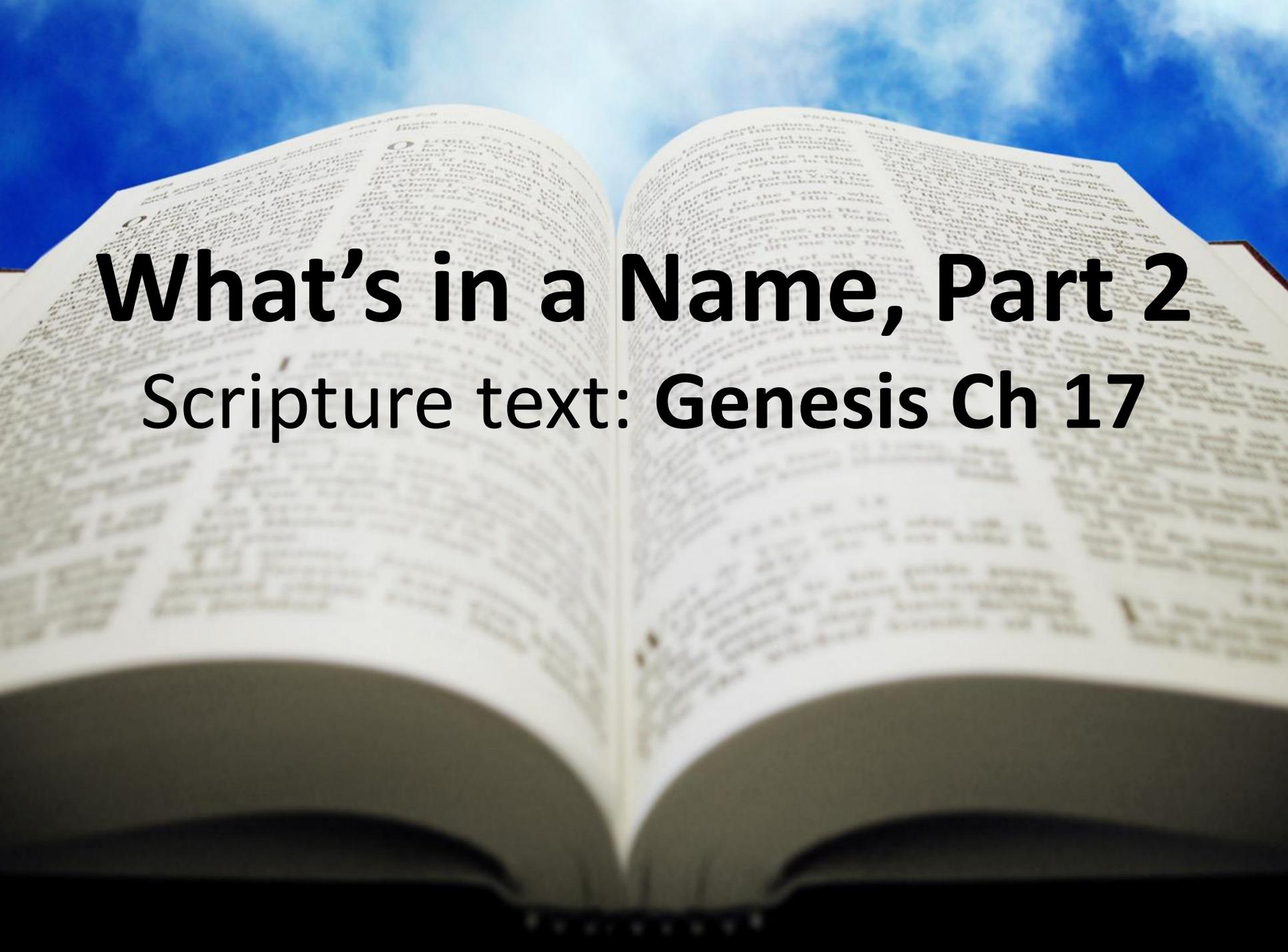


Welcome to Promise Land Bible Church
We're glad you're here!



An open Bible is shown from a low angle, looking up at the pages. The pages are filled with text, but it is blurred. The background is a bright blue sky with white clouds. The text is overlaid in a large, bold, black font.

What's in a Name, Part 2

Scripture text: Genesis Ch 17

Circumcision removes only a part of the body, but the true **“spiritual circumcision”** puts off **“the body of the sins of the flesh”** and deals radically with the sin nature.

Colossians 2:11-12 In him also you were **circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ**, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

This “**spiritual circumcision**” is accomplished at conversion **when the sinner believes in Christ and is baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ** (1 Cor. 12:13). This baptism identifies the believer with Christ in His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, and also in His circumcision (Col. 2:11–12; Luke 2:21).

It is not “the circumcision of Moses” but “**the circumcision of Christ**” that is important to the Christian believer.

1 Corinthians 12:13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--Jews or Greeks, slaves or free--and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

Colossians 2:11-12 In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

Donald Grey Barnhouse has said, “**We have a nature of sin that must be dealt with by the knife ... The thing must be dealt with as a whole, and not piecemeal.**” In Christ, we can “walk in the Spirit and ... not fulfill the lusts of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16).

Abraham immediately obeyed God and gave every male in his household **the mark of the covenant**. No doubt when he told them his new name, he also explained what this ritual meant.

