

Genesis 17:1-27

The Sign of the Covenant

An everlasting Covenant ...

I. Reaffirming the Covenant

- A. Multiplication
- B. Monikers

II. A Sign and Seal

- A. Mark
- B. Meaning

III. A Call to Holiness

- A. The Almighty
- B. And His People

... *and a reason to fall on our faces.*

Children, Listen ...

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1. How did God tell Abram to live?
2. What did God change Abram and Sarai's name to?
3. What was their baby's name going to be?
4. What was the mark did God give to His people show that they were His?
5. Do we have a mark that means the same thing for the church today? What is it?

Always a Matter of the Heart

From the time of Abraham to the cross of Christ circumcision was the authorized mark of inclusion in the Covenant God made with his people. If a male was not circumcised he was cut off from the household of God, Israel. The significance of this bloody sign was abrogated by the shedding of Christ's blood along with all the bloody rituals ordained by God for His Old Covenant people. In Reformed understanding of the continuance of the Covenant people in the New Testament era circumcision has been replaced by the sacrament of Baptism. The sacred sprinkling of water on believers and their offspring indicate inclusion into the new Israel of God, the church of Jesus Christ. It is vital to understand that, significant as both OT and NT signs and seals are, they were never intended to save or even indicate genuine regeneration. While inclusion in the Covenant people of God offers the extension of grace and set all the means of it at the fingertips of the individual, it is only saving grace embraced by a genuine living faith that secures redemption for the soul. It is and always has been a matter of the heart. It is an especially profound tragedy when the blessings of the Covenant are rejected by the people who are closest to it. Remember, "not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel," (Romans 9:6) thus, all the church in not the church. It behooves us all to examine ourselves and be sure that all Baptism signifies is truly ours by grace through faith in Christ.

For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem: "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the LORD; remove the foreskin of your hearts, O men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem; lest my wrath go forth like fire, and burn with none to quench it, because of the evil of your deeds." Jeremiah 4:3-4