

## Genesis, part 36 – Circumcision and Abraham’s Full Obedience to God (Genesis 17:1-27)

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“Have you noticed how much praying for revival has been going on of late? And how little revival has resulted?”

“Considering the volume of prayer that is ascending these days, rivers of revival should be flowing.”

“That no such results are in evidence should not discourage us. Rather, it should stir us to find out why our prayers are not answered.”

“I believe that our problem is that we have been trying to substitute praying for obeying – and it simply will not work.”

“When Abraham was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abraham . . .” Genesis 17:1

“The LORD appeared to Abraham and said, ‘I am God Almighty; walk before Me and have integrity. For I will confirm My covenant between Me and you, and I will greatly increase your descendants . . . and you will become the “father of multitudes of people.”’” Genesis 17:1b, 2, 4

**First** – God re-confirms His promise that Abraham will become the father of “multitudes of people.”

[God] “No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham . . .” Genesis 17:5a

“Abram” = “Exalted father”

“Abraham” = “Father of a multitude”

[God] “And the whole land of Canaan I will give to you and your descendants after you as an everlasting possession . . .” Genesis 17:8a

**Second** – God re-confirms His promise to give the land of Canaan to Abraham’s descendants as their permanent possession.

[God] “And I will establish My covenant between Me and you – and your descendants after you – throughout all generations for an everlasting covenant – to be God to you and God to your descendants.” Genesis 17:7

**Third** – God says that part of this covenant is that He is choosing Abraham’s descendants to have a special “personal and private” relationship with God that the rest of the human race **will not have**.

The Jewish people are “descendants of Abraham” through Isaac.

The Arab peoples are also “descendants of Abraham” through Ishmael.

So then – based on what God has said so far:

- The Arab people are God's "specially chosen people" just like the Jewish people
- The Arab people have a claim to the land of Palestine just like the Jewish people
- The God of the Arab people and Islam (“Allah”) is the same God Jews and Christians worship

When we finish the chapter, we discover that – here in Genesis 17 – God “limits” this covenant only to Abraham’s descendants through Isaac!

“So Abraham said to God, ‘Oh that Ishmael might live before Thee.’ But God said, ‘No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for **his** descendants after **him**. As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him and multiply him and make him fruitful. He shall become the father of twelve princes and I will make of him a great nation. But My **covenant** I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year.’” Genesis 17:18-21

- Even though the Arab people are descendants of Abraham . . .
- They are his descendants through Ishmael – not Isaac . . .
- Which means that God’s everlasting covenant with Abraham here in Genesis 17 is **not** with them

#1 - The Arab people are not God's "specially chosen" people

#2 – God’s promise about the land of Canaan does not belong to the Arab people

#3 – God’s promise to be their unique and private God does not belong to the Arab people

- “Allah” is **not** the true and living God
- “Islam” is **not** a true path to God
- “Mohammed” is **not** God’s ultimate messenger to mankind - Jesus is!

“God said further to Abraham, “This is My covenant which you shall keep, between you and Me, and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised . . . This will be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.” Genesis 17:10, 11

The point of circumcision was to highlight the Jewish people’s unique relationship with God.

“On that very same day, Abraham took his son Ishmael, and every male in his household . . . and circumcised them just as God had told him to do.” Genesis 17:23

“Now Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised and Ishmael his son was thirteen years old.” Genesis 17:24, 25

“Abraham and his son Ishmael were both circumcised on that very same day. And every male in Abraham’s household . . . was circumcised along with them.” Genesis 17:26, 27

### **So What?**

“**On that very same day**, Abraham took his son Ishmael, and every male in his household . . . and circumcised them just as God had told him to do.” Genesis 17:23

“Abraham and his son Ishmael were both circumcised **on that very same day**. And every male in Abraham’s household . . . was circumcised along with them.” Genesis 17:26, 27

In Genesis 17, God did not specifically command Abraham to circumcise himself and his household “**that very day**.”

Abraham did not even put it off **for one day**– **because** he was a man who practiced **instant and complete obedience to God**.

“The LORD said to Abraham, ‘Leave your country, your people, and your father’s household and go to the land which I will show you.’” Genesis 12:1

“**So Abraham left** just as the LORD had commanded him to do.” Genesis 12:4

“By faith, Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as an inheritance [“Canaan”], **obeyed and went**, not even knowing where he was going.” Hebrews 11:8

“Now God tested Abraham and said to him . . . , “Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love; and go to the land of Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering on the mountain that I will show you.”” Genesis 22:1, 2

“So Abraham arose **early the next morning**, saddled his donkey . . . and set out for the place God had told him to go.” Genesis 22:3

“. . . Abraham, my friend.” Isaiah 41:8

**Obedience** = “To follow the orders and carry out the instructions of someone in authority over you; to do what you are told”

As followers of Christ, we must understand – that in God’s vocabulary obedience is a **treasured word**.

[Jesus] “If you love Me, you will **obey** what I command.” John 14:15

[Jesus] “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and yet you do not **do** what I say?” Luke 6:46

“. . . A good understanding have all those who **do** God’s commandments . . .” Psalm 111:10

“This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night – so that you may be careful to **do** everything written in it – because **then** you will be prosperous and then you will have good success.” Joshua 1:8

“But prove yourselves to be **doers** of the Word and not merely hearers only.” James 1:22

“Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as He does in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to **obey** is better than to sacrifice . . .” 1 Samuel 15:22

We forget that God is a **holy God** – and that He **demand**s full obedience from His children!

You and I can never become true men and women of God – personal “**friends of God**” like Abraham was – until we **get serious about obeying God in every facet of our lives!**

“As followers of Christ, do you do what you want to do in life – or do you do what the Lord tells you to do?”

We’re either living our lives 100% under the authority of God’s Word or we’re living them under the authority of ourselves – there’s nothing in between!

**Question #1** – “What has God been asking you to obey Him and do?”

**Question #2** – “Have you obeyed?”

“Now, it shall be, if you will fully obey the LORD . . .”

“Blessed shall you be in the city and blessed shall you be in the country.”

“Blessed shall be the offspring of your body and blessed shall be the produce of your ground.”

“Blessed shall you be when you come in and blessed shall you be when you go out.”

“The LORD shall cause your enemies to be defeated before you; they shall come out against you one way and shall flee before you seven ways.”

“The LORD shall make you the head and not the tail, if only you will fully obey the LORD’S commands.” Deuteronomy 28:1a, 3, 4a, 6, 7, 13

“Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.” 1 Samuel 3:10b