

## The Everlasting Covenant By Trey Sullins

How long was God's everlasting covenant with Abraham's descendants? In Genesis 17:7 God tells Abraham, "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you." What exactly is the time frame for the words "everlasting covenant"? This question is one that has long been debated by those holding onto various premillennialist beliefs. However, to answer this question more accurately, Christians should look only at what the scriptures say and avoid interpreting through a lens of doctrinal bias.

In Genesis 17, God begins by restating the promise that he made to Abraham to multiply his descendants and give him land. In verse 7 God begins to tell Abraham about the everlasting covenant that He is establishing between Himself and Abraham. This covenant is detailed in verse 10. In verse 8 God mentions the promise of land as an everlasting possession for his descendants. In verse 19, God is assuring Abraham that through his son Isaac the everlasting covenant and promises would continue on. Several times throughout the chapter God constantly reminds him of their covenant and Abraham's responsibilities.

One of the most important parts to understanding how long this contract would last is to understand the term "everlasting." Words like "everlasting" and "forever" are used many times throughout the Old Testament do not always mean that something will never end.

- One example is circumcision as seen in verse 13. The verse says that circumcision was an "everlasting covenant." If circumcision is everlasting in the sense of completely endless then it would still be required today. However, Paul clearly proves to us that circumcision is not necessary anymore (Galatians 5:2-4, 6; Romans 2:28-29; 1 Corinthians 7:19; Colossians 3:11). Circumcision was taken away with the Old Law by Jesus Christ.
- Another example is the Passover. In Exodus 12:24 the Passover is said to be an "ordinance for you and your sons forever." Again, the law of Christ does not require the Passover of Christians and was taken away just like circumcision. This wording which is similar to "everlasting" is used numerous times throughout the Old Law in Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and more. If the word "forever" only means completely endless (or something along those lines), then we all should be keeping the Law of Moses still today. But that would be a contradiction in the scriptures because in keeping the Old Law we would be condemned by Paul in Galatians 5:4. But if the words "forever" and "everlasting" can mean indefinite or long duration (or things along these lines), then we do not need to keep the Old Law.
- In Genesis 17:8, God tells Abraham that the land of Canaan would be an "everlasting possession." If "everlasting" can only mean completely endless, as the premillennialist would like, then God broke his promise every single time that Israel lost possession of the land of Canaan. However, we know God cannot fail and God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). God kept His promise because Israel held that land for a very long time and lost it due to their own rejection of God.

As with most passages, context is extremely important in understanding exactly what God is telling us. By searching the context, the Bible reveals that in Genesis 17 God uses the word everlasting to

mean an indefinite or long time. The answer to our original question is that God's covenant with Israel was fulfilled long before Christ came. God kept His promises just as He always does. Now we look towards the kingdom of Christ and no longer the kingdom of Israel.