



GOD'S COVENANT SIGN

GENESIS 17:1-14



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“And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant...”

Genesis 17: 7

What's in a name? My parents named me Joshua, after Joshua Son of Nun, the man appointed by God to lead the nation of Israel into the land that was promised. For some, a name has historical significance. For others, it may be personal. Like a woman mentioned in an article I read recently named Macy, whose mother went into labor...in a Macy's. Names can be significant. This was especially true in ancient cultures, and in Genesis 17, we join the ongoing story of a man named Abram. The name Abram means “father of many” and God had promised Abram that the meaning of his name would be realized; God would make of him a great nation, yet we learn in Genesis 15 that Abram and his wife, Sarai, remain childless into their elder years.

In the second half of chapter 17, we learn that God always intended, and still intends to, carry out the covenant through Sarai, which leaves Abram in a fascinating position: childless, with a barren wife, at the age of 99, holding nothing but a promise from God. Here is where God appears to Abram to confirm his covenant. God first emphasizes his own power, calling Himself God Almighty, or “El Shaddai,” in Hebrew, He calls Abram to walk in righteousness, He renames Abram to Abraham, and reaffirms His own end of the covenant. Finally, God establishes a sign that

the covenant promise of land and descendants would be fulfilled; the sign of circumcision.

What does that have to do with us today? Well, this covenant, called the Abrahamic covenant, reappears throughout scripture, and continues to this day. In Galatians 3, Paul says that Christ became a curse for us “so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised spirit through faith.” We could talk all day about the continuation of the Abrahamic Covenant, but let's focus on the sign – if the sign of the covenant for Israel was circumcision, what then is our sign of the new covenant? Again, we go to Paul in Colossians 2, where he explains that the old sign of circumcision carries the same spiritual importance as the new sign of baptism. Pastor Kevin DeYoung says this: “Circumcision, like baptism...pointed to belonging, discipleship, covenant obligations, and allowed for future faith that would take hold of the realities symbolized.”

How does God draw near to us, as He did with Abraham? Christ has made a way for us to be counted among God's covenant people. God draws near to us by the Biblical reminder of His promise to bring us home and by the new sign of our covenant. Upon faith in Christ, we begin to receive what Paul refers to as a “circumcised heart, a heart in line with God's own. Receive the covenant, with obedience and faith, trusting in the finished work of Christ, and resting on the everlasting promises of God Almighty.

Heavenly Father, we come to You today
thankful for Your Promises and
Faithfulness. Cultivate in us hearts in line
with Yours as we rest in the finished work
of Christ, anticipating the hour of our
reunion with You. In the Name of King
Jesus, we pray. Amen.