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Genesis 17

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Genesis 17.

Topics.

- God tells Abram that he will be the father of a multitude of nations.
- God changes Abrams name to Abraham and says kings will come from him.
- God tells Abram that circumcision will be a sign of the everlasting covenant.
- God changes Sarai's name to Sarah and says kings shall come from her.
- God told Abraham, Sarah will bear him a son and he laughed.
- God tells Abram Ishmael will be father of twelve princes and a great nation.
- God will establish His covenant with Isaac and then goes up from Abraham.
- Abraham, all the males of his household and Ishmael are circumcised

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

The previous chapter: the focus of chapter sixteen was firstly upon Sarai giving Hagar to Abram as a wife and Hagar giving birth to Ishmael and fleeing from Sari and secondly, upon the angel of the LORD telling Hagar, to return to Sari and promising her that Ishmael's offspring would be so numerous no one would be able to count them.

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THE RENEWAL OF GOD'S PROMISE TO ABRAM

GENESIS 17:1-4

Abram will be the Father of a Multitude of Nations.

- **Genesis 17:1-4:** When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless (be thou perfect in KJV), ²that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly." ³Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, ⁴"Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations.

The LORD appeared to Abram: (v1) whether the LORD appeared to Abram in visible form as an angel, by His presence or as an angelic man as he did to others in the Old Testament or in some other form we are not told, but whatever form it was Abram had absolutely no doubt he was with the LORD which signifies that there was some visible manifestation of God's Shekinah and brilliant radiance shining around him.

I am the Almighty God: (v1) the word Almighty comes from the Hebrew word (*Shadday*) it literally means Almighty, it carries the idea of being powerful impregnable and able to destroy and utterly lay waste. God in this verse comes from the Hebrew word (*'el*) shortened from the Hebrew word (*'ayil*) it literally means strength, mighty one, powerful one (especially the Almighty), but can also be used for any deity, god or great idol. The title, "The Almighty God," in Greek comes from the Hebrew word (*pantokrator*) it literally means, the the all-ruling One, God as the absolute and universal sovereign, Almighty and Omnipotent God.

The universal and general worldwide title of the Almighty and Most High God is El shaddai which carries the following ideas:

- The Holy unchangeable, lasting, eternal Almighty God.
- The creator of all things and source of all life.
- The all sufficient God who stands sufficient in Himself with no need of anything from another.
- The deliver from sin and death and author of eternal life.
- The One who has absolute power, to cause to flourish or lay waste.
- The sovereign God who wills and to destroy sin and build up holiness.

The title God as used by Christian's today, embraces all the above titles, attributes and powers. It was by the name, "I am the almighty God," (v1) that God chose to make Himself known to Abram, Isaac, and Jacob, rather than by His name the LORD (Jehovah in KJV).

- I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them (by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them, in KJV) (Exod. 6:3).

God Almighty: in this verse comes from the Hebrew word (*'el, Shadday*) its core meaning is powerful and mighty.

LORD (Jehovah in KJV): in this verse comes from the Hebrew word (*Y^ehovah*) its core meaning is the self-Existent and Eternal One. The difference between knowing God as LORD and knowing Him as Jehovah can be explained in the following way: to know God as LORD seems to carry the idea of and individual knowing Him personally in their life and seeing him personally working for them in contrast to Jehovah carrying the idea of God working for them collectively as a nation or as being the God over the entire universe. An example of this would be religious people who intellectually know that God (Jehovah) is the creator and source of all life and know that He has the power to judge to condemnation or to eternal life, but do not know Him in their lives, their belief is intellectual and traditional. In contrast to this knowing God as LORD embraces those who not only know God as Jehovah, but also know Him personally as a God who cares and works for them as an individual and knows and is aware of His love and grace dwelling in their inner most being.

Walk before me, and be blameless: (Gen. 17 v1) (be thou perfect in KJV), these commands carry the following ideas:

- To set God always before us, and to think, and speak, and act in everything as those that are always under His eye.
- To live with God's word as our rule, and to bring honour to His name in all we say and do, in contrast to bringing dishonour and disgrace.
- To be completely devoted to God and be spiritually sincere in all acts of worship, praise and prayer and honest in all duties and services of faith.
- To faithfully walk in all God's, commandments, laws and ordinances.
- To live with the continual realization that we are continually in God's presence.
- To love God and joyfully and wilfully serve Him.

