

# The Abrahamic Covenant

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These studies are designed for believers in Jesus Christ only. If you have exercised faith in Christ, then you are in the right place. If you have not, then you need to heed the words of our Lord, Who said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son, so that every [one] believing [or, trusting] in Him shall not perish, but shall be have eternal life! For God did not send His Son into the world so that He should judge the world, but so that the world shall be saved through Him. The one believing [or, trusting] in Him is not judged, but the one not believing has already been judged, because he has not believed in the Name of the only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son of God." (John 3:16–18). "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life! No one comes to the Father except through [or, by means of] Me!" (John 14:6).

Every study of the Word of God ought to be preceded by a naming of your sins to God. This restores you to fellowship with God (1John 1:8–10). If we acknowledge our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1John 1:9). If there are people around, you would name these sins silently. If there is no one around, then it does not matter if you name them silently or whether you speak aloud.

Passages Covered		
Genesis 12:1–3	Genesis 15:1–21	Genesis 17:1–15
Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines		
The Abrahamic Covenant—Gen. 12:2–3	"I will Bless Those who Bless you; and I will Curse Those who Curse you."	The Suzerain Vassal Treaty
Circumcision Represents Regeneration	The Familial Relationship between God and Abraham's Seed	God's Covenants with Abraham
	The Covenants of God (graphic)	

**Preface:** I need to come back to this doctrine and edit this down to 20 or 30 pages. This is taken from the Basic Exegesis study, from a dozen or two lessons.

The last recorded incident when God spoke to man was God speaking to Noah when he exited the ark (Gen. 9:1–17).<sup>1</sup> 300 (or 1200) years have passed since then (recall the difference between the Hebrew and Greek texts). It is possible that during this time, the incidents recorded in the book of Job took place.

Suddenly, seemingly out of nowhere, God is speaking to Abram. We do not know what has led to this. We do not know anything about Abram's background, apart from his family lineage recorded in the

<sup>1</sup> In Gen. 11, God spoke to the other members of the Trinity.

previous chapter. We do not know in what form God is. We may reasonably assume that Abram has believed in Jehovah Elohim (which will be confirmed in Gen. 15:6), and Jehovah Elohim is speaking directly to Abram.

Recall that Abram was originally living in Ur of the Chaldees (near the Persian Gulf), and now is living with his father northeast of Canaan. He is actually fairly close to the land where God wants him to be.

This informally introduces the concept of the geographical will of God. There is a place where God wants us to be. This is obviously related to the *will of God*, a doctrine that we will cover in an upcoming lesson.

Terah (Abram's father) has moved his family to Haran (also transliterated *Charan*) and they have lived there long enough for it to be called *his country*.

There is a point to Abram leaving his father's house. Abram is 75 years old and he lives in the shadow of his father and he is under the authority of his father. Abram has to separate himself like a man, and raise his family separate from his father. Abram cannot be seen as the patriarch of his family if he is living in his father's shadow under his father's authority.

**Gen 12:1** Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your family and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

The final word in this verse is the Hiphil (causative) imperfect (future and/or continuous action) of the very common verb *râ'âh* (רָאָה) [pronounced *raw-AWH*], which means *to see, to look, to look at, to view, to behold; to perceive, to understand, to learn, to know*. In the Hiphil stem, it means *to cause to see, to cause to look; to show; to cause to see [with pleasure]; to cause to know, to cause to learn; to cause to experience [evil or good]*. Strong's #7200 BDB #906. God is going to *show* Abram this great land that He is giving him; and the imperfect tense indicates that this will be a process, not a singular event. That is, Abram will not go into the land, park himself in one spot, look around, and think, "That's not bad." He is going to walk throughout much of the land over a period of decades. God will prosper Abram as He shows him the land He is giving to him.

**Gen 12:2** And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

This begins what is called, the Abrahamic Covenant, which will be repeated and added to throughout the next few chapters. God is making specific promises to Abraham. This is known as an unconditional covenant—these things will come to pass no matter what Abram does. The first thing which God promises is, He would make a great nation from Abram.

In subsequent chapters, it is going to be clear that God blesses Abram. Before he dies, Abram will have been blessed with several children, all born past the time that he was able to sire children. Abram will also be blessed materially; Gen. 13:2 indicates that his material wealth had become great. He had another wife after Sarai had passed away (Gen. 25:1); he had many servants (Gen. 24:2, 35); and vast possessions (Gen. 24:35).

God also promises Abram that, in his life and through his descendants, he would be a blessing to all mankind. The greatest blessing from Abraham to mankind will be his Son, Jesus Christ.

**Gen 12:3** I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse those cursing you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

God's original promises are made directly to Abram. In vv. 2–3, we find the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix again and again, which refers to Abram. However, we may reasonably apply this to the not just Abram but to his descendants as well. It makes little sense for *all the families of the earth* to be blessed by Abram alone. However, God will work through Abram.

This blessing and cursing promise continues to this day, to all those who are descendants of Abraham (Jews), and to all of those who have any sort of relationship with his descendants.

As an application of this, today, the United States is in a precarious position. We have a high debt, we have a nation with large numbers of dependents, we have great enemies in the world (Islam and communism, 2 of the most powerful forces for evil in the history of mankind); and yet we are the most prosperous and the greatest nation in all of human history. Part of this comes from our alliance with the modern-day nation Israel. The people there are the seed of Abraham, and God watches over them, despite the fact that many of them are unbelievers. We are blessed greatly because of the Jewish population in our country and because of our relationship to Israel. "I will bless those who bless you and I will curse those who curse you."

Look at the Arabic nations in contrast. Whereas these nations have the potential of building hundreds of great cities like Dubai (which is an incredible achievement), they instead consume their resources on hatred. Nations like Iraq and Iran and Saudi Arabia have this potential along with the actuality of billions upon billions of dollars flowing into their countries. With this money, they could turn their backward desert nations into a paradise like Dubai. However, despite the great influx of wealth which Arab lands have enjoyed for decades, the Middle East is one of the most backward and wretched places of the world. The key is their hatred of the Jew. The Jews live in a postage stamp-sized country (approximately 0.2% of the Middle East) and they have made it beautiful and prosperous once again, even though they have no oil resources, and the Arabs, with all of their great wealth, are unable to do this. In the U.A.E., we see the potential that all Arabic countries have. However, most of these nations hate Jews and God curses those who curse Abraham and his seed. Hatred is expensive.

Spain is another excellent example. At one time, Spain was a world power, sending out explorers throughout the world. However, almost simultaneous to this was Torquemada and the Spanish Inquisition, which resulted in both the execution and expulsion of Jews from Spain. This evil continued into the 1800's, by which time, Spain was no longer a great power. They became a third-rate power on a downhill slide since then. "I will bless those who bless you and I will curse those who curse you." This is a promise from God which is as true today as it was 4000 years ago.

God would continue to make promises to Abram, throughout his life, but so far, God has promised him:

### **The Abrahamic Covenant—Gen. 12:2–3**

- (1) I will make a great nation from you; This would be the nation Israel, which will be the central nation in both the Tribulation and the Millennium. .
- (2) I will prosper you; Abram personally became very prosperous. Gen. 13:2
- (3) I will make your reputation great; Abram became well-known in the land of Canaan. Abraham and Moses are 2 of the most well-known Jews of history. And, during Abram's day, he became known to kings (Gen. 14) and great armies (Gen. 21:22–33).

## The Abrahamic Covenant—Gen. 12:2–3

- (4) **You will be a blessing;** Jesus Christ would come from the line of Abram. Through Jesus Christ, all men are blessed.
- (5) **I will bless those who bless you;** Nations, peoples and individuals who have treated the Jews graciously are so treated by God. This has been true throughout human history.
- (6) **I will curse those who curse you.** Nations, peoples and individuals who have persecuted the Jews, or even have spoken disparagingly of them, are cursed by God.

In 2 short verses, written thousands of years ago, one of the most dynamic factors of history is clearly laid out, and fulfilled as history plays out, over and over again.

Let's look at the final 2 promises made by God to Abram, 4000 years ago.

