

## Coastal Sermon Notes: Genesis 17:1-27

Title: (September 7, 2025)

### 1. Yahweh Appears to Abram (Gen. 17:1- 3)

- <sup>1</sup> When Abram was **ninety-nine** years old  
**Yahweh appeared to Abram and said to him,**  
“**I am God Almighty**; (*El Shaddai*.) walk before me,  
and be blameless,  
<sup>2</sup> that I may make my **covenant** between me and you,  
and may multiply you greatly.”  
<sup>3</sup> **Then Abram fell on his face.**

#### a. Yahweh Appears to Abram during the most significant times of his life.

- **Initial call in Ur** (Genesis 12:1-3): God tells Abram to leave his country for a new land, promising to make him into a great nation and to bless him.
- **At Shechem** (Genesis 12:7): God appears to Abram after he enters Canaan and promises to give the land to his descendants.
- **After separating from Lot** (Genesis 13:14-17): God speaks to Abram and reaffirms the promise of the land, telling him to look in all directions to see what would be his and his descendants' forever.
- **Vision and covenant ceremony** (Genesis 15:1-21): God appears to Abram in a vision, promising him a biological son and countless descendants. This encounter features a unique covenant-making ceremony.
- **Revealed as "God Almighty"** (Genesis 17:1-22): God appears to Abram when he is 99 years old, establishes the covenant of circumcision, changes his name to Abraham, and promises a son through Sarai (now Sarah).
- **At the Oaks of Mamre** (Genesis 18:1-15): God, appearing in the form of three men, visits Abraham and Sarah to announce that Sarah would give birth to a son within a year. This is a more visible, physical appearance compared to the previous visions.
- **At Mount Moriah** (Genesis 22:1-18): God tests Abraham by commanding him to sacrifice his son, Isaac. An angel of the Lord intervenes, and God speaks from heaven, reaffirming his covenant and promises.

#### b. **Yahweh asserts His Divine Power over Human Impossibility.** That's why he waited till Abram was ninety-nine years old, while pronouncing himself as God All Mighty (*El Shaddai*).

- **Context:** For over a decade, Abram and Sarai waited for the promised heir. Impatient, they resorted to their own plan, resulting in the birth of Ishmael through Hagar (Genesis 16).
- **The Problem:** By the time of the Genesis 17 revelation, Abram's body was "as good as dead (Romans 4:19)," and Sarai was well past childbearing age. This left no room for human effort.
- **The Meaning of El Shaddai:** By introducing himself as "God Almighty" (*El Shaddai*), God emphasized his absolute, unlimited power and his ability to do what is impossible in the natural realm. This was a direct rebuke of Abram and Sarai's attempts to help God and a powerful reassurance that the divine promise would be fulfilled on his own efforts.

- In the Exodus Story, the Lord confirms to Moses how He revealed himself to the patriarchs. **Exodus 3:6: God spoke to Moses and said to him, “I am the LORD. 3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD (Yahweh), I did not make myself known to them.**

- **Romans 4:19-21**

<sup>19</sup> He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. <sup>20</sup> No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, <sup>21</sup> fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

- c. **Abram’s Response: He fell on His face.** Abram falls on his face for two primary reasons: first, out of profound reverence and submission to God, and second, because he was overwhelmed by God’s awesome presence and the astonishing nature of His promises.

## 2. Abram Renamed (Gen. 17:4-8)

And **God** (Elohim) **said to him**,

<sup>4</sup> “Behold, **my covenant** is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations.

<sup>5</sup> **No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham,** for I have made you **the father of a multitude of nations**.

<sup>6</sup> **I will** make you **exceedingly** (greatly, greatly) fruitful, and **I will** make you into nations, and kings shall come from you.

<sup>7</sup> And **I will** establish my covenant between me and you and **your offspring** after you throughout their generations for an **everlasting covenant**, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

<sup>8</sup> And **I will** give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, **all the land of Canaan**,

- a. **From Abram to Abraham: The Promise of a New Identity.**

- **Abram means “exalted father.”** The hard reality is he only had one child, Ishmael, who was a product of a schemed plan by Sarai.
- **The Lord changed his name to Abraham**, to seal the covenant, promising that he would become the father (or ancestor) of a multitude of nations. Still, that would have been a hard name switch in front of his people, because he certainly did not look like his old name, “an exalted father.”
- **Personal identity tied to God’s purpose:** Just as Abram’s name now points forward to God’s work, the same is true for God’s people today. Their identity becomes tied to God’s mission, **NOT** to their past failures or present limitations.

- b. **The Foundation of the Covenant: God Himself.** This is His Covenant. The “I Will” statements

- **I will** make you greatly, greatly, Fruitful
- **I will** make you into nations, and kings will come from you.
- **I will** establish my covenant with me and you, and your offspring throughout their generations.
- **I will** give you and your offspring all of the land of Canaan.

- c. **Practical Application:** Think in terms of your covenant relationship with God.

