hard for God to cure cancer? Etc...
 - b) **Q** = How BIG is your God? What is He capable of?...
 - i. Can He be the Creator of the whole universe?
 - ii. Can He cause a person to be swallowed by a fish and survive?
 - iii. Can He cause a barren woman to conceive?
 - iv. Can He cause a virgin to conceive?
 - v. Can He resurrect the dead?
 - vi. Can He radically change a society or nation?

D. (v. 32)

1. **"And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake."**

a. "I will not destroy it for ten's sake"

1) "ten" = Lot and his family

- a) Lot & his wife 2
 - b) Lot's 2 sons (19:12) + 2
 - c) Lot's 2 married daughters (19:14) + 2
 - d) Lot's 2 sons-in-law (19:14) + 2
 - e) Lot's 2 virgin daughters (19:8) + 2
- = 10

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- b. **NOTE:** Only 3 made it out of Sodom, and the angels said that they *couldn't* destroy the city *until* they got out! (19:22)
- 1) This passage is so relevant for us today because soon, God is going to destroy the earth in judgment! We are fast approaching the period known as the Great Tribulation where God will destroy the wicked here on the earth.
 - 2) There are many Christians today who take the position that the Church will be going through the Great Tribulation Period, but this denying the justice of God. This is the very premise that Abraham is pressing with the LORD — that it would not be fair to judge the righteous with the wicked.
- c. **KEY:** God will not destroy the righteous with the wicked! To deny that is to deny the very character of God.
- 1) Cf. **2 Peter 2:4-9** - *"For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) **The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:**"*
- d. **NOTE:** In the next chapter (19), we will see the conditions that existed in Sodom which called God's judgment down upon it. What was happening in Sodom are the same things happening in San Francisco, Hollywood, Las Vegas, New York, etc... The same conditions which are around us today brought God's judgment upon Sodom.