### “I will Bless Those who Bless you; and I will Curse Those who Curse you.”

#### Examples from Ancient History:

- 1) The Amalekites
  - (1) As the Jews march toward the Land of Promise, after spending nearly 40 years in the desert, they are viciously attacked by the Amalekites. Ex. 17:8
  - (2) Joshua, Moses' general, led the Israelites against Amalek and defeated them. Ex. 17:9–13
  - (3) Because this is the first people to attack Israel as a nation, God told Moses to be certain to record this incident, because He would blot out Amalek completely. Ex. 17:14 Num. 24:20
  - (4) Amalek has vanished from history. Even archeologists cannot find anything which can be clearly associated with the Amalekites.
- 2) The Assyrians
  - (1) In the ancient world, the Assyrians became one of the eminent empires of that day.
  - (2) For 200 years, their army was undefeated, and they, along with the Phoenicians, controlled the world's iron market (and its application to weapons manufacturing).
  - (3) Their kings are well-known to ancient historians: Tiglath-Pileser III, Shalmaneser V, Sargon, Sennacherib, Esar-Haddon and Assur-bani-pal.
  - (4) As they began to decline as a nation, God sent Jonah to them to evangelize them in 754 B.C. (a mission Jonah rebelled against, because he hated the Assyrians).
  - (5) However, anti-Semitism began to fester in this empire (even though the Assyrians were a Semitic people—i.e., descended from Shem). In 739 B.C., they threatened Judah for the first time. Jonah's evangelization had about a 15 year effect, upon one generation of Assyrians.
  - (6) Essentially what happened was, many Assyrians were saved under the ministry of Jonah, but there was no dissemination of Bible doctrine. They had no truth to take them from being evangelized to becoming a nation with a subset of mature believers, which would have helped to guide the nation away from anti-Semitism.
  - (7) Although there were a myriad of reasons for the fall of the Assyrian empire, the chief cause was their unrelenting anti-Semitism. Jonah hated the Assyrians and it irked him to evangelize them; but that hatred was a two-way street. So, even though many Assyrians responded to Jonah's message, their anger toward the Jews overtook this evangelical

## “I will Bless Those who Bless you; and I will Curse Those who Curse you.”

movement in a very short period of time.

- (8) Isaiah, of the Bible, records a very unusual incident. The Assyrians had invaded Judah in 701 B.C. and were about to take down Jerusalem. However, they launched a psychological attack first, where the Rabshakeh (a trained propagandist for the Assyrians) taunted the Jews, warning them of their imminent defeat (Isa. 36:20), in hopes of crushing their spirit. Although the leaders of the Jews were ready to surrender, the people of Jerusalem held fast on the wall. The Assyrians prepared for war, intending to attack the next morning. Then something unusual occurred. **The Angel of the Lord** [Jesus Christ in His preincarnate form] **went out and He struck down the camp of the Assyrians, all 185,000 of them, so that, when they** [the Israelites] **awoke, they** [the Assyrians] **were all dead corpses** (Isa. 37:36).
- (9) As you may well imagine, you will find that incident recorded in the Bible, but not in any of your ancient history books. However, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Volume of the 1965 Edition of The Cambridge Ancient History, we read the following: *The disappearance of the Assyrian people will always remain an unique and striking phenomenon in ancient history. Other, similar, kingdoms and empires have indeed passed away, but the people have lived on. Recent discoveries have proved it is true, and have shown that poverty-stricken communities perpetuated the old Assyrian names at various places, for instance on the ruined site of Ashur, for many centuries, but the essential Truth remains the same. A nation which had existed two thousand years and had ruled a wide area, lost its independent character. To account for this two considerations may be urged. First, even in lands where, as Gibbon has remarked, the people are of a lustful complexion, the Assyrians seem to have been unduly devoted to practices which can only end in racial suicide . . . No other land seems to have been sacked and pillaged so completely as was Assyria; no other people, unless it be Israel, was ever so completely enslaved.*

This quotation came from R. B. Thieme, Jr.'s book *Antisemitism*, ©1974, pp. 21–22. Portions or all of this quotation can also be found here:

<http://sermons.logos.com/submissions/89651-Anti-Semitism#content=/submissions/89651>

<http://www.jaas.org/edocs/v13n1/yildiz.pdf> (p. 16, footnote).

<http://www.enotes.com/topic/Assyrianism> (footnote)

<http://www.betnahrain.net/1History/Parpola1.htm>

- 3) We could also examine the Syrians, Phœnicians and Philistines for additional evidence of God cursing those who curse Israel.

### Examples from Modern History:

- 4) Spain
- (1) The king and queen of Spain, Ferdinand V and Isabella I, desired to make Spain into a purely Catholic nation.
  - (2) Spain was more or less divided at that time into *Christian Spain* and *Moorish Spain*; the former controlled by Catholicism and the latter a mixture of Catholics, Christians, Jews and Moslems.
  - (3) Previously, Spain had been a refuge for the Jews, but in 1482, the Inquisition began (however, it was not full-blown at that time).
  - (4) Torquemada, who apparently originated the inquisition, demanded the expulsion of all Jews in 1492, but Pope Sixtus IV told him *no*.

## “I will Bless Those who Bless you; and I will Curse Those who Curse you.”

- (5) So, Spain simultaneously was a world power, sending out explorers all over the globe; and beginning a persecution of the Jews (among others).
- (6) By 1569, Jews had been mostly expelled from Spain and Western Europe, as this anti-Semitic Inquisition began, and with that began the sharp decline of many western European nations, including Spain.
- (7) This quotation is from the *Columbia Encyclopedia*, from p. 1863 of its 1950 edition: *The expulsion of the Jews deprived Spain of part of its most useful and active population. Many went to the Levant, to the Americas, and to the Netherlands, where their skills, capital, and commercial connections benefited their hosts....Jewish scholars such as Maimonides had a major share in the development of Christian scholasticism..*

<http://reference.allrefer.com/encyclopedia/S/Spain-history-muslim-spain-and-the-christian-reconquest.html> R. B. Thieme, Jr. references the actual encyclopedia that this quotation comes from.

- 5) Great Britain, German and the United States could all be examined so show a correlation between the rise and fall of Germany, the rise and decline of Great Britain, and the rise of the United States, all occurring simultaneously to these nations and their positive or negative attitudes toward the Jews.

The principle that God would bless those who blessed the Jew and curse those who curse the Jew, is stated outside of the Bible. We read in the 14<sup>th</sup> edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol 13, p. 51: *It is a noteworthy fact of history that great conquerors—Alexander, Cæsar, and Napoleon—have always treated the Jew well; On the other hand, lesser men, endowed with narrower outlooks, have failed to recognize the Jew and have sought to crush him. But such Procrustean methods are contrary to nature and tyranny, whether toward the Jew or toward any other [group of people] and this has never secured permanent results. The same policy of religious unification has characterized subsequent dynasties from the Assyrians to the Romanovs, and the same fate has overtaken them The Jews have always survived their disappearance.* I am quite certain that this quotation was scrubbed from more modern editions.<sup>2</sup>

I took this quote from R. B. Thieme, Jr.'s study of Jeremiah, lesson #96. This quotation can also be found here: <http://sermons.logos.com/submissions/89651-Anti-Semitism#content=/submissions/89651> and elsewhere on the internet, as well as in Bob's book *Anti-Semitism*.

The examples of historical anti-Semitism came from R. B. Thieme, Jr., *Anti-Semitism*; ©1974 by R. B. Thieme, Jr.; pp. 15–22, 31–36. This 150 page book examines these histories in much greater detail and may be obtained from Berachah Church without charge (713-621-3740).

<http://www.rbthieme.org/publicationsalphabeticallistings.html> provides a complete list of booklets available from Berachah.

This phenomenon, [I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you](#), is examined on several websites, and many examples from modern and ancient history are given; one of the best is: <http://sermons.logos.com/submissions/89651-Anti-Semitism#content=/submissions/89651>

<sup>2</sup> I took this quote from R. B. Thieme, Jr.'s study of Jeremiah, lesson #96. This quotation can also be found here: <http://sermons.logos.com/submissions/89651-Anti-Semitism#content=/submissions/89651> and elsewhere on the internet, as well as in Bob's book *Anti-Semitism*.

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[http://www.churchisraelforum.com/CH\\_11\\_Blessing\\_or\\_Cursing.htm](http://www.churchisraelforum.com/CH_11_Blessing_or_Cursing.htm) is also a reasonable page on this particular topic, of nations which have been both blessed and cursed based upon their relationship with the Jews. I do not know enough about this website to either endorse or disparage the other materials found there.

**Gen 15:1–5** After these things the Word of Y<sup>e</sup>howah came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." But Abram said, "O Lord Y<sup>e</sup>howah, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "Listen, You have given me no offspring [seed], and a member of my household will be my heir." And behold, the Word of the Y<sup>e</sup>howah said to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." And He brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then He said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

The Word of Y<sup>e</sup>howah appears to Abram in a vision, and God identifies Himself as Abram's shield, which is apropos because of the battle Abram had just been in (Gen. 14). God promises Abram that he would have a son, and that his seed would be multiplied like the stars in the sky. What God had promised would be exactly what God would bring about.

