

Our Covenant God – Part Five

Jesus walked for us between the pieces of the animals!

In our last lesson, we saw that Jesus walked the covenant walk between the bloody animals in Abraham's place. God the Father cut covenant with God the Son. AFTER He walked between the pieces He then included Abraham (and his descendants) in the covenant as well. This is tremendous news for us because it means that:

1. The covenant CANNOT be broken. Even if we are unfaithful to the covenant and make ourselves enemies of God, the covenant itself can never be broken because the covenant depends on the faithful devotion of God the Father and God the Son to each other. Yes, we can renounce being part of that covenant and we can break our side of it but that will not then destroy the covenant for other worshippers of God.
2. If Abraham or his descendants were unfaithful to the covenant then they would face the death penalty because that was the penalty for breaking a covenant but because Jesus walked between the carcasses in Abraham's place, Jesus would legally be allowed to die in place of Abraham (or his descendants) as well.

The New Covenant is tied to the Abrahamic Covenant

If we look at the Bible, we all know that it is split into two sections, being the Old Testament and the New Testament. You can replace the word 'testament' with 'covenant'. It is the same word. But the Old Testament is not one big covenant. The Old Testament is not the Old Covenant. There are a number of different covenants that God made with Abraham and Abraham's descendants in the 'Old Testament'.

At the moment, we are looking at the most important of all the covenants in the Old Testament – the covenant that God made with Abraham (also called the Abrahamic Covenant). This covenant is still valid today. Note that there is an 'Old Covenant', but it is not the Abrahamic covenant. We will examine the 'Old Covenant' later on in this study.

The New Covenant is what you and I live under - our relationship with God is dependant upon the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This New Covenant is connected to the Abrahamic Covenant, which you will see more and more clearly as we go along!

Now, back to Abraham...

Ishmael is born...

As we have studied the different aspects of the covenant that God cut with Abraham we must remember that he was a very real person – with real emotions and needs. Abraham's destiny was to father a son through whom the Messiah would come. And Abraham's desires matched this destiny!

When God cut covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15, Abraham was older than seventy-five years old. Part of God's covenant promise was that Abraham would have countless descendants. Sarah was barren. The years had come and gone and she had not fallen pregnant. And so Sarah did something that would blow most women's minds! She brought her maidservant, Hagar, to Abraham and told him to sleep with Hagar in the hopes that way he would be able to be a father at last.

Abraham was eighty-six years old when Ishmael was born. After Ishmael's birth, thirteen more years passed by before God spoke to Abraham in his fifth encounter with the Lord.

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Abraham's fifth encounter with the Lord at 99 years of age

Genesis 17:1-8 (NKJV) When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I *am* Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly." Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. 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. 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."

One of the key words in God's conversation with Abraham in Genesis 17 is "give". For example, in verse 2, in the NKJV the English translates as "And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly. However, the word translated there as "make" is actually "give". It is "nathan", which is a Hebrew word, Strong's number 5414.

If we change this word to give in the English, which is the more correct meaning, God's conversation with Abraham recorded in verse 1 – 8 would read as follows:

"I *am* Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will **give** My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly." Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have **given** you a father of many nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will **give** nations of you, and kings shall come from you. 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. 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."

We find this same word in verses 16 and 20:

Genesis 17:16 (NKJV) And I will bless her [Sarah] 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."

Genesis 17:20 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 **give** him a great nation.

Homework Question # 1: Why do you think that God kept repeating the word 'give' in this conversation?

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Homework Question # 2: List all the gifts that God promised in this conversation. Who would the beneficiaries of these gifts be?

Abram becomes Abraham and Sarai becomes Sarah

Genesis 17:5 (NKJV) No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations.

Genesis 17:15 (NKJV) Then God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah *shall be* her name.

God changed both Abram and Sarai’s names. This is very important for two reasons:

1. God was changing their identities.
2. God was giving them part of His own Name in an exchange of names.

1. God changed their identities

Abram means ‘high or exalted father’ and God changed it to Abraham, meaning ‘father of a great multitude’. Sarai means ‘she that strives’ and God changed it to Sarah, which means ‘princess’.

In order to understand the relevance of God changing their names, we **MUST** bear in mind that names, in a way very similar to clothing, represented the identity of an individual.

Up to this time, Sarah was someone who strived. She was barren, unable to have children. Her best laid plans had ended up a disaster as Hagar turned against her.

When God changed their names, He was enlarging Abraham’s vision and expectancy. At the same time, God did something really special and deep inside Sarah, for He changed her from a woman who strived into a princess.

Homework Question # 3: Why do you think that God changed both Abraham and Sarah’s names?

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2. God exchanged names with Abraham and Sarah

When a couple gets married today, it is the custom for the bride to take her bridegroom's last name. This is part of the covenant ritual. When God changed Abram's name to Abraham and Sarai's name to Sarah, He was inserting part of His own Name into their names.

The Hebrew word for Lord used in verses one, six, and seven of Genesis 15 is Jehovah or Yahweh in English. Actually the Hebrew for Jehovah has no vowels and looks like this: JHVH. Also, there is no "J" sound in Hebrew either so YHWH is the more correct word to use in English.

In changing Abram to Abraham and Sarai to Sarah, an "H" was inserted by God into both names. Now, look at God's Name "YHWH". What is the predominant letter in YHWH? Do you see it? When He changed their names, God put the predominant letter of His own Name into both Abraham and Sarah's names. (Note that this works in exactly the same way in both the English and the Hebrew).

Then, to complete the exchange of names, God took Abraham's name. From that point on He was no longer only called God, or the Lord. Instead, He was called "the God of Abraham". After the next generation accepted the covenant He was known as "the God of Abraham and Isaac". After Jacob entered into the covenant with God He became known as "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob".

Hebrews 11:16b (Amplified Bible) God is not ashamed to be called their God [even to be surnamed their God--the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob], for He has prepared a city for them.

Homework Question # 4: Bearing this in mind, complete this sentence using your own name:

Today, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is also called "The God of _____".

Because of our covenant with God, the Name of Jesus is ours today. When Jesus rose from the dead and gave the disciples what is known as the "Great Commission":

Mark 16:15-18 (NKJV) And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: **In My name** they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

In essence, Jesus was saying "Use my Name so that My will can be done on this earth." Because you are in covenant with God, when you do something in the Name of Jesus it is the same as if Jesus Himself was doing it. That same commission that Jesus gave His disciples 2000 years ago is our commission today.

Homework Question # 5: Based on Mark 16:15-18, as a covenant partner with God, what should you be doing and what signs will follow you?

