

# Covenant Upgrade

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[ 0 : 00 ] Today our reading is from Genesis chapter 17 and it's the full chapter so yeah settled in for a bit of a long read.

Then Abram fell on his face and God said to him, Behold, my covenant is with you and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations.

No longer shall your name be called Abram but your name shall be Abraham for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.

I will make you exceedingly fruitful and I'll make you into nations and kings shall come from you.

And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout the generations for an everlasting covenant to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession.

[ 1 : 28 ] And I will be their God. And God said to Abraham, As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout the generations.

This is my covenant which you shall keep between me and you and your offspring after you. Every male among you shall be circumcised.

You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised.

Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, both he who is born in your house and he who is born with your money shall be circumcised.

So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people.

[ 2 : 38 ] He has broken my covenant. And God said to Abraham, As for Sarai, your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.

I will bless her and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her and she shall become nations. Kings of people shall come from her.

Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old?

Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child? And Abraham said to God, Oh, that Ishmael might live before you.

God said, No, but Sarah, your wife, shall bear you a son. And you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.

[ 3 : 47 ] As for Ishmael, I have heard you. I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and multiply him greatly. He shall father twelve princes and I will make him into a great nation.

But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year.

When he had finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.

Then Abraham took Ishmael, his son, and all those who were born in his house, all bought with money. Every male among the men of Abraham's house.

And he circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very day, as God had said to him. Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

And Ishmael, his son, was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

That very day, Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised.

[ 4 : 59 ] And all the men of his house, those born in the house and those bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him. This is God's word. May he bless it to us today.

Good morning, everyone. It would be a great help if you have your Bibles open at Genesis chapter 17. And also, if you have an outline, I think that may assist you this morning as well.

Now, if you do have an outline, which is in the bulletin there, it may feel ominously long and detailed. It is there to help you follow the flow of thought in Genesis chapter 17.

I'll be spending more time speaking about the first half of the outline than the second half. So don't get too nervous. But yeah, it will just help you follow the flow of ideas.

And I'll be stepping through most of the ideas on that outline bit by bit as we go through the text of Genesis 17. Now, Genesis 17 is a chapter of monumental significance, which reverberates through the rest of the Bible.

[6:17] Genesis 17, it may not have quite the same human drama as chapter 16, which we looked at last week. But in the scheme of the Bible's unfolding story, Genesis 17, chapter 17, is by far the more important.

It's the first time in this chapter that we hear the name Abraham. We've met him before, of course, by a different name, by the name Abram. But this is Abraham is the name by which he will be known throughout the rest of the scriptures.

The name which we mentioned 73 times in the New Testament, second only to Moses as an Old Testament figure in the New Testament. The first mention in the Bible of circumcision.

Genesis chapter 17, in this chapter, the word covenant occurs more times than in any other chapter in the Bible. Thirteen times the word covenant occurs in Genesis chapter 17.

The closest any other chapter in the Bible gets is seven. There's a lot going on in Genesis 17. So I want to give you something to hang on to as we get into it.

[7:27] And what I'm going to give you to hang on to is five speeches, four names, one promise. Five speeches, four names, one promise.

The covenant God announces in this chapter unfolds over five speeches. Five times the speech of God is introduced. In four of those five speeches, God gives someone a new name.

Simon spoke about a couple of those in the kids' talk. And those names are keys which unlock the key ideas, the key themes of the covenant in this chapter.

But everything God says, all five speeches, all four new names, are all for the sake of one staggering promise. Five speeches, four names, one promise.

Now God makes various promises in this chapter and many more throughout the Bible. But of every promise God has given, there is one specific promise in this chapter that I would suggest is the most important promise of all.

[8:34] It's the most important promise because it is the whole point of every other promise. And in the Bible we hear it for the first time in Genesis chapter 17.

So let's get into this chapter together. Five speeches, four names, one promise. It begins in verse 1, when Abram was 99 years old. Now 13 years had passed since the end of chapter 16.

13 years had passed since Abram's son Ishmael was born to Hagar. And Hagar, if you were here last week, you will remember, was an Egyptian servant girl who belonged to Abram's wife Sarai.

It's been 13 years with Abram, his wife Sarai, Ishmael and Hagar living together under the one roof, so to speak.

