

Genesis 15-17

Genesis 14:17 And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Ched-or-la'-o-mer (Ched-or-LAH-o-mare), and of the kings that [were] with him, at the valley of Sha'-veh (SHAH-veh), which [is] the king's dale.

Note how skillfully the narrative is written in order to stress the great importance of Mel-chiz'-e-dek (mel-KIZ-i-dek). The king of Sodom evidently arrived first, but he is kept his distance in the background during the far more important meeting with Mel-chiz'-e-dek.

Genesis 14:18-20 And Mel-chiz'-e-dek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he [was] the priest of the most high God. **19** And he blessed him, and said, Blessed [be] Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: **20** And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.

Genesis 14:21-24 And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. **22** And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, **23** That I will not [take] from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that [is] thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich: **24** Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, A'-ner, Esh'-col, and Mam'-re; let them take their portion.

Significantly in this passage Abram continued to use the term *Yahweh* for God, indicating that he swore by that name, and in his refusal of any of the loot indicated that he promised the LORD such restraint in case the victory for which he prayed was granted.

In this passage, the king of Sodom, having waited until the episode with Melchizedek was concluded, presented himself before Abram with a suggestion that would have indeed added to his riches. In this must be seen the benefit to Sodom of having had even one righteous person in it, in the person of Lot. The world is continually indebted to the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ." Ye are the salt of the earth & the light of the world " as stated by Jesus, is truth!

Covenants.jpg

In Genesis 15, God entered into a treaty, or covenant, with Abram. God speaks to men in their own language using current examples for their time that they can easily understand.

Example: The American Declaration of Independence in 1776, says "All men are created equal". The French Declaration of 1798, says "The rights of man (to equality)" and many others have since used common sense to include the same in their treaty and covenant. The biblical treaties with the patriarchs all fit within the exact biblical timeline of these events. They differ remarkably from other historical periods of which we have many examples of treaties and covenants.

Ancient historical treaties and covenants, of which we have about a dozen, have a consistent format in the third millennium BC, differing radically in format from the second millennium BC. Later the biblical period of Abram about 1877 BC, followed by Isaac, and Jacob, have a different treaty and covenant outline from other time periods.

These are personal religious covenants consisting simply of a promise from Deity to His human client, and a sign as confirmation and a witness. Example: Noah, sign rainbow; Abram, sign furnace and torch; Abram's second sign, new name and circumcision, Isaac implied. Jacob's, sign was a ladder to Heaven.

Genesis 15:1 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I [am] thy shield, [and] thy exceeding great reward.

"After these things ..." The events of Genesis 14 were a necessary prelude to what is written here ... so the great Christ-Type, Melchizedek, should appear, for the purpose of removing any impression that Abram, in any way whatever, either invented or discovered the knowledge and worship of the one true God!

"The word of the LORD came unto Abram ..." God is the author of the Abrahamic promises; Our Lord repeatedly referred to the word found in Genesis as, "God hath said," and no believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has the authority to set that aside.

"In a vision ..." We believe this whole chapter is a vision, as stated here, and that any limitation of the vision to some particular portion of this chapter is wrong. The mingling of day scenes and night scenes (Genesis 15:5,12), the passing, of many hours, the slaughter of animals, the darkness, the deep sleep, and other factors of this chapter are best understood, just like the book says: "a vision".

"Fear not, Abram ..." it appears the thing on Abram's mind was that the years were slipping away, and that, he had NO child ... That was the thing that Abram brought up at once.

"I am thy Shield, and thy exceeding great reward ..." This statement at the head of the chapter removes all possibility that this chapter gives clues as to how a sinner is saved from sin. Abram, is not an alien sinner. He had been following God ever since he left Ur of the Chaldees (KAL-dees); and again, and again, he had strictly obeyed the commandments of the Lord Yahweh in leaving Ur, in leaving Haran (HAIR-an), in going to Canaan, and (probably) in the return to Bethel to get right with God. The war to rescue Lot could not have been

undertaken without prayer for God's aid. Abram's obedient faith was the grounds upon which God had accounted Abram righteous, long before the events of this chapter. Could God possibly have said, "I am thy shield," if this had not been so?

Genesis 15:2-3 And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house [is] this E-li-e'-zer (e-lee-EH-zer) of Damascus? 3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.

