

# Discover the Story of Your Biblical Heritage



**Laying the Foundation**  
Covenant Heritage Series – Book One

LAWRENCE BLANCHARD

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Thank you.

Discover  
the Story  
of Your  
Biblical Heritage

Laying the Foundation

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Covenant Heritage Series - Book One

LAWRENCE BLANCHARD

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**A word to KJV folk:** We are aware that there are many who believe that the *King James Version* (KJV) of the Bible should be the only version that is used. We respect that belief and conviction. However, we hope that because we have chosen to use the *New American Standard Bible* (NASB) in this book series, that that will not dissuade you to partake in reading it. We encourage you to check out every Bible reference with the KJV to see if there are any substantial discrepancies.

All bold notations are the author's except where it is in an original quoted text from another source and will be indicated by "Emphasis in the original."

Cover background painting: by Frans II Franken, "King Solomon meets the Queen of Sheba," painted in between the years 1606 and 1617.

Maps and artwork: Johannes Verhoeff

For more information on the *Covenant Heritage Series*, please logon to:  
[www.YourBiblicalHeritage.com](http://www.YourBiblicalHeritage.com)

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# Dedication

For the honor and glory of the God of  
Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.





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# Introduction

## About the *Covenant Heritage Series*

**T**he *Covenant Heritage Series* is comprised of seven books that will help you build knowledge, understanding and relevance regarding the heritage of the covenant people of God. As you will see, this heritage has been lost or hidden from the modern day teaching of the Bible and the pages of history. However, this series boldly and joyfully reveals and proclaims this God-ordained heritage to the people to whom it belongs.

Why is heritage important? Is **your** heritage important to you? We tend to live in the moment with little, if any, regard for our past heritage. But whether we know it or not, whether we try to ignore it or not, we are the products of our history in and through our ancestors. Knowledge of our heritage reveals who we are and who we're supposed to be. It reveals what we've been given as an inheritance. And, by implication, it reveals our present and future purpose in life.

Most of us have been taught that our heritage is not important to living in the present. But the truth is, living in the present is relatively meaningless without the knowledge and understanding of your purpose that has its roots in your heritage – your family history. And life is void of meaning in the present unless from that heritage you realize your destiny.

To live with ultimate meaning and purpose, to know without a doubt who you are and what you were created for comes together in your past heritage, your present life and your future destiny. Where do you begin to find your biblical heritage?

## Where Do We Start?

We begin with a basic question: What does the Bible say and what does it mean by what it says? That's what Book One, *Discover the Story of Your Biblical Heritage*, and the subsequent books in the *Covenant Heritage Series* attempt to answer.

Would you be willing to take a **fresh look** at the Old and New Covenant Scriptures to discover for yourself what the word of God actually says and consider what it means by what it says?

There is not a more significant question that must be satisfactorily answered for every person – Christian or not. Of course, if you already are unmistakably confident that you have grasped for yourself the unity and consistency of what the whole Bible says and means from beginning to end, then you will have no need for reading this book. Or, perhaps you are satisfied with what you have been told to believe by recognized hierarchies in the “church” and by trusted “scholars” who have, more or less, come to a consensus of opinion about what they **think** the Bible says and means. If so, you will have no reason to read this book.

## Who Is this Book For?

If, on the other hand, you do have questions and some doubt in your mind as to what the Bible says and what it means by what it says, and if you feel you have not been satisfied enough to confidently understand it for yourself, **then this book is for you**. Perhaps you have thought or felt that the Bible doesn't fully add up or make complete sense. **Then this book is for you**.

Beyond that, this book is for those who really want to find out for themselves what the message and meaning of the Scripture is. If you seek hard after the truth and hold on to the truth based on the evidence discovered for yourself, even if it means rethinking what you previously believed or had been told the Bible said and meant, **then this book is for you**.

It's for those who are courageous enough to think and believe differently from the present day "orthodox"<sup>1</sup> systems and traditions even if it means the ridicule and rejection of family and friends.

Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.  
– Matthew 5:11-12

Though personal conviction of truth is often costly, Jesus Christ did say we would be "blessed" and to "rejoice."

It will be a test of character and personal integrity to hold to a view contrary to the majority if you find the evidence to warrant a change of thinking. But as someone once said, "The truth is the truth even if no one believes it, and a lie is a lie even if everyone believes it."

## The Old and New

Please rest assured that this book and the books in this series do not abandon **historical and biblically evidenced** doctrines of Christianity. Indeed, these books hold firmly to the Bible as God-breathed and other core teachings such as the sacrificial blood atonement of Christ Jesus and justification by grace through faith alone.

On the other hand, these books do challenge the liberal and present day "conservative" opinions of our time that render a radically different picture about what the Bible says and what it means by what it says, as you will see. It will challenge the "orthodox" consensus opinion that has become an **assumed**<sup>2</sup> set of biblical "facts."

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<sup>1</sup> Orthodox: of, pertaining to, or conforming to the approved form of any doctrine, philosophy, ideology, etc. ... conforming to beliefs attitudes or modes of conduct that are generally approved. – Dictionary.com (online). Orthodoxy is simply the consensus opinion of recognized authorities and experts of the day. That opinion may be true, correct and certain, or it may not be.

<sup>2</sup> Assume: 1. to take for granted or without proof. – Dictionary.com (online)

Of course, these are vehemently guarded as sacred. But still, the issue is, does the consensus opinion agree with what the Bible actually says or not? Is it verified by the evidence of Scripture with the fewest contradictions?