Then we have one of the most amazing passages in all the Old Testament: **Abram believed in Y<sup>e</sup>howah, and it was credited to his account as righteousnes**s. Or, more literally:

**Gen 15:6** And he [Abram] had believed in Y<sup>e</sup>howah and He [God] therefore credits it [this act of faith] [as] righteousnes to him [crediting righteousnes to his account].

**Gen 15:7** And He said to him, "I am Y<sup>e</sup>howah Who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess."

In Gen. 11, we studied God, through circumstance, and by direct command, taking Abram from the heart of early civilization, what is now southern Iraq, a little over 100 miles from the Persian Gulf; and they traveled up along the Euphrates River and then up the Balih River settling down in Haran.

Then God moved Abram and his wife from Haran to Canaan, which is where Abram is now. And God tells Abram, "I brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess;" the very land that Abram is standing on, this very land that God has Abram walking across, a small portion of which is under the control of Jews today.

This is the life which Abram has himself lived. He knows that, apart from God, he would not be where he is. He knows that, apart from God, he would be back in Haran, because Abram did not decide on his own to come to Canaan; God told him to go to Canaan (Gen. 12:1–3).

You ought to be able to point to several things in your life which are different because of Bible doctrine in your soul. There is information from God's Word which has changed the course of your life. If you can honestly say that, you would probably be right where you are right now, even if you had not believed in Jesus Christ, then you have given testimony against your own spiritual life. This is quite obviously a personal inventory. If you have experienced any spiritual growth at all, then you ought to be able to point to dozens, if not hundreds, of decisions which you have made, on the basis of the Word of God, which have changed the direction of your life. God is reminding Abram of the most important decision of his young life, to leave Haran and to come to Canaan. **And He said to him, "I am Y<sup>e</sup>howah Who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess."** If Abram is able to objectively examine his life, then his very life in Canaan—his great riches and success—all point to God's guidance.

What God is doing here is giving Abram the big picture. Abram has this whole other life living along the Euphrates, probably in the shadow of his own father, with a life that is so nondescript that, Abram does not even record anything except his family line, his move from Ur to Haran, and the death of his father (which is recorded in Gen. 11:32, but had not actually taken place yet in the timeline our narrative). When he leaves Haran, Abram is 75 years old, and his father would be 145 years old (compare Gen. 11:26 to 12:4). Abram is not yet 100 in our passage (Gen. 17:1), so that is father is not yet 170 (his father will die at age 205—Gen. 11:32).

In any case, the big picture is, Abram moved to Canaan, as God directed him to do, and this has changed everything in Abram's life. Over a period of 75 years, Abram had nothing to say about his life; however, over the past 20+ years, quite a bit has happened and Abram recorded this (or, Isaac or Jacob recorded it, based upon what Abram told them).

At this point in time, Abram is a very rich and successful businessman; people all over Canaan know and respect him, and he has just changed world history with a tiny army. This is what God wants Abram to recognize. However, what God is saying to Abram flies right over his head. He focuses on what God said, which has not been fulfilled yet. "You said You are going to give my people this land; how do I know that is true?"

**Gen 15:8** But he said, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I will possess it?"

If you are not careful, it appears as though there is a contradiction here. Gen. 15:6 reads: "And Abram believed in the Lord and it was credited to him as righteousness." Two verses later, Abram is asking God how can he know that he will possess the land, which indicates a distinct lack of faith. As explained, Gen. 15:6, Abram exercised faith in Y<sup>e</sup>howah some time ago, and that faith was credited to him as righteousness. However, here we are, maybe 20–50 years later (God told Abram to leave Haran nearly 25 years ago), and now Abram is expressing some doubt. This ought to strike you as a little odd, because Abram has just defeated the greatest army of his day with a handful of men. However, so it is with the believer in Jesus Christ. We have good days and we have bad days.

So Abram asks God a reasonable question, for a person who has ignored much of what God has said and much of his own life. God promised him a son, and he doesn't have a son yet. Now God is promising him this land, and Abram says, "Okay, God, You say You are giving me this land—how am I to know that's true? I don't even have the son yet"

Interestingly enough, God does not perform some miracle or sign to answer Abram; This would have been the easiest thing in the world. God could have given Abram a vision of Moses leading the Jews, poised on the eastern border of Israel. God could have caused an earthquake to affect everything around Abram, except for the ground upon which he stands. However, God makes a covenant with Abram instead. No great future visions; no miracles.

**Gen 15:9** He said to him, "Bring Me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon."

When I first became a believer, and heard or read passages like this, it just seemed like random animals being used. "You own a goat, right? Let's use that as well."

This heifer is never used in the Levitical sacrifices. It is not mentioned in the Pentateuch, except by Moses in Deut. 21. Here, when a man is murdered, and the culprit is not known, a heifer is beheaded

near a stream, and the priests are to wash their hands in the stream, to be cleansed of this murder. Punishing someone for murder is not just the right but the duty of a client nation to God, and when they fail in that duty, a heifer is offered up as a substitute for the murderer. This represents a failure in their ability to carry out their solemn duty. This also indicates that, no matter what the situation, justice must be done. There must be a payment for sin.

Later, sacrificing a heifer is associated with Samuel naming David as king (and David represents Jesus Christ in His 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> advents). 1Sam. 16:1–5

The heifer, therefore is associated with both failure (Abram's failure of faith in this passage); as well as with the *substitutionary* death of Christ on the cross (which was an unjust taking of a life, before which, Pilate washed his own hands); and with Jesus Christ during the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> advents. This is the Person with Whom Abram is making a covenant—Jesus Christ, the revealed member of the Trinity.

The female goat is found more commonly as a sacrifice in the Old Testament. However, like the heifer, this is its first mention in the Bible. The Levitical offering of a goat appears to be tied to rebound (naming one's sins to God—Lev. 4:23, 28). Now, why does Abram need to restore his walk with God? He has called into question God's veracity. He has implied that he is losing faith in what God promised him. So he needs to be restored to fellowship.

Like the other two animals, this is the first time a ram is mentioned. The word translated *ram* actually has a number of other meanings: *a strong man, leader, a chief* (Ex. 15:15 Ezek. 17:13); *a mighty tree* (Isa. 61:3 Ezek. 31:14); and *pillars, door posts* (Ezek. 40–41). I believe what is suggested, with the ram, is the power and the strength and the preeminence of Jesus Christ.

The idea of the 3 years is, this would be the age of these animals in the prime of their lives, just as Jesus Christ, in His humanity, was in the prime of His life when He was hung on the cross.

The turtledove is mentioned here for the first time, and this was an offering often given when the person offering it was poor (and the same is true of the pigeon—Lev. 5:7, 11 12:8 14:22, 30). The pigeon in particular is the offering of a poor person. It does not matter our station in life in order to come to the cross—rich or poor, it makes no difference. Furthermore, the pigeon is representative of Abram's relative poverty, compared to what God has promised him (Abram is a very successful businessman, but his holdings are far less than God will ultimately give his seed).

**Gen 15:10** And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half.

Now, normally, what happens when a covenant is made is, those who are parties to the covenant walk between the pieces of animals in order to seal the covenant. The blood and the deaths of the animals seal the covenant, just as we have a covenant with God, based upon the death of His Son. In a sense, we walk *through* the Son in faith (“**No man comes to the Father but through Me**” —John 14:6b).

**Gen 15:11** And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

These animal sacrifices represent a covenant between God and Abram, and this covenant is both about Abram's son, his descendants, and the gift of Canaan to Abram's descendants. This covenant is going to be attacked repeatedly, represented by these birds of prey, and Abram drives them away, protecting

this covenant with God. Therefore, Abram is back in fellowship and he understands the importance of protecting and preserving this covenant, even though he has not a son as of yet.

Again, we have a parallel. All that God has promised Abram is based upon his son, in whom he must have faith for the other promises to have any sort of meaning. For us, the same is true. All of the promises of the Bible are based upon one thing—the Son of Abram. We must have faith in Him first and foremost (this may help to explain the genealogies found throughout the Bible; they testify to Jesus being the Son of Abram).

This covenant is the promise of God to Abram that his descendants would possess the land upon which he stood. The attacks upon this covenant continue even to this moment, when hundreds of Hamas rockets are fired each year into Israel, and groups of people—even nations—who today refuse to recognize that Israel has a right to exist. The leader of Iran has spoken of the complete destruction of Israel.

