

New Names

Scripture Reading — Genesis 17:1-22

"Your name will be Abraham" ... "As for Sarai your wife ... her name will be Sarah." Genesis 17:5, 15

Abram was 99 years old, and Sarai was 90. They'd been known as Abram and Sarai for a long time. But God looked past their ages into their future. They would be the father and mother of a great multitude, and their name change would reflect that future reality.

Abraham laughed, but God kept working with this couple who had faith but were not always faithful. God repeated his promises to Abraham and established a covenant with him. And as a sign of obedience to this covenant, Abraham and all his descendants were to be circumcised.

If people want a name change today, they usually have to go to the courthouse to make it official. They have to fill out paperwork that says they are not making this name change to avoid payment for bills or prosecution for a crime. They have to promise that the name change won't affect anything in their past.

When God changes a person's name, however, it usually means that the past is forever changed. The past is forgiven, and a new day has begun.

God waited 13 years after Ishmael's birth to again affirm that Sarai--now Sarah--would be the mother of a promised child and a multitude of descendants. God changed her name to mark the moment and to provide a lasting reminder of his covenant promises.

Prayer

Thank you, God, for your faithful care. You know each one of us by name. Help us to honor your name by following your will for us in all we do. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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Printed on June 24, 2019