13 years, we might imagine, of some domestic tension. But nonetheless, at the end of those 13 years, at age 99, as an old man, Abram probably thought that the most important events of his life were past.

[9:37] God had given him promises in Genesis chapter 12. He had journeyed to the land of Canaan. He had defeated a coalition of eastern kings in chapter 14.

God had made a covenant with him in chapter 15. And we had the birth of Ishmael in chapter 16. The major events of Abram's life seem complete.

He has a son. He has an heir. Sure, it may have come about in an awkward way, but his line would continue. God's promises would continue. But God was about to interrupt Abram's thoughts.

And so we come to the first of God's five speeches in this chapter. Verse 1. First, God says, I am God Almighty.

In Hebrew, El Shaddai. I am El Shaddai. This is the first of the four new names in this chapter. God identifies himself here as El Shaddai for the first time in the Bible.

[10:49] And that's not the most common name for God in the Bible. I think it occurs 48 times through the Old Testament, mostly in the book of Job. It pops up at some significant places in

Genesis.

And there is some uncertainty about how it should be translated, El Shaddai. But God Almighty is probably close to the mark. Or maybe, as the New English translation has it, the sovereign God. El is easy. That just means God. What about Shaddai? Well, I think the most likely suggestions for Shaddai are that it's related to either the Hebrew word for sufficiency or to a Hebrew word to destroy and overpower, a word for strength.

Either way, here is a name that suggests God's absolute power, sovereignty and strength. The early Christian scholar, Jerome, 4th century scholar who translated the Hebrew Old Testament into a Latin version called the Vulgate, he consistently translated this word Shaddai with the Latin word omnipotence.

El Shaddai is not a God to be trifled with. He is a God who can do whatever he wishes. I am El Shaddai.

[12:16] And what El Shaddai had for Abram in this first speech was a two-part command and a two-part promise. And in each case, the two parts work together really to convey a single idea.

So first the command, walk before me and be blameless. God calls Abram to allegiance, obedience and moral integrity.

Walk before me and be blameless. And what follows is a two-part promise that I may make my covenant between me and you and may multiply you greatly.

Now let me say something in general about covenants and then we'll look at the specifics of this particular covenant. A covenant in the Bible is a solemn agreement which establishes a lasting relationship.

It's similar to a contract, we have contracts today, but contracts in our context have a very different spirit to the covenants God makes in the Bible. Contracts, our modern day contracts, are transactional.

[13:24] They're agreements that serve the self-interest of each party. They're limited, narrow and clearly defined in scope. But God's covenants are deeper and much more open-ended than that.

So my wife and my family, we've just moved house. But at our old house, some years ago, we were doing some renovation work and we engaged a plumber by the name of Anthony.

And Anthony had just started a new business. We were one of Anthony's first customers. The first invoice we received from Anthony was number 20. His invoice number 20.

And we got Anthony, you know, I got on well with Anthony. He was a hard worker. We seemed to have a good relationship. He charged reasonable prices. He did a good job. We got him to do more and more work. We had invoices 20, then 22, then 34, then 52, then 86.

Five of his first hundred invoices written out to us. We must have been a significant customer for Anthony in the early years of his business. So we stuck with Anthony from then on.

[14:31] But over the years, things changed. His business grew. We stopped seeing Anthony. Someone else would answer the phone when we rang.

Someone else would come out to our house to attend a job, a junior plumber. The fees increased. The invoice numbers rose. The most recent invoice we received this year was number 21,340.

The reality is, although my relationship with Anthony was warm, it was only ever transactional. You do this for me and I'll do that for you. You unclog our drains and I'll pay your fee.

A lot of people have a transactional approach to God. Heal me of this affliction and I'll start going to church.

Give me a wife and I'll consider missionary service. Or maybe we put it around the other way. God, I've been giving money to church and a mission.

[15:40] You owe it to me, God, to make my business prosper. Much ancient religion was transactional in nature.

But El Shaddai does not make contracts. He makes covenants.

And his words in verses 1 and 2 are more marriage proposal than business deal. He calls Abram to complete wholehearted allegiance and promises to bind himself to Abram in a covenant.

A covenant that's summarized in the words that I may multiply you greatly. Now God had already made one covenant with Abram in chapter 15. The covenant to your descendants I give this land.