A contemporary bird of prey today would be Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who said "Iran's stance has always been clear on this ugly phenomenon (Israel). We have repeatedly said that this cancerous tumor of a state should be removed from the region."<sup>3</sup> One of the so-called Arab spring protestors proclaimed, "If the people are free in Egypt... they're going to go free Palestinians, they're going to destroy Israel. The country who control the United States is Israel!"<sup>4</sup>

Israel may lose and regain that plot of ground on many occasions, but that region has been given by God to Abram and to his seed, and at some point in the future, in the Millennium, they will possess much, much more land in that region than today or at anytime in their history.

**Gen 15:12** As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him.

We have an unusual continuity here. God is speaking to Abram, Abram does what God tells him to do, and then there is a period of time which passes, which includes a frightful darkness.

This darkness represents various periods of time during which the Jews do not fully trust in the promises of God. These will be periods of time when God does not speak to any Jew, or periods of time when they have been expelled from the land (the 5<sup>th</sup> stage of national discipline). God will certainly bring these things to pass; but there will be times when this is doubted and times when this covenant will be attacked.

Why do we have these periods of darkness? A lack of faith on the part of the Jews. God has given them promises, both short-term and long-term, and the Jews have chased after other gods. Or the Jews have questioned or doubted their spiritual history. Or the Jews have gotten so far into gross sins and idolatry that God punishes them with severe discipline.

Abram, despite all that has happened to date, has begun to question God and the validity of His promises. Abram overlooks all that has happened because God told him to go to the land of Canaan; and focuses one what has not yet happened. "How do I know that You are going to actually give this land to my descendants? I don't have a son yet who is my heir."

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<sup>3</sup> From <http://archives.cnn.com/2000/WORLD/meast/12/15/mideast.iran.reut/> accessed September 20, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> From <http://www.rawstory.com/rs/2011/01/31/egyptian-protester-claims-destroy-israel/> accessed September 20, 2011.

God gives Abram a taste of what is to come while making a covenant with him. This covenant is made with the animal sacrifices of vv. 9–11. The birds of prey which come down to eat the meat of these carcasses indicate that Abram's genetic line would be attacked again and again—right down to today, in the year of our Lord, 2011. All during this time, Abram drove these birds of prey away (this represents what God would do to protect the Jews). What Abram was supposed to do takes time. Getting these 5 animals and offering them up takes a few hours, and with the first carcass that Abram lays out, birds begin to circle; and Abram finds himself driving these birds away as he gathers the other animals.

This takes us to the end of the day; the animal carcasses are all laid out, the larger animals split apart with a walkway in between them; and then Abram falls into a deep sleep.

**Gen 15:12** As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him.

The darkness in which Abram finds himself is quit unusual. It is a terror of great darkness which comes down upon Abram. So Abram is in a deep sleep, but he perceives this great darkness around him.

God then will make a covenant with Abram, at which time God interprets this covenant, the birds of prey and the great darkness that fell upon Abram. So Abram is near these animal carcasses which he laid out; he is in a deep sleep, and he perceives great frightening darkness about him; and God speaks to him.

**Gen 15:13** Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring [lit., seed] will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be slaves there, and they will be afflicted for 400 years.

The descendants of Abram will go into a land which is not theirs. Recall that, Abram's descendants will have no land which is theirs at this time, apart from this promise from God. They will go to this other land (which is Egypt) and they will be in slavery there for 400 years.

The people of Egypt are the birds of prey who descend upon the covenant which God is making between Himself and Abram, and they would attack this covenant, making it appear as if these promises of God will never come to pass. The Egyptians are the first of many who would attack this covenant of God, down to the Palestinians today.

This is one of the prophecies in the Bible which will have a relatively immediate fulfillment. Within the next century or so, Abram will have a child, who will have twins, one of which will have 12 sons, and Abram's grandchild and his children and their families will all go to Egypt. They actually resided in Egypt for 430 years (Ex. 12:40–41); they would be *afflicted* for 400 of those years (Gen. 15:13 Acts 7:6).

My thinking is, Genesis was written in portions; and every generation or so, some man of God would add to the book. Moses undoubtedly wrote the other 4 books of the Pentateuch (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy)—he is called the author of these books in several places, but he is never said to be the writer of Genesis. It is possible that he edited Genesis, but I am of the opinion that Moses was given the book of Genesis at some point in his life or, most likely, the Jews had this book with them while in Egypt.

In order for this prophecy to have much meaning, it needed to be written down and for there to be some knowledge of it while the Jews are enslaved in Egypt. During this time of slavery, someone had to have these writings, these prophecies of God; and some of the Jews knew about these things. Let's put it this

way: they were supposed to know about these things. It is like believers in the Church Age; there are things we are supposed to know, but many believers do not.

As we will find out in the far future, the Jews in slavery had some knowledge of the God of Abraham, as they would call out to Him. This would suggest that they had the book of Genesis and knew some portions of it.

In any case, what we are reading would be fulfilled, but the prophecy and a part of the fulfillment are found in the same book, Genesis. For the most part, prophecies are not fulfilled in the same book in which they are given.

Now, if there are several authors to the book of Genesis, then this prophecy is actually prophetic—that is, one author records the prophecy and then another author records the fulfillment (or, a partial fulfillment) of the prophecy.

As I have suggested before, Genesis is a narrative written by several different authors, each one adding onto what had already been written. We will come to a very personal statement made by Jacob—something which only Jacob himself would have written (or one of his sons, to whom he revealed this). However, there is no reason whatsoever to credit Jacob with the writing of all of Genesis.

My personal theory is, Melchizedek had the Scriptures, recorded up to Gen. 11, and that he handed a copy to Abraham, who preserved and added to these words. This would explain why Abram, a man who had spoken with God on several occasions, could, in a very short time, place himself under the authority of Melchizedek. Only a man who had heard the Word of God spoken to him, could recognize this same voice in written form.

We have already studied the *Seeds of Theology Found in Genesis*. This, in itself, should have been quite amazing to you. How is it possible for a book written 4000 years ago to contain all of the basic strains of Christian theology? In the very near future, we will examine the “Lucky Guesses” of Genesis, chapters 1–15; and it will cause you to wonder, if Genesis is just a book like any other, how did the author get so many things right?

Back to the narrative: God continues to speak to Abram, telling him what would come to pass.

**Gen 15:14** But I will bring judgment on the nation [Egypt] that they [the Jews] serve, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.

*Will come out* is the very common Hebrew verb *yâtsâ'* (יָצָא) [pronounced *yaw-TZAWH*], which means *to go out, to come out, to come forth*. Strong's #3318 BDB #422. This word in the Greek is *exerchomai* (ἐξέρχομαι) [pronounced *ex-EHR-khoh-mai*], which also means *to go out, to come out*. Strong's #1831. Closely related to this word is *exodos* (ἐξοδος) [pronounced *EX-ohd-oss*], which means, 1) *exit, i.e. departure*; 2) *the close of one's career, one's final fate*; 3) *departure from life, decease*. This is from whence we get the English word *exodus*. Strong's #1841.

God promises Abram that He would bring judgment against the nation Egypt—the nation that they will serve—and that the people of Israel would exit Egypt with great possessions. This will be fulfilled in the book of Exodus. Remember this great darkness that came upon Abram? This represents the judgment that God will bring down upon Egypt, which is fulfilled literally in Ex. 10:21–23. The great darkness that

Abram experienced is representative of the judgment of God upon Egypt. And one of those specific judgments was a thick darkness over the land of Egypt.

The concept being introduced here is a very specific prophecy which will be fulfilled. God has already made prophecies specific to Abram, which are both short-term (having a son) and long term (Israel being given the land upon which Abram is walking). The latter prophecy will not be fulfilled until the Millennium. However, in this chapter, God is telling what will happen over the next several hundred years after Abram passes from the scene. So these prophecies are not actually for Abram, even though they are spoken to Abram; they are for his descendants. Like all other portions of the Word of God, if believers in that day knew these things, they could depend upon God to bring them to pass; if they did not know these things, they had less to depend upon.

The exact same thing is true for believers today. If we know what is in the Bible, then we have things we can place our faith in; if we do not know what is in the Bible, we have a very limited relationship with God. We have the Bible in order to understand Who and What God is and what is our place in this world after salvation.

In any case, Egypt placing Abram's descendants into slavery is future from Abram; Abram would not see any of this. He would die at a ripe old age and go to be with his fathers (which suggests that Abram's ancestors believed in Jehovah Elohim as well).