Jesus summed up the words, "Walk before me, and be blameless and perfect," with the following commandment:

- You shall love your neighbour as yourself. (Mark 12:28-31)

To, "Love your neighbour as yourself," means do not deliberately do harm to other humans. No sane person deliberately does things to inflict pain on themselves, loving others as you love yourself is not about feeling some warm and fuzzy emotion towards others, it is about not hurting others as you would not hurt yourself. James the brother of Jesus calls Jesus command, "Love your neighbour as yourself," the royal law (James 2:8). The thing God hates the most is when we deliberately do harm to another person, physically, financially, sexually, emotionally or spiritually and the thing God loves the most is when we do-good to others. It is interesting to notice that the major crime that God points out in Noah's time and one of the main reasons for the flood was because of all the violence in the land.

- Micah wrote: "What the LORD requires of mankind is to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with their God" (Micah 6:5-10).
- Isaiah says: "The LORD loves justice, hates robbery and wrong doing" (Isaiah 61:8).
- Jeremiah said: "Those who know God practise steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, because it is in these things that God delights" (Jer. 9:24).

The great prophets Micah, Isaiah and Jeremiah clearly show the law is about doing-good to others and protecting them from harm and hurt. The spirit under-pinning the Ten Commandments, is love because each law protects another human from harm. In the book of Romans Paul states:

- Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (Romans 13:10).

The spirit of the law is to protect the innocent from all types of harm and hurt. Those who belong to Christ aim to keep the law not to get saved, but because it honours God and brings a good testimony to the name of Jesus and the Christian faith and because it is the right and loving thing to do. They not only understand that righteousness that leads to eternal life is a free gift of God that comes through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and cannot be earned by self-effort, but also know that from the love of God dwelling within their heart and displayed on the bloodstained cross of Calvary they are called to live a lifestyle that honours the King and Saviour they worship and follow.

Jesus famous Sermon on the Mount: the constant theme throughout Jesus famous Sermon on the Mount is doing what is right before God by seeking the way of peace in all situations. Jesus calls Christians to treat people fairly and with respect, dignity, decency grace compassion, kindness, mercy and to be quick to forgive. This means living a life that honours God and the Lord Jesus Christ is about doing right to those in the church and those outside of it. This is the reason the message Jesus spoke on the mountain is referred to as, "The Famous Sermon" because the principals if followed not only by Christians, but all humanity are the only way to peace (Matt 5). Based on the commandment, love your neighbour as yourself and the law it could be said that a wicked and evil person is one who deliberately and consciously denies the existence of God and deliberately does harm to other humans. For further information on Jesus Famous Sermon see:

- Matthew 5 in, Commentary NT (ON WEBSITE MENU).

This is what it means to, "Walk before God, and be blameless and perfect," it is a life, spent in continual consciousness of being naked and opened before the eyes of God to who we all have to give account and endeavouring to do all we can to bring honour to His name.

What is does not mean: the call to walk before God, and be blameless and perfect, does not mean walk without sin, if anyone of us could attain to that perfect standard Jesus died for no reason, the Lord Jesus Christ didn't give his life up to a brutal, bloody and cruel death on the cross of Calvary so that we could attain to the perfect standard the law demands

and to God's perfect Holiness and live totally free of sin, but because we couldn't, if we could his death serves no purpose. However even though to walk before God completely free of sin is not attainable in this life, our heartfelt desire and aim should be to attain to the unattainable all the while knowing when we fall short, God's grace in Christ covers. All our actions, behaviour and speech should be set upon a heartfelt aim to satisfy God's gaze.

My covenant is with you, you will be the father of nations: (Gen. 17:2-4) this is not a new covenant, but a repeating and confirmation of the original covenant (Gen. 12:1-7), However there are two differences here in this covenant:

1. The covenant is now sealed by the change of Abram's name to Abraham which literally means father of a multitude. Since it is God Himself who changed Abraham's name it not only acts as an outward testimony of the promise God made to Abraham and to his offspring, but also as a testimony to all the world.
2. The content of the covenant is identical with the previous promise in that the land is to belong to Abram's offspring and his offspring will be very numerous. But there is new emphasis placed on God's relationship to Abram's descendants in that God promises to be a God to him and to his offspring after him, saying, "I will be their God" (Gen. 17 v7-8).