## How to Read and Study this Book

If you want to get the most out this book, here are some helpful suggestions:

- Start at the beginning and read it through page by page.
- Set aside sufficient time to read and study one chapter at a time with a Bible in hand.
- Though you can go through this book on your own, you might benefit from partnering up with your spouse, friend or even a small study group. But be sure they have the same open mind and are committed to considering the facts objectively. Get that commitment to do so first.
- Make sure you do not go beyond a word you do not understand. This book was carefully written to highlight the definitions of certain words so you can better understand the meaning of words and their application.
- Make sure you go back to a previous section or chapter if necessary and reread it until you feel you have a firm grasp of what is written before you proceed to the next.
- Take time to ponder and answer the questions at the end of each chapter. They are designed to help you review what you have read and studied, and confirm your own conclusions.

In other words, don't rush through this book. It's foundational to understanding what the Bible says and sets the groundwork for the rest of the books in this series. Take the time to absorb it, think about it, and test it.

## Unique Approach to the Bible

The Bible is a true story. It's not just a collection of interesting stories, events and people. It's essentially the story of one man's family traced

and recorded down through the ages. It's a history that reveals God's unfolding plan and purpose for this family, which in turn develops a clearer and larger picture of God's will and grand design for the sake of His own Name and Glory.

This book, therefore, proposes to answer the question, "What does the Bible say and what does it mean by what it says?" by following this unfolding story and piecing together the key characters and elements of that story to present a picture of the whole purpose of God. "The sum of Your word is truth ..." (Psalm 119:160).

Unlike typical approaches, often called "systematic theology," that take small sections gathered from the biblical text to arrive at isolated conclusions of doctrine (such as the doctrine of salvation called Soteriology or the doctrine of Jesus Christ called Christology), this approach captures the broader, sequential<sup>3</sup> context of the continuing unfolding storyline that is the progressive revelation of God throughout time.

Another unique distinction of this book is that it presents this biblical story as a unified whole with an unforced consistency of the people and covenants continually advancing God's unchanging purpose by God's sovereign hand of grace. This is in contrast to relatively modern, but popular, versions of a theological framework that divide the plan of God through the ages into theoretical "dispensations" and imagined "gaps." This is also in contrast to the teaching that biblical interpretation is based on each individual's personal conclusions or opinions (II Peter 1:20-21).

This book (and the following series of books) does, however, stay within the bounds of the well-accepted principles of interpretation of the Bible. The two fundamental ones are: 1) that the Bible is more accurately and safely understood in its own context and, 2) when the

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<sup>3</sup> Sequential [from sequence]: the following of one thing after another in chronological, causal, or logical order. – Victoria Newfeldt, Ed.in Chief, *Webster's New World Dictionary*, Third College Edition, New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1988.

Bible is allowed to interpret itself. These two basic principles underlie the guiding process that will be critical to answering the question about what the Bible actually says.

## A Personal Message

Even though modern Bible teaching and preaching is primarily focused on personal application, and pastors and teachers strive to make it personally relevant to others, true individual significance is lost without understanding the full context of the word of God. The Bible was not written primarily to individuals although it does have individual, personal application (“How do I live my life now?”). But, what the Bible says and what it means has a much larger context. It is a **national message** of which an individual is a part of the whole.

Within that national message lies the greater personal message of true and lasting relevance. That a man or woman finds himself or herself as a vital part of a greater unfolding purpose of the Kingdom of God is the high road of finding personal significance and eternal purpose, which cannot be equaled.

Jesus commanded us to “**seek first His kingdom** and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). But how can we seek His Kingdom if we don’t know and understand what it is and our place in it? This book introduces the national context of the Kingdom of God consistently through the biblical covenants assigned throughout the story of one man’s family.

## Significance for Our Time

This book will lay the foundation for a biblical perspective of the consequences of a rapidly deteriorating moral, economic and political system not just in America, but in the rest of the “civilized world.” In order to understand why we are going through increasingly severe difficulties, we must understand biblical history and how it relates to us. Through evidence-based conclusions of fact in this book, and the



ones that follow, you may begin to catch a glimpse of why we have “gone off the rails,” so to speak, and what must be done to repent and return to do the will of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

These conclusions are not difficult to understand, but may be the ultimate challenge to accept. If, however, you discover they are true, correct and certain, there is no other choice but to accept them unless, of course, you find the personal cost too great. If you want results and want to be a part of a real change of direction that seeks first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, consider carefully what this book and the books that follow present.

This book, and the rest of the books in this series, will not interest those who have concluded that nothing can be done to remedy our deteriorating conditions because, after all, “we are in the end times” and everything is going to get worse anyway. If that is true, why do anything at all beyond the survival of yourself and family and maybe get motivated to get as many “saved” as possible?

If you also believe that things will turn around only if God directly intervenes by a massive global display of His presence and power “when Jesus comes back,” and that we are powerless to do anything apart from this direct action of God, then this book will not interest you.

If, on the other hand, you believe that the true local church is the dwelling place of God by His Spirit and the church is His “body” to fulfill His “eternal purpose...so that the manifold wisdom of God might **now** be made known **through the church** to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 3:10-11), then read on. If you believe that God the Father in Christ Jesus is “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come, and He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things **to the church, which is His body**, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:21-23) and that Jesus promised “I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it” (Matthew 16:18), then read on.

If you do not yet realize, at least in some small degree, that the problems and issues of our time have consequences with critical outcomes, then there may be little reason to read this book. However, if you are aware enough to know that:

- murder, rape and drugs are continuing to increase,
- prisons are overflowing,
- sexual perversion is rampant,
- politicians and judges are largely compromised and many are corrupt,
- the economic debt is unmanageable and unsolvable in the present system (that is, there is “no mathematical solution” or “market solution” to pay it off),
- we are daily poisoned by “dead” food laced with chemicals, preservatives, pesticides and herbicides, not to mention environmental pollution introducing more chemicals and heavy metal poisoning,

then you may want to consider this book seriously as a study of what the Bible says and what it means by what it says.