**Gen 15:15** As for yourself, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age.

Abram will have died long before these prophecies come to pass, and he will die having lived a long and fulfilling life. Obviously, he must have a son before he dies in order for any of this to be true. *Peace* here is the Hebrew word *shâlôwm* (שָׁלוֹם) [pronounced *shaw-LOHM*], which means *completeness, soundness, welfare, peace, safe, secure, tranquil, undisturbed, unagitated*. Strong's #7965 BDB #1022. Abram's death would be tranquil, peaceful and represent him having lived a complete life. Abram will die at age 175.

Also, Abram would have a son from his own loins. These things Abram would see fulfilled; but before that comes to pass, Abram will have faith in what God tells him.

You will note that v. 15 is oddly placed. God talks about the Jews in Egypt in vv. 13–14 and v. 16, but in the middle of that, God talks about Abram.

**Gen. 15:13–16** He said to Abram, "Know for sure that your seed will live as foreigners in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them. They will afflict them 400 years. I will also judge that nation, whom they will serve. Afterward they will come out with great substance. **But you will go to your fathers in peace. You will be buried in a good old age.** In the fourth generation they will come here again, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full."

It is not Abram who will live as a foreigner in Egypt; this is for his seed. The 400 years of affliction will be for Abram's seed. However, Abram will not suffer any of this. He is going to live his life in peace and be buried in a good old age. God is telling Abram, "These prophecies are not about you; they are about your seed. Your life is going to be fine and peaceful." Abram is about 85 at this time and most of his life is still ahead of him.

There is quite a difference between Abram and the Jews (his descendants) who are put into slavery. Abram fails, but he trusts God. He may question God, but he knows God's Word. At the beginning of this chapter, Abram got quite impertinent with God, but his questions were in line with what God had promised him. Those who follow Abram's grandson, Jacob, in time, will not appear to know the promises of God. For 4 generations, they will be afflicted. This suggests to us that, there are no great men; and that God needs to exert strong controls over His people. So God allows them to be enslaved. Do not become confused over this. The Jews could be a very hard-headed people. So the slavery that these Jews will find themselves in will be apropos to their thinking.

In the United States, we have almost no concept of what it is like in the rest of the world. We do not have any sort of idea as to the suffering that is out there; but it all comes back to the individual and corporate relationship to God—and not to just any god, but to God, the Father of Jesus Christ. We in the United States enjoy great comforts and great prosperity, but it is because a huge number of people in the United States believe in Jesus Christ; and a subset of these people actually know much of what is in God's Word. Salvation and knowledge of doctrine is the key.

There is one more thing: most of the modern conveniences which are beginning to be found throughout the world—they were invented by Americans and produced, in many cases, by Americans. Much of the prosperity in the world is because of the United States.

God told Abram, ["I will bless those who bless you; and curse those who curse you."](#) The same is true of the United States, as long as we retain our status as a client nation; as long as we adhere, for the most part, to the laws of divine establishment; as long as there are a significant percentage of believers in the United States; and as long as there is a significant percentage of those who are growing spiritually.

You may wonder, *what about China?* China is easy to explain. They have been controlled by an evil system of communism for decades, and more people have been slaughtered in that country in peacetime than in any war. But, as of late, the number of believers in China has increased. Adherence to the laws of divine establishment, which are almost the direct opposite of communism, has also increased. What should we expect? We should expect that their nation and their lives would improve. We should expect that their influence in the world should increase. At one time Christians were persecuted, reeducated and murdered by the Chinese government. Today, even though Christianity is discouraged and not taught in any way in their schools, Christianity is beginning to grow by leaps and bounds. There is some limited toleration for it by the government.

Why is Europe beginning to fall apart? Christianity has declined in the past 50 or 100 years. There are fewer and fewer believers which means that the nations of Europe will become worse places in which to live.

[Gen 15:17](#) *When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces.*

Anything to do with fire, in the Bible, often refers to judgment. The animals that became blood sacrifices, represent the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The smoking fire pot and the flaming torch represent God the Father pouring out our sins on God the Son and judging those sins.

Part of the tradition of making a covenant, and walking in between the animal parts, is the sealing of the covenant or the 2 parties agreeing to the covenant. God's justice and righteousness, represented by the smoking fire pot and the flaming torch, pass between the animal parts, thus binding God to the covenant

which He has made with Abram. It is key that His justice and righteousness are what are bound to this covenant.

Remember how this chapter started? Before God got much more than a full sentence out of His mouth, Abram began to complain, asking God, "What are you going to promise me now? By the way, I do not have that child yet and my only heir is a man who is not even related to me." This ritual binds the covenant which God has made with Abram. God's justice and righteousness are making a covenant with Abram.

Abram has fallen into a deep sleep. Is this smoking fire pot and flaming torch real? Could someone else have come upon this scene and seen the same things? We don't know. But, to Abram, this is real. He laid out these animal pieces himself and he sees God's righteousness and justice pass between the pieces. To him, this is real; it is not simply a vision that Abram is having. However, the context or the set up for this verse is, [a deep sleep fell on Abram](#). So, despite what the narrative says after this, all of this could have simply taken place within the context of Abram's vision or in a dream-like state. It is my opinion that Abram began seeing God in a vision, but that he moved on from there.

Again, what is key is not the circumstances or the actual reality of these events, but what is true and what stands forever are the words spoken by God.

[Gen 15:18](#) On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates,

The verb *to make* is the Qal perfect of *kâ'ath* (תָּכַח) [pronounced *kaw-RAHTH*], which means *to cut off, to cut down; to kill, to destroy; to cut [or make] [a covenant]*. Strong's #3772 BDB #503. This word is clearly related to cutting these sacrificial animals into pieces. The perfect tense indicates that God already made this covenant with Abram. The covenant was made first, and then the smoking pot and the flaming torch went between the pieces of the animals (after it became dark). That sealed the covenant. The darkness is the judgment of God against Egypt, after which, God will move forward with fulfilling this covenant. The Jews will, as a nation, come into this land and take it.

Now, why didn't God just give the Jews the land and let Abram have children, and let them have children, and simply live in the land and, once their numbers were large enough, take it? Canaan is a land of great degeneracy. God needs to isolate the Jews. They cannot be mixed into the Canaanite culture and they cannot be mixed into the Egyptian culture. They must be kept separate and spiritually pure. Abram was not left in Hebron because he would have become corrupted; the Jews were not left in Canaan because they would have become corrupted as a people.

Furthermore, what happens in the future will be an event as has never occurred before or after. Even today, Jewish people will gather around a meal—the Passover Seder—and talk about God taking their people out of Egypt. Even today, people who are evil will take this story and distort it into liberation theology. 3500 years later, the exodus still plays a part in modern human history. When God wants to step into history and get our attention, He is quite able to do so.

[Gen 15:18](#) On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates,

The land which God gives to Abram is far larger than anything which the Jews have ever controlled, even at the height of their power under Solomon. Right now, Israel is less than 0.2% of the Middle East

(not 2% but 1/5<sup>th</sup> of 1%). In the many surrounding Muslim countries, there are a handful of Jews, if that many, because of the incalculable attitude of the Muslim people, who occupy the other 99.8% of the Mideast lands. The hatred of many of those in the Mideast is so great that, even this tiny sliver of land occupied by Jews is too much for them to bear. These Muslims are the birds of prey, swooping down, trying to destroy the covenant of God made with Abram. So many Muslims today, if they could snap their fingers and have the Jews disappear, they would. If they could snap their fingers and have the Jews die horrible, miserable deaths before Israel went away, they would. This is the nature of evil in our world.

God here gives the Jews the land between the Nile and the Euphrates, which takes in a small portion of Egypt, the Sinai Peninsula, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia (it is unclear whether this description includes of the Saudi Arabia) and a large chunk of Iraq. In other words, about 40% of the Middle East.

Today, Israel is a postage stamp of a country, and various Arabic nations would like to see it destroyed. Their hatred of the Jew is deep and lasting, and no matter how small Israel is, they want to see all of Israel destroyed. In my lifetime, I have seen Israel attacked several times and in a number of ways, yet God has been faithful even today to keep them alive as a people. Whether this present-day Israel will be a part of the end-time prophecies or not, is another topic (it could be destroyed and another Israel raised up in its place decades or even centuries later).

Behind Islam is Satan. If God does not keep this covenant with Israel, then God is not God. Therefore, Satan, throughout history, has worked tirelessly through various nations and various religions to destroy the Jew. Knowing this may help to explain to you the irrational hatred of the Jews throughout history.