Abraham's promised offspring is the promised seed of the woman spoken of in (Gen 3:14-15) that will crush the serpents head. This promised seed is of course Israel's Messiah, the Christ and all the faithful in him. When we cast our eyes upon the bloodstained cross of Calvary and see that through it God takes us for his very own, we get a glimpse into the depths of His heart, His love, His mercy and His grace and discover the most glorious eternal truth, "we are His possession, precious to Him above all the riches of earth and the wonders and glories of heaven!"

GENESIS 17:5-8

Abrams name is Changed to Abraham; Kings will come from Him.

- **Genesis 17:5-8:** 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. ⁶I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. ⁷And 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. ⁸And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God."

No longer shall your name be called Abram: (v5) the name Abraham literally means, "Father of a multitude," it embraces God's promise to him. Ponder for a moment how Abraham's name would sound to those in his household, he is close to being one hundred years old, and from now on, against all signs of outward reality, those in his household are going to be calling him father of many nations (summed up in the name Abraham). Regardless of the impossibility of such a thing happening and the jokes that may have been made before him and behind his back Abraham by faith embraced the full meaning of the name and wore it as a crown of honour in the same way that Christians should wear the name of Jesus as their crown.

They shall be my people: the content of the first covenant God made with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-7) is repeated here with the addition, "And they shall be My people," there is no greater words in the Bible than these. God makes a people His own but to become God's own people we must yield ourselves to Him. When we give our heart, mind up to Him and surrender our will to His will we make Him our God and make ourselves

His people. When we give ourselves over to God and allow Him to have authority over us rather than being our own masters, we will find new life blossoms in our inner most being and will continue to flourish as we grow in love with Him.

I will make you into nations and kings shall come from you: (v6) despite the many amazing prophecies such as this one throughout the Old Testament many believe there is no evidence to prove the truth that the Bible is the inspired word of God. The reality is that even though there is much outward evidence to prove the Bible (i.e., archeology, history, evidences of sin in the world etc.), it does not need any of them to prove it is God's word, since it proves itself by the many perfectly fulfilled prophecies such as this one. Both secular History and the Bible show that multitudes of nations and kings came from the offspring of Abraham.

Prophecy and visions: on the Mount of Transfiguration (God's holy mountain) Peter, James and John saw Jesus transfigured before them with his face shining like the sun and his clothes as white as light. Then they see Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus with a bright cloud overshadowing them and heard a voice from the cloud saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." (Matt. 17:1-5). This would have to be one of the most amazing experiences with Christ in the Bible, yet Peter wrote:

- We have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, ²⁰knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. ²¹For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:19-21).

Peter is saying that as fantastic as it was for him, James and John to be on God's Holy Mountain and see the Majestic Glory as they did, they do not rest their faith on it, but rather on the prophetic word of God. This is because prophecies such as the one recorded in this chapter proves that the Scriptures could not have been written by anyone with the limitations of a mortal mind, without being inspired by and influenced by the Spirit of the Alpha and Omega who planned and purposed the course of the world according to His eternal foreknowledge before time began and therefore knows all things from beginning to end before they come to pass.

I will establish my everlasting covenant between me and you and your offspring: (v7) it is important to understand that the true promised seed of Abraham is Christ and that all the faithful in Christ are the offspring of Abram which means that the promises to Israel are now fulfilled in Christ therefore they are not limited to Israel only, but extend and embrace all those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is because God is now creating one new nation in Christ made up of both Jews and Gentiles. (Gentiles are everyone who is not a Hebrew or Jew). This means that Jews and Gentiles become one new nation in Christ (also called a new man in Christ, a new creation in Christ, the church, the body of Christ and the Kingdom of God). The Apostle Paul said:

- Remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision (Jews), which is made in the flesh by hands— ¹²remember that you (Gentiles) were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the *COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL* and *STRANGERS* to the *COVENANTS OF PROMISE*, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you (Gentiles) who once were far off (from God) have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our (Jews and Gentiles) peace, who has made us both *ONE* and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he (Jesus) might create in himself *ONE NEW MAN* (or Nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles), so making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile us (Jews and Gentiles) both to God in *ONE BODY* through the cross, thereby killing the hostility (between the Jews and Gentiles). ¹⁷And he (Jesus) came and preached peace to you (Gentiles) who were far off (from God) and peace to those who were near (Jews). ¹⁸For through him (Jesus) we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access in *ONE SPIRIT* to the Father.

¹⁹So then you (Gentiles) are *NO LONGER* strangers and aliens, but you are *FELLOW CITIZENS* with the *SAINTS* (the Jews) and members of the *HOUSEHOLD* of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone ²¹in whom the *WHOLE STRUCTURE* being joined together (Jews and Gentiles) grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you (Jews and Gentiles) also are being built together into a *DWELLING PLACE* for *GOD* by the Spirit (Ephes. 2:11-22).

Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the, Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles). In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Christ is the head of this new nation and its Jewish and Gentile citizens are now equal in status before God since in Christ we are all brothers and sisters in the same eternal family that God is now establishing in the Lord Jesus Christ throughout all nations of the world. The practical application of what this means to those who belong to Christ is that all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel also apply to them. The book of Revelation states:

- When Christ returns in glory every eye will see him, even those who pierced him and all the tribes of the earth (Rev. 1:7).

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that:

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation (i.e., Jews and Gentiles) and he has made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Rev. 5:9-10).

I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of Canaan: (v8) this promise will be ultimately fulfilled when Christ returns in glory as, King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11-16) to rule and reign from God's Holy City Jerusalem (on Mount Zion God's Holy Mountain) to destroy the antichrist and his kingdom and establish God's Kingdom on earth during his glorious millennial reign. The dead in Christ (Old and New Testament) and the faithful, who are alive, will be gathered together in this first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6) to rule and reign as kings and priests with the Lord over those nations who are left outside the Holy City of God. Christ the King united with his people will not only bring peace to the Middle East, but establish God's Kingdom of steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, joy and peace throughout the world and the glory of God will cover the earth. Jesus will do justice to the poor and oppressed, he will be a faithful and compassionate King forever. He will not allow anyone to strike terror in the earth or use lies and deception to enlarge their own wealth and power. The land will abundantly produce and even the deserts will flourish. The animals will not feed on each other and even the lamb will be able to lie down with the wolf and everyone will eat of their own hands because all that they plant will produce (Isaiah 65:17-25). All nations the LORD has made will come and worship before the Lord Jesus Christ. They will glorify God's Name, proclaiming the LORD is great and does wondrous things and that He alone is God. The book of Revelation states:

- Jesus Christ, the faithful witness who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father is coming in glory and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him and all kindreds of the earth (Revelation 1:5-7).

In Revelation chapter five we are told that:

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he redeemed a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9-10).

The great prophet Isaiah wrote:

- They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:9).

It should be noted: that as glorious as Christ's millennial reign will be it is not the final stage of God's eternal plan for mankind's salvation that he planned and purposed in His eternal mind before the world began. At the end of Christ's millennial reign God descends to earth on a Great White Throne the sea, death and hades (the grave) give up the dead. They stand before God and are judged according to what is written in certain heavenly books according to what they have done. Death and those counted unworthy are cast into the lake of fire a symbol of eternal destruction (i.e., total extinction) (also called the, second death) (Rev. 20:11-15). Christ hands the Kingdom over to his heavenly Father and God is ALL in ALL and ETERNITY begins in all its eternal perfect fullness and majestic royal glory. For further information see titles:

- Kingdom of God (ON WEBSITE MENU).
- The Second Resurrection or Great White Throne Judgment.

In, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

GENESIS 17:9-14

Circumcision will be a Sign of the Everlasting Covenant.

- **Genesis 17:9-14:** And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹²He 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, ¹³both 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. ¹⁴Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."

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Every male among you shall be circumcised: (v10) all the male offspring of Abraham throughout all their generations whether born in their house or a foreigner bought with money are to be circumcised as a sign of the everlasting covenant between God and Abraham. Any male that is not circumcised is to be cast off from God's people because he has broken God's covenant. (Gen. 17:10-14). Concerning circumcision, the Bible teaches:

- Abraham took Ishmael and those born in his house and those bought with money and circumcised them on the very same day the LORD had finished talking with him. He was ninety-nine years old and Ishmael was thirteen when they were circumcised. (v23-27).
- No uncircumcised man was to eat the Passover to the LORD. (Exod. 12:48).
- Jesus was given his name by the angel before he was conceived in the womb and was circumcised at the end of eight days. (Luke 2:21).
- The gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out on uncircumcised Gentiles. (Acts 10:45).
- God will justify the circumcised and the uncircumcised by faith. (Rom. 3:30).