But here in chapter 17 he proposes a second covenant. Or at the very least an expansion of the covenant. A covenant upgrade. Now why do I say this is a second covenant or at least a covenant upgrade?

[16:47] Because the covenant in chapter 17 is future, not past. The one in chapter 15 is already given. But this one in chapter 17, when God announces it here in verse 2, it hasn't yet been made.

It's not yet ratified. He proposes giving Abram this covenant. But first Abram must walk before him and be blameless. Chapter 17 is the engagement.

The marriage is yet to come. So the Lord appeared to Abram with this searching command and this priceless promise. And Abram did what we might expect a human being to do, a mere mortal to do in the presence of El Shaddai.

Verse 3, he fell on his face. Which brings us to the second speech in verses 3 to 8 and the second new name. Verse 3, Abram fell on his face and God said to him, Now the Hebrew word Ab means father.

And the name Abraham means, or Avram, probably a better pronunciation, means exalted father.

But the name Avraham, as Simon explained in the kids talk, means father of many.

[18:17] Father of many. In chapter 15, God had promised Abram many descendants. And it's implied that they would form one nation in the land of Canaan, the land God was giving.

But in this second covenant, or this covenant upgrade, Abraham would be the father of many in an even greater sense.

He would be the father of a multitude of nations, not just one, but many. Now that's the promise that's at the heart of this covenant.

Verse 6, I will make you exceedingly fruitful. The word fruitful there echoes Genesis chapter 1, the promise at creation, or the mandate at creation.

And Genesis chapter 9, the command to Noah, the blessing of Noah after the flood. I will make you exceedingly fruitful and I will make you into nations, God says.

[19:23] That's the promise that's at the heart of this covenant in Genesis chapter 17. That's the sense in which God will multiply Abraham greatly.

Making him the father of many, not just descendants, but many nations. But in what sense would Abraham be the father of a multitude of nations? That's the question we need to ask.

But hold that question. First, I want us to see three other elements of this covenant. Kings, offspring and everlasting. First kings.

Look at verse 6. Again, I will make you into nations and kings shall come from you. The Lord says. In making this covenant, God emphasizes your descendants will include kings.

For some reason not yet explained, a royal line will be important for this covenant. Second, your offspring, verse 7. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you.

[20:32] Throughout their generations. The covenant in chapter 15 was made with Abram alone. This covenant God specifically makes with Abraham and his offspring.

It would fully belong to future generations. Third, everlasting. Between me and your offspring after you throughout their generations.

For an everlasting covenant, God says. This covenant would be perpetual. It would endure. It concerned God's ultimate plans.

His plans for an everlasting future. For days without end. God's everlasting covenant. His eternal plan was that Abraham would be the father of a multitude of nations.

So let's return to that question. In what sense would Abraham be the father of a multitude of nations? Well, one option is maybe he's the father of many nations by physical descent.

[21:34] Now, he's their ancestor. Now, getting ahead of ourselves a little bit here, but I have a family tree for Abraham that I think will come up on the screen.

There we go. There we go. Showing Abraham's descendants. And ultimately, Abraham would have children by three women, by Hagar, Sarah and Keturah.

And from them came multiple nations. The Arab tribes descended from Ishmael. Edom and Israel descended from Sarah, through Sarah.

And Midianites and others through Keturah. Now, maybe you could say that if you take all of those different people, groups and nations together, that adds up to a multitude.

And in that sense, Abraham is the father of a multitude of nations. Although maybe that feels like it's stretching the language a little. I think next slide we go.

[22:35] But actually, Genesis doesn't really let us reach that conclusion anyway. Because later on in this chapter, in verses 19 to 21, God distinguishes between Isaac and Ishmael, two sons of

Abraham, and says the covenant will be through Isaac, not through Ishmael.

So that seems to narrow it down even further. Maybe the multitude of nations, next slide, is just Edom and Israel. But then that doesn't really sound like a multitude at all.

That's just two. Even more definitive, though, is when we get to it, Genesis chapter 35, verse 11, when the Lord repeats this or reaffirms this covenant to Jacob, Abraham's grandson.

Genesis 35, verse 9, God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan Aram and he blessed him. And God said to him, I am God Almighty, El Shaddai. Be fruitful and multiply.