As a teacher and as a normal person, I have known a number of Jews throughout my lifetime. I could not define them physically; I could not look at a group of people and pick out the Jews from the group; nor could I separate them by a set of core beliefs. My point is, there is nothing superficial about the Jews which ought to cause such hatred. We can make clear and immediately distinctions between Blacks and Whites, and therefore, racial tensions are going to occur between these groups of people—it is inevitable. However, there is no such clear distinction between Jews and other peoples. Because of this, Islamic propaganda tells its believers that Jews come from monkeys and dogs, and some Islamic adherents actually believe that (it is taught at a very early age). However, non-European Jews could blend into any Middle East country, and, as long as their origins are religion were not known, they would not stand out. There is nothing overt or obvious in the appearance of Jews which causes such recalcitrant behavior on the part of Muslims

However, despite the lack of dramatic physical differences, Jews are hated from time to time in many nations, or even by certain nations, not because of anything which they have done or not because of the way that they look, but because they are God's people, and they will always be God's people. Therefore, Satan hates them, wants to destroy them, and Satan is able to infect whole nations with this sort of irrational hatred.

One of the reasons that the United States is so blessed is our relationship to Israel and to the Jewish people. God promised Abram, "[I will bless those who bless you and I will curse those who curse you.](#)" And so it has been down throughout the ages, up until this point in time. I discussed the precipice upon which our nation happens to be. One of the reasons that we have been preserved is our attitude toward the Jewish people. However, this could change in one generation. We may live to see the day when a majority of people in the United States see no difference between the Jewish people and Muslims; and that their differences in the Middle East are to be seen as equal; and that a reasonable man could be

seen to take one side as well as the other. When that day comes, our nation has reached its most dangerous place.

In the 1400's, Spain was one of the greatest nations in the world, sending out explorers throughout the world, claiming great chunks of the new world for Spain. Spain was a world power. However, simultaneously, the Spanish Inquisition, which began as a tribunal in 1480, forced Jews and Muslims out of Spain, if they did not convert to Catholicism. That was a decree issued in 1492 and in 1501. And suddenly, in a very short period of time, Spain went from being one of the great nations of the world to a 3<sup>rd</sup> class power, which is where it stands today.

Back to the narrative. Next God tells Abram which peoples will be dispossessed or destroyed in order for them to take the land.

**Gen 15:18** On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates,

**Gen 15:19** the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites,

This is the first mention of the Kenites, who apparently have ties to Midian (who will be a son of Abram—Gen. 25:1–2), from whom are the Midianites, a people who will be antagonistic toward the Jews for several centuries after the Jews leave Egypt. The Kenites are less well-known and are thought to be by some identical to the Midianites (however, that would make little sense, since the Midianites are descendants of Abram).

The Kenizzites are barely mentioned in Scripture. To some degree, this is their first and last mention. Caleb—one of the great men of the Exodus—is Kenizzite on his father's side. The word means *hunter*. So, at this point in time, they occupy a portion of the land that God is giving to Abram, but their historical significance seems to all but disappear after this promise (apart from Caleb).

The Kadmonites are mentioned only here, in this one passage. These people are known to Abram but have vanished from this earth as a people—all that remains of them is a name found once in the Bible.

**Gen 15:20** the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim,

Unlike the 3 previous groups of people, the Hittites were a great people, but the land which is associated with them is Turkey. This passage suggests either that God has given much of Turkey over to the descendants of Abram, which would mean that this land grant includes even more land than I have herein described (there is no northern border, per se, given here). The alternative is, the Hittites also exercised some control over land which was south of Turkey, and that is what God is giving to Abram and his seed. The latter explanation makes the most sense.

The Bible treats the Hittites as a very prominent people, mentioning them almost 50 times over several generations, indicating them to be a great powerful empire in the Middle East. And, for many centuries, critics of the Bible scoffed at this, saying that the Hittites were, at best, some little local tribe with much less influence than the Bible indicates. However, archeology has proven these critics wrong and the Bible right (as is so often the case with the Word of God).

Also interesting: I cannot locate any recorded conflicts between Israel and the Hittites. However, one Hittite plays a prominent role in the Bible (Uriah the Hittite) and another is an ally of David's when he is on the run from King Saul.

All of those groups named so far—the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites—are first named here in this passage. The next 6 peoples have already been named in Genesis.

The Perizzites were those who live in the open country of the land of Canaan (*Perizzite* means *open region, unwalled village, open country*). They were the grazers, farmers, and peasants of the time and they probably lived east of the Jordan. Of the 23 times they are mentioned in the Bible, 22 of them have them in a list of names, as we have here. The only time they are listed separate from 3 or more other peoples is in Joshua 17:15. So, their land is given to the Jews, but we do not have any recorded conflicts between the Jews and the Perizzites.

The Rephaim are the giants of the land, and we will come across them on several occasions (although they may not all be related). Some of them will live east of the Jordan River, and others will be found along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea (which is west of the Jordan).

### Gen 15:21 the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites."

The term Amorite is used in 3 different ways: (1) as representative of the people who live in the land of Palestine (which generic usage explains a number of problem passages—Gen. 15:16 Judges 6:10) (2) as the people who live in the hills as opposed to those who live on the plains (Num. 13:29); and (3) as a racially specific group (Num. 21:21–31 Deut. 2:26–35). According to ISBE, *The Amorite kingdom was of great antiquity. About 2500 B.C. it embraced the larger part of Mesopotamia and Syria, with its capital probably at Harran, and a few centuries later northern Babylonia was occupied by an "Amorite" dynasty of kings who traced their descent from Samu or Sumu (the Biblical Shem), and made Babylon their capital.*<sup>5</sup> If this is accurate, then God has been separating Abram from this people for several decades. Also, according to ISBE, the Amorites are mentioned in several extra-Biblical records (e.g., in the Tell el-Amarna Letters, and the Hittite archives discovered at Boghaz-keui).

The Canaanites are the descendants of Canaan, a son of Ham. They moved westward into Palestine and Egypt. They lived in the lowland areas, near the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea (Num. 13:29).

The Girgashites are descended from Canaan (Gen. 10:16) and found in Scripture 6 times, always in a list of names. They are always found associated with the Hittites (Heth), the Canaanites, Amorites and Jebusites. This is because these tribes are all related. There are differing opinions as to where these people lived and who they might be in extra-Biblical history.

The Jebusites are one of the most well-known people in the Old Testament, their name occurring 41 times. They are also sons of Canaan and they will play a part in the history of Israel for the next 1000 years, at least to the time of David. At that time, they will occupy a city called Jebus, a city that David will conquer and make the capitol city of all Israel (this is Salem of Gen. 14:18). At the time that Moses returns to the Land of Promise with his sorry band of soldiers, the Jebusites will be living in the hill country (Num. 13:29), which possibly included Jerusalem.

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<sup>5</sup> *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; from E-Sword; Topic: Amorites.

All of these groups, when Abram entered into the land, were major and minor players in that arena of history. Every single one of them was a *people* at that point; Abram was not. Abram was simply one guy with a wife, no kids, and the men who worked for him. Yet, throughout the centuries, God promised that His Angel (Jehovah) would go before the Jews and drive these people out (Deut. 7:1 Joshua 3:10) and even blot them out (Ex. 23:23 Deut. 20:17). 10 peoples, who controlled the land of Canaan, would fall into great degeneracy, and God would take the land from them and order Joshua to slaughter them.

So, Abram and his wife are the only Jews in the land. Of the people named above, there must be millions in the land of Canaan at this time. Do you know any Amorites, Canaanites or Hittites today? Yet these were 3 of the greatest peoples in that day. God has blotted them out of history. Do you know any Jews? There is a future for the Jews in God's plan, so we will always have Jews. **God's Word lives and abides forever** (1Peter 1:23b). God's Word told Abram, "I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you." Words which were true 4000 years ago and words which continue to be true today.

**Gen 17:1** When Abram was 99 years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be spiritually mature,...

So far, God has delivered a series of commands and promises to Abram, which is why he is living in Canaan in the first place. However, there is no indication that God has ever laid out a system of specific laws and that the pre-Mosaic spiritual life is only implied. However, as we have studied in the **previous lesson**, there appears to be enough information presented so that we can reasonably determine the basic spiritual life for believers and the concept of right and wrong for believers and unbelievers alike (the common morality for believers and unbelievers is known as **divine establishment** or the **laws of divine establishment**). So, the function of the spiritual life combined with the morality of the laws of divine establishment was how a believer was to function.