- **Embracing a new identity in Christ**

God changed Abram's name (meaning "exalted father") to Abraham ("father of a multitude") to reflect his new covenant role. Similarly, followers of Jesus are given a new identity in Christ, moving from their old self to a new self.

- **Consider what it means to be defined by your relationship with God** rather than by your past or personal accomplishments. Embrace the new identity you have been given in Christ.
- **Trust in God's Power over Your Human Limitations.** When God changed Abram's name, he was older than any of you. He was a ninety-nine-year-old man. He had Pastor Darrell by a decade. From a human perspective it was impossible to become the father of "many nations."
- **Patiently Wait for God's Perfect Timing:** Abraham walked many years between the promise and its fulfillment. In the process he was learning patience and perseverance. You must believe God's timing is perfect, even when you do not understand it.

### 3. Abram Renamed (Gen. 17:9-14)

9 And **God** (Elohim) **said to Abraham**,

"As for you, you shall **keep my covenant**,  
you and your offspring after you throughout their generations.

10 **This is my covenant**,  
which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you:

**Every male among you shall be circumcised.**

11 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** throughout your generations,  
whether **born in your house** or **bought with your money**  
from any **foreigner** who is not of your offspring,

13 both he who is born in your house

and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be **circumcised**.

So shall **my covenant** be in your flesh an **everlasting covenant**.

14 **Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised**

in the flesh of his foreskin **shall be cut off from his people;**  
**he has broken my covenant.**"

a. **The broader Abrahamic Covenant, first established in Genesis 12 and affirmed again in Genesis 15, is seen as unconditional.** God swore an oath to himself to fulfill its promises regardless of human obedience. This initial covenant, made before the command of circumcision, **guarantees three things:**

- **A great nation** would come from Abraham's descendants.
- **The land of Canaan** would be their possession forever.
- **Through his family line, all nations** on earth would be blessed.

b. **The Conditional Sign of Circumcision**

- **Requirement for inclusion:** In Genesis 17:10, God commands, "This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised."
- **Consequence for disobedience:** The condition is made explicit in verse 14: "Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken

my covenant". This shows that a specific action was required to stay within the covenant community and receive its immediate blessings.

- **A sign of faith:** Circumcision was intended as a public, physical sign of the internal reality of faith in God's promises. It set Abraham's descendants apart and was a constant reminder of their dependence on God's power for their future.

### c. The Requirements of the Covenant of circumcision

- Every male must be circumcised
- It is a "sign" of God's covenant.
- Once a male child is eight days old, he must be circumcised
- Every male throughout generations
- Whether they are born in Abraham's House or purchased, they must be circumcised
- Any male who is not circumcised, shall be cut off from Israel.

### d. Question: If circumcision is an everlasting covenant, why didn't the Jerusalem council (Acts 15) uphold this covenant?

- **The everlasting covenant** was fulfilled in Jesus.
- **Salvation**, You are Adopted and a part of God's family, based on faith in Jesus, not in observing the law.
- **Just as circumcision was a sign**; it has been replaced by "the sign" of the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit allows you to have a true circumcision, one that is of the heart
- **Romans 2:28-29: 28** *For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. 29 But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God*

### 4. From Sarai to Sarah. (Gen. 17:15-17)

15 And **God** said to Abraham,

"As for **Sarai** your wife,

you shall not call her name Sarai, but **Sarah** shall be her name.

16 **I will** bless her, and moreover,

**I will** give you a son by her.

**I will** bless her,

and **she** shall become **nations**;

**kings of peoples** shall come from her."

17 Then **Abraham fell on his face** and **laughed** and said to himself,

"Shall a child be born to a man who is a **hundred years old**?

Shall **Sarah**, who is **ninety years old**, bear a child?"

a. **Although Sarai's and Sarah's names have similar meanings**, the change was meant to elevate her status and symbolize her new destiny. The subtle difference in the Hebrew carries immense theological weight within the covenant God made with Abraham.

b. **A key difference in interpretation stems from the ending of each name:** Note: in Hebrew, you read the letters from the right to left. You will see the last letter is different. Kene

- **Sarai** (שָׂרַי) likely means "**my princess**," confining her nobility to her relationship with Abram.
- **Sarah** (שָׂרָה), in contrast, means "**princess**" in an absolute sense, signifying her elevated role as a matriarch to a multitude of nations.

**If there was anyone who needed a new name change and identity**, it was Sarah. She was eighty-nine years old, had been barren all of her marriage, and it was her last scheme thirteen years

earlier that made her jealous and bitter. Well now, God gives her a new identity, one whom will birth nations and kings! I suspect Sarah had finally come to terms with your childless fate.

- **Sarah's son:** Sarah gave birth to Isaac when she was 90 years old, a miraculous birth that fulfilled God's promise to Abraham and her.
  - **Isaac's descendants:** The promise of kingship was passed down through **Isaac**. His son Jacob (renamed Israel) had 12 sons, whose descendants became the twelve tribes of Israel.
  - **The line of Judah:** The prophecy was fulfilled through the lineage of Judah, one of Jacob's sons. The kings of Israel, including **King David** and his **royal line**, descended from **the tribe of Judah**.
  - **While Sarah did not directly give birth to kings**, she was the matriarch through whom the royal lineage originated.
- e. **Abraham, once again, falls on his face in awe**, but this time **he laughs**. Will this really happen to an old couple like us? Though, hard to wrap your mind around, this was always a part of God's supernatural Plan.