A nation and a company of nations shall come from you and kings shall come from your own body. Can you hear all the echoes of Genesis 17 there?

[ 23 : 49 ] I am El Shaddai. Be fruitful. A company of nations. Kings. I mean, this is the Genesis 17 covenant being reaffirmed to Jacob.

And about the kings, God is explicit. He says, kings shall come from your own body. That is, by physical descent from you. But what about the first part?

A nation and a company of nations shall come from you. Well, physically, Jacob was the ancestor of only one nation. Israel.

Israel. So God distinguishes. A nation would come from Jacob, a nation by physical descent. But a company of nations could only come from Jacob in another sense.

In other words, to bring us back to Genesis 17, the covenant in Genesis 17 is not about Abraham's physical fatherhood of a few nations, but his spiritual fatherhood of a multitude of nations.

[ 24 : 54 ] The covenant of Genesis 17 is God's formal, binding, eternal ratification of the promise initially announced in Genesis 12, verse 3, in you, all families of the earth shall be blessed.

That's the meaning of the name Abraham. It signifies God's promise and plan and purpose to gather together all nations, all peoples, all the families of the earth, that they might receive his blessing.

And what is the blessing? What is the ultimate goal of this covenant? Well, it's there before us in that one promise, that one most important promise, which is the purpose of every other promise.

Verse 7, And I'll establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

Or as God puts it simply at the end of verse 8, And I will be their God. God has made an everlasting covenant, from which he will not budge, to bring together a multitude of nations, all the families of the earth, so that he might bless us by being our God.

[ 26 : 27 ] Now think about that promise, and I will be their God. God has made an everlasting covenant, from which he will not budge, promise that, because that is just a given of reality.

What God promises here, when he says, I will be their God, is the kind of relationship with God that Adam and Eve enjoyed in the garden. When they dwelt in his presence, heard his voice, delighted in his blessing, when they walked with the Lord in the cool of the day.

It's the kind of relationship in which God is over us, and with us, and for us, and nothing in all creation can separate us from his love.

God pledged himself to restore, with a multitude of nations, all the spiritual offspring of Abraham, that perfect union of love, and worship, and joy, for which we were made.

God promised to give himself to us, that we might glorify him, and enjoy him forever. And that promise is for people of every nation. And I will be their God.

[ 28 : 12 ] Now I want us to think about some implications of that. We're going to think about one implication now. We're going to think about some further implications after we've looked at the rest of chapter 17, briefly.

One implication now. Martin Luther King used to say, 11 a.m. Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in America.

That is, he's making the point that in mid-20th century America, nowhere was the division between black and white clearer than on a Sunday morning, when the country divided into black churches, and white churches, African-American churches, and European-American churches.

Now, at one level, it doesn't matter if there are ethnic churches. Think about it. If in Glendale here, we had a Chinese church, and an African church, and a Korean church, and a Spanish church, and an Aboriginal Australian church.

Well, if that happened, if we had all those churches here in Glendale, praise God. There was a 1969 song by Blue Mink, which proposed putting all the people of the world into a melting pot. [ 29 : 32 ] And then, stirring the melting pot for a hundred years or more, and then turning out coffee-coloured people by the score.

Anyone know that song? I could sing one or two nods, right? It's not a very good song. But, but, but while God's plan is to gather one church, that one church is not uniform, it's not monochrome. God wants to be known and worshipped in English, and in Mandarin, and in Swahili, and in Spanish, and in Arabic, and in Indonesian, Telugu, Creole, and thousands of other languages. Abraham is not the father of one coffee-coloured nation, but of a multitude of nations. So there's no problem with specific ethnic or language-based churches.

Every, in fact, every congregation is a language-based church. You can't avoid it. At the same time, every church, while it may operate in a specific language, should in principle be a place where people of every nation and ethnicity and background are welcome.

[ 30 : 52 ] Now, when the multitude of nations in the church is mirrored in a plurality of nations in a church, well, that's a beautiful thing.

we have some of that diversity here at Grace. Praise God. We might pray for even more.

So let's strive to be hospitable to one another, to build bridges across culture and across language, so that anyone who walks through the doors of our church will know they belong, wherever they come from.