## What Is this Book About?

This is a foundational study that tells the true story about one man and his physical offspring. It’s the story about how God revealed Himself and specially chose Abraham and his descendants through Isaac and Jacob to establish His Kingdom on earth. It’s the story of God’s faithful covenant relationship with this chosen covenant family. It connects all the significant points of history and covenants from Abraham to Jesus Christ, helping you make sense about what the Bible says. And it shows why the vast majority of the churches today have misunderstood God’s purpose and plan to establish His Kingdom in righteousness and justice. When you complete this book, you may never read or study the Bible in the same way again.

Okay, here you go. Are you ready to start discovering what the Bible says and what it means by what it says? Be like a Berean<sup>4</sup> and examine everything that is written here very carefully.

And one more piece of counsel, to get the most out of this book and the remainder of the books in this series as they interact with God's word: **Read the Bible as if you were reading it for the very first time.** To do that, you may need to temporarily set aside what you have come to believe the Bible says and what it means by what it says and consciously put your beliefs on the shelf. Examine the Scriptures afresh. You may just discover new truths that you have never seen before.

... and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. – John 8:32

In the quest for truth, may the Spirit of truth make His revelation and wisdom known to you.

Lawrence Blanchard  
December 2012

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<sup>4</sup> In Acts 17:10-12, the Apostle Paul preached “the word” to some of the people in Berea and the text says of them: “Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.”



# 1

## God's Covenant Promises to Abraham

### The Starting Place

**I**n order to more easily grasp what the Bible says and what it means by what it says, we begin with God's promises to Abram (later renamed Abraham) as revealed in Genesis 12. As you will discover, the story of the Bible flows from this important patriarch down through history connecting the biblical covenants and God's chosen people together in a unified, unforced consistency. From Genesis 12 through the New Covenant (Testament) Scriptures, we will see Abraham as the critical foundation upon which to build a true, correct and certain understanding of the biblical story.

### Why Not Start in Genesis 1?

You may be asking this question: Why start in Genesis 12 and not chapter 1? It does seem logical to start at the beginning of the Bible, doesn't it? Genesis 1-11 is very important to understanding what the Bible says and what it means by what it says, and we certainly

want to study these beginning chapters of the Scripture in our search for the truth about what God has revealed. And we will do so in Book Four of this series, *God's Covenant Creation*.

We don't start with Genesis 1-11 for two reasons. First, there are a lot of differing and emotionally-charged beliefs and issues about the creation story (Genesis 1-2) and Noah's Flood (Genesis 6-8), for example. If we started there, we feel we would have to address the many varied Christian and non-Christian perspectives about these chapters and this would only serve to distract us from our objective to tell the overall biblical story as simply and directly as possible.

Second, we believe that the first eleven chapters of Genesis are most accurately understood if the rest of the Bible (Genesis 12 – Revelation) is first understood. In other words, in keeping with the two basic principles of interpretation of the Bible – 1) that the Bible is best understood in its context, and 2) when it's allowed to interpret itself (Scripture interprets Scripture) – we believe that Genesis 1-11 can be read with a more definite understanding by bringing the light of the rest of Scripture to shine upon it. Just like trying to understand any portion of the Bible that stands alone, whether a verse or a chapter, apart from considering the rest of the Bible, there is likewise an increased hazard of misinterpretation of Genesis 1-11 when it stands alone.

So, we begin with Genesis 12 and we'll take what we learn and eventually come back to Genesis 1-11. We think you will find that the knowledge you gain from this approach will give you greater insight and wisdom when we examine Genesis 1-11 in Book Four of this series, *God's Covenant Creation*.

## The First Two Promises to Abram

Genesis 12 begins with God's call to Abram to leave his relatives and the land where he was living and go to another land that God would show to him (12:1):



Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you...”

We’ll get to “the land” part of it shortly. After that call, God made two promises to Abram:

1. That He would make him **a great nation**, and
2. That **in him all the families of the earth would be blessed**.

And **I will make you a great nation**, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And **in you all the families of the earth will be blessed**. – Genesis 12:2-3

### God’s Promises to Abram<sup>1</sup> (Abraham)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
|  <p>1) He would become a<br/>great nation.<br/>(Gen. 12:2)</p> |  <p>2) All the families of the<br/>earth would be blessed<br/>in him. (Gen. 12:3)</p> |
|---|--|

So, Abram obeyed the voice of the Lord God and left for “the land of Canaan” (Genesis 12:4-5). This land was called Canaan because the Canaanite lived in that land (Genesis 12:6).

## The Promises to Abram about His Descendants

Over the course of time, after Abram settled in the land of Canaan (Genesis 13:12), God made two more promises to Abram and his descendants:

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<sup>1</sup> Abram was a direct descendant of Shem, one of Noah’s three sons. His genealogy is listed in Genesis 11:10-32. This will be studied more in Book Four of this series, *God’s Covenant Creation*.

3. That they would **possess the land of Canaan**, and
4. That Abram's descendants would comprise a **multitude of people** – like the dust of the earth.

The LORD said to Abram...“Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; **for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever. I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered.**”

– Genesis 13:14-16

Many years later, God repeated His promise to Abraham<sup>2</sup> in two other ways:

Indeed I will greatly bless you, and **I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore...** – Genesis 22:17

According to God's promise, Abraham's descendants would possess the land of Canaan and become a multitude of people like the dust of the earth, the stars of the heavens and the sand which is on the seashore. In other words, they would become many, many people too numerous to count.

From the basic Hebrew and Greek meaning as noted on the next page, it seems clear that “descendants” or “seed” (Hebrew: *zera*; Greek: *sperma*) often refers to **physical offspring**, that is, sons and daughters, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and so forth.

### Meaning of Words:

What does “descendants” or “seed” mean? “Descendants” is translated from the Hebrew word *zera*. – *Strong's Hebrew Dictionary #2233*

(Continued)

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<sup>2</sup> God changed his name from Abram to Abraham by this time (Genesis 17:5).



