

Genesis 17:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.

Analysis

This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man chil... This passage is part of the Abrahamic narratives which shift from universal human history to God's particular covenant people. The Abraham cycle (Genesis 12-25) demonstrates God's sovereign election, covenant faithfulness, and the development of faith through testing and promise fulfillment.

Central themes include God's unconditional covenant promises (land, descendants, blessing to nations), the call to faith and obedience, the testing of faith through delays and impossibilities, the contrast between divine promises and human schemes, and God's gracious persistence despite human failures. Abraham emerges as the father of faith whose trust in God's promises becomes the model for all believers (Romans 4, Galatians 3, Hebrews 11).

Theologically, these narratives establish:

1. salvation by grace through faith rather than works
2. covenant as God's gracious initiative binding Himself to His people
3. the necessity of patient trust when promises seem impossible
4. the consequences of attempting to fulfill God's promises through human effort
5. the pattern of divine testing producing mature faith.

The Abraham cycle foreshadows Christ as the ultimate seed through whom blessing extends to all nations (Galatians 3:16).

Historical Context

The patriarchal narratives (Genesis 12-50) reflect the cultural, social, and legal customs of the ancient Near East during the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1500 BCE). Archaeological discoveries including the Mari tablets, Nuzi tablets, and Egyptian records confirm many details: nomadic pastoralism, covenant-making ceremonies, marriage customs, property laws, and international travel patterns described in Genesis.

The cultural practices reflected include: treaty/covenant forms (Genesis 15), bride-price customs (Genesis 24, 29), inheritance laws favoring firstborn sons (Genesis 25, 27), adoption practices (Genesis 15, 30), levirate-type arrangements (Genesis 38), and Egyptian administrative systems (Genesis 41, 47). These parallels confirm Genesis's historical reliability while showing how God worked within ancient cultural frameworks to accomplish His purposes.

For later Israelites, these narratives established their identity as Abraham's descendants, explained their claim to Canaan, justified their possession of Joseph's bones (Exodus 13:19), and provided models of faith despite imperfection. The patriarchs' failures and God's faithfulness encouraged Israel that covenant relationship depended on God's grace rather than human merit. The movement from Mesopotamia to Canaan to Egypt set the stage for the Exodus and conquest narratives.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What does this passage reveal about God's sovereignty and human responsibility?
2. How does this passage challenge modern cultural assumptions about identity, purpose, or morality?
3. How does this passage point forward to Christ and the gospel of redemption?

Interlinear Text

זֶה אֶת	בְּרִיתִי י	אֲשֶׁר	תִּשְׁמְרוּ ו	בֵּינִי	וּבֵין יֵיכֶם
H2063	This is my covenant	H834	which ye shall keep	H996	H996
	H1285		H8104		
וּבֵין י	וְרַעְיִךְ	אַחֲרַי	הֵם וְלֹא		
H996	between me and you and thy seed	after thee	among you shall be circumcised		
	H2233	H310	H4135		
כָּל	זָכָר:				
H0	H3605	Every man child			
	H2145				

Additional Cross-References

Acts 7:8 (Covenant): And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs.

Romans 3:30 (Parallel theme): Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

Genesis 17:11 (Covenant): And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.

Joshua 5:2 (Parallel theme): At that time the LORD said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time.

Philippians 3:3 (Parallel theme): For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

Ephesians 2:11 (Parallel theme): Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;

Deuteronomy 30:6 (Parallel theme): And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.

Galatians 6:12 (Parallel theme): As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.

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