

## The Full and Final Disclosure

- \* Verses 4-22 are the heart of the narrative
  - ◆ All that God has been saying and promising comes to a head in this [FULL AND FINAL DISCLOSURE](#) .. except for 1 timing detail in 18:10
- \* It is one long “discourse” from God .. with one short “interruption” from Abram
- \* There is a key little phrase that unlocks the structure of the discourse .. what is it?
  - ◆ “AS FOR ...”
  - ◆ Note vv. 4, 9, 15, 20

## Structure of vv. 4-22

- \* As for ME .. God’s part — v. 4-8
- \* As for You .. Abraham’s part — v. 9-14
- \* As for Sarai .. Sarai’s part — v. 15-19
- \* As for Ishmael .. Ishmael’s part — v. 20-21

## “As For ME”

- \* Not only a great nation .. But a MULTITUDE OF NATIONS
- \* Therefore .. You need a new name — v. 5
  - ◆ No longer אֱלֹהִים — “Exalted Father”
  - ◆ Now אֱלֹהֵינוּ — “Father of a Multitude”
  - ◆ Note the past tense .. I **have made** you — it’s a done deal
    - With God, what is said is as good a done!
- \* Fruitful (echoes of Gen 1:28) and Nations reinforced — v. 6
- \* What else is revealed in v. 6?
  - ◆ Kings — Davidic Covenant will further define this

## “As For ME”

- \* An everlasting covenant .. “generation by generation” — v. 7
  - ◆ Nothing new here w/r/t “eternity” of the covenant
- \* What is new in v. 7?
  - ◆ God [BINDS, OR PLEDGES, HIMSELF](#) to Abraham and His descendants
    - First “hint” of CORPORATE ELECTION ... though Israel as God’s chosen nation is not explicitly stated until later (Deut 7:6)
  - ◆ God will have an eternal and special relationship with Israel
- \* What other nation(s) does God do this with?
  - ◆ NONE!!

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## “As For ME”

- \* Reconfirms the land promise — v. 8a
- \* Re-asserts His special relationship with the nation — v. 8b
- \* God closes out His part of the final disclosure with the fullest description of the promised descendants (note the plural) and the land promises
  - ◆ We see again that either the [land](#) or the [descendants](#) is front and center in the the Abraham narrative

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## “As For You”

- \* Now we get to Abraham’s part ...
- \* What in the world is going on in v. 9-II? Is God making a covenant w/in the covenant?
  - ◆ NOOOOO
  - ◆ Abram is given a [sign of identification](#) and a [perpetual reminder](#)
  - ◆ I know the answer is simple, but reconciling that with what the text says baffled me for a while ...

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## “As For You”

- \* The “perpetual reminder” part is pretty easy ... the physical mark is a visible one
- \* The “sign of identification” part is a bit harder to work out ...
- \* I’m beholden to “Bible Speaks Today” commentary on the OT — does the best job that I found among all resources I studied
  - ◆ Clear and simple explanation .. others make it overly technical & complex, with far too much symbolism (IN MY OPINION)

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## “As For You”

- \* **First, what is it NOT .. and why?**
  - ◆ It cannot be a condition of fulfillment of the A.C.
  - ◆ Because that was “unilaterally ratified” by God in Gen 15:7-21 — Abraham had no part in its fulfillment
  - ◆ And a covenant, once ratified CANNOT BE CHANGED
- \* **So .. what is it at a high level?**
  - ◆ A visible sign .. for all generations .. to unconditionally express their commitment to God, as their God, and to the blessings bestowed by the A.C.

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## “As For You”

- \* **What NT parallel might you point to?**
  - ◆ Baptism
- \* Circumcision is SIMILAR to a NT believer’s baptism, **BUT**
  - ◆ It is NOT a type — the correspondence is far from perfect!
  - ◆ Nor is it justification for “infant baptism”
- \* Its similarity is found in one’s public commitment to God
  - ◆ Baptism is a PUBLIC DECLARATION of your PRIVATE DECISION to place your faith in Christ. You are ASSOCIATING yourself WITH CHRIST and His covenant community .. THE CHURCH

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## “As For You”

- \* So also with circumcision ..
- \* By submitting to circumcision Abraham, his descendants and his household ...
  - ◆ Made a [PUBLIC AFFIRMATION](#) to unconditionally commit themselves to [GOD AS THEIR GOD](#) and to [HIS COVENANT PROMISES](#) and ...
  - ◆ By their affirmation they participate in what God has committed to do for them in the A.C. — that is “the covenant blessings”
- \* OK .. that was a mouthful. What questions do you have?