#### 5. Isaac and Ishmael. (Gen. 17:18-21)

- 18 And **Abraham said to God**,  
    **"Oh that Ishmael might live before you!"**
- 19 **God** said, **"No**,  
    but **Sarah** your wife shall bear you a son,  
    and you shall call his name **Isaac**.  
    **I will** establish **my covenant** with him  
    as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.
- 20 As for **Ishmael**, **I have heard you**;  
    behold, **I have** blessed him  
    and **will** make him fruitful and multiply him greatly.  
    He shall father twelve princes,  
    and **I will** make him into a **great nation**.
- 21 But **I will** establish my covenant with **Isaac**,  
    whom **Sarah** shall bear to you at this time **next year**."

- a. **Oh that Ishmael may live.** This was Abraham's way of saying Ishmael is good enough. If you would just bless Ishmael, my son, that's all I need. He's probably thinking that he is too old to have another child. Besides, he now had his heir, Ishmael.
- God's response was a dramatic "No!" The Lord showed Abraham He had not forgotten about His promise. He just had to wait for the perfect timing, that being when both Abraham and Sarah were physically unable to have a child in the natural.
- b. **Still, God had not forgotten about Ishmael**, as he demonstrated thirteen years earlier with the birth of Hagar's and Abram's son. The Lord expands on what God told Hagar. Not only was he going to be a "wild donkey" who would dwell over against all his kinsmen (Gen. 16:12), but he would have twelve princes, and would become a great nation. In other words, Ishmael would spurn out royalty.
- c. **The Lord reaffirms his covenant to Abraham focuses on his future son, Isaac, not Ishmael.** Then, no doubt he rocks his world by stating that he will have this child **NEXT YEAR!**
- d. **One Important detail worth noting is that the Lord in a sense named Abraham's whole family.**
- **Ishmael** (God will hear). This was based on the Lord hearing the cry of Hagar as she ran away from Sarai. As a constant reminder, when she called her son's name, she would be reminded the God hears and sees our afflictions.

- **The Parents:** The Lord renames Abram (exalted father) to Abraham (father of a multitude) and Sarai (My princess or queen) to Sarah (princess or queen).
- **Isaac:** Finally, the Lord Names Abraham's son, Isaac, which means "he laughs." No doubt this is in response too Abraham's laughter when told he and Sarah will have their own son at the ripe old ages of ninety and a hundred. How can this happen? Only through the God of the Impossible. The Lord wanted Abram to be triple digits as a reminder that no matter how bleak it seems; the Lord keeps His promises. He remembers His covenants.

## 6. Isaac and Ishmael. (Gen. 17:22-27)

22 When he had finished talking with him,  
**God went up from Abraham.**

23 Then Abraham took **Ishmael his son**  
and **all those born in his house or bought with his money,**  
**every male** among the men of Abraham's house,  
and he **circumcised** the flesh of their foreskins that very day,  
as God had said to him.

24 Abraham was **ninety-nine years old**  
when he was **circumcised** in the flesh of his foreskin.

25 And **Ishmael his son** was **thirteen years old**  
when he was **circumcised** in the flesh of his foreskin.

26 That very day **Abraham** and **his son Ishmael** were circumcised.

27 And **all the men of his house,**  
those **born in the house and those bought with money** from a foreigner, **were circumcised** with him.

- How much did Abraham believe God?** Well, this is not hard to answer because immediately he puts his faith into practice and starts to circumcise all the males in his household, including himself at the age of ninety-nine years of age. To indicate how important this was, the biblical author repeats this event twice. No doubt Abraham was fired up to see the Lord's promise to come true. How the men felt about this revelation, I am not sure they were too excited to undergo that procedure.
- Why Circumcision?** Perhaps there is a correlation with the scheme of Abraham and Saria in relation to Hagar. That intimate encounter put a forever rift in their household. Now God commands him and each man to cut off some flesh in the most private of areas, reminding them not to take advantage of any female because they are now a part of a covenant community. The mark of circumcision may include the notion that man can make life with this part, but God ultimately is the giver of life. The reality of circumcision would point to that reality. In the end, God wants all his people to stay true and be in community with his immediate family.
  - **Abraham's willingness to believe God is an absolute testament of his faith in the God Almighty.** The name for God, here, is the name he used (God almighty) mostly for the patriarchs in relation to childbearing. Abram, Isaac, and Jacob waited longer than expected to have children by the wife they loved.
  - **May We always Remember the God Almighty in our hardships, some which seem impossible to overcome.** This story is to remind us that when you are a part of God's family (circumcision of the heart), no matter how bleak the future seems; we have the privilege of serving the God of the Impossible.