The gift of righteousness: is for the circumcised and the uncircumcised. Abraham received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he already had by faith while he was uncircumcised. The purpose for this was to make Abraham the father of the circumcised and the uncircumcised that walk in the faith that he had before he was circumcised so that righteousness would be counted to all people (Jews and Gentiles)

by faith and not by works. (Rom. 4:9-12). Those who are circumcised should not seek to remove the marks of circumcision nor should anyone uncircumcised seek to be circumcised to be saved or after they are saved. (1 Cor. 7:18). Those who do seek salvation by being circumcised (or by keeping any other religious ceremony) are obligated to keep the whole law (Galatians 5:2-3). Striving to earn salvation by circumcision or by any other religious works annihilates the cross of Christ, and overthrows the whole message of his grace and therefore the Lord Jesus Christ is of no advantage to anyone who seeks to be saved by being circumcised or by adhering to any other religious ceremony or religious practice. Circumcision in the Old Testament made with human hands symbolised the following two things:

1. It was an outward ordinance that signified that those who were circumcised were devoted to God.
2. It outwardly signified that all sin was cut off.

The circumcision of Christ,” (Col. 2:11) Circumcision in the New Testament made without human hands is called, “The circumcision of Christ,” (Col. 2:11). This refers to the internal, spiritual putting off the whole spiritual body of the flesh (i.e., the corrupt nature) and all the sins that flow out from it in contrast to outwardly putting off of a little skin. This inner spiritual circumcision is obtained by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and believing the Gospel. All in Christ are spiritually circumcised at their conversion and baptism. This spiritual circumcision of the heart brings about a personal fellowship with Christ which also brings about God’s forgiveness and imputed righteousness. It is a circumcision of the heart that comes about when a sinner perceives the iniquity dwelling within and all that is wrong before God is laid open; they are convinced that they fall far short of God’s Holiness and the heart is cut and broken, because of the corruption that has been revealed to their mind. With this insight the sinner humbles themselves before God; repents; and by faith accepts the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour and trusts in his righteousness to save them and not their own self-righteousness. Those who have found Christ in this manner, and find that they have a natural loathing and abhorrence toward sin and those things that are an offense to God, can rightly and truly say Christ has circumcised their heart. In conclusion the apostle Paul wrote:

- There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. (Col. 3:11).

Here Paul is shining a spotlight upon the truth that in Christ circumcision counts for nothing.

GENESIS 17:15-16

Sarai’s name is Changed to Sarah; and Kings shall come from Her.

- **Genesis 17:15-16:** And God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. ¹⁶I 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."

Sari, means a head person of any rank or class it can refer to a chief or captain that had rule, a general, a governor, a lord, a master or prince, while Sarah refers to a mistress, especially a female noble lady, a princess or queen. Sarai is now formally taken into the covenant, as she is to be the mother of the promised seed.

The assurance of this promise was the change of Sarai's name into Sarah and the change of Abram’s own name to Abraham. Long before now God had told Abraham that he would have a son, but it is only now that he tells him that the son would be by Sarai whose name will from now on be

Sarah. This fact presents a reason why Abraham may have believed that that Ishmael was to be the promised child that both Abraham and Sarah had for such a long time waited and hoped for. The following verse of Peter shows that those who are children of Abraham by faith are also children of Sarah his wife:

- Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening. (1 Peter 3:6).

Sarah shall become nations and kings shall come from her: (v16) she shall become mother of nations; of the twelve tribes of Israel; of the two nations of Israel and Judah. Kings of people shall come from her; such as King David, King Solomon, and many others and especially the King Messiah the Lord Jesus Christ.

GENESIS 17:17-19

God told Abraham, Sarah will Bear Him a Son and He Laughed.

- **Genesis 17:17-19:** Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself (said in his heart in KJV), "Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" ¹⁸And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before you!" ¹⁹God 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.

Abraham is struck with a sense of humour in his inner most being at the thought that a hundred-year-old man and a ninety-year-old woman could have a baby and thinks within himself (or better within his mind), "Can such a couple have a child?" Following are the two most common thoughts amongst commentators concerning Abraham's laughter:

1. Abraham, being so old and Sarah being past the age of bearing children doubted what God was saying and therefore laughed at the thought of it.
2. Abraham's laughter was not laughter of doubt, but of joyful and grateful surprise.

