

Genesis 17:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

Analysis

Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many... 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

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does understanding this verse shape our doctrine of humanity, sin, or salvation?
2. How should this truth about Isaac Promised shape our daily decisions and priorities?
3. How does this passage point forward to Christ and the gospel of redemption?

Interlinear Text

| | | | | | | |
|-------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-------|-------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| וְלֹא | יִקְרָא | אֶת | עֹד | שְׁמֶךָ | אֲבְרָם | יְהִי |
| H3808 | any more be called | H5750 | H853 | Neither shall thy name | Abram | H1961 |
| | H7121 | | | H8034 | H87 | |
| | שְׁמֶךָ | אֲבְרָם | כִּי | אֲב | הֵמָּן | גוֹיִם |
| | Neither shall thy name | shall be Abraham | H3588 | for a father | of many | nations |
| | H8034 | H85 | | H1 | H1995 | H1471 |
| | בְּתִיָּךְ: | | | | | |
| | have I made thee | | | | | |
| | H5414 | | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

Nehemiah 9:7 (References Abraham): Thou art the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham;

Genesis 17:15 (References Abraham): And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be.

Genesis 32:28 (Parallel theme): And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

Revelation 2:17 (Parallel theme): He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the

hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

Jeremiah 20:3 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass on the morrow, that Pashur brought forth Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then said Jeremiah unto him, The LORD hath not called thy name Pashur, but Magor-missabib.

Romans 4:17 (Creation): (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

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