

## Our Covenant God – Part Eight

### The promised son would not be born naturally

**Genesis 17:15-19** (NKJV) Then God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah *shall be* her name. 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.”

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*?”

And Abraham said to God, “Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!”

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.

In Genesis 15, when Abraham asked God for a son, God promised him much more than he asked for. God promised him a son **PLUS** more descendants than he (Abraham) would be able to count.

Abraham’s son would be the fulfillment of God’s promise to him, not the fulfillment of the natural process of conception. That is one reason why Ishmael could never be the fulfillment of that promise. There was nothing special or remarkable about Ishmael’s conception at all. But the birth of the Promised son (Isaac) would be a complete miracle! It had to be completely impossible! And so God waited until Abraham was physically incapable of fathering a child before giving him Isaac.

Sarah had always been barren and she was past the age of childbearing. Her menstrual cycle had ceased. Abraham was 100 years old and no longer fertile. The writer of Hebrews said that Abraham was as good as dead. The Bible translation called The Message says that Abraham’s loins were “dead and shriveled”. Paul also recognizes the fact that both Sarah and Abraham were infertile when Isaac was conceived and born. Just like the conception of Jesus Christ, Isaac’s conception was completely supernatural.

**Hebrews 11:11-12** (The Message) By faith, barren Sarah was able to become pregnant, old woman as she was at the time, because she believed the One who made a promise would do what he said. That’s how it happened that from one man’s **dead and shriveled loins** there are now people numbering into the millions.

**Romans 4:18-21** (The Amplified) [For Abraham, human reason for] hope being gone, hoped in faith that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been promised, So [numberless] shall your descendants be. He did not weaken in faith when he considered the [utter] impotence of his own body, which was **as good as dead** because he was about a hundred years old, or [when he considered] the barrenness of Sarah’s [**deadened**] womb. No unbelief or distrust made him waver (doubtingly question) concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong and was empowered by faith as he gave praise and glory to God, Fully satisfied and assured that God was able and mighty to keep His word and to do what He had promised.

Abraham and Sarah both laughed at the thought of having a child at a hundred years of age and ninety years of age, respectively. When the child was born, according to God’s instruction, they named him Isaac, which literally means “will laugh” in the future tense. God included Isaac in His covenant and then changed His Name to include him. And so God became known as the God of Isaac. Thus, God is the God of Future Laughter.

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### God taught Abraham about the resurrection of the dead.

As we have seen, God took Abraham step by step through many lessons in his life, teaching him about Himself. After lessons we always get tested, right? And so it was with Abraham too.

One of the big lessons that God taught Abraham was that physical death was not the end of life. In Genesis 22 we read about God testing Abraham's faith by telling him to sacrifice Isaac to him. The writer of Hebrews tells us that the reason that Abraham was able to offer up Isaac was because he believed that God was able to raise Isaac up from the dead (Hebrews 11:19). This certainly agrees with Genesis 22:5, which tells us that Abraham fully expected to return WITH Isaac after sacrificing him.

Yet, the Abraham that we see before that test was fearful of death. Twice he asked Sarah to lie about being his wife because he was scared that men would kill him in order to take her as their wife (Genesis 12:11-13; 20:2,11-13). He was so fearful of dying that he was willing to sacrifice his wife's purity to save his own skin.

So, what changed? I am SO glad that you asked! Let's take a good look at this!

God demonstrated to Abraham that He could take what was dead and bring it to life. God used Sarah's barrenness and Abraham's impotency to teach this powerful lesson. God's timing was perfect. Abraham had to have no human reason left to hope. He could not trust in his own body (that's how he made Ishmael) for God's promise (Isaac) to come to pass. God waited until all Abraham had left to hope in and trust was God's word – nothing more, nothing less!

### God showed Abraham that He was able to bring life out of his and Sarah's dead (infertile) bodies.

Abraham was unable to contribute a single sperm cell to Isaac naturally. God miraculously brought new life out of his dead loins and Sarah's dead womb. In fact, God was so effective in this matter that Abraham fathered more children later on.

God taught Abraham to utterly depend on Him and trust Him. He taught Abraham that death was NOT the end of life. He taught Abraham that He was Faithful and True. He promised that Abraham would have a son (Isaac) and that from Isaac would come many descendants – more than the grains of sand on the beach and more than the stars in the sky.

Jesus told the people in Matthew 3:9 and Luke 3:8 that God was able to raise up descendants for Abraham out of stones. There is nothing more dead than a stone! Jesus was trying to illustrate to the people that the descendants of Abraham were born – not by the natural process but by a spiritual process of God giving life to that which was dead!

This spiritual process is called "resurrection".