Genesis 15:4 And, behold, the word of the LORD [came] unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.

It was not specifically stated here that Sarai (SAR-i) would be the mother of the promised heir, although both Abram and Sarai should have understood it thus. That they did not do so, led to their "helping God out" by the events that led to the birth of Ishmael ... A sin that has slow-walked the Jews down for almost 4,000 years!

Genesis 15:5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

Innumerable stars(1-10)

"... tell the stars, if thou be able to number them ..." Previously, God had promised that Abram's seed would be as "the dust of the earth". Now the dramatic change here suggests the two Israels that call Abram their father, the earthly Israel and the spiritual Israel of God's Church. The innumerability of the stars is a scientific truth, there being, in fact, innumerable galaxies, the total number of stars in any one of them being innumerable, and the question rises as to how such a fact of such knowledge is mentioned so casually. The answer has to lie in the omniscience of God, as the real Author of Genesis.

"So shall thy seed be ..." Seed, of course, has two meanings, being a collective noun, meaning: (1) a single Seed Christ, or (2) billions of seeds. Both meanings are found in the Scriptures. Beginning, in Genesis 3:15, and following "seed" is used restrictively as reference to Jesus Christ only.

Galatians 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

Genesis 15:6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

"It is the obedient acceptance of God's plan, of history and of salvation, which places man in the right relationship with God."

The truth must be that for a long while the covenant had already been in existence, Abram's OBEDIENT faith had been "reckoned unto him for righteousness." This chapter began with the revelation that God was already indeed the shield and "exceeding great reward" of Abram. Therefore, Abram's status before this chapter was NOT that of an alien sinner.

Romans 4:3-5 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. 4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. 5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Paul's statements concerning this event in such passages have no reference whatever to Abram's receiving justification WITHOUT OBEDIENCE, but to the fact that his justification was not, in any sense, founded upon circumcision and the Law of Moses.

Genesis 15:7-8 And he said unto him, I [am] the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chal'-dees (KAL-dees), to give thee this land to inherit it. 8 And he said, Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?

The covenant was already in existence (Genesis 12:1ff); and the question of Abram was to how he could know that it would really be fulfilled.

Genesis 15:9 And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.

Sacrificial Animal.jpg

The covenant is the type suzerain-vassal (SOO-zer-ain – VASS-sal) (King-subject) the form always used in the Bible between God the King and the people who are the vassals (subjects).

The Amorites used an ass but in this vision these were clean creatures, later confirmed as suitable for sacrifices to God, in the coming Law of Moses. That all of this was part of the vision, and not an actual happening, is confirmed in the truth that Abram did not pass between the carcasses, and that God did so only in a symbol. In the actual rituals, both parties passed through between the slain animals. Also note, that Abram did not need time to procure the creatures mentioned. It all took place in the vision.

Genesis 15:10 And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not.

(Clear)

In the ceremony it was necessary to cut an animal in half and shed its blood. This action is clear in original Hebrew the verb for making a

covenant is literally “to cut” a covenant. The pieces of the animal would be placed in two rows with an isle between.

The parties to the covenant walked between the rows while taking an oath invoking similar dismemberment on themselves should they not keep their part of the covenant.

This ritual was actually used in antiquity by numerous ancient people as the means of assuring the performance of agreements.

There was no need whatever for God to do such a thing and evidently, it was prompted because of Abram's question as to how he might "really know" that he would inherit the land. It is called an-THRO-po-mor-phic figure of speech. Here God in a vision, representing Himself as taking an oath, in the manner of the ritual of men for the purpose of reassuring Abram.

Another example is: Psalms 110:4 speaks of God's swearing "with an oath" to raise up a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

In such events, the heavenly Father assures men by the same language and devices by which men seek to reassure one another.

Genesis 15:11 And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

"The birds of prey ... Abram drove them away ..." Christ himself used "the birds" as symbols of evil in the N.T. (Matthew 13:4 &19); and they doubtless have the same symbolical meaning here.

Abram's watchfulness and his driving them away symbolize the need for Christians to be alert and aggressive in their opposition to evil.

I Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

Genesis 15:12 And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.