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## “As For You”

- \* Four KEY things to remember ...
  - ◆ Committing themselves to God and His promises [DID NOT SAVE THEM !!!!!](#) .. just as baptism does not save us
    - Gen 15:6 says that righteous came by means of belief ...
    - Which Paul makes unmistakably clear in Rom 4:1ff
  - ◆ Circumcision communicated and sealed God's promises to the recipient
  - ◆ The obligation to circumcise rested with the patriarch of the family!

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## “As For You”

- ◆ Women .. daughters/wives .. were not excluded — they participated by virtue of their position in the ANE family hierarchy
- \* So .. in vv. 9-11 we have the [practice](#) (using “our” language you could say [ordinance](#)) of circumcision
  - ◆ It's essential importance is the voluntary expression of their [UNION](#) with God's covenant with Abraham
- \* In vv. 12-13 we get the particulars of circumcision
  - ◆ Namely .. who and when

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## “As For You”

- \* Who shall be circumcised
  - ◆ Every male .. in perpetuity (i.e. “throughout your generations”)
  - ◆ Without distinction ...
    - ▶ Those born in your house
      - ◆ Your direct line
      - ◆ The children of those you have acquired
    - ▶ Anyone acquired BY your house

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## “As For You”

- \* When shall they be circumcised
  - ◆ When they are 8-days old .. in other words, infants
  - ◆ Which .. BTW .. further affirms that the essence of circumcision is to confirm what God is saying/doing for them because the infant has no “say” in the matter!!
- \* Verse 14 identifies a penalty for disobedience
  - ◆ Somewhat akin to the NT idea of church discipline

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## As For Sarai

- \* I think these verses are very interesting ...
  - ◆ Because we know the rest of the story .. we can easily overlook the significance of vv. 15-21
- \* But NOT Abraham and Sarai ...
  - ◆ I'm guessing they both thought they had the heir in Ishmael
- \* So this revelation probably comes as a shock
  - ◆ REMEMBER .. it's been 13 years since Ishmael's birth
  - ◆ Abraham & Sarai were both nothing but older .. and less likely to have a child — “humanly speaking!”
  - ◆ No record of any other “adventure” to procure an heir on their terms

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## As For Sarai

- \* So now we come to part three of the full and final disclosure — Sarai's part
  - ◆ Note .. though the target of the revelation is Sarai, God speaks to Abraham
  - ◆ Note further .. Up to this point, Sarai has received no promises
- \* Therefore, what comes next is astonishing in many ways!!

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## As For Sarai

- \* Like Abraham, Sarai gets a new name .. Sarah
  - ◆ No new meaning — just a “modernized” Hebrew form
- \* She will be blessed .. **What are her blessings?**
  - ◆ She will bear a son
  - ◆ Nations and kings shall come from her
- \* **How does Abram respond?**
  - ◆ First in awe and worship again — cf. v. 3

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## As For Sarai

- ◆ Next with astonishment
  - Nervous “expectant” laughter .. not unbelief or cynicism
- ◆ Then with human logic posed as rhetorical questions to himself —
  - Essentially .. “This can't be possible — can it?”
- ◆ Finally with intercession for Ishmael
  - Abraham is either trying to redirect God to the path of his logical thought .. and test God (unbelief/confirmation?)
  - or,

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## As For Sarai

- ▶ He believes God and is interceding for Ishmael's care — **WHICH IS IT?**
- ◆ I REALLY DON'T KNOW .. could be both, but I lean towards intercession for three reasons
  - ▶ First, because God does not chastise Abraham for his laughter and internal doubts .. as He will later w/Sarah
  - ▶ Second, because God honors the request in v. 20
  - ▶ Third, intercession, and care, for others is consistent with Abraham's character — which we will see further in Gen 18

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## As For Sarai

- \* Sarah's part ends with God's reply — **What is the nature of His reply to Abraham?**
  - ◆ He gives Abraham concrete & detailed assurance
    - ▶ Confirms a son by Sarah herself
    - ▶ Gives the boy a name — Isaac .. means "He laughs," indicating that God knew Abraham's secret thoughts (i.e. v. 17 .. "and said in his heart")
    - ▶ **MOST IMPORTANT:** God indicates that Isaac will inherit the A.C. — he is **THE SEED** line

