



## Week 2

## Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

17:1 Gn 6:9,  
Gn 12:1,  
Gn 12:7,  
Dt 18:13;  
Mt 5:48

**God's covenant with Abraham**

**17**When Abram was 99 years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am El Shaddai.<sup>a</sup> Walk with me and be trustworthy. <sup>2</sup>I will make a covenant between us and I will give you many, many descendants." <sup>3</sup>Abram fell on his face, and God said to him, <sup>4</sup>"But me, my covenant is with you; you will be the ancestor of many nations. <sup>5</sup>And because I have made you the ancestor of many nations, your name will no longer be Abram<sup>b</sup> but Abraham.<sup>c</sup> <sup>6</sup>I will make you very fertile. I will produce nations from you, and kings will come from you. <sup>7</sup>I will set up my covenant with you and your descendants after you in every generation as an enduring covenant. I will be your God and your descendants' God after you.

17:2 Gn 12:2,  
Gn 13:16,  
Gn 15:18

17:3 Gn 17:17

17:4 Ro 4:11

17:5 Gn 17:15,  
Gn 32:28;  
Neh 9:7; Ro 4:17

17:6 Gn 17:16,  
Gn 35:11

17:7 Gn 26:24;  
Lv 26:12;  
Heb 11:16

17:15 Gn 17:5

17:16 Gn 17:6,  
Gn 18:10

<sup>15</sup>God said to Abraham, "As for your wife Sarai, you will no longer call her Sarai. Her name will now be Sarah. <sup>16</sup>I will bless her and even give you a son from her. I will bless her so that she will become nations, and kings of peoples will come from her."

<sup>a</sup>Or God Almighty or God of the Mountain <sup>b</sup>Or exalted ancestor <sup>c</sup>Or ancestor of a multitude

**The Ancestors in Their Environment** Israel's ancestors are commonly pictured in Bible studies, in popular art, and on television as shepherds who roamed the desert as nomads. They were not nomads. They were typical ancient farmers in the mountains east of the Mediterranean. It's true that they traveled through the land of Canaan, pitched tents, and owned herds of sheep, goats, cattle, donkeys, and camels. However, the specific details of their lives reveal characters whose agricultural way of life mirrored their Israelite descendants', including the authors of Genesis who wrote these stories about them.

God gives Israel's ancestors the agricultural land in the Canaanite mountains (e.g., Gen 12:7; 13:1-15). They live on this land and cultivate grain on it (Gen 26:12). God gives them the produce of the vineyard and the field of grain as divine blessings (Gen 27:28). They live in houses (Gen 27:15; 33:17) in and near the urban centers of their agrarian landscape (Gen 13:18). They don't live on the desert fringes, where seminomads raised sheep and goats. The animals the ancestors owned—sheep and goats, donkeys, cattle—were typical livestock on a Mediterranean family farm. Cattle pulled plows. Donkeys carried loads. Sheep and goats provided milk products and wool. Israel's ancestors are described as practicing the same agricultural style of life as their descendants: They are farmers involved in the mixed agricultural economy typical of the Mediterranean highlands: cultivating grains and fruits while raising animals to assist in cultivation and to supplement its produce. They traveled not as nomadic shepherds but as settled farmers, moving as immigrants from one place to another (Gen 12:10; 45:17-20).

The highlands east of the Mediterranean Sea not only provided a place for Israel's ancestors to farm but were also a sacred landscape. God appeared to them at places marked by particular natural features, such as the oak tree (Gen 12:6; 18:1); the mountain (Gen 12:8); and the source of water (Gen 16:7, 14; 26:24-25; 32:22-23). At these places of divine revelation, the ancestors built altars that identified the locations as sacred (Gen 12:8; 13:18; 26:25; cf. 28:10-20).

Thus the religion of Israel's ancestors was linked closely with the land where they lived and farmed. Their landscape provided a way of experiencing God. They saw the land's produce as God's blessing on them. Interpreters have sometimes portrayed nature as the realm of pagan deities and history as the realm of the biblical God. This portrayal doesn't hold true in Genesis. The religious experience of Israel's ancestors connected them closely with the landscape that sustained them.