"And when the sun was going down ..." All of this is still part of the vision "The horror of a great darkness" was also part of it, as were the words spoken by the LORD

Genesis 15:13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land [that is] not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;

"... thy seed shall be a stranger in a land [that is] not theirs ..." This is a prophetic revelation of the captivity of Israel in Egypt, "thy seed" being a reference to the descendants of Abram.

"Four hundred years ..." The same period is referred to as 430 years in Exodus 12:40. Note that it is not the total stay in Egypt, but the period of their "affliction" which is here prophesied as "four hundred years." They were not afflicted during the early years of their sojourn there while Joseph was yet Pharaoh's visier. The time period here is stated in round numbers, meaning "about four hundred years."

The same period is called "four generations" a little later, that being correct in view of the longevity of the patriarchs.

Genesis 15:14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.

"That nation ... will I judge ..." The ten plagues brought against Egypt.

"Come out with great substance ..." This too was related in Exodus. From Egyptians, the Israelites borrowed great wealth on the very night that God delivered them. In these promises concerning Abram's seed would seem to be the source of that:

"horror of great darkness" that came upon Abram.

This kind of prophecy was not intended to inspire shouts of joy on Abram's part but to warn him that through suffering He would bring many sons to glory.

Genesis 15:15 And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.

"Thou shalt go to thy fathers ..." This cannot apply to the place where Abram was buried, for he was not buried with his fathers, but in the cave of Machpelah (mack-PEL-ah). **"We find here a clear testimony to belief in an eternal life in the patriarchal age."**

Genesis 15:16 But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites [is] not yet full.

"And in the fourth generation they shall come hither again ..." Hebron, where Abram lived at the time, was in Canaan ... the promised Land.

The iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full ..." The word "Amorite" is used here as a "collective term for the pre-Israelite population of Canaan." The justice of God is visible in this statement. "God would not arbitrarily dispossess one people for another, even to fulfill His purpose. Later, when the Canaanites were conquered, it was because they had lost the right to the land by their own sinfulness.

Later, the Jews were expelled for the same reason

Genesis 15:17 And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.

burning-torch.jpg

"Smoking furnace ... burning lamp ..." Such symbolism stands for God Himself; In this account God assumed the role of the suzerain (SOO-zer-ain – VASS-sal) this acting out of the ceremony differs however from all known examples in that in this vision, Abram did not pass between the carcasses, God alone walked between the rows of animal pieces and took the oath only on Himself because only God would keep the covenant ... Abram's descendants would not.

Genesis 15:18 In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Eu-phra'-tes:

"In the same day the Lord made a covenant ..." This must be understood in the sense that God ratified and confirmed with this ancient type of oath the covenant already existing, and which we studied last week in Genesis 12:1f.

He also elaborated significant details not previously given:

Abram himself would not inherit the land at all, but it would be possessed by his descendants.

Even his seed would not possess the land until centuries should pass and the iniquity of the Amorite should have run its course.

"Amorites" represent the 10 nations of Canaan standing here for the totality of their world, would be destroyed the land given to Israel.

In the 400 years preceding the ultimate possession of the land by Israel, the people would undergo slavery and affliction.

The nation that would thus subject them would be severely judged.

The Jews would finally leave with great wealth.

The actual boundaries of Israel's ultimate domain were given.

"From the river of Egypt ... the river Euphrates ..." scholars are unanimous in that "Egypt is probably the Wady (WA-dee) of Arish (AIR-ish) on the border of Egypt. "This was precisely fulfilled in the days of Solomon's Empire which embraced all of the territory included here.

Genesis 15:19-21 The Ken'-ites, and the Ken'-iz-zites, and the Kad'-mon-ites, 20 And the Hit'-tites, and the Per'-iz-zites, and the Reph'-a-

ims, 21 And the Am'-or-ites, and the Ca'-naan-ites, and the Gir'-ga-shites, and the Jeb'-u-sites.

Genesis 16:1-2 Now Sa'-rai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name [was] Ha'-gar. 2 And Sa'-rai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sa'-rai.

Well, what was wrong with this? It was a legal (Hammurabi) and commonly accepted practice after the customs of that age, and we can hardly suppose that Abram and Sarai here deliberately chose to violate God's law. However, there are a number of things wrong:

It violates the concept from the beginning of 1 man and 1 woman.