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## As For Ishmael

- \* God heard Abraham's intercession and blessed Ishmael ... **With what?**
  - ◆ He will be fruitful and multiply
  - ◆ His progeny will yield 12 princes
    - ▶ Likely clans/families/tribes .. not "countries"
  - ◆ And he will be a great **NATION** (note the singular)
- \* **Now, what is the point of v. 21?**

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## As For Ishmael

- ◆ God chooses Isaac over Ishmael w/r/t His covenant promises — Which is an early form of what Biblical doctrine?
  - ▶ INDIVIDUAL ELECTION
- ◆ Interesting chapter — the “germs” of both corporate and individual election are revealed
- \* God chooses according to his good pleasure and sovereign will
- \* Ishmael received covenant blessings ... BUT Isaac received the covenant promises

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## As For Ishmael

- \* Based on God's choice, will we see Ishmael in heaven?
  - ◆ Trick question!
  - ◆ Salvation is based on belief — has nothing to do with either the covenant promises or the covenant blessings
  - ◆ If Ishmael believed — we will see him; if not — we won't ... Bible doesn't tell us either way

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## As For Ishmael

- \* What about Isaac — will we see him?
  - ◆ I say yes — How might I support that from the Bible?
    - ▶ Go to Gen 22:6ff
    - ▶ And also Exod 3:6, cited by Christ in Matt 22:32
- \* God had a lot to say in this final and full disclosure of the A.C.!!!!!!

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## Abraham's Obedience

- \* God finished his revelation and left abruptly, just as with His arrival in v. 1 — v. 22
- \* Abraham .. as before ..did what God said — vv. 23-27
  - ◆ IMMEDIATELY ... and
  - ◆ COMPLETELY
- \* Despite the exclusiveness of v. 21, Gen 17 ends on a note of inclusiveness w/r/t to God's blessings
  - ◆ Abraham circumcises his entire household ...

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## Studies in Genesis

The Life of Abraham (Gen 18-25)

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## Roadmap

- \* The Friend of God - Gen 18
- \* A Monument to God's Justice - Gen 19
- \* Our Susceptibility to Besetting Sin - Gen 20
- \* The Promise, The Problem, The Patriarch - Gen 21
- \* The Mother of All Tests - Gen 22
- \* The Road Ahead - Gen 23-25:18

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# Genesis 18

ABRAHAM — THE FRIEND OF GOD

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## The Friend of God

- \* Gen 18 pictures the “Intimacies of Divine Fellowship”
- \* And ... It illuminates the progression of Abraham’s relationship with God
- \* There are 4 perquisites of Divine Fellowship that provide our outline for this chapter — Divine Fellowship ...
  - ◆ Enjoys God’s fellowship — vv. 1-8
  - ◆ Receives God’s blessings — 9-15
  - ◆ Hears God’s inner thoughts — vv. 16-21
  - ◆ Has God’s “ear” — vv. 22-33

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## Enjoys God’s Fellowship

- \* Verses 1-5 set the context for chapter 18
  - ◆ We .. the readers .. are informed that God has come to see Abraham
  - ◆ The scene takes place during “siesta time” ...
  - ◆ Three visitors appear in the form of men
    - Don’t overplay the word “appear” .. they didn’t arrive out of nowhere!!
    - The word emphasizes that they were real, live people ... not some vision or dream

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## Fellowship .. Continued

- ◆ Abraham greets them with customary ANE hospitality
  - Hastens (i.e. runs) to greet them
  - Extends a “formal invitation” ... If I have found favor in your sight, do not (emphatic) pass by your servant
  - Invitation is to refresh themselves ... “a foot-bath” and “a snack” ... which in ANE custom is an elaborate meal!
  - The invitation is accepted
- \* Not completely clear that Abraham knows who he is entertaining, but I lean toward “he does”

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## Fellowship .. Continued

- \* Verses 6–8 commence the plot line of the story
  - ◆ Note — Sarah is not part of the greeting party ... she is in the tent (remember this)
  - ◆ Abraham instructs her to prepare bread
  - ◆ Next, he instructs one of his servants to prepare some “Prime Veal”
  - ◆ Abraham serves his guests, but does not eat with them

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## Receives God’s Blessing

- \* Four interesting things are revealed in this section ... what are they?
  - ◆ God reveals Himself by His attributes (more on this later)
  - ◆ God reveals when the heir will arrive
  - ◆ God reveals that Sarah will be the child’s mother
  - ◆ God reveals the character of Sarah’s faith
- \* What is interesting about the question in v. 9?
  - ◆ How do they know Abraham has a wife ... and more pointedly, her name??

