

## IN THE BEGINNING – Part 10

**Gen 15:17** *And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. 18 On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates- 19 "the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites, 20 "the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, 21 "the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."*

- ✓ We had seen last time that following Abram's defeat of the kings, his rescue of Lot, his blessing by Melchizedek and Abram giving a tithe of all, that God had then revealed to him the role of his descendants with respect to the heavens, the heavenly realm of the Kingdom, presently occupied by Satan and his fallen angels.
- ✓ And to make absolutely clear to Abram the veracity of His promise, God Himself cut a covenant with Abram – a confirmation which is beyond doubt, even in the human realm.

**Heb. 6:13** *For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, 14 saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." 15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. 16 For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. 17 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, 18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.*

- And let us be of no doubt here that God had orchestrated the events of Abram's life to train him and teach him to bring him to the place that He needed him to be-

**Prov.16:9** *A man's heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps (NKJV)*

**Prov.19:21** *You can make many plans, but the LORD's purpose will prevail (NLT)*

- From leaving Ur of the Chaldeans onwards, all was moving inexorably towards Mount Moriah and an event that would take place there that was out of sight for Abram at that time, an event that would require immovable faith on Abraham's part, an event that would be crucial to God's purpose for the ages.
- We can all note Abram's mistakes along the way as well as the ever present choice he had to walk away from the direction that God wanted to lead him, but despite his failings he retained the desire to do the will of the Lord.

- ❖ So, we can now begin to see the picture – God had given Abram the promise of an inheritance, for him and his descendants; an inheritance to do with both the earth, the land of

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Canaan and the heavens, both within the context of rulership, and to seal the certainty of this promise God cut a covenant with Abram as a guarantee.

- BUT, Abram still had no child –

**Gen. 16:1** *Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. 2 So Sarai said to Abram, "See now, the LORD has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her." And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai. 3 Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan. 4 So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes.*

- Abram had already dwelt ‘ten years’ in Canaan, Sarai had born him no children and he wasn’t getting any younger. And from Sarai’s perspective the situation looked hopeless. There needed to be a child for God’s promise to be fulfilled.
- Now in turning to Hagar to provide the ‘solution’ we again see Abram and indeed Sarai, going to Egypt, turning to the world, acting according to their flesh. The ever-present sin nature.
- Although the scripture states quite clearly that Abram believed God with respect to the promise – **Gen. 15:6** *And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.*  
He still felt it necessary to help matters along as he had not yet learned to wait upon the Lord, but the son born according to the flesh could never be the recipient of that which was promised, as the man of the flesh can have no inheritance with the man of the spirit.

**Gen 16:15** *So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. 16 Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram....*

- And this is what the Lord said to Hagar concerning Ishmael, the son born according to the flesh –

**Gen 16:12** *He shall be a wild man; His hand shall be against every man, And every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren."*

-And there are several things we will note from this – we see the antagonistic nature of Ishmael, ‘His hand shall be against every man’ and the conflict that would surround him, ‘And every man’s hand against him’; all taking place as he dwells ‘in the presence of his brethren’.

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-In the natural realm we can see this through the descendants of Ishmael today dwelling in the presence of the descendants of Isaac, his brethren, and the reality of what God had said in Genesis 16:12 is all too apparent.

- What about the spiritual aspect?

Ishmael as a type of the man of flesh continues to dwell in the presence of the man of spirit, resulting in a continual conflict between the two –

**Gal. 4:28** *Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. 29 But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. 30 Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." 31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.*

**Gal. 5:17** *For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish (These echo Rom.7, right?)*

✓ **Please note:** This is our ongoing experience and the nature of the conflict we face daily.

- ❖ From the time of the birth of Ishmael until God spoke to Abram again there is a period of 13 years – 13 years of which there is no record in the scriptures – 13 years of apparent silence and isolation – 13 years that would give Abram plenty of time to reflect on his actions and to wonder about the reason for God's silence towards him.

**Gen 17:1** *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. 2 "And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly."*

- After 13 years God appeared to Abram again... **Gen 17:3** *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. 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."*

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- The name Abram, literally meaning ‘high father’ in the sense of being honored is the name associated with Abram’s first birth and with his years in Ur of the Chaldeans. A name then that has to do with the man of the flesh.
- The name Abraham literally means ‘father of a multitude’ – the sand on the seashore, the stars in the heavens. This is the name that has to do with the man of the spirit, the one who will receive the promises.
- In changing Abram’s name at this point the Lord draws attention to the composition of the eternally saved individual, just as we had seen earlier.
- It was Abram who was the father of Ishmael, but Abraham who was the father of Isaac, the son of promise. And only the descendants of Abraham will receive the promised inheritance.
- But, as we will know, although the new name Abraham is now his, Abram still exists. And the continuing existence of Abram we can see 3 Chapters further on in the incident with Abimelech –