It was a sinful use of a servant girl, who was not in a position to deny what was demanded of her, to fulfill the personal desires of Abram and Sarai. Such an inconsiderate use of one's fellow human beings for our own purposes can never be anything but sinful.

It was a presumption upon their part that God could not fulfill His promise except through their human devices.

This introduction of polygamy was to continue among the patriarchs of Israel with the most far-reaching and undesirable consequences, as in the example of Jacob. Abram and Sarai could not have exhibited a worse example for the subsequent generations of the Chosen People.

"Whose name was Hagar ..." she was in all probability acquired in Egypt during Abram's sinful escapade there.

"The Arabs claim descent from Abraham through Ishmael and Hagar. Her name, which means "flight," is akin to the word He-gira, used of the flight of Mohammed from Medina to Mecca (622 AD), an event from which the Muslims date their origin.

The extensive descendants of Hagar are the nations of Islam, and the nations that came through Hagar not only proved to be habitual enemies of the Jews, but of the Christians also. Little could Abram and Sarai have known what a Pandora's Box of perpetual troubles for all mankind they opened by the little selfish sinful maneuver.

Genesis 16:3-4 And Sa'-rai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife. 4 And he went in unto Ha'-gar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.

Sarai and Abram had not counted on such a development as this. They had their weaknesses, but Hagar also had hers. Hagar was then Abram's concubine wife, and although she was not on an equal with Sarai, ... being in fact her servant she began to despise her mistress. Thinking that, her child would become heir to Abram's fortune, her temperament as a servant did not lead her to accept her status and treat Sarai with proper respect. It was impossible for Hagar to be sent away by Sarai, for the laws of that period granted certain rights to concubine wives. Sure enough, Hagar would soon be a mother, but the jealousies and hatreds that entered Abram's household were a sore trial for the whole family. Such is ever the result of sin.

Genesis 16:5-6 And Sa'-rai said unto Abram, My wrong [be] upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee. 6 But Abram said unto Sa'-rai, Behold, thy maid [is] in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sa'-rai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.

Abram's house was troubled indeed with this situation. Abram was at that time powerless to find a solution to the problem; because, in fact, there really was no solution, any more than there is a solution

today for the Arab-Israeli conflict that troubles the whole world. As Hagar was Sarai's property, and since the whole situation was due to her initial suggestion, Abram simply turned the problem back to Sarai. She dealt harshly with Hagar so Hagar decided to run away.

Note the tangled emotions of the characters in the drama: Sarai, frustrated and enraged. Hagar, spirited but tactless.

"My wrong be upon thee ..." "The wrong done me is your fault." This was an inaccurate and unreasonable on Sarai's part, growing out of her anger and wounded pride. She herself had suggested the arrangement! Instead of an heir through a slave girl to bounce upon her knee she became the mother of envy, jealousy, and strife.

The Law Code of Hammurabi warns expressly, that a slave girl elevated by her mistress should not and could not claim equality.

"To be his wife ..." The Hebrew word rendered "wife" is the same as "concubine." ... but there was a difference, and Hagar certainly enjoyed the status of Abram's wife, however subordinate to Sarai. It was a situation certain to produce friction, hatred, and tragedy.

Genesis 16:7-8 And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. 8 And he said, Ha'-gar, Sa'-rai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sa'-rai.

"The angel of the LORD ..." Those who find here a pre-incarnate Christ pictured here, are not necessarily wrong. The words "refer to the Lord himself." "The teaching here implied a plurality of Persons in the Godhead is in perfect harmony with Gen 1:26 & 11:7. There are other examples of this in the OT. This is the first occurrence in the Bible of this phraseology - pre-incarnate appearance of the Messiah."

"By the fountain in the way to Shur (SURE)..." This was evidently a well-known watering place on the way back to Egypt. "The word `Shur' means `wall' and was probably applied to the chain of fortresses on the northeast frontier of Egypt." Hagar could flee from Sarai, but not from the presence of God.

The angel of the Lord questioned her as God had questioned Adam in Eden, not for the purpose of procuring information but with a design of appealing to Hagar's conscience.

"Whence camest thou? and whither goest thou? ..." Everyone needs to ask such questions of himself when confronting any crisis in life.

Genesis 16:9-11 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands. 10 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. 11 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou [art] with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction.