## Meaning of Words (Continued):

Definition: *zera*, seed; figurative fruit, plant, sowing-time, posterity...  
– *Strong's Hebrew Dictionary*

In the LXX (LXX or Septuagint is the Greek version of the Old Testament): *sperma*. – *Strong's Greek Dictionary* #4690

Definition: *sperma*; from #4687; that which is sown, i.e. seed: [variously translated] conceive, descendant, offspring, posterity, seed, seeds. – *Strong's Greek Dictionary*

*Sperma*: Old Testament: *sperma*....in LXX...which literally refers to agronomic seed-sowing (Gen. 47:23) and to the flow of male semen (Lev. 15:16) ...*Sperma* in the sense of “offspring” or “posterity”...in citations of Old Testament promise texts which foretell the future blessing of the descendants of Abraham (Lk. 1:55, Acts 7:5, Rom. 9:7, Heb. 11:18).  
– Colin Brown, Ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. III, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1971, p. 521-523

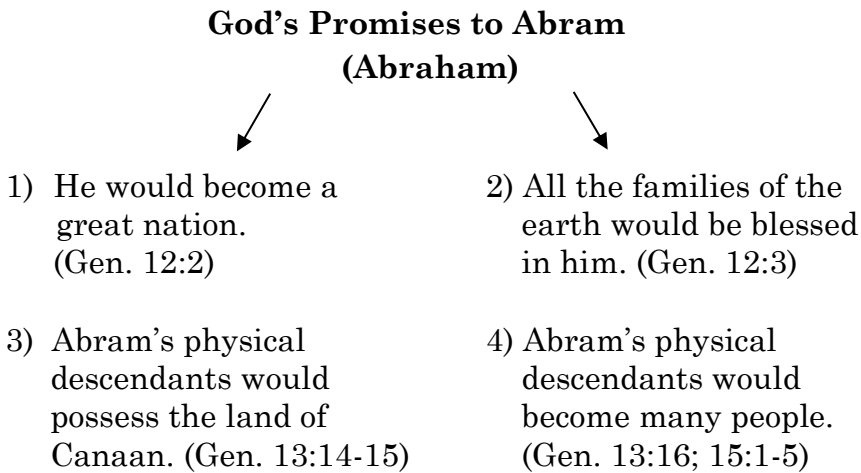
Can this meaning of “descendants” as physical offspring be verified in the Bible? Let's look at Genesis 15:1-5.

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; your reward shall be very great.” Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since **I am childless**, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “Since You have given no **offspring** to me, one born in my house is my heir.” Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, “This man will not be your heir; but **one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir**.” And He took him outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So shall **your descendants** be.”

In this passage, Abram inquired of the Lord about the fact that he had no child or “offspring” of his own. “Offspring” is the same Hebrew word *zera* (and Greek word *sperma*) as in Genesis 13:15 and 15:5 (translated “descendants” in these verses in the NASB). The

Lord replied that Abram would have a child “from your own body.” Furthermore, the Lord verified the promise that Abram’s descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the night sky (later repeated in Genesis 22:17). Logically, if Abram was to have a child from his “own body,” that would be a **literal, physical offspring or descendant**. Abram would be the father of that physical child. So, the word “offspring” or “descendants” (or “seed”) in this context means the literal, physical children of Abram.

At this point, God’s promises to Abram are as follows:



## Promise to Abraham Concerning the Nations

Of all the promises that God made to Abraham, this next one is, perhaps, the most important in terms of understanding what the Bible says and what it means by what it says. This promise that God made to Abraham was that he would “be the father of a multitude of nations” (Genesis 17:4). This promise was made also by “covenant”:

Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be blameless. I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly.” Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, “As for Me, behold, **My covenant is with you,**

**and you will be the father of a multitude of nations.**  
 No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for **I will make you the father of a multitude of nations.**”— Genesis 17:1-5

To begin to grasp the significance of this covenant promise, let's define the word “nations” and how it is variously translated in other parts of the Bible.

### Meaning of Words:

What does “nations” mean? “Nations” is translated from the Hebrew word *goy*. — *Strong's Hebrew Dictionary* #1471

*Goy* can be translated by the following words: Gentile, heathen, nation, people. So *goy* can be translated either Gentile or heathen or nation or people.

*Goy*. Gentile, heathen, nation, people... It is difficult to ascertain the exact definition of the term. However, if one takes the various usages into consideration...one must conclude that **the basic idea is that of a defined body or group of people**, or some specific large segment of a given body. **The context will generally indicate the specific quality or characteristic which is to be understood...** The term *goy* is used especially to refer to specifically defined political, ethnic or territorial groups of people without intending to ascribe a specific religious or moral connotation. — Harris, Archer, Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. I, Chicago, IL: The Moody Bible Institute, 1980, pp. 153-154

There are two points here about the Hebrew word *goy*. First, it is variously translated “nation,” “Gentile,” “heathen” or “people” depending on the translator's choice. In other words, the word “nation” is interchangeable with the word “Gentile.” We have been taught that the word “Gentile” means someone who is not a “Jew.” But that is incorrect. It's simply another word for “nation.”

Nation = Gentile

Gentile = Nation

Second, the **context** determines the specific meaning of the word “nation” (or “Gentile”), who it applies to and how it’s understood. In other words, if you want to understand who “nation” or “Gentile” refers to, it must be determined from the context in which it is used.

There is another helpful English definition of “nation” that we can use to determine what it means. Consider the original definition of this word:

***Nation**, as its etymology<sup>3</sup> imports, originally denoted a family or race of men descended from a common progenitor, like *tribe*, but by emigration, conquest and intermixtures of men of different families, this distinction is in most countries lost. – Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, Vol. I, New Haven, CT: S. Converse, 1828, (emphasis added in part)*

We have highlighted for emphasis the fact that the “etymology” (or origin of the word) of “nation” is “a family or race of men descended from a common progenitor.”<sup>4</sup> Of course, “nation” has all but lost that original meaning due to foreign immigration and political identity such as the United Nations. That’s how we think of the word today – not a race of people, but many races in a specific country, regardless of race.