***Gen 20:1 And Abraham journeyed from there to the South, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur, and stayed in Gerar. 2 Now Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah*** (Remember a similar incident when they had gone down to Egypt)

- The changing of a name is something we also see with Abraham’s grandson Jacob –  
***Gen 32:28 And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed."***  
Jacob = ‘supplanter’ or ‘deceiver’ – again associated with the man of the flesh, whereas the new name, Israel means ‘**he who will rule with God**’. It is only the man of the spirit who can operate in this realm. But again, although Israel will rule with God, Jacob still existed and in one sense still exists even today as the nation remains in disobedience and unfaithfulness.
- Having changed Abram’s name to Abraham the Lord then gives Abraham the sign of the covenant He had made with him - ***Gen 17:7 "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. 10 "This is My covenant which you shall keep, you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child***

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*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.*

✓ **Please note:** The sign of the covenant is for Abraham and his descendants not Abram and his descendants. It is Isaac not Ishmael who is to have the inheritance.

- The physical descendants of Abraham and Isaac through Jacob and the 12 sons still possess the sign of the covenant through circumcision, but it is not the physical sign of itself that is the guarantee of the inheritance –

**Rom 2:28** *For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; **29** but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.*

**Rom. 4:9** *Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. **10** How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised. **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, **12** and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised. **13** For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.*

- And, of course a name change was also necessary for Sarai, the mother of the son of promise – **Gen. 17:15** *Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. **16** "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 = ‘head person’ – Sarah = ‘Princess’, Literally ‘female noble’.

- ❖ Despite these extraordinary events, Abraham still saw with his natural eyes - **Gen 17:17** *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?" **18** And Abraham said to God, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!" **19** 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.*



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- Abraham looked at his own age and Sarah's age and the physical impossibility of producing a child in that context and so looked again to Ishmael, 'Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!'. But God is very clear, 'NO' – Sarah will bear a son and this son will be called Isaac and God's everlasting covenant will be made with Isaac and his descendants after him. **That which God has purposed is the only possibility.**
- What Abraham had yet to realize is that, promise and inheritance are within the Divine remit alone. And here is a valuable lesson for us to learn - ***Phil 2:12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.***
- ❖ Keeping what we have learnt about the name change in mind, let's see the Lord's words to the church of Pergamos in – ***Rev. 2:17 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it."*** This is one of the seven overcomers' promises in Rev. 2 & 3.
- All of those found worthy at the Judgment Seat who will rule with Christ in His Kingdom must receive a new name, a name associated with the man of the spirit. To say this in a personal way, Eunice Mungai can have no inheritance in the coming Kingdom – this is the name associated with my first birth, the man of the flesh and as such has no part in the purpose of God. But, in that future day there will be a new name, a name connected directly to the man of the spirit. And it will be the bearer of this new name who will receive an inheritance.
- This would make perfect sense – if the sin nature is eradicated through the salvation of the soul, so will all of that attached to the sin nature, symbolized in our given name - ***1Cor.15:46 However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. 47 The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. 48 As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. 49 And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man. 50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.***
- And so, we may look forward to bearing the image of the heavenly Man and the new name that will accompany it. **Amen!!!**

## Questions

## **IN THE BEGINNING – Part 10**

1. Read Genesis 15:17-20 – What is significant about God cutting a covenant with Abraham and which scripture did we look at that talks about this?

2. Read Romans 8:28-30 – how should we understand these verses in relation to Abraham's life and what do they tell us of our own experience?

3. What did the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham depend upon?

4. What does God tell us about Ishmael in Genesis 16:12 – and how should we understand this in relation to Abraham's physical descendants?

5. Read Genesis 17:1-8 – How many years were there between the birth of Ishmael and when God spoke again to Abram? What do we know of Abram's life during these years?

a. Why does God change Abram's name to Abraham and what now happens to Abram?

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b. Where else do we see a name change like this?

c. Read Revelation 2:17 – How should we now understand this verse and which scripture did we look at in connection to this?

6. Read Genesis 17:7-11 – What does God do in these verses and why does He do it?

a. Read Romans 2:28-29 and Romans 4:9-13 – What do we learn from these verses?

7. Read Genesis 17:15-19 – Why was it necessary to change Sarai's name?

a. Where did Abraham still look with respect to a child and why did he do that?

b. What is God's response?

c. What lesson did Abraham still need to learn and what insight can we gain from this for ourselves?