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## Blessing .. Continued

- ◆ Should be a hint to Abraham he is in the presence of God
- \* God finally tells Abraham when the boy will arrive ... **by this time next year!**
- \* AND ... That Sarah will be his mother
- \* We are reminded of their advanced ages in v. 11, followed by Sarah's response
- \* **What is right about Sarah's response?**
  - ◆ She correctly notes the impossibility of having a child "in her own strength"

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## Blessing .. Continued

- \* **What else does she get right?**
  - ◆ Her respect for her husband — "my lord"
  - ◆ OK — just teasing!! ... this is interesting, but incidental to the story
- \* **What is wrong about Sarah's response?**
  - ◆ She demonstrates **unbelief** — her laugh was different than Abraham's as her private thinking reveals

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## Blessing .. Continued

- \* **How does God address Sarah's unbelief?**
  - ◆ With two questions — sounds kind of like how Jesus met resistance and unbelief
  - ◆ And — reaffirmation
- \* **What does God demonstrate with his 1<sup>st</sup> question?**
  - ◆ His omniscience
- \* **What does God demonstrate with his 2<sup>nd</sup> question?**
  - ◆ His omnipotence

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## Blessing .. Continued

- \* God's 2<sup>nd</sup>? raises an interesting question for us
- \* Is there anything God can't do?
  - ◆ He can't lie, nor change his mind — Num 23:19
  - ◆ He can't change his promises — Heb 6:17-18
- \* What does God demonstrate with His reaffirmation?
  - ◆ That He is long-suffering.. i.e. His patience toward sinners despite their continual disobedience and disregard for His word

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## Blessing .. Continued

- \* How does Sarah compound her lack of faith?
  - ◆ She lies! ... Reminding us that unrepentant sin always leads to more sin
- \* Some implications
  - ◆ Our unbelief will not thwart God's purposes
  - ◆ Do you have the faith of Abraham - Rom 4:13-21, or Sarah?

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## Hears God's Inner Thoughts

- \* This and the next section (vv. 22-33) are fascinating
- \* In vv. 16-21 we see the next step, yet not quite the pinnacle (cf. Gen 22), in the progression of Abraham's relationship with God ... What is it?
  - ◆ A very close intimacy with God
- \* The section starts with Abraham "seeing his guests off" .. v. 16

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## Thoughts .. Continued

- \* What is the point of vv. 17-19?
  - ◆ Parenthetical soliloquy to let Abraham (and us) in on God's thinking
  - ◆ Abraham is brought into the counsel of God
- \* There is much speculation about whether Abraham heard vv. 17-19 ... I lean toward YES — God is thinking “out loud”
- \* What reasons does God give for letting Abraham in on His plans?
  - ◆ The covenant promises .. v. 18
  - ◆ The nature of His relationship .. v. 19a

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## Thoughts .. Continued

- \* What is the nature of Abraham's relationship?
  - ◆ He is “known” by God
- \* The Hebrew verb ידע is very common — 952x's in the OT
- \* Most often it simply means general knowledge
- \* However it can and is also used to reflect intimate knowledge of ...
  - ◆ Physical (sexual) intimacy — Gen 4:1, 17
  - ◆ Relational intimacy — Ps 1:6; Amos 3:2; and Gen 18:19

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## Thoughts .. Continued

- \* Abraham has a special and intimate relationship with God
- \* What does the Bible call it?
  - ◆ “His friend”
  - ◆ 2 Chron 20:7; Isa 41:8 ... literally “Abraham, Your/My love, forever
  - ◆ James 2:23

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## Thoughts .. Continued

- \* "Chosen" goes too far, even though most EV's ... except the NKJ ... translate it that way!!
  - ◆ My primary support for this is twofold ...
  - ◆ The LXX parallel is the Greek verb οἶδα .. which is never used of "election"
  - ◆ Hebrew has a particular verb for "to choose" בחר which does parallel the Greek verbs used in relation to election ...
    - Specifically ἐλέγω, προτινῶσκα
- \* In other words, I would not appeal to Gen 18:19 as a starting point for the doctrine of election — we had the seed forms last chapter

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## Thoughts .. Continued

- \* What purpose(s) are given for this intimate relationship?
  - ◆ To keep God's "ways" .. reminiscent of the Garden
    - Particularly by doing righteousness and justice (remember these two words!!)
  - ◆ To receive God's blessings
- \* Vv. 20-21 conclude with God announcing his plans

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