If we take this original English definition and the context of Genesis 17:1-5, there are definite clues as to how “nations” is used and applied. For example, God told Abraham that he would be “the **father** of a multitude of **nations**.” The Hebrew word for “father” is *ab*. The word is used overwhelmingly in the Old Covenant Scriptures in “kinship terms...[with]...the basic meaning ‘(natural) father (of his children)’”<sup>5</sup> and often can refer to father, grand-father, great-

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<sup>3</sup> Etymology means derivation of a word...word origin. – Dictionary. reference. com

<sup>4</sup> Progenitor: 1. a biologically related ancestor: a progenitor of the species... – Dictionary.com (online)

<sup>5</sup> Ernest, Jenni, Claus, Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997, pp. 1-2

grandfather and so forth. Furthermore, the context tells us that God would “establish My covenant between Me and you [Abraham] and **your descendants** after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant” (Genesis 17:7). The word “descendants” or “seed” in other translations is the same word we discussed previously meaning physical descendants (Genesis 13:14-16, 15:1-5 and 22:17). So, the facts of the context of “nation” or “nations” indicate that **the promised “nations” that would come from Abraham would be his physical descendants.**

This is an important point, as you will discover in future chapters, because there is a major religious **assumption** today that “Gentiles” means people who are not the physical descendants of Abraham. When the translators use the word “Gentiles,” they are implying this **interpretation** which may not be accurate. In the case and context of God’s promise to Abraham that he would become the father of many “nations,” the meaning and application of “nations” (or “Gentiles”) as anyone other than his physical offspring, cannot be true.

This **assumed definition** of “Gentiles” in modern day Christian theology forces the translators of the Hebrew word *goy* (*goyim* – plural) to use “nations” instead of “Gentiles.” Imagine if Genesis 17:5 read this way: “I will make you the father of many Gentiles.” Can you see where that would cause confusion in the mind of the reader? If it is **assumed** that “Gentiles” does not refer to the physical descendants of Abraham, then “Gentiles” would not fit the context of Genesis 17:1-5<sup>6</sup> since the context clearly refers to “nations” as his physical descendants.

“Nations” (or “Gentiles”), in the context of Genesis 17:1-5, means the physical descendants of Abraham. By the way, the word “Gentiles” is from the Latin word *gentilis*.<sup>7</sup> Let’s look at the origin and meaning of the word:

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<sup>6</sup> In the Greek version of the Old Testament Scriptures called the Septuagint or LXX, the word translated “nation” is *ethnos*. It is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word *goy*. We’ll take a look at *ethnos* later on in this book.

<sup>7</sup> The word “*gentilis*” was first used in the Latin Vulgate Bible, which was published by Jerome around 390 A.D.

### Meaning of Words:

*Gentilis*, adj. family, hereditary; tribal; national; m. (masculine noun) clansman, kinsman. – John C. Traupman, *The New College Latin & English Dictionary*, New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1981, p. 122

Another important derivative of *genere* is the n. *gens*, originally, “**the group of all those who, in the male line, descend from a common (free) male ancestor**,” hence a clan. The adj. is *gentilis*, belonging to the clan, hence in Late Latin (180-600 A.D.), a non-Roman, a foreigner, and in Late to Medieval Latin (600-1500 A.D.) a non-Jew, a non-Christian. – Eric Partridge, *A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., New York, NY: Macmillan Co., 1959, p. 250

As you can see, originally *gentilis* referred to a family line and meant the same as the word “nation.”

## A Word about “Covenant”

Before we move on to the remaining promises to Abraham, let’s discuss this all-important word “covenant.” God made a “covenant” with Abraham:

I will establish My **covenant** between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting **covenant**, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. – Genesis 17:7

First, we notice several things about what this verse says: God was making a “covenant” with Abraham and his descendants (that is, his physical offspring), and it was going to be “an everlasting covenant.” The covenant promise was that God was going to make Abraham the father of many nations and it was going to be a perpetual covenant to be manifested or fulfilled in Abraham’s physical descendants. The Hebrew word for “everlasting” is *olam* which means “long duration, antiquity, futurity” (*Strong’s Hebrew Dictionary* #5769). Psalm 105:8-9 emphasizes this “everlasting” covenant:

He has remembered His covenant **forever**, the word which He commanded to **a thousand generations**...which He made with Abraham...

In other words, it was to be a perpetual covenant for many, many future generations in the family line of Abraham.

This “covenant” was given to Abraham **and** his descendants. Let’s look closer at the word itself.

### Meaning of Words:

What does “covenant” mean? “Covenant” is translated from the Hebrew word *berith*. – *Strong’s Hebrew Dictionary* #1285

A compact (because made by passing between pieces of flesh) which is explained below.

Another authoritative source says that covenant is defined as: 1. *alliance* of friendship... 2. covenant, as a divine constitution or ordinance with signs and pledges. – F. Brown, S. Driver, C. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, Peabody: MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2001, p. 136

The word “covenant” as translated from the Hebrew word *berith* is used throughout the Old Covenant portion of the Bible in the context of an agreement “made in conjunction with the ceremonial death of an animal”.<sup>8</sup> There is no exact word that gives this definition, but the word “covenant” is associated in context with blood sacrifice as explained in Genesis 15:1-21. In this story, God Himself passed through the pieces of sacrificial animals and cut, or made, a “covenant” (v. 18) on behalf of Abraham as a sign and pledge to him that He would fulfill certain promises. It was an **unconditional covenant** made by God Himself. It’s worth reading this story for yourself. One author said it well when he defined covenant as “...a bond-in-blood.”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Robert Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978, p. 214

<sup>9</sup> O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1980, p. 14

This idea of a biblical covenant extends throughout Scripture and plays a significant truth in the unfolding plan of God in and through His covenant people. We will come back to this important covenant concept later in this book.

