

Genesis 17:1-9 – A Unique Covenant

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: What makes God's covenant with Abram so unique? There is a sense of closeness with "little, sinful, doubtful" Abram and "holy, almighty, self-sufficient" God. The parties are very divergent their conditions. Who wants to enter in a covenant with a disparagingly 轻蔑 lesser次要的 person? No one. It is normal to enter in agreement with someone with whom you have something in common...or if you have the ability to meet each other's need. So this was a unique covenant...very gracious covenant, but a very unique covenant.

Our headings are: **Foundation of the Covenant**, **Benediction 祝福 of the Covenant**, and **Perpetuation 不朽 of the Covenant**.

Our goals are: That you **will see the certainty and blessing of the covenant God made with you...and that you will work to advance God's kingdom in your heart, home, and nation.**

Foundation of the Covenant

1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.

1. Jesus **Christ appeared** in visible form – a theophany 神的出现 – when Abram was 99 years old. **Jesus appeared in order to strengthen Abram's faith.** Abram probably had wondered: How long before we have this child. Now Abram faced the fact that his body was dead – and certainly Sarah's body was dead. They were beyond child bearing years...But maybe that was exactly what God was planning. God wanted Abram to be convinced that this was a miracle from God...This is the reason for the delay. Paul suggested that principle. Moses taught that on principle. And Jesus practiced that principle when he did not go immediately to comfort Mary and Martha when Lazarus died.

Romans 4:17 (as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he believed---God, **who gives life to the dead** and calls those things which do not exist as though they did;

Deuteronomy 32:36 "For the LORD will judge His people And have compassion on His servants, When He **sees that their power is gone**, And there is no one remaining, bond or free.

John 11:6 So, when He heard that he was sick, **He stayed two more days** in the place where He was.

But the key here is that Jesus initiated the meeting with Abram in order to strengthen Abram's faith.

2. Jesus **showed his strength to encourage Abram's faith.** He introduced himself as the "the Almighty...all-powerful, all-sufficient." The word is "El Shaddai." This is the 1st time this word is used in the Bible. And this name was most appropriate. You would want a surgeon to do your heart surgery...not a butcher. So identifying who he was by his name, Jesus comforted Abram. He was the right man for the job. "El Shaddai" is the name of God mainly used in Job to show that he was able to raise Job up and protect him during his trials. And "El Shaddai" is used in similar context throughout the Bible: God keeps.

2Corinthians 6:18 - "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty."

Revelation 1:8 – 8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, **the Almighty.**"

You hear someone screams "Fire." The call of "fire" evokes 引起 a big response. Leave. Get water. Call 911. Help someone. So when you hear the name "Almighty" you understand that God is able to do what he promises.

3. **What lessons can you learn from this?** a. God **sometimes waits you out** so you stop thinking that you are the source of what you accomplish. When you realize you can't do something, then God does it, or gives you the strength to do it.
b. When things are impossible with man, all things are possible with God. Nothing lies outside of the sovereign 掌握全权的 will and power of God. This is a sufficient plaster 膏药 for every human sore.

4. Jesus **summarized this unique covenant to Abram in this way: Walk before me and be blameless.** (This means to walk in front of God face.) The idea is: Walk before me as if I were visible to you, and you were conscious of my Presence. This was a brief stipulation 契约 of the covenant **but it was a full stipulation in meaning.** You have to walk before God in obedience...obedience to all his laws...in heart and in action...and teach your children to do the same.

5. **There were no negotiations in this covenant as in a business or military covenant.** **And the foundation of that obedience that God demanded** was faith in Christ...a faith that was seen in obedience to God's law. It was the same for Abram and it

is the same for you today. Abram had faith in Jesus Christ. This was why he was able obey and be God's friend.

Benediction of the Covenant

2 "And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly." 3 Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: 4 "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. 5 "No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. 6 "I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you.

1. This covenant was most precious put, along with all of its blessings, upon Abrams children also. God would continue to be their God. Though Abram would die and pass from this world, God would not forget this children. What a comfort the covenant is to God's people. Consider how a Christian brother (who was about to be martyred) viewed the covenant and wrote to his wife: "*Though we do shortly depart hence, and leave our poor infant... yet shall he have our gracious God to be his God: for so hath he said—and he cannot lie; —'I will be thy God, and of thy seed.'*" The covenant does not die with you. So bring your children to the covenant and leave them in the hands of the Lord.