3. Sarah (Gen. 17:15–17)

The third new name was “Sarah,” which means “**princess.**” (We are not certain what “Sarai” means. Some say “**to mock**” or “**to be contentious.**” It could also be another form of the word “princess.”) Since she would become the **mother of kings**, it was only right that she be called a princess!

We must not minimize the place of Sarah in God's great plan of salvation. Like her husband (and all of us), she had her faults; but also like her husband, she trusted God and accomplished His purposes (Heb. 11:11). She is not only the mother of the Jewish nation (Isa. 51:2) but also **a good example for Christian wives to follow** (1 Peter 3:1–6). **The Christian husband should treat his wife like a princess, because that is what she is in the Lord.**

Hebrews 11:11 By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since **she considered him faithful who had promised.**

Isaiah 51:2 Look to Abraham your father and **to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one** when I called him, that I might bless him and multiply him.

1 Peter 3:1-4 Likewise, wives, **be subject to your own husbands**, so that even if some do not obey the word, **they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives**, when they see **your respectful and pure conduct**. Do not let your adorning be external--the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear--**but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.**

1 Peter 3:5-6 For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, **by submitting to their own husbands**, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. **And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.**

How well does this go over today?

How well does this line up with women's lib?

Three different occasions of **laughter** are associated with Isaac's birth:

Abraham laughed for joy when he heard his wife would give birth to the promised son (Gen. 17:17); Sarah laughed in unbelief when she heard the news (18:9–15); and Sarah laughed for joy when the boy was born (21:6–7).

The name Isaac means “**he laughs.**”

Motherhood should be highly esteemed, and the birth of a baby welcomed with joy. While God does not call all women to marry, or all married women to bear children, He does have a special concern for both mothers and children (Pss. 113:9; 127:3–5; Matt. 19:14). In a selfish society, too many people see motherhood as a barrier and children as a burden. In fact, some people consider children such a burden that they destroy them before they have an opportunity to become a blessing.

Psalm 113:9 He gives the barren woman a home, **making her the joyous mother of children.** Praise the LORD!

Psalm 127:3-5 Behold, **children are a heritage from the LORD,** the fruit of the womb **a reward.** Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. **Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them!** He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

Matthew 19:14 but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."

The womb of the mother is a holy of holies where **God is at work.**

How tragic that we turn that womb into a tomb, that holy of holies into a holocaust.

Psalm 139:13-18 For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, **when I was being made in secret**, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you.

4. Isaac (Gen. 17:18–22)

The first baby in the Bible who was named before birth was Ishmael (16:11), and the second was Isaac.

As we shall see when we study Genesis 21, these two boys represent two different births:

- (1) Ishmael, our first birth after the flesh, and
- (2) Isaac, our second birth through the Spirit.

John 3:5-8 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Galatians 4:24-27 Now this may be interpreted allegorically: **these women are two covenants.** One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. **Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia;** she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written, "Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband."

Galatians 4:28-31 Now you, brothers, **like Isaac, are children of promise.** But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. But what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman." So, brothers, **we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.**

From the human point of view, we can understand why Abraham interceded for Ishmael. **Ishmael was his son**, and the father loved him dearly. They had been together now for thirteen years, and Ishmael was entering adulthood. Was God going to waste all that Abraham had invested in Ishmael? Was there to be no future for the lad? After all, it wasn't Ishmael's fault that he was born! It was Abraham and Sarah who sinned, not the boy.

But from the spiritual point of view, Ishmael could not replace Isaac or even be equal to him in the covenant plan of God.

God had already promised to bless Ishmael (Gen. 16:11), and He kept His promise (25:12–16); but the covenant blessings were not a part of Ishmael's heritage.

Isaac alone was to be the heir of all things (25:5–6; Rom. 9:6–13).

Romans 9:6-9 But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. For this is what the promise said: "About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son."

Romans 9:10-13 And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad--**in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls--** she was told, "The older will serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

There is a practical lesson here for all who seek to live by faith: **When God is preparing a bright future for you, don't cling to the things of the past.** Ishmael represented the past, Isaac the future. Ishmael symbolized man's fleshly way of accomplishing something for God; **but Isaac was a miracle baby, born by the power of God.** Ishmael brought dissension into the home, but Isaac brought laughter. If you have an "Ishmael" in your life, yield it up to God. God has a perfect plan, and what He plans is the best. It may pain you to give up your cherished dreams, but God's way is always the right way.

Amy Carmichael, missionary to India, wrote to a friend who was perplexed about a painful experience, “I will say what our Heavenly Father said to me long ago, and says to me still very often: **‘See in it a chance to die.’** ”

Perhaps we all need to pray, **“Oh, that Ishmael might *die within me!*”**

Ishmael did not get a new name, because he represents the flesh; and the flesh cannot be changed. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh” (John 3:6) and always will be flesh. “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing” (Rom. 7:18). “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing” (John 6:63). The old nature can be disciplined, subdued, and even to some extent controlled; **but it cannot be changed.** Until we receive our glorified bodies in the presence of the Lord, **the struggle between the flesh and the Spirit will continue.**

Galatians 5:18-21 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. **Now the works of the flesh are evident:** sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, **that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

Galatians 5:22-25 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. **And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.**

It was the beginning of a new day for Abraham and Sarah, for Sarah was going to have a baby boy!

John 8:56-58 Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad." So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.**"