## The Final Two Promises to Abraham

The next promise to Abraham is also found in Genesis 17:6: “kings will come forth from you.” In other words, from the descendants of Abraham would come rulers or kings. We’ll see this expanded and fulfilled more specifically in Book Three, *The Foundation and Fulfillment of the Old and New Covenant Scriptures*.

The final promise to Abraham is found in Genesis 22:17: “your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.” Scholar Adam Clarke commented on this phrase:

By the gates may be meant all the strength, whether troops, counsels or fortified cites of their enemies.<sup>10</sup>

God’s promise to Abraham was that his descendants would rule over and conquer their enemies. In other words, they would have dominion over their enemies.

## Conclusion

Let’s sum up these unconditional promises to Abraham:

### God’s Promises to Abram

↙ **(Abraham)** ↘

1) He would become a great nation.  
(Gen. 12:2)

2) All the families of the earth would be blessed in him. (Gen. 12:3)

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<sup>10</sup> Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI: Beacon Hill Press, 1967, p. 48



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|---|--|
| 3) Abram's physical descendants would possess the land of Canaan. (Gen. 13:14-15)     | 4) Abram's physical descendants would become many people. (Gen. 13:16; 15:1-5) |
| 5) Abram's physical descendants would become many nations. (Gen. 17:5-6)              | 6) Abram's physical descendants would produce kings. (Gen. 17:6)               |
| 7) Abram's physical descendants would possess the gate of their enemies. (Gen. 22:17) |  |

The unity and consistency of the entire Bible begins with these unconditional, everlasting covenant promises to Abraham and his physical descendants. Keep in mind the meaning and application of the word “nation” or “nations.” Understanding this will help you to put the pieces of the Bible together and you will begin to see God's word as you have never seen it before. You will see the Bible story unfold before your very eyes and it will really begin to make sense.

In the next chapter, we'll discover who inherited these powerful, unconditional, everlasting covenant promises.

## What Did You Learn? Test Yourself.

1. List the covenant promises made to Abraham (Abram) by God.
  - a. Abraham would become a great \_\_\_\_\_. (p. 3)
  - b. Abraham would be a blessing to all the \_\_\_\_\_ of the earth. (p. 3)
  - c. Abraham and his descendants would possess the land of \_\_\_\_\_. (p. 4)
  - d. From Abraham would come many \_\_\_\_\_. (p. 4)
  - e. From Abraham would come a multitude of \_\_\_\_\_. (p. 7)
  - f. From Abraham \_\_\_\_\_ would come forth. (p. 12)

g. Abraham’s descendants would possess the gate of their  
\_\_\_\_\_. (p. 12)

2. What other common Latin word taken from the Latin Vulgate Bible is translated the same as “nation”?  
\_\_\_\_\_ (p. 9)

3. God made a conditional covenant with Abraham.

True or False (p. 11)

Question to Think About

Suppose you wanted to find out if you were one of the physical descendants of Abraham who would inherit the covenant promises given to Abraham. Based on the promises themselves, what clues would you expect to find to confirm whether you were one of those descendants?

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# 2

## God's Covenant Promises Inherited by Isaac and Jacob

**A**s we learned in the first chapter, God made a series of magnificent, unconditional and everlasting promises to Abraham by covenant. These promises were also to be inherited and fulfilled in his physical descendants. This chapter will examine the portions of Scripture that reveal that it was Abraham's son Isaac and grandson Jacob who would inherit these covenant promises. The inheritance was by God's sovereign<sup>1</sup> choice, as you will see.

### God's Promise of a Son

As you recall in the previous chapter, God assured Abram (later renamed Abraham) that he would have a natural born son from his

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<sup>1</sup> Sovereign means: ...Supreme or highest in power; superior to all others; chief; as, our sovereign prince. Independent of, and unlimited by, any other; possessing, or entitled to, original authority or jurisdiction; as, a sovereign state; a sovereign discretion. – *Webster's Online Dictionary*

“own body” (Genesis 15:4). This son would be Abram’s “heir” of the covenant promises.

In the course of time, Abram and his wife Sarai (later renamed Sarah), still did not have any child of their own. Sarai, desiring the fulfillment of this promise that Abram would have a son, decided to give her maidservant, Hagar, to him in order that he might finally obtain a son.

Now Sarai, Abram’s wife had borne him no children, and she had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar. So Sarai said to Abram, “Now behold, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children through her.” And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai...And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her sight. – Genesis 16:1-2, 4

The son Hagar bore to Abram was named Ishmael.

So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. And Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him.  
– Genesis 16:15-16

Thirteen years later, when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord again reaffirmed His covenant to him and changed his name from Abram to Abraham, because God was going to make him “the father of a multitude of nations.”

No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be **Abraham**: for I will make you **the father of a multitude of nations**. – Genesis 17:5

Abraham means “to be populous; father of a multitude” (*Strong’s Hebrew Dictionary* #85).

Also, at this time, God told Abraham that the name of his wife Sarai would be changed to Sarah, because she would “be a mother of nations...”

Then God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but **Sarah shall be her name**. And I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and **she shall be a mother of**

**nations;** kings of peoples shall come from her.”  
– Genesis 17:15-16

That Abram's name was changed to Abraham and Sarai's name was changed to Sarah reflected and confirmed that the covenant promises would be fulfilled in and through a child of their own.

