

The Father of Nations:

A Study of Abraham

Lesson Six: The name is changed for the Father of Nations
Genesis 17

July 5, 2020

*Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees, And looks to that alone;
Laughs at life's impossibilities, And cries, It shall be done!*
Charles Wesley

Opening Illustration: What is faith? A not-so-wise man once said, "Faith is repeating God's promises to yourself until they are fulfilled!" Wouldn't you think that is correct? Isn't that what we do as we struggle to live by faith? Don't we keep telling ourselves that God's word is true as we wait for the promises to be fulfilled?

What would you do if somebody keeps telling you that they are going to send you box of chocolates or flowers or whatever you are into and they just don't? How many times are you going to believe them? Remember, it has been a long time since God first gave this promise to Abram. The greatness of Abram/Abraham's faith is that he keeps believing God, even though he is isn't perfect.

I. Introduction/Review

A. It has been another 13 years since the last chapter.

1. It has been roughly 23 years since God originally called Abram.
2. Ishmael is now 13 years old.
3. Sarai still hasn't had any babies.

II. God re-confirms His covenant...again... (vv. 1-8)

A. God reminds Abram Who He is (v. 1a).

1. He is referred to here as the LORD and "God Almighty".

B. God commands Abram (v. 1c).

1. Walk before me—live in relationship with Me.
2. Be blameless—live in obedience to Me.

C. God reminds Abram of His promise (v. 2).

1. I will establish My covenant between Me and you.
2. I will multiply you exceedingly.

D. Abram falls on his face before God (v. 3).

1. This is, again, very important! Whatever flaws we find in Abraham, there was still reverence for God.

E. God restates the covenant (v. 4, 6-8).

1. You will be father of a multitude of nations.
2. I will make you exceedingly fruitful.
3. I will make nations of you.

F. God changes Abram's name (v. 5).

1. Abram—"Exalted father"
2. Abraham—"Father of multitudes"

III. God Commands the sign of the covenant (vv. 9-14)

A. What does circumcision represent?

1. It represents separation from everybody else. It sets Abraham's descendants apart.

B. To whom was circumcision applied?

1. All males
2. When they are 8 days old
3. Both sons and servants

C. What if they refused?

1. They were to be cut off from their people.

IV. This is not a laughing matter! (vv. 15-22)

A. Sarai's name is changed.

1. This seems to correct what Abram did in chapter 16.

B. Abraham fell on his face again!

1. This time, he fell on his face to laugh.
 - a) Was this a laugh of joy or a laugh of doubt and confusion?
 - b) The context here seems to make it clear that Abraham's laugh was not out of joy, but out of doubt and/or confusion.
 - (1) He questioned God.
 - (2) He recommended Ishmael to God.

C. Seriously, though, can we really blame Abraham for this?

1. Why is God making Abraham wait so long?
 - a) Answer: We don't know. We DO know, however, that God is not slow.

V. Abraham makes the cut! (vv. 23-27)

VI. What are our Conclusions?