To discover which of these it may have been it helps to look at Sarah's reaction when the LORD tells her the same thing in the following verses:

- The LORD said to Abraham, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. ¹¹Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. ¹²So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?" ¹³The LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' ¹⁴Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son." ¹⁵But Sarah denied it, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid. He said, "No, but you did laugh." (Gen. 18:10-14)

If Sarah's laughter was laughter of joyful belief in what the LORD was saying she would have had no need to deny the fact she laughed, or feel a sense of guilt and fear when the LORD asked, why she laughed. Added to this, if her laugh was a laugh of absolute belief the LORD would have taken delight in it and would not have had to say, "Is anything too hard for the LORD?" (v14) or repeat the promise a second time (v14). Though Sarah doubted, no one can stand up in self-righteousness and condemn her, since we don't know in what form the LORD actually appeared to her. This story is recorded in the following chapter and in it the LORD appears as three angels appearing as men that ate with Abraham and it seems that the LORD was by His Spirit one of these angels that spoke to him. (For greater detail see the following chapter). Added to this it is certain

Abraham and Sarah had tried many times to conceive and now Sarah is past the age of bearing children and she is told she will now give birth to a son. I wonder how we might respond given the same circumstances. It is clear God wasn't offended He still exalted her above almost all women spoken of in the Bible with the exception of the Virgin Mary. With this in mind it is very likely that Abraham's laugh was very similar to the laugh of his wife Sarah. It is also most certain that the LORD knowing Abraham's and Sarah's circumstances understood their joyful doubt and felt a great delight in His heart knowing He was going to bless them with the greatest gift a woman during these ancient times could be blessed with and bless Abraham with the son and heir he had longed to have.

Oh, that Ishmael might live before you: (v18) after Abraham had finished laughing, he says to the LORD (i.e., the three men or angels), "Oh that Ishmael might live before you!" Verse one of this chapter tells us that Abraham was ninety-nine years old and in chapter sixteen we are told that he was eighty-six when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram (Gen. 16:16) which means that thirteen years passed since the birth of Ishmael to God now telling Abraham that he would have a son by Sarah. During these thirteen years God had not told Abraham that the promised child would be from Sarah which means that for thirteen years he had most likely believed that Ishmael would be the promised Child. It is also most likely that Abraham had raised Ishmael as his son and that he became very dear to Abraham's heart. With all these facts in mind it is easy to understand why he would pray to the LORD, "Oh that Ishmael might live before you," especially considering his and Sarah's age. Some suspect that God's promise to Abraham was delayed for thirteen years for the following three reasons:

1. As a punishment for Abraham's over-hasty decision in taking Hagar to wife.
2. To act as a trial and test of his faith.
3. So that God's power would be greatly magnified, by waiting until Abraham and Sarah were far past the age for bearing children.

Though the last reason is the most likely they are all speculations and therefore should not be taken too seriously.

I will establish my everlasting covenant with Isaac: (v19) here God confirms to Abraham that the spiritual blessings of the covenant are kept solely for Isaac and that he is to be the heir of promise and not Ishmael.

GENESIS 17:20

Ishmael will be Father of Twelve Princes and a Great Nation.

- **Genesis 17:20:** 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.

Ishmael shall father twelve princes and a great nation: (v20) God comforts Abraham by telling him that twelve princes will arise from Ishmael and that he will become a great nation, which he did by the nation of the Turks. In Jewish writings the Turkish Empire is frequently called the kingdom of Ishmael and the Arabic language is called the Ishmaelitish language. God also promise Abraham that Ishmael's offspring would multiply exceedingly which it did through many of the Arabian nations, the Hagarenes, Saracens and Turks, all springing from him. The Ishmaelites have continued to this day in free and undiminished possession of the extensive peninsula between the Euphrates, the Straits of Suez, and the Red Sea, from which they have overspread both Northern Africa and Southern Asia. The names of the twelve princes of Ishmael are recorded in (Gen. 25:12-18). (They are Nebaioth, Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah).

God will establish His Covenant with Isaac.

- **Genesis 17:21-22:** But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year." ²²When he had finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.

Immediately after the LORD had finished telling ninety-nine-year-old Abraham and eighty-nine-year-old Sarah that she would give birth to Isaac next year and that He would establish His covenant with him God leaves them.

GENESIS 17:23-27

Abraham, all the Males and Ishmael are Circumcised.

- **Genesis 17:23-27:** 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. ²⁴Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. ²⁵And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. ²⁶That very day Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised. ²⁷And all the men of his house, those born in the house and those bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.

Abraham did not ask why, but immediately acted as soon as God had left him, it was an complete act of complete obedience he did exactly as God had said to him, he and all male members of his family were circumcised distinguishing themselves from all other families that had no part in the covenant of promise. For further information concerning circumcision, see the title: "Every male among you shall be circumcised," following (Genesis 17:9-14) (above).

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.