And so God's covenant with Abraham might be visibly displayed right here in this place. Okay, I have some more implications later, but let's just fly through the rest of chapter 17 because there are some more things we need to notice here and then we'll wrap it up together.

The third speech of God in verses 9 to 14 begins, verse 9, And God said to Abraham, As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations.

[ 32 : 11 ] Now what God means by this when he calls on Abraham to keep his covenant is to keep what he calls in verse 11 a sign of the covenant. Abraham's descendants were to be marked by that sign.

It was a way of saying we belong to the covenant. We are waiting on God's promises. God is our God. The sign of the covenant was circumcision.

Now why circumcision? Well, this chapter doesn't directly answer that. In fact, I don't think really anywhere in the Bible directly answers that question.

but I think it's reasonable to suppose that there is some relationship between the sign and between what God has promised. Just as you think about the covenant with Noah, there's an obvious connection between the sign, a rainbow, and the promise not to flood the earth.

Well, the promise of the covenant in Genesis 17 is, I will multiply you greatly. I will make you exceedingly fruitful. I will make you into nations and kings shall come from you.

[ 33 : 27 ] So perhaps the best suggestion as to why circumcision is because of the association with procreation. Circumcision was to serve as a visible sign that fruitfulness, multiplication, descendants are from the Lord.

They are the blessing of El Shaddai. And ultimately it was a reminder that it was God himself who would fulfil his promise to bless all families of the earth through the seed of Abraham.

God commands in verse 10 that every male among you shall be circumcised. And verses 12 to 13 go on to explain that this includes both those born in your house and any bought with your money from any foreigner who's not of your offspring.

That is, this sign of the covenant wasn't only for the natural descendants of Abraham, it was for any who became attached to Abraham's family.

Whatever people or tribe they might be from. All could be included. And so the covenant with Abraham was both universal and particular.

[ 34 : 45 ] We've seen the universal, Abraham the father of a multitude of nations. But there's also a sense in which this covenant is particular. And the fourth and fifth speeches of God in this chapter sort of draw out the connection between the universal and the particular.

Speech 4, verse 15, And God said to Abraham, As for Sarai, your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her and moreover I will give a son by her.

I will bless her and she shall become nations. Kings of peoples shall come from her. Now, when God says I will bless her, I will give you a son by her, that's the particular.

family line. Physically, Sarah would be the mother of a particular family line. When God says I will bless her and she shall become nations, that's the universal.

Spiritually, Sarah would be the mother of a multitude of nations. So what's the relationship between the two, between a son and nations, between a particular family line and all the families of the earth?

[ 36 : 00 ] Well, Genesis 17 is giving us hints, right? It's laying seeds, it's beginning threads that will flow through the rest of the Bible. Here's another hint.

Kings of peoples shall come from her. The particular line through Sarah's son would be a royal line, a line that would produce kings, which may well explain the third new name we encounter in this chapter, Sarah.

No longer Sarah, but call her name Sarah, because Sarah means princess. It's a name fitting for the mother of kings.

Kings of people shall come from her. So as the Bible unfolds, the particular promise, Sarah's line, is the key to the universal promise, all nations.

It's through the son of Sarah that the nations would be blessed. The promise to Sarah sets us waiting for a king, a king to whom would belong the obedience of all nations.

[ 37 : 22 ] nations. Now Abraham responds to all this, the promise that Sarah will have a son in verse 17, by falling on his face again and laughing.

And then he speaks to himself and he speaks to God. In verse 17, Abraham says to himself, shall a child be born to a man who's a hundred years old? Shall Sarah who's ninety years old bear a child? I mean, it's impossible. His laughter is laughter of disbelief. I'm too old. Sarah's too old. This can't happen.

It's ludicrous. And so Abraham speaks to God in verse 18 and offers a very practical solution. And Abraham said to God, oh that Ishmael might live before you.

Abraham already had a son. Oh may that this son, the son born according to the flesh, the son born through Sarah's and Abraham's scheme back in chapter 16, may this son be enough.

[ 38 : 35 ] Abraham laughed at the impossible but in his fifth speech God picks up on Abraham's laughter. Verse 19, no but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son and you shall call his name Isaac.