**17:1-27** This is the second account of God's covenant with Abram. As in the Yahwist's version of the covenant in Genesis 15, God promises Abram descendants (17:2, 6) and land (17:8). However, here in the Priest's version in Genesis 17, the covenant focuses especially on the ritual of circumcision. Like the Priest's covenant with Noah, the covenant with Abram here in Genesis 17 is *set up* by God (Gen 9:9; 17:7, 19) as an *enduring covenant* (Gen 9:16; 17:7, 13, 19) accompanied by a *covenant symbol* (Gen 9:12; 17:11).

**17:1** *El Shaddai* is traditionally translated "God Almighty." It likely means "God of the Mountain" (see translation note). Like other gods in the ancient Near East, the God

of the Bible is often associated with mountains (Exod 19:3; Ps 48:1; see sidebar, "The Ancestors in Their Environment" at Gen 13). Abram is commanded to *Walk with God*, a phrase used to describe Enoch (Gen 5:22) and Noah (Gen 6:9).

**17:5** On *Abram* and *Abraham*, see translation notes b and c. In ancient societies and in some communities today, a new name marks a new phase in the life of its bearer. Here it marks a new covenant relationship.

**17:15-16** *Sarai* may be an alternate form of *Sarah*, which means "princess." The name *Sarah*, "princess," is related to God's promise that she will be the mother of *kings*. The writer has in mind here the kings in David's line.

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## Psalm 22:23-31

- 22:23** Ps 33:8, Ps 50:23, Ps 135:19-20  
**23** All of you who revere the LORD—praise him!  
 All of you who are Jacob's descendants—honor him!
- 22:24** Ps 13:1, Ps 31:22; Heb 5:7  
**24** All of you who are all Israel's offspring—stand in awe of him!
- 22:25** Ps 35:18, Ps 40:9, Ps 50:14, Ps 61:8, Ps 66:13  
**24** Because he didn't despise or detest  
 the suffering of the one who suffered—  
 he didn't hide his face from me.
- 22:26** Ps 69:32  
**25** No, he listened when I cried out to him for help.
- 22:27** Ps 2:8, Ps 86:9; Is 45:22  
**25** I offer praise in the great congregation because of you;  
 I will fulfill my promises in the presence of those who honor God.
- 22:28** Ps 47:7-8; Zec 14:9  
**26** Let all those who are suffering eat and be full!  
 Let all who seek the LORD praise him!
- 22:29** Ps 45:12, Ps 89:48; Is 26:19  
**27** I pray your hearts live forever!
- 22:30** Ps 102:18  
**27** Every part of the earth  
 will remember and come back to the LORD;  
 every family among all the nations will worship you.
- 22:31** Ps 78:6, Ps 102:18  
**28** Because the right to rule belongs to the LORD,  
 he rules all nations.
- 29** Indeed, all the earth's powerful will worship him;<sup>n</sup>  
 all who are descending to the dust will kneel before him;  
 my being also lives for him.<sup>o</sup>
- 30** Future descendants will serve him;  
 generations to come will be told about my Lord.
- 31** They will proclaim God's righteousness to those not yet born,  
 telling them what God has done.

<sup>n</sup>Correction; MT *All the earth's powerful have eaten and will worship.* <sup>o</sup>Correction with LXX; Heb uncertain

**The Psalms and Jesus** The Gospel writers couldn't tell the story of Jesus' suffering and death without using the Psalms. Like the psalmists in many of the prayers for help, Jesus was a righteous sufferer who was surrounded by enemies. The clearest link between the Psalms and Jesus is Psalm 22, one of the longest and most intense prayers for help. In the books of Matthew and Mark, Psalm 22:1 becomes Jesus' words from the cross (see Matt 27:46; Mark 15:43). Other experiences of the psalmist also fit with details of the passion stories (see Pss 22:6-8, 15; 69:21). While Jesus didn't want to suffer and die, he gave his life fully to God, as the suffering psalmists regularly do. In the book of Luke, Jesus' words from the cross come out of trust (see Ps 31:5; Luke 23:46).