## God's Choice of Isaac

Because both Abraham and Sarah were childless and advanced in age well beyond childbearing years (Genesis 18:11), Abraham assumed Ishmael would be the heir of the covenant promises. However, God did not choose Ishmael as the heir, but rather the son Abraham would have with Sarah. His name was to be Isaac.

Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, “Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?” And Abraham said to God, “Oh that Ishmael might live before Thee!” But God said, “No, but **Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac;** and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.”  
– Genesis 17:17-19

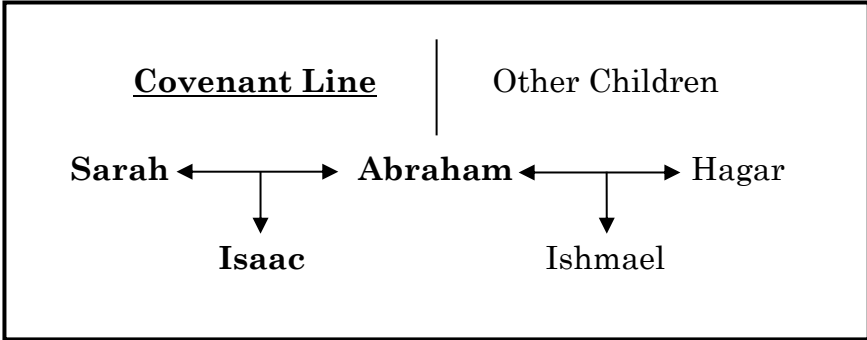
God would establish the “covenant” with Isaac, not Ishmael.

**But my covenant I will establish with Isaac,** whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year.  
– Genesis 17:21

Although Ishmael would become a great nation (Genesis 17:20), he would not be Abraham's heir. God chose Isaac.

One year later, Sarah gave birth to Isaac.

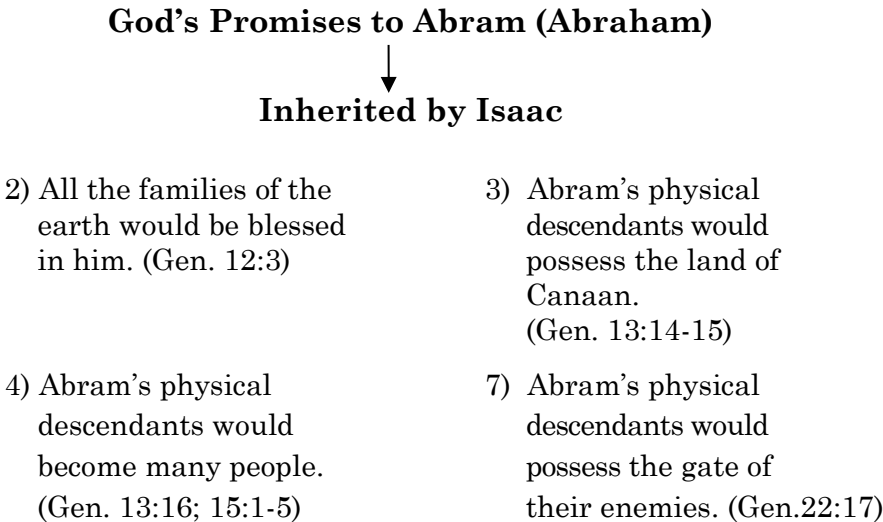
So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him. And **Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac.**  
– Genesis 21:2-3



## Covenant Promises Affirmed to Isaac

After Isaac grew to be a man, God affirmed three promises He gave to Abraham: 1) his descendants would occupy “these lands” (in Canaan), 2) his descendants would be multiplied “as the stars of the heavens,” and 3) “the nations of the earth” would “be blessed” in his descendants (Genesis 26:3-4).

Furthermore, Isaac’s wife Rebekah received two of the prophetic covenant promises: that her offspring would “become thousands of ten thousands,” and “possess the gate of those who hate them” – that is, their enemies (Genesis 24:60). Thus, to Isaac and Rebekah were reaffirmed these covenant promises given to Abraham, as the diagram on the next page summarizes.



## God's Choice of Jacob

After Isaac married Rebekah, like Abraham and Sarah, they could not have children of their own. However, Isaac prayed for his wife and “the Lord answered and Rebekah his wife conceived” (Genesis 25:21). The rest of the story is interesting and revealing, especially in regard to the word “nations.”

Rebekah was pregnant with twins, but “the children struggled together within her” (Genesis 25:22). Inquiring of the Lord why this was so, the Lord explained the nature of the struggle:

And the Lord said to her, “**Two nations** are in your womb; and **two peoples** shall be separated from your body; and one people shall be stronger than the other; and the older shall serve the younger.”— Genesis 25:23

It was revealed that the conflict between the twins indicated “two nations” and “two peoples” who would be separated from each other. Here we again see the word translated “nations.” As you might recall in the previous chapter, **a “nation” in the biblical and English definition means a people coming from a common set of parents. In the context, the “two nations” refer to the children to be born to Isaac and Rebekah.** Recall also that “nations” (Hebrew *goyim*) could be translated by the Latinized word “Gentiles.” Same Hebrew word, but just the translator’s choice of which word to use for *goyim* – “nations” or “Gentiles.” So, Genesis 25:23 could have been translated: “Two Gentiles are in your womb.”