Which means he laughs. You shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him. As for Ishmael, I've heard you and behold I've blessed him and will make him fruitful and multiply him greatly.

He shall father twelve princes and I'll make him into a great nation. but I will establish my covenant with Isaac whom Sarah will bear to you at this time next year.

Here's the fourth of the new names. Isaac, he laughs and the name here, the naming of Isaac points to the improbability of what God was going to do.

How ludicrous it was. But you see the blessing of all nations couldn't be achieved by man but only by God, by El Shaddai.

[ 39 : 48 ] It couldn't be achieved by the flesh or our plans but only by the promise of the Lord. And as for Ishmael, well Ishmael wouldn't be the son through whom all nations would be blessed.

Rather Ishmael would come to be a nation who must come to that son for blessing. Let's draw together some implications for us.

What does this mean for us? One of the places Genesis chapter 17 is picked up later in the New Testament is in Galatians chapter 3. Here are some verses from Galatians chapter 3, verse 26 to 29.

In Christ Jesus, you are all sons of God through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

[ 41 : 03 ] God's covenant, God's plan, God's promise was that whoever you are, whatever your nationality, whatever your background, whether you're rich or poor, whether you're educated or illiterate, slave or free, male or female, whoever you are, that you might know him through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the King of peoples. He is the royal son of Sarah, the son of Isaac, the son of Jacob, for whom the covenant was waiting.

Circumcision's no longer required of us, Paul makes that very clear in Galatians, circumcision's no longer required, because we're no longer waiting for the promise.

The son we were waiting for has come. Through faith in Christ, the promise that is the purpose of all promises is yours and I will be their God.

He is our God and we are his people, not just his people, his sons. because the one Genesis 17 is waiting for has come.

[ 42 : 32 ] Four names, one promise, El Shaddai, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac will be their God.

But let me make one last point in closing. Because brothers and sisters, heirs of Abraham's promise, the task isn't finished yet.

God will be saved. You can jump online and go to a website called the Joshua Project, which kind of tracks the progress of the gospel throughout the world, the progress of the promise of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Christ. And according to the Joshua Project, 1.9 billion people, that's one quarter of the world's population, 1.9 billion people live in 3,215 frontier people groups.

Now, a frontier people group, according to the Joshua Project, is a people group, a tribe, a people group, in which there are fewer than one in a thousand Christians, often far fewer.

[ 44 : 07 ] These are unreached people groups in our world, with virtually no followers of Jesus, with no known movement to Jesus, but people groups still in need of pioneering cross-cultural mission.

3,215 people groups, 1.9 billion people, a quarter of the world's population. Among them are the Khunbi people.

This is a people group in central and western India, a people of 22 million people. They speak Gujarati, Kannada and Telugu, they're the main languages of this group.

Their religion, they're Hindu by religion, 99.3% Hindu. The Bible is available in their language and yet people in this, Khunbi people, regard Christianity with fear as an intrusive religious system which will disturb their culture and their families.

people. There are very few believers, perhaps one in 2,000. But God's plan is to bless the Khunbi people through faith in Jesus, that he may be their God.

[ 45 : 37 ] and that's just one of thousands of unreached people groups in our world. So brothers, sisters, let's keep praying for the unfinished task.

Let's support those who are engaged in reaching the nations with the message of Christ and even let's pray that God may send out people from our midst to the furthest reaches of the world.

Will you pray with me? Heavenly Father, we thank you for your everlasting promise and covenant, your commitment to us that you will be our God through your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Father, we pray that at church here we might be welcoming to people of all nations and all backgrounds and all cultures. Please, may we be a visible demonstration of your covenant with Abraham.

And Father, we pray for the progress of the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world. There are still so many people, billions of people, Lord, who will live and die without any real opportunity to know their saviour unless someone goes to them.

[ 47 : 28 ] So, please, Father, continue and speed the work of worldwide mission. Help us to be prayerful and to support those who go to do that work.

Please raise up more from here and throughout the world to send to those unreached frontier people groups. we pray for the Kumbi people and thousands of people groups like them.

We ask that in this generation you would bring Christ, his name, his gospel, the saving word, to them in such a way that their hearts are gripped, that they are convicted and that they call on the name of their saviour.

And we ask all this for Jesus' sake. Amen.