Jesus' life and teaching also show links to the Psalms. Jesus' basic message announces God's reign (kingdom), and this message is also at the heart of the book of Psalms (see sidebar, "Book IV and the Rule of God"). The Sermon on the Mount begins with the Beatitudes (see Matt 5:3-11), so both the Psalms and Jesus' teaching begin with a lesson about happiness (see Ps 1:1-2; sidebar, "True Happiness" at Ps 1). Jesus says that sufferers who pray for help are truly happy. These sufferers are afflicted and mistreated for doing what's right: They are humbled and shamed (compare Matt 5:5 with Ps 37:11) and are pure in heart (compare Matt 5:8 with Ps 24:4-6).

**22:1-31** Psalm 22 is one of the longest and most intense of the prayers for help. Two sections of complaint and petition (22:1-11, 12-21a) are followed by two longer-than-usual sections of praise and affirmation of faith (22:21b-24, 25-31). The psalm offers an eloquent affirmation of God's presence in the midst of bitter suffering (22:21b-24). It also imagines a worldwide congregation in which even the dead will take part (22:27-30). Thus the psalm was an ideal resource for the Gospel writers as they told the story of Jesus, especially his suffering, death, and resurrection (see notes following; see sidebar, "The Psalms and Jesus" at Ps 22).

**22:22-24** The psalmist becomes a witness to God's presence, inviting others to join the celebration. Verse 24 suggests that suffering hasn't separated the speaker from God, and perhaps even that God somehow shares the speaker's suffering (see Pss 9:12; 34:6; 35:10; 40:17; 140:12).

**22:24** *didn't hide his face*: See Psalm 13:1.

**22:25-31** The praise continues. The psalmist's expansive vision takes the form of a

thanksgiving meal that includes not only sufferers like the psalmist (22:26) but also *all the nations* (22:27), the dead (22:29), and future generations (22:30).

**22:25** *I . . . promises*: The fulfillment of promises was part of a thanksgiving sacrifice (see Pss 56:12; 61:8; 65:1; 66:13; 116:14, 17-18).

**22:26** *eat*: The worshippers ate portions of a thanksgiving sacrifice (see Lev 7:11-18; translation note n in Ps 22:29).

**22:27** The expansive vision seems to point to Genesis 12:3 and God's will that blessing extend to "all the families of earth" (see Pss 47:9; 72:17).

**22:28** The Psalms regularly affirm God's claim on the whole world (see Pss 2:4; 47; 93; 95-99; sidebar, "Book IV and the Rule of God" at Ps 89).

**22:29** *all . . . dust*: The psalmist imagines that even the dead, who normally would have no ability to relate to God (see Ps 6:5), will join the worldwide company of those who recognize God's rule and gather for worship (see Ps 49:15). The Gospel writers may have heard in this verse an expectation of Jesus' resurrection (see Matt 27:46).