**Homework Question #1:** Why did God refuse to establish His covenant with Ishmael?

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**Homework Question #2:** Did God's rejection of Ishmael mean that He loved Isaac more than He loved Ishmael?

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## Our Covenant God – Part Eight

### Why is resurrection necessary?

Paul said that if there was no resurrection then we of all men are the most pitiable (1 Corinthians 15:19). As covenant friends of God, our hope and trust is that we will be with Him forever. That was God's intent and design for mankind all along. God never designed us to die. He created everything that you see around you: the heavens and the earth, the trees, the animals, the birds, the fish, the plants, the insects, the mountains, the sunrises and the sunsets, and the people ... everything that you see around you was created by our God, the Creator.

God placed Adam into a perfect garden that He had planted especially for Adam and his family to live in. There was one tree in that garden that they were not allowed to eat from. How did that tree get there? We don't know. The Bible doesn't say that God planted that specific tree. It says that God planted every tree that was "pleasant to the sight and good for food" (Genesis 2:9). The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was not "good for food". In fact, God told Adam that if he ate of that tree he would surely die. The fruit of that tree was deadly, poisonous fruit. Adam disobeyed God and ate from that forbidden tree. When he did so, death entered this world.

What is death? Death is the complete reversal of Creation.

**Genesis 2:7** (NKJV) And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

Picture that in your mind's eye. See God taking a handful of soil and working that soil just like a potter works a handful of clay. Then see God breathing His Spirit into the man that He formed. And then see the man coming to life!

The same steps that God followed in creating Adam, are the same steps that death follows in reverse.

These are the steps showing the creation and death of man:

- 1 A handful of soil ...
- 2 God gives it form ...
- 3 God breathes Spirit into the man's body...
- 4 The man becomes a living soul...
- 3 The man's spirit leaves his body...
- 2 The body loses its form...
- 1 All that is left is a handful of soil...

**Genesis 3:19** (NKJV) In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you *are*, and to dust you shall return."

What a terrible thing to happen! Death is the complete opposite of everything that God did. Stop and ponder this fact for a while: **Sin completely reversed Creation!** But all was not lost. God is the God of the impossible. **God made a plan to bring everything that was dead back to life. That plan is called "Resurrection".**

## Our Covenant God – Part Eight

### All of Creation will be resurrected

Yes, everything that God made in Genesis 1 and 2 was doomed to destruction because of Adam's sin. The Bible tells us that one day it will all be destroyed by fire. But in Revelation 21 we see that there is a whole new Creation!

**Revelation 21:1** (NKJV) Now I saw a **new** heaven and a **new** earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.

This is great news! And the best part of all is the fact that God throws nothing away. The Greek word translated in Revelation 21:1 as "new" is *kainos*. According to Vines Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words this word does not mean new in time. Instead, it means new in form or quality, of a different nature from what is contrasted as old. In other words, it means "renewed" or "resurrected".

**Isaiah 65:17** (NKJV) "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.

One day God will take the pile of dust that is left over from the Old Creation, which we are living in today, and He will resurrect it and make everything brand new. There will be animals and birds and other creatures living on the new earth.

#### **Psalms 104:24-30** (NKJV)

O LORD, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all. The earth is full of Your possessions— This great and wide sea, in which *are* innumerable teeming things, Living things both small and great. There the ships sail about; *There is* that Leviathan which You have made to play there.

These all wait for You, that You may give *them* their food in due season. *What* You give them they gather in; You open Your hand, they are filled with good. You hide Your face, they are troubled; You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the earth.

In Psalm 104, verse 29 speaks of the death of the animals while verse 30 speaks very clearly of their resurrection and the renewing or resurrection of the Earth itself.

This is the lesson that God was teaching Abraham: resurrection. God was teaching him that his descendants would not just be of the First or Old Creation but that they would live forever as part of the New Creation.

**2 Corinthians 5:17** (NKJV) Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

**Galatians 6:15** (NKJV) For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.

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God always works in patterns. He follows the same or similar steps when creating the New Creation as He did when He created the First or Old Creation. He worked like a potter, forming Adam out of the soil in His image. He follows this same pattern as He works inside our hearts and forms us into the image of His Son.

**Isaiah 64:8** (NKJV) But now, O LORD, You *are* our Father; We *are* the clay, and You our potter; and all we *are* the work of Your hand.

**Romans 8:29** (NKJV) For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

**Homework Question #3:** Adam was the first Man of the Old or First Creation. Who is the firstborn of the New Creation? (see Colossians 1:18 and Revelation 1:5)

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**Homework Question #4:** Why would we be the most pitiable people on this earth if there is no resurrection?

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