

Genesis

Chapter 17:9-27

✠ **Gen 17:9-14** ⁹ *And God said to Abraham: "As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰ "This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; ¹¹ "and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. ¹² "He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. ¹³ "He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. ¹⁴ "And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."*

Have you ever wondered why God chose circumcision which is only for men, instead of something which both men and women should do? I believe that God chose this because we as men are the heads of the household, but also because we are to be an example for our families to follow.

Circumcision was not only a shedding of the old flesh, but also a shedding of the old man. Before this time, Abraham was like all other men in sense, and there had to be a symbol of the separation from the world and a clinging to the Lord and His covenant.

✠ **Romans 2:25-29** (NLT) ²⁵ *The Jewish ceremony of circumcision is worth something only if you obey God's law. But if you don't obey God's law, you are no better off than an uncircumcised Gentile. ²⁶ And if the Gentiles obey God's law, won't God give them all the rights and honors of being his own people? ²⁷ In fact, uncircumcised Gentiles who keep God's law will be much better off than you Jews who are circumcised and know so much about God's law but don't obey it. ²⁸ For you are not a true Jew just because you were born of Jewish parents or because you have gone through the Jewish ceremony of circumcision. ²⁹ No, a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not a cutting of the body but a change of heart produced by God's Spirit. Whoever has that kind of change seeks praise from God, not from people. (underlined for emphasis)*

Abraham believed God and had changed. With the change and God's instruction to be separate from the world came the symbolism of circumcision.

✠ **Col 2:11** (NLT) *When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised," but not by a physical procedure. It was a spiritual procedure--the cutting away of your sinful nature.*

Flesh is a symbol of sin and circumcision is a symbol of removing sin from your life. Shedding off the old man (or woman). Think of when you get sunburned really bad and days later you start peeling that old dead dry skin off. And what's underneath it? Shiny, new fresh soft skin. Like a baby when they are born with that soft skin.

Remember that Jesus said you must be born again? It's the same type of thing. When a baby is in the womb, there is skin around it. But when the baby comes out that skin is now gone with the baby being new and fresh.

✎ ***12 He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant.***

Why did God say eight days old for the baby to be circumcised? They say at 8 days old a child experiences less pain. But also the number 8 in the bible represents a new beginning, which this would be.

Even someone that was bought with money was to be circumcised. Remember that Jesus was sold for 30 pieces of silver. So our salvation was purchased from Judas since he sold Jesus to the Jewish priest.

There is always a price for sin. And you may not be paying for it now, but you possibly will in the future, or God may grant you total mercy and you won't pay at all. But then you will never have to pay for your sins, because Jesus did that already. But it doesn't mean there won't be a consequence for your sin. And that's what we call paying for our sin.

✎ ***14 "And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."***

If you have not been circumcised as a man does that mean you won't go to heaven?

† ***Gal 5:2-4 (NLT) Listen! I, Paul, tell you this: If you are counting on circumcision to make you right with God, then Christ cannot help you. I'll say it again. If you are trying to find favor with God by being circumcised, you must obey all of the regulations in the whole law of Moses. For if you are trying to make yourselves right with God by keeping the law, you have been cut off from Christ! You have fallen away from God's grace.***

Also the covenant was made with Abraham's descendants and the children of Israel.

✎ ***11 and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.*** (underlined for emphasis)

✠ **Gen 17:15-16** *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."*

Sarai = princess; My lady;

Sarah = Lady; princess of the multitude.

Either way Sarah was a lady, but now not just a lady to her husband Abraham, but also a lady to the generations that would come through her.

Also remember that Abraham was 99 at this time. Let's take a look at Abraham's response.

✠ **Gen 17:17-18** *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!"*

Abraham was 99, and by the time a child would be born he would be 100. Abraham was starting to doubt God because he offered his son Ishmael to God as being the chosen one. Basically he was saying that he was too old and God was biting off more than He could chew.

Abraham wanted Ishmael to be the chosen one of God, after all he was Abraham's first born son. But He wasn't the first born of God's promise. And God explains that to Him as Abraham would be eating his own words.

✠ **Gen 17:19-22** *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. 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 make him a great nation. But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year." Then He finished talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.*

People wonder if God can hear our thoughts? Well this verse tells us He can. God is saying to Abraham that He knew his heart and his love for his son Ishmael, but the chosen one would come from both Abraham and Sarah.

And who were these 12 princes of Ishmael? We have to look further ahead to find out.

† **Gen 25:12-16** *Now this is the genealogy of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's maidservant, bore to Abraham. And these were the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: The firstborn of Ishmael, Nebajoth; then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma,*

Dumah, Massa, Hadar, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. These were the sons of Ishmael and these were their names, by their towns and their settlements, twelve princes according to their nations.

We will look further into these men when we get to chapter 25.

But God told Abraham that the covenant would be with his son Isaac, who you noticed God named a year before he was born.

Isaac = "he laughs" or Laughter.

And reading this you would think that it would mean that it was a joy for them to have Isaac, which it probably was. But the original meaning of the word is to laugh or mock. So from generation to generation Abraham would have to tell everyone that he mocked God just by the name of his son, Isaac.

✎ *22 Then He finished talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.*

Basically, in the Hebrew “went up” is 'alah, which suggests movement from a lower to a higher place. God went from the earth, God’s foot stool, or the lower heavens which we call space to heaven, God’s throne.

✎ *Gen 17:23-27 So Abraham took Ishmael his son, all who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very same day, as God had said to him. Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. That very same day Abraham was circumcised, and his son Ishmael; and all the men of his house, born in the house or bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.*

Very simply put, Abraham was obedient to God. He didn’t wait for his favorite TV show to finish, or until the weather was better, or until Sunday when he could do it before the church. No, Abraham did it *that very same day*.

So what does this tell us as Christians? When God speaks to you, don’t ignore Him or put it off for another day. God is a patient God and He is not like our parents saying, “*I’m going to count to ten, and you better be moving before I finish.*”

Very simply put, if God speaks to you then it must be important to Him and to you. So listen and be obedient, not lagging or dragging your feet. If God has been telling you to do something, or even stop doing something, then listen and do it now, no more waiting. If He told you some time ago, then come before Him and ask His forgiveness for not being obedient, and do what He has asked you to do now.

How obedient are you?

What if everyone in the church were just like you, what kind of a church would it be?

Think about your giving, and service.

What about your study habits or your prayer time?

What about how your family is.

Would the church continue to exist because you tithe, or would it close down because no one would tithe?

Would nothing get done because everyone would be like you and do nothing or would everything be taken care of because you are always willing to do?

Would it be a bunch of weak Christians who don't study God's Word or would it be strong Christians who stay in the word daily?

Would the families be families of God, or families of the world?

What kind of church are you representing?