

# Better Way Apostolic Church – Bible Class

## Subject: Give the Lord Control: Genesis 17:1-2

As we look at the life of Abraham God ask him to offer up his son of promise that he waited so long. What God wanted was Abraham's heart, not Isaac's life. So when the knife was raised to slay, a provided substitute appeared. After this sacrifice Abraham received the testimony that he had pleased God.

### **Give the Lord Control**

In his observations on 1 Corinthians 2:1, J. Stuart Holden gives a beautiful illustration. He says, "I have around my home a garden. In that garden and its possibilities I have the mind of nature. For instance, I know what soil and what seed should produce this, that, and all the other kinds of flowers and fruit; I see set forth in the seedsmen's catalogues the wonderful things that the garden should bring forth. . . . But mark you, the flowers and the fruit are only produced by labor, by obedience to the laws of nature. When the garden has been made beautiful and fruitful, it has been made so only by intelligent cooperation with nature. Similarly, we Christians have the mind of Christ. We know full well what a Christian life should be." The fruits of the Spirit are only made evident in our lives as we wholeheartedly cooperate with the Lord in full submission and obedience to Him by letting His Spirit have full control of us—body, soul and spirit.

### **HOLINESS**

The word signifies everything about God that sets him apart from us and makes him an object of awe, adoration, and dread to us. It covers all aspects of his transcendent greatness and moral perfection and thus is an attribute of all his attributes, pointing to the "Godliness" of God at every point. Every facet of God's nature and every aspect of his character may properly be spoken of as holy, just because it is his. The core of the concept, however, is God's purity, which cannot tolerate any form of sin (Hab. 1:13) and thus calls sinners to constant self-abasement in his presence (Isa. 6:5).

Justice, which means doing in all circumstances things that are right, is one expression of God's holiness. God displays his justice as legislator and judge, and also as promise-keeper and pardoner of sin. His moral law, requiring behavior that matches his own, is "holy, righteous and good" (Rom. 7:12). He judges justly, according to actual desert (Gen. 18:25; Pss. 7:11; 96:13; Acts 17:31). His "wrath," that is, his active judicial hostility to sin, is wholly just in its manifestations (Rom. 2:5-16), and his particular "judgments" (retributive punishments) are glorious and praiseworthy (Rev. 16:5, 7; 19:1-4). Whenever God fulfills his covenant commitment by acting to save his people, it is a gesture of "righteousness," that is, justice (Isa. 51:5-6; 56:1; 63:1; 1 John 1:9). When God justifies sinners through faith in Christ, he does so on the basis of justice done, that is, the punishment of our sins in the person of Christ our substitute; thus the form taken by his justifying mercy shows him to be utterly and totally just (Rom. 3:25-26), and our justification itself is shown to be judicially justified.

When John says that God is "light," with no darkness in him at all, the image is affirming God's holy purity, which makes fellowship between him and the willfully unholy impossible and requires the pursuit of holiness and righteousness of life to be a central concern for Christian

people (1 John 1:5–2:1; 2 Cor. 6:14–7:1; Heb. 12:10-17). The summons to believers, regenerate and forgiven as they are, to practice a holiness that will match God's own, and so please him, is constant in the New Testament, as indeed it was in the Old Testament (Deut. 30:1-10; Eph. 4:17–5:14; 1 Pet. 1:13-22). Because God is holy, God's people must be holy too.

God Almighty (Genesis 17:1-2)

**Revelation.** The Hebrew name is "El Shaddai" (shuh-DYE), and this is the first time it occurs in Scripture. "Shaddai" is translated as "Almighty" forty-eight times in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, the Greek equivalent is used in 2 Corinthians 6:18 and Revelation 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7 and 14; 19:6 and 15; and 21:22. It is translated "Almighty" except in Revelation 19:6 ("omnipotent").

"El" is the name of God that speaks of power; but what does "Shaddai" mean? Scholars do not agree. Some say it comes from a Hebrew word meaning "to be strong"; others prefer a word meaning "mountain" or "breast." Metaphorically, a mountain is a "breast" that rises up from the plain; and certainly a mountain is a symbol of strength. If we combine these several ideas, we might say that "El Shaddai" is the name of "the all-powerful and all-sufficient God who can do anything and meet any need."

But why would God reveal this name to Abraham at this time, at the close of thirteen years of silence? Because God was going to tell His friend that Sarah would have a son. The Lord wanted Abraham to know that He is the God who is all-sufficient and all-powerful, and that nothing is too hard for Him. God says "I will" twelve times in this chapter; He is about to do the miraculous.

After Abraham's battle with the four kings, God came to him as a warrior and told him He was his "shield." When Abraham wondered about his refusal of Sodom's wealth, God told him He was his "exceedingly great reward" (Genesis 15:1). Now when Abraham and Sarah were "as good as dead," God assured them that He was more than sufficient to bring about the miracle birth. God comes to us in the ways we need Him most.

**Responsibility.** Revelation always brings responsibility. Enoch and Noah had walked with God (5:22; 6:8-9), but Abraham was to walk before God, that is, live in the knowledge that the eyes of God were always upon him (Hebrews 4:13). The word "perfect" does not mean "sinless," for that would be an impossible goal for anyone to reach (1 Kings 8:46). The word means "single-hearted, without blame, sincere, wholly devoted to the Lord." In Exodus 12:5, the word refers to a "perfect" sacrifice without blemish. It was a call for integrity.

This is not to suggest that God's people should settle for anything less than striving to conform to His will. "His desire for us should be our aim and desire for ourselves," wrote Alexander Maclaren. "It is more blessed to be smitten with the longing to win the unwon than to stagnate in ignoble contentment with partial attainments. Better to climb, with faces turned upwards to the inaccessible peak, than to lie at ease in the fat valleys" (Expositions of Holy Scripture, vol. 1, 120 [Baker Book House, 1974]).

The secret of a perfect walk before God is a personal worship of God. Like Abraham, every believer must fall before the Lord and yield everything to Him. If He is "El Shaddai — God Almighty," then who are we to resist His will?

**Relationship.** The phrase "My covenant" is used nine times in this chapter and defines God's relationship with Abraham. This was not another covenant, different from the one God had already established with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; 15). It was a reaffirmation of that covenant, with the important addition of circumcision, the sign and seal of the covenant.

God promised once again to multiply Abraham's family, even though he and his wife did not have any children. His descendants would be "as the dust of the earth" (13:16) and as the stars of the heavens (15:5). These two comparisons — earth and heaven — suggest that Abraham would have a physical family, the Jews (Matthew 3:9), and a spiritual family made up of all who believe in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:26-29).

## Evidence of Holy Spirit Baptism

In the book of Acts, the most common sign of the Holy Spirit baptism was the expression of unknown tongues. They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Acts 2:4, Mark 16:17; Acts 10:44-48, 19:6.

Why was the sign of tongues the most common evidence of the Holy Ghost baptism? Well, probably because a person's tongue is the most unruly member of the body (James 3:2-10), so when the tongue is brought under the inspiration and influence of the Holy Ghost, there can be no doubt that the whole person has been immersed in the Holy Ghost.