

## New Names and A Sign: The Promise Affirmed

### Genesis 17.1-27

It's been thirteen years since Ishmael was born; he's now a teenager. Abram has his heir, so he thinks: God has other plans. Abram is 99; Sarai is 89. Having a child together is, well, *impossible!* With new names, and a new sign, God affirms His amazing promise.

#### A New Name: Abraham – *Father of a Multitude* (1-8)

*Abram=exalted father (lineage); Abraham=father of a multitude (progeny).  
A new name signifies God's pledge to fulfill His promises.*

#### A New Sign: Circumcision: *A physical sign of the Covenant* (9-14)

*Circumcision reminded Israel of God's covenant promise to multiply them.  
Obedience to this sign reflected faith in God and His promises.*

#### A New Name: Sarah – *A mother of nations* (15-22)

*Sarah will bear the covenant son, Isaac, at the age of 90.  
Abraham shows worship...and incredulity!*

#### A Faith Response: Abraham obeys command to circumcise (23-27)

#### Lessons for Today

- Be patient: God wants to do amazing things in your life.
- God's pledge secures His promise to us; our obedience secures our fellowship with Him.
- God's promise that kings would come from Abraham points to Messiah Jesus – King of kings and Lord of lords!

God makes the  
impossible possible.



## Digging Deeper

1. The name for God in Genesis 17.1, *El Shaddai*, is translated *God Almighty*. This name appears four times in Genesis; read each verse in its context (17.1-2; 28.3; 35.11; 48.3-4). What is God promising in every context? How might God be revealing Himself to His people in this name?
2. Gen.17.1-22 is a single scene: It begins when God appears to *Abram* (1) and ends when God 'goes up' from *Abraham* (22). Except for Abraham's stunned response in verses 17-18, God does all the talking. In the first 'act' of this drama (1-8), God gives Abram a new name. What did *Abram* mean, and how did the name *Abraham* reflect God's covenant promise? What new information about the covenant does God provide in v6?
3. In the second 'act' (verses 9-14), God gives circumcision as the sign of the covenant. What is the significance of circumcision? How would it be a reminder to all Abraham's descendants of the promises God made to them (cf. v2)?
4. God's covenant promises to Abraham were *unconditional* (see 15.12-21); circumcision was not *required* for them to happen. But while God is faithful and keeps His promises, only those who obeyed this command would enjoy its provisions. What would happen to those who ignored this command (14)? How does this experience reflect our Christian lives? Is it possible for us to be eternally saved, yet fail to enjoy the provisions of new life in Christ?
5. The third 'act' (15-22) is where God 'really shines'! He has left the best till last – the *impossible*: Sarah will give birth to a son. What emotions do you see in Abraham's response (17-18)?
6. Gen.17.23-27 records Abraham's response to God's commands to him concerning circumcision. What words would you use to describe Abraham's obedience? What does his obedience show about his faith in God? How does your obedience to God reflect your faith in Him?