In fact, one of the things which has been lost to our society is the concept of right and wrong, good and bad, which is for nations of believers and unbelievers both. In the United States, this is being foisted upon our young in the form of relativism, humanism and multi-culturalism (all of which are taught in the public schools); and in Muslim countries, sharia law is replacing divine establishment laws. It would be wrong for believers to think that morality applies to them alone; and for unbelievers to think, whatever they think they ought to do, that is what they ought to do (or, as it phrased in the book of Judges, **every man did what was right in his own eyes**—Judges 17:6 21:25; see also Deut. 12:18 Prov. 12:15).

As we will soon discover, nations are preserved by the believers in that nation. Some of that preservation is direct. That is, if there is a large percentage of believers in a nation and a reasonable percentage of them understand Bible doctrine, then the nation is preserved simply because so many in that nation understand the **laws of divine establishment**. The direct influence of such believers on a society helps to preserve that society. As divine norms and standards are a part of the lives of believers in a society; and these believers are large enough in size to affect that society, in this way the society is preserved. That is the principle; we will study it in the not-too-distant future.

As an aside, one way that concepts of right and wrong are distorted in a society is by taking the vocabulary of right and wrong and distorting that. We have seen that in the past few years with the word *justice*, redefining it in such a way so as to reflect Marxist thinking (state directed redistribution of wealth), as in *economic justice*; or to reflect fanatical environmentalism, as in *environmental justice* (which is a cover for *economic justice*). These very same people would shrink back in horror, if you were to suggest any restrictions be placed on their sexual behavior, even though there are simple straight lines that can be drawn from sexual immorality to crime, increased immorality, increased lawlessness (which 3 things

are a result of single motherhood), and a decreased lifespan (which results from homosexual activity). On the other hand, when it comes to so-called economic justice, any attempt to equalize income distribution results in a less productive, a less free and a more restrictive society. So, these same people who want complete freedom when it comes to sexual behavior—regardless of the negative consequences on society—are more than willing to place devastating restrictions on the productive elements of their society.

Back to Abram. It is 13 years after Ishmael was born to him by Hagar, his wife's Egyptian slave-girl; and God appears to Abram once again.

**Gen 17:1** When Abram was 99 years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be spiritually mature,...

God reminds Abram that He is omnipotent and indicates that there is a specific *walk* for believers, as well as a concept of spiritual maturity even in Abram's day, over 4000 years ago.

**Gen 17:2** ...that I may make My covenant between Me and you, and may multiply you greatly."

This is the second time that God has spoken of making a covenant with Abram, the first being back in Gen. 15. Although God has talked with Abram on 3 previous occasions, only once did God speak about a covenant. A covenant is simply an anachronistic word for *contract*. Sometimes Christians hold on too tightly to some of these anachronistic words, and young people are confused and put off by their foreign-sounding words (churches which continue to use the excellent but anachronistic KJV should be warned about this). God is simply making an agreement with Abram; He is establishing a contract with Abram.

The word here generally translated *to make, to establish* is actually the very common Hebrew word *to give*. Anytime you see *God* as the subject, *give* as the verb, and some person or group as the recipient of that gift, we are talking about *grace*. Grace may be defined as, *all that God is free to do for us based upon the cross; and which things God does for us, are undeserved by us*. We have touched on **grace** in the previous lesson, but we have not yet fully studied this word.

This verb is *nāthan* (נָתַן) [pronounced *naw-THAHN*], which means: 1) *to give, put, set; 1a) to give, bestow, grant, permit, ascribe, employ, devote, consecrate, dedicate, pay wages, sell, exchange, lend, commit, entrust, give over, deliver up, yield produce, occasion, produce, requite to, report, mention, utter, stretch out, extend; 1b) to put, set, put on, put upon, set, appoint, assign, designate; 1c) to make, constitute*. All of these BDB meanings for the Qal stem of *nāthan*. Strong's #5414 BDB #678

At the end of the verb *to give*, we have the cohortative *hê*, which simply means that the Hebrew letter *hê* (ה) is added to the end of the verb. When applied to the first person, the idea is an expression of will or compulsion, and in the singular, may be expressed with *I must, I could, I would, I will, I should, I may*.

God is there, tapping His foot, as it were, waiting to bless Abram by giving him an agreement, a gracious contract. In Gen. 15, it appeared as though God was going to start to make good on His promises made thus far to Abram, and then, Abram went out ahead of God and impregnated Hagar the Egyptian slave-girl. So, for 13 years, God has been there, tapping His foot, waiting to give grace to Abram.

Let's not become confused here. God has not withdrawn His promises from Abram. God is not punishing Abram for 13 years because of his dalliance with *Little Egypt*. What Abram did was throw off the timetable. God cannot desert Abram's seed, which is Ishmael, born to him by Hagar. So God allows

Ishmael to be born and to grow into a young man (13 years old). God's specific promises to Abram had to be put on hold until that time.

Abram's spiritual heritage is going to flow through one very specific genetic line, which line will be begun with a child sired by Abram and carried by Sarai. God still has to allow for Abram's decision to impregnate Hagar; and time must be allowed for their child to be raised properly in a good environment. That takes 13 years. So, for all intents and purposes, Abram is not waiting on God but God is waiting on Abram.

**Gen 17:1–2** When Abram was 99 years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be spiritually mature, that I may make My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you greatly."

God has to let certain things run their course before He can step back into Abram's life. Raising up Ishmael to the point of being a young adult has to occur, and then God can come back to Abram and give him grace. God can come back into Abram's life and bless him with a gracious contract. But, because of Abram's actions, God had to wait. This was not punishment to Abram; God has not walked off in a huff, saying, "I'll show him!" A certain amount of time has to transpire and Ishmael has to become a young adult before God can step back into Abram's life and to continue the work which God had begun.

Walking before God and being spiritually mature means, Abram is in fellowship (there is no unconfessed sin in his life), he is trusting God's promises, and he is obedient to the laws of divine establishment.

*To multiply* is in the Hiphil imperfect. The *Hiphil* is the causative stem, and this verb is given the following Hiphil definitions: *to make much, make many, have many; to multiply, increase; to make much to do, do much in respect of, transgress greatly; to increase greatly or exceedingly; to make great, enlarge, do much*. What follows is a repetition of the adverb  $m^e\hat{o}d$  (מְעֹד) [pronounced *m<sup>e</sup>-ODE*], which means *exceedingly, extremely, greatly, very*. Strong's #3966 BDB #547. Not only is the verb intensified, but it is doubly intensified, as this adverb occurs twice, which is rare in the Hebrew. Verbs in the Hebrew are often doubled, relatively speaking; adverbs much less so. This indicates that God has an incredible amount of blessing that He wants to pour on Abram.

Abram is just one man, a very successful rancher, who comes down to us today as one of the most well-known people from the ancient world. During Abram's day, there were many vigorous peoples, many powerful nations; and yet, the most well-known person of this era is Abram. What king from Abram's day is as well-known? What king or man of great power can you name from that era (say, 2100–1900 B.C.)? And yet, Abram is not a king he is simply a very successful businessman, successful because God has greatly blessed him. He is known to us today as the father of the Jewish race or the father of the Jewish people. Furthermore, he is known to us because God promised him, "I will multiply you greatly."

**Gen 17:3a** Then Abram fell on his face.

This is new. Abram's response was to do obeisance to God, which is something he has not done before. God has not spoken to Abram for a long time. God spoke to Hagar, Sarai's slave girl, 13 years previous to this (which information, she apparently passed along to Abram), and prior to that, God spoke to Abram, which would have been perhaps 15–20 years previous (Abram left Charan at age 75, and he is now 99). Therefore, Abram, having no idea how much longer he will live, is quite overwhelmed to speak to God again.

It is reasonable to suppose that Abram has remembered and/or recorded all that God said to him earlier. In other words, all of the contact between God and Abram are recorded for us today. There is no reason to think that there were several other meetings between God and Abram that Abram chose not to talk about.

### Gen 17:3b And God said to him,...

The Hebrew is much more difficult than most English translations make it out to be here. First of all, there are 2 verbs here which mean *to speak*. The first is the Piel (intensive stem) imperfect of *dâbar* (דָּבַר) [pronounced *daw<sup>b</sup>-VAHR*], which means (in the Piel): *to speak, to talk [and back with action], to give an opinion, to expound, to make a formal speech, to speak out, to promise, to propose, to speak kindly of, to declare, to proclaim, to announce*. Strong's #1696 BDB #180. This phrase ends with the words *to speak, to say* (the more common verb for *to say*). Furthermore, we do not have the normal preposition here; we would expect the *lâmed* preposition, which simply means *to* or the more formal preposition, *unto*. What we have here instead is, *with*. The implication is, God is speaking to Abram as a friend and willing to interact with him. Literally, this reads: **And so speaks with him, Elohim** [the subject of the verb, in Hebrew, usually follows the verb], **to say...** My point is, this is much more formal than it appears in most English translations.