"And the angel of the LORD ..." The threefold repetition of this in V:9, V:10, & V:11 are 3 definite and prophecies concerning Hagar:

"Return and submit ..." This is never easy to do; and in Hagar's case it might have been unusually difficult but she returned and submitted.

"I will multiply thy seed ..." This was fulfilled on a scale that no one in that age could have believed, not even Hagar.

"Thou shalt bear a son, and thou shalt call his name Ishmael ..." This recalls the prophecy of Gabriel to Mary. Only God can name in advance the sex of a child and give his name in this manner.

Genesis 16:12 And he will be a wild man; his hand [will be] against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.

"He shall be as a wild man ..." The antagonistic and war-like nature of the Arab nations has continued until the present time.

Only God could have uttered a prophecy so accurately fulfilled over such a long period of time.

"That race has neither been dissipated by conquest, nor lost. They have continued to dwell in the presence of their brethren, a distinct people, wearing upon the whole the same features and aspects which this prophecy first impressed upon them."

And thus it came to pass that the child of Abram and Sarai's unbelief became the ancestor of the Arabs, Israel's bitterest foes throughout history, and, "from this line also came Muhammad and Islam, one of the most demonic of religions and a foe of Christianity."

Genesis 16:13-14 And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me? 14 Wherefore the well was called Be'-er-la-hai'-roi (BE-er-la-HI-roy); behold, [it is] between Ka'-desh and Be'-red.

May be read: I have seen God and have survived after seeing him.

Whatever the exact meaning of the names here, the thought is clear enough that God had seen Hagar's distress, and that he heeded her cry, consoled her, put her feet homeward on the path of duty, and gave magnificent prophecies of the son to be born to her.

Genesis 16:15-16 And Ha'-gar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Ha'-gar bare, Ishmael. 16 And Abram [was] fourscore and six years old, when Ha'-gar bare Ish'-mael to Abram.

The importance of this chapter in the history of the Chosen People is boundless. Much of the future of Israel would be related to the Ishmaelites and the nations that came from them, much in the same manner as the Edomites entered the picture following the birth of

Esau. The age of Abram is given here as 86, and it was not until 13 years later when he was 99 that God appeared to him again. During that long period, Abram would have to live with the situation that he and Sarai had brought upon themselves.

Genesis 17:1-2 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I [am] the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. 2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.

"Ninety years old and nine ..." Later Abram's reference to himself as being a hundred years old allowed for the passage of time before the child was born.

" Almighty God ..." Scholars agree that the exact meaning of *EI Shaddai*] (sha-DIE), " Almighty God" is the best translation available. This name for God is used 6 times in Genesis, and 31 times in Job.

The LORD, the covenant God, has the power to realize His promises, even when the order of nature offers no prospect of their fulfillment.

"Walk before me, and be thou perfect ..." Jesus gave us the same cf: Matthew 5:48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

That usage rules out any subordinate or secondary meaning. Only absolute perfection shall enter heaven, and that has been evident from this passage to the end of the NT.

Man, unaided, is unable to achieve any such thing, but he must TRY, and, for those who love and serve God, he has made available that perfection "in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Colossians 1:28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

Two things demanded here: "A God-conscience life of the best type, and faithful observance of all duties." It was precisely for the purpose of informing Abram and descendants of their part, and the absolute necessity of abiding by terms that this recapitulation and elaboration of the covenant Gen 15 was given.

Genesis 17:3-6 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, 4 As for me, behold, my covenant [is] with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. 5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. 6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

"And Abram fell on his face ..." "Man on his face, God on his throne, only in this posture can we talk to God and God really talk to us."

Genesis 17:9 And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.

"Thy name shall be Abraham ..." This is usually interpreted to mean "father of the faithful,"

Perhaps, this was the forerunner of that promise in which God promised that each of the redeemed would receive a new name,

Revelation 2:17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that over cometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth [it].

Thus kings and popes take on new names when they ascend to the throne. The occasion here for Abraham was just as important, and even more so, than the accession of an earthly monarch to his throne.

"Father of a multitude of nations ..." The fulfillment of this might not lie merely in the nations and kings that descended lineally from

Abraham, for if we should view the one nation of secular Israel as the one primarily descended from Abraham ... the "multitude of nations," enlarged in the spiritual sense, would include all the hosts of Christianity throughout the ages.