2. Jesus promised not just covenant seed, but the multiplication增多 of Abram's covenant seed to Abram— to continue this covenant...a most impressive blessings of the day. No wonder Abram prostrated himself before God. A picture does convey a thousand words. This was a picture of total submission. He was laid flat on his face before God.

3. Jesus promised Abram that he would be the father, not just of many descendants, but of many nations of descendants. Of course this fits in perfectly with a plan for the expansion of the kingdom as you are seeing in Revelation. Jesus told his disciples, as children of Abram, to make disciples of all the nations. So this was a view to a spiritual reality. And notice how this is an "exceeding" blessing...something that was greatly desirable... How sad that our culture looks upon children as an unnecessary burden and restriction. God does not show favoritism. He loves all men. We saw this illustrated last Thursday when we met with Korean church leaders and then Chinese church leaders.

Romans 4:18 who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be."

4. And to confirm the blessings, Jesus changed Abram's name – from Abram – high father - to Abraham (Abraham) – "Father of many nations." This was like a seal to confirm what God would do. In Eastern countries a change of name was an advertisement of some new circumstance in the history, rank, or religion.

5. The blessing was just more than a quantitative blessing of all the nations of the world being blessed because of him...it was also a qualitative定性的blessings. Kings would come from Abram. Yes, blessing of rice are good...but blessings of meat mean much more. This is a spiritual blessing also.

6. And you have to take this one step farther. This was not just about physical kings...as not all the nations are blood relations to Abraham. Rather, this was a promise of spiritual growth...the nations of the world and their kings would believe the same as Abram. Consider Paul's words! And remember all the illustrations from Revelation 20.

Romans 4:11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also,

Blood relations are good...spirit relations are better.

Perpetuation不朽 of the Covenant

7 "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. 8 "Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." 9 And God said to Abraham: "As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.

1. God reminded Abram that his children were bound by this agreement also, just as your children are bound to the covenant by baptism. Abram's children would have to keep God as their God. Any departure from the true God would make the covenant null and void. God had the right of rejection just like he rejected King Saul from before and Judas later. There is no blessing without

obedience. This of course binds parents to teach their children...and it is a terrible sin to shirk that responsibility through laziness, carelessness, or delegation.

2. This everlasting covenant was later confirmed, with Jesus being the sacrifice and man being obedient.

Hebrews 13: 20 Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

But was this really a perpetual covenant? It is a perpetual covenant because God is able to keep both sides of the covenant. He elected you and while you are bound to repent, believe, and be saved, God gave you a new heart so you could repent, believe, and be saved. This is why the covenant is properly described as un-failable. It is interesting too that 10X God said: "I will" in this chapter...maybe mirroring the 10 laws that you daily break.

3. But this promise of inheritance was much more than inheriting Canaan by Abram's children. This promise was also a promise of heaven. Yes, they would live in the Land of Canaan and be blessed, but that would only be a temporary place. The writer of Hebrews points out both of these points.

Hebrews 4:8 For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. 9 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.

Hebrews 11:16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country.

Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

And then for good measure, in verse 9, God repeats the same thing...making sure there were no ambiguities.

4. What blessings came upon those who continued to keep the covenant that God made with Abram!

Psalm 33:12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, The people He has chosen as His own inheritance.

Psalm 144:15 Happy are the people who are in such a state; Happy are the people whose God is the LORD!

This is most perfectly summarized in Galatians by the Apostle Paul.

Galatians 3:29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Conclusion:

Abram was required to walk in an obedient faith before the Lord...a faith that came from Jesus Christ. Christ knew that he had to bless Abram for him to be able to walk in obedient faith. And God encouraged him further by keeping the same blessings for his children.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus: Christ calls you to walk the Christian way, even with all its troubles. You have Christ to walk with you as Christian walked in Pilgrim's Progress...and you must walk till you reach the great reward. Know that you will win. You will not only be personally able to make it to heaven, you can lead others there. Christ's church will triumph. His promises are certain. Rejoice. But don't become lazy. Take the time to teach your children. Yes, you have all failed from time to time. But ask God to pick you up and help you so you can be faithful followers of the one who redeemed you by his blood.

Finally, 1Jo 4:19 We love Him because He first loved us. This means you can't love God without him loving you first. May you ask God to move you to faith and repentance in Jesus Christ...so you can truly love him. No enemy of God will survive, but those who have their sins forgiven will thrive.