**22:31** *God's righteousness*: See Psalm 5:8.

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## Romans 4:13-25

**4:13** Gn 17:4;  
Ga 3:16, Ga 3:29

**4:14** Ga 3:18

**4:15** Ro 3:20,  
Ro 5:13,  
Ro 7:7;  
1Co 15:56;  
Ga 3:10

**4:16** Ro 3:24,  
Ro 4:11

**4:17** Gn 17:5;  
Jn 5:21;  
1Co 1:28

**4:18** Gn 15:5;  
Ro 4:17

**4:19** Gn 17:17,  
Gn 18:11;  
Heb 11:11,  
Heb 11:12

**4:20** Mt 9:8

**4:21** Gn 18:14;  
Mt 19:26;  
Heb 11:19

**4:22** Ro 4:3

**4:23** Ro 15:4;  
1Co 9:10,  
1Co 10:11

**4:24** Ac 2:24;  
Ro 10:9;  
1Pt 1:21

**4:25** Is 53:5;  
Ro 5:6, Ro 5:8,  
Ro 8:32;  
1Co 15:17

**Abraham's promise is received through faith**

<sup>13</sup>The promise to Abraham and to his descendants, that he would inherit the world, didn't come through the Law but through the righteousness that comes from faith. <sup>14</sup>If they inherit because of the Law, then faith has no effect and the promise has been canceled. <sup>15</sup>The Law brings about wrath. But when there isn't any law, there isn't any violation of the law. <sup>16</sup>That's why the inheritance comes through faith, so that it will be on the basis of God's grace. In that way, the promise is secure for all of Abraham's descendants, not just for those who are related by Law but also for those who are related by the faith of Abraham, who is the father of all of us. <sup>17</sup>As it is written: *I have appointed you to be the father of many nations.*<sup>n</sup> So Abraham is our father in the eyes of God in whom he had faith, the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that don't exist into existence. <sup>18</sup>When it was beyond hope, he had faith in the hope that he would become the father of many nations, in keeping with the promise God spoke to him: *That's how many descendants you will have.*<sup>o</sup> <sup>19</sup>Without losing faith, Abraham, who was nearly 100 years old, took into account his own body, which was as good as dead, and Sarah's womb, which was dead. <sup>20</sup>He didn't hesitate with a lack of faith in God's promise, but he grew strong in faith and gave glory to God. <sup>21</sup>He was fully convinced that God was able to do what he promised. <sup>22</sup>Therefore, it was credited to him as righteousness.

<sup>23</sup>But the scripture that says *it was credited to him*<sup>p</sup> wasn't written only for Abraham's sake. <sup>24</sup>It was written also for our sake, because it is going to be credited to us too. It will be credited to those of us who have faith in the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. <sup>25</sup>He was handed over because of our mistakes, and he was raised to meet the requirements of righteousness for us.

<sup>n</sup>Gen 17:5 <sup>o</sup>Gen 15:5 <sup>p</sup>Gen 15:6

**4:1-25** The story of Abraham and Sarah, with support from David, serves as OT testimony (see Rom 3:31) to the gospel. Paul focuses on three things: (1) God's grace as the source of Abraham's righteousness; (2) Abraham's faithful trust in God's promise—not in his circumcision, his deeds, or the Law—as the basis for his being considered righteous; and (3) the story of Abraham and Sarah as a story of death and resurrection. All who share in this kind of faith in the gospel's promise of new life through death and resurrection with Christ (Rom 6) are Abraham's descendants, whether circumcised or not (cf. Gal 3:6-18).

**4:13-17** Just as Abraham's descendants aren't defined by being circumcised, neither are they defined by possessing the Law.

**4:13** *inherit the world*: have many descendants throughout the world (see Gen 17:5; 15:5, which are both quoted in Rom 4:17, 18). The promise to Abraham came before the Law was given to Moses.

**4:15** *wrath*: rather than life (cf. Rom 3:20). *isn't any law*: See Romans 5:13.

**4:16** Grace and faith have become the new way of defining who is part of Abraham's family, his descendants and heirs of the promise made to him (Gal 3:18, 23-29).

**4:17** The promise from Genesis 17:5 means that Gentiles (*many nations*) will be

Abraham's descendants. *the God who gives life*: the God who brings resurrection out of death, whether for Abraham, for Jesus, or for believers.

**4:18-22** Abraham's hope and trust in God's promise (Gen 15:5-6).

**4:18** *beyond hope*: beyond the age for childbearing.

**4:19** The "deadness" of Abraham's body and Sarah's womb emphasizes God's resurrection power, demonstrated in the birth of Isaac (Gen 21:1-8). Paul assumes his readers know the story.

**4:20-22** Abraham's faith was robust and full of hope, trust, and praise. *credited*: See Romans 4:3, 9 (Gen 15:6).

**4:23-25** The story of Abraham's faith and righteousness points ahead to the gospel and to believers in Paul's own day.

**4:24** *faith in the one who raised*: As with Abraham (Rom 4:17), the faith that leads to righteousness is faith in the God of resurrection (Rom 8:34; 10:9).

**4:25** Compare with Isaiah 53. *handed over*: to death (Rom 8:32). *mistakes*: sins. *was raised*: See Romans 6:4; 8:34; 1 Corinthians 15:4. Sinners who, by faith, share in Jesus' death and resurrection (Rom 6) are made righteous by God, just like Abraham.