Romans 4:13 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, [was] not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

Genesis 17:7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

"For an everlasting covenant ..." The great purpose of this covenant was the delivery of the Messiah to redeem all mankind, and that aspect of it was indeed eternal.

Genesis 17:8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

Here is the famous land promise by which modern-day Israel claim divine right to the land of Canaan, and many Christian commentators agree wrong is the notion that commandments of God may be ignored with impunity, and that "everlasting" here means eternally are wrong.

All of God's commands are conditions, and failure to obey the conditions is forfeiture of every blessing mentioned in connection with the commands. Willis: "Everlasting here does not mean endless time, but a relatively long period of time." Whatever the meaning of everlasting, Israel forfeited the promise in its entirety by rebelling against God and becoming "worse than Sodom and Gomorrah"

Ezekiel 16:48 [As] I live, saith the Lord GOD, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters.

Israel followed in the way of the pre-Israelite paganism of Canaan and became, in fact, just as wicked as the old Canaanites whom God had expelled in order to bring them into the land. God threw them out of the land and moved the whole nation into captivity. That marked the end of "the land promise" as far as it concerned the fleshly Israel.

Genesis 17:9-14 And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. 10 This [is] my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. 11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. 12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which [is] not of thy seed. 13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. 14 And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

"And as for thee ..." This reaches back to Genesis 17:4, where God stated his part of the covenant. Here he began to recount the obligations that pertained to Abraham and his posterity.

"Every male among you ... shall be circumcised ..." 1st item mentioned.

Genesis 17:15-19 And God said unto Abraham, As for Sa'-rai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sa'-rai, but Sarah [shall] her name [be]. 16 And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will

bless her, and she shall be [a mother] of nations; kings of people shall be of her. 17 Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall [a child] be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? 18 And Abraham said unto God, O that Ish'-mael might live before thee! 19 And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, [and] with his seed after him.

Abraham's laughter was a laugh of doubt & unbelief. What he asked God was that Ishmael and not the promised son, would be the heir.

"I will establish my covenant with him (Isaac) for an everlasting covenant ..." It should never be forgotten that there were two separate elements in the Abrahamic covenant, that pertaining to the Messiah and the redemption of all mankind, and that concerning the fleshly seed of Abraham and their possession of the land of Canaan. The Messianic phase of that covenant was, of course is everlasting, for it is still in effect through the gospel of Christ.

Genesis 17:20-21 And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. 21 But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

"Princes shall he beget ..." The superiority of Isaac over Ishmael is doubly apparent, in his being born of the free woman and not a bond. Whereas Isaac would beget kings, Ishmael would beget princes.

We may wonder why God made Abraham wait such a long time for the fulfillment of the glorious promise ... but it was absolutely imperative that the father of the Chosen People should truly believe God and know of a certainty that God's promises would be fulfilled.

No matter how impossible and unreasonable they might have seemed from the human standpoint. God fulfills his promises, but because God is God and His Word is true and absolutely reliable.

Genesis 17:22-23 And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham. 23 And Abraham took Ish'-ma-el his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him.

The significant thing revealed here is that Abraham obeyed God immediately and completely.

"Circumcision ..." This rite is a fleshly operation in which the foreskin of the male reproductive organ is cut off. In the days of Abraham, it was performed with a flint knife, showing how close that era was to what is called the Stone Age.

Genesis 17:24-27 And Abraham [was] ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 25 And Ish'ma-el his son [was] thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 26 In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ish'-ma-el his son. 27 And all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him.

The full and prompt obedience of Abraham was here recorded in detail, the purpose of the repetition being that of providing emphasis upon the patriarch's prompt, complete, and unquestioning obedience.

"Ishmael was thirteen years old ..." This is an important detail, because it provides unexpected confirmation of the historicity of this whole chapter. The Arabs to this day claim descent from Abraham through Hagar.

And they also observe the rite of circumcision, but not on the eighth

day as among the Jews but when the males are "thirteen years old" as Ishmael was here!

Sources: KJV, theWord.com, Burton Coffman, BW Johnson, Adam Clark, FF Bruce, McKnight, JW McGarvey, George Faull Commentaries, Archaeology & the Old Testament by Alfred Hoerth, On the Reliability of the OT, KA Kitchens; Google Images, Halleys Handbook, Wikipedia.