As in the case of the promise to Abraham that his descendants would become “a multitude of nations,” it would seem rather confusing to translate this Hebrew word “Gentiles” instead of “nations.” If the translation read: “Two Gentiles are in your womb...” this would cause confusion because most people have been taught (at least in western Christianity) that there are only two types of people on the planet – Jews and Gentiles, and that “Gentiles” means everyone who is not a “Jew.” But that is not the definition of “Gentiles,” as we have already seen. “Gentiles” is simply the Latinized

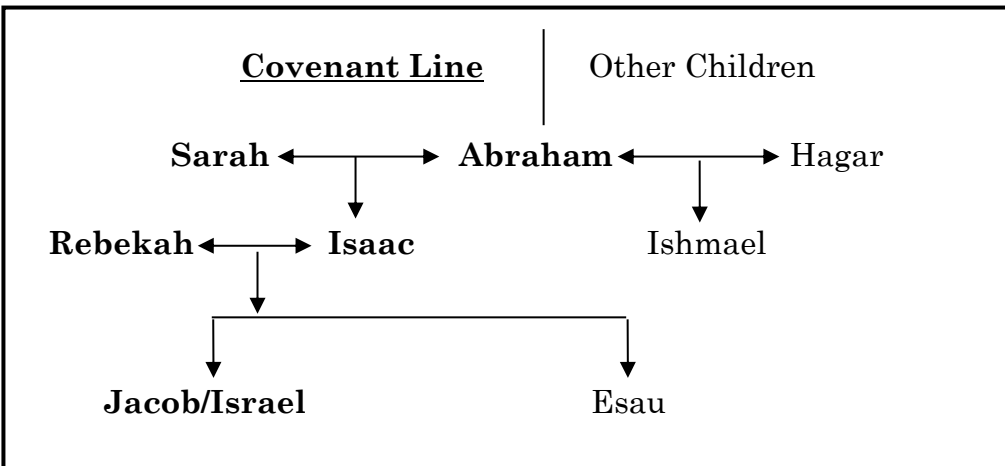
word for “nations.” But this will be explained more in depth in coming chapters. For now, it is important to understand simply that the twins in Rebekah’s womb represented “two nations” and “two peoples” that were to be separated.

The other part of the prophetic revelation to Rebekah was that one would be stronger than the other and the older of the children would serve the younger. In other words, one of the children would have dominion over the other.

As the time for giving birth arrived, Rebekah delivered two boys. Esau came out first (the older and firstborn) and then his brother Jacob (the younger). Traditionally, the birthright belonged to the firstborn male. The birthright represented the right to the family inheritance and, because Esau was born first, the birthright belonged to him. The birthright, in the context of Abraham and Isaac, represented the covenant promises. As the firstborn, these promises belonged to Esau.

However, according to the prophetic revelation received by Rebekah, it was to be Jacob, the younger brother of Esau, who was to have dominion rather than Esau. **God sovereignly chose Jacob to receive all the birthright promises.** The fascinating story about how all this took place is worth reading on your own (Genesis 25:24-34; 27:1-40).

So now we advance the next phase of Abraham’s covenant family:





## Covenant Promises Affirmed to Jacob

As Jacob grew into manhood, God revealed that he would inherit the covenant promises of his father Isaac and grandfather Abraham:

And behold, the Lord ... said, "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; **the land** on which you lie [land of Canaan], **I will give it to you and to your descendants. Your descendants shall also be like the dust of the earth**, and you shall spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and **in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed.**" – Genesis 28:13-14

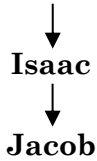
Then God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan-aram, and He blessed him. And God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; **you shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name.**" Thus He called him Israel. God also said to him, "I am God Almighty; be fruitful and multiply; **a nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come forth from you.** And **the land** which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, **I will give it to you**, and I will give the land **to your descendants after you.**" – Genesis 35:9-12 (Also see Genesis 48:4 in the LXX or Septuagint where Jacob is repeating this promise to Joseph using the phrase "a multitude of nations.")

So, by God's reaffirming promise, Jacob's physical descendants would:

- Be a multitude of people like the dust of the earth;
- Be a blessing to all the families of the earth;
- Become a nation and a company of nations;
- Have kings come from them;
- Possess the land given to Abraham and Isaac.

The following diagram summarizes these covenant promises inherited by Jacob:

## God's Promises to Abram (Abraham)



- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>1) He would become a great nation.<br/>(Gen. 12:2)</p>                                | <p>2) All the families of the earth would be blessed in him. (Gen. 12:3)</p>          |
| <p>3) Abram's physical descendants would possess the land of Canaan. (Gen. 13:14-15)</p> | <p>4) Abram's physical descendants would become many people. (Gen. 13:16; 15:1-5)</p> |
| <p>5) Abram's physical descendants would become many nations. (Gen. 17:5-6)</p>          | <p>6) Abram's physical descendants would produce kings. (Gen. 17:6)</p>               |

## Conclusion

The promises given to Abraham and to his physical descendants by covenant from God were inherited by his son Isaac and grandson Jacob, as also explained in Hebrews 11:8-9:

By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with **Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise.**

In other words, Isaac and Jacob were within Abraham's body and they became "heirs," not only of possessing the land promised to Abraham, but by implication, of all the promises. And from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob, the inheritance was all by God's sovereign choice. God chose Abraham and his physical descendants, Isaac and Jacob, to receive the unconditional and everlasting covenant promises.

## What Did You Learn? Test Yourself.

1. God chose Isaac instead of \_\_\_\_\_ to receive the inheritance of the covenant promises. (p. 17)
2. God chose \_\_\_\_\_ instead of Esau to receive the inheritance of the covenant promises. (p. 20)
3. Isaac and Jacob were the physical descendants of Abraham. (p. 22)

True

False

(Circle one)

## Question to Think About

If God decided to choose Isaac over Ishmael and Jacob over Esau before they were born and before they could do anything bad or good, does that mean that God shows favoritism? Does that mean that God does not choose every person equally or love everyone the same? From what you learned to this point, honestly answer these questions.

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# Summary of the *Covenant Heritage Series*

The *Covenant Heritage Series* is a set of seven books that will help you understand what the Bible says and what it means to you in regard to your heritage. The series examines the current critical issues of our time in light of what the Bible says. Finally, it offers biblical answers for transforming this world system back to God's original plan and purpose.

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