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## Mark 8:31-38

**8:31** Mt 16:21;  
Mk 9:31;  
Mk 10:34;  
Lk 9:22

**8:32** Mt 16:22;  
Jn 16:25

**8:33** Mt 4:10;  
Mt 16:23

**8:34** Mt 10:38;  
Lk 14:27

**8:35** Mt 10:39;  
Lk 17:33;  
Jn 12:25

**8:36** Mt 16:26;  
Lk 12:20

**8:37** Ps 49:7;  
Ps 49:8

**8:38** Mt 10:33;  
Mt 16:27;  
Mt 25:31;  
Lk 12:9; Ro 1:16

<sup>31</sup>Then Jesus began to teach his disciples: “The Human One<sup>1</sup> must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and the legal experts, and be killed, and then, after three days, rise from the dead.” <sup>32</sup>He said this plainly. But Peter took hold of Jesus and, scolding him, began to correct him. <sup>33</sup>Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, then sternly corrected Peter: “Get behind me, Satan. You are not thinking God’s thoughts but human thoughts.”

<sup>34</sup>After calling the crowd together with his disciples, Jesus said to them, “All who want to come after me must say no to themselves, take up their cross, and follow me. <sup>35</sup>All who want to save their lives will lose them. But all who lose their lives because of me and because of the good news will save them. <sup>36</sup>Why would people gain the whole world but lose their lives? <sup>37</sup>What will people give in exchange for their lives? <sup>38</sup>Whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this unfaithful and sinful generation, the Human One<sup>m</sup> will be ashamed of that person when he comes in the Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

<sup>1</sup>Or *Son of Man*    <sup>m</sup>Or *Son of Man*

**The Human One in Mark** This title is an ambiguous term that appears frequently in Mark (Mark 2:10, 28; 3:28; 8:31, 38; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; 13:26; 14:21, 41, 62). Sometimes Jesus uses it indirectly to name himself. In other cases, he seems to refer to humanity as a whole or to a special figure who will preside over God’s kingdom. How then might we understand the term? It’s helpful to remember that, in Jesus’ world, individual figures often represented groups of people. The Human One probably is a symbol—an ideal human being who embodies the new humanity that reflects God’s kingdom. From this perspective, Jesus is the Human One because he is the Christ who is entrusted with the task of showing the world what God’s power looks like. But his followers, too, get involved in his mission. So they also become part of the Human One. In this way, the Human One is both Jesus—God’s anointed one—and the people who, through him, trust the power of God’s kingdom.

**8:31** *Human One*: Jesus refers to himself as the one who goes before the new humanity that will live in God’s coming kingdom. See notes on Mark 2:10, 28. See sidebar, “The Human One in Mark” at Mark 14. *elders, chief priests, and the legal experts*: These Jewish authorities together form the Sanhedrin, the ruling council in Jerusalem.

**8:32** *plainly*: Jesus freely announces the outcome of his mission as the Christ (cf. Mark 8:30).

**8:33** *Satan*: See Mark 1:13; 3:22-27. By calling out Satan, Jesus exposes an evil force behind Peter’s response. The problem is that Peter denies that Jesus’ mission as the Christ includes suffering. He isn’t thinking from God’s point of view. See note on Mark 4:15.

**8:34** *say no . . . follow me*: Jesus defines discipleship in terms of self-denial and

suffering. Like Jesus, his followers actively choose their destiny; they aren’t passive victims.

**8:35** *because of me and because of the good news*: Jesus’ followers *lose their lives* because they have learned from him the pattern of self-sacrifice that reflects God’s kingdom. Notice Jesus’ distinction between himself and the good news. While Jesus proclaims and demonstrates God’s good news, Mark doesn’t equate it with Jesus’ identity, strictly speaking (see also Mark 10:29).

**8:38** *ashamed*: Jesus’ call for self-sacrifice would have been humiliating to ancient hearers, since he’s urging voluntary weakness in a culture that avoids it. *comes in the Father’s glory*: probably a reference to Daniel 7:13-14. As God’s kingdom arrives on earth, the Human One will practice judgment according to divine, not human, standards.

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