### Gen 17:3b And Elohim spoke with him, saying,...

God is about to lay out His covenant with Abram, so the Hebrew indicates that this is a very formal event.

### Gen 17:4a "Behold, My covenant [is] with you,..."

Like v. 3b, this phrase is also more complicated than most English translations make it out to be. Literally, it reads: **"I, behold! My covenant [is] with you."** Some translators render this, **"As for Me, behold..."** Several ignore these first 2 Hebrew words. Essentially, the first 2 words might be more idiomatically rendered, "Listen to Me" "Listen up" "Pay attention to what I am going to say." Remember, Abram fell on the ground before God. God needs his full attention here.

The second phrase leaves out the verb *to be*, which indicates great emphasis in these words. Elliptical phrases often indicate great emphasis. As mentioned before, God has not said anything to Abram, and now He tells him to listen, saying, **"My covenant with you!"** The idea is, God has not changed His mind. He has not been observing Abram over the past 15 or so years, deciding, "Naw, I need to pick someone else as a part of my covenant." The power and force here indicates that we are speaking of something which is quite exclusive and directed specifically toward Abram. God is not going around and making agreements with several dozen people. This is a very specific and very exclusive contract that God is making with Abram.

There is a reason I am putting great emphasis upon this: God, who is all-knowing (Job 37:16 Psalm 139:1–4 147:4–5), Who knows the end from the beginning (Isa. 46:10), did not make a mistake by choosing Abram and He is not going to transfer all of His promises to Abram to another group of people (the church) because the Jews never turned out to be quite the people that God wanted them to be. That view is called Covenant Theology, and it is the basis for much of the Christian theology today. God will set the Jewish race aside, for a time, and work through the church (just as He has done with Abram), but the Jews are still His people.

Gen 17:4 "Behold, My covenant [is] with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations.

God tells Abram that he will be the father of many nations; so from Abram will not just come Israel (in its various forms), but a number of Semitic nations. *Semitic* then refers back to Shem, Abram's ancestor from the ark. Today, we use the term *Semitic* to refer exclusively to Jews.

So, 13 years have gone by since Abram's child was born, and during that time, God did not appear to Abram. However, God is with Abram now, and this will be a pivotal chapter, both in the life of Abram and in human history.

God continues speaking to Abram, saying something which is quite unusual:

Gen 17:5 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.

God changes Abram's name to Abraham. *Abram* means *exalted father; father of high and windy places*. One might even understand Abram to mean *father of wind*. However, his new name is Abraham, the name by which we know him. *Abraham* means *father of many*. *Abram* can be understood to mean that Abram is the father of nothing; or the father of something that is just too far off to see; he is the father of something which cannot be seen. However, his new name is *father of many*, which indicates that this is a major change for Abram. He is still a father, but he is no longer a father of *wind* but of *many*, of a *multitude*.

Both of the verbs at the end of this verse are in the perfect tense, indicating a completed action. "You name has been Abraham for I have [already] made you the father of a multitude of nations." So, forever, his name has been Abraham and forever, Abraham has been the father of a multitude of nations.

God exists outside of time; God is not confined to time. Time is God's invention for man. Therefore, from God's point of view, this name-change is a done deal; this has already been accomplished. From Abraham's vantage point, his being named *Abraham* has just occurred, and these multitudes of nations are future from this point in time. To God, these things have already taken place, hence the perfect tense, indicating completed action. We will find this approach throughout this chapter.

If at the beginning of this study, if you knew very little about the Bible, you still probably knew the name of Abraham and you may have even known him as the father of the Jewish race. All this time, you may have wondered why his name has been Abram or you may not have even known that we were even talking about Abraham all this time. Because his name *has been* Abraham and God has already made a multitude of nations come from him.

One of the cults that I was familiar with, took in new cult members and gave them new names (usually from the Bible). I supposed this was based upon God renaming Abram here and Saul of Tarsus took the name Paul. However, this is not spirituality. You don't walk into a church and someone says, "Your name used to be Charley Brown, but now it is Hezekiah" (they like to take your new name out of the Bible). This sort of thing is goofy. However, it is common for a cult to take a minor occurrence in the Bible and turn it into a fundamental church doctrine or practice. It is as if they find 40 or so passages, and they build their doctrine upon those particular passages. There is never the instruction in the Bible that we are commanded by God to rename people. This is why verse-by-verse teaching is so essential; it keeps you from falling into cults or into churches with a lot of false principles.

I mention this not because you are familiar with such a cult, because you probably are not. You probably recognize that as a goofy idea without me telling you that it is. I mention this because it lays the groundwork for an important principle for the Christian life. Just because something happens in the Bible, Old or New Testaments, does not mean that you should imitate it. The Bible is filled with verbs in the imperative mood, so it is not as though we lack direction in the Bible; but there is no imperative mood when it comes to changing the name of people like Abram (Abraham) and Saul of Tarsus (Paul). Their new names are indicative of what God has done in their lives; therefore, it is appropriate that God renames them, as God knows what is planned for them.

Let me take a practice that most Christians agree upon: the Eucharist (also called Communion). We may have disagreements about the way this is practiced and what it means, but one thing is clear: this is a ritual all Christians should participate in. Not only do we have the example of the first Communion occurring with Jesus and His disciples on the night in which He was betrayed, but, Jesus tells us to do it, using the imperative mood. **“Do this in memory of Me.”**

Now, let me append this slightly. There are some *conditional* statements in the Bible (*if...then...* statements) which also teach spiritual mechanics. 1John 1:9 **If we name our sins, [then] He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** This is a mechanic designed for the believer (most of the epistles are written to believers; *Hebrews* being an exception in part). In order to be temporally cleansed, we name our sins (*after* we have sinned, of course). There are synonyms for this practice of naming our sins where the imperative mood is used: **walk in the Spirit** (Gal. 5:16); **be a follower of God** (Eph. 5:1); **be filled with the Spirit** (Eph. 5:18); **“Abide in Me”** (John 15:4); and **walk in love** (Eph. 5:2). In order to reach the status of *walking in the Spirit, being filled by the Spirit, walking in love, being a follower of God*, we use the exact mechanics given to us in 1John 1:9.

What I am doing here is setting you up for something; I am planting a seed in your soul. You may find this or that thing in the Bible, and this or that thing may be fundamental to your church’s doctrine and practice. However, you may need to ask yourself—particularly if it is a controversial practice—did anyone at anytime in the Bible tell you to do this practice? Did God or Paul or Peter or John use the imperative mood and tell you, “Do this”? At any time have you been told that you ought to do this practice—not by someone in your church, but by the Bible itself? Is this a practice or a doctrine which is clearly laid out in Scripture which is not based upon imitation alone?

Let me lay out a simple principle, and leave it here: if your church, denomination or group imitates something that they have found in the Bible, and yet, God the Holy Spirit through Scripture has not commanded you to do this (either by using the imperative mood or some other unambiguous language), then let me submit to you, that could be a false tradition at best and a cultic practice at worst.

One of the reasons that we must know the Word of God is, we find out if we belong to a church or denomination which has traditions and practices which are outside of what God has specifically told us to do. The Bible is our life-manual; it is our Standards and Practices textbook.

Back to Abraham:

**Gen 17:3b–5** And Elohim spoke with him, saying, "Behold Me [= listen up!], 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.

The verbs which are future for Abraham are actually in the perfect tense, indicating that these are past events or completed events, when spoken by God. **“Behold Me! My covenant with you and you have been the father of a multitude of nations. Your name will no longer be called Abram, but your name has been Abraham, for I have made you a father of nations.”**

Let me get into the weeds here a little bit with the Hebrew language. In the past (and in some Hebrew classes today), we have the misnomer, the *wâw conversative*. It is claimed that the *wâw* conjunction (and/or the *wâw* consecutive) convert the verbs from perfect tense to imperfect (from a completed action to a future action) or vice versa. Well, as far as I am concerned, that is a lot of hooey. I have translated entire books word-by-word from the Hebrew, and there was never a need to convert this or that verb to a different tense. In a narrative, about every 6<sup>th</sup> word or so is the *wâw* consecutive and all of the verbs are imperfect tenses. Converting them all to the perfect tense makes no sense.

I think it is passages like this which caused the original confusion. Nearly every English translation and even many ancient translations take these verbs in the perfect tense and change them into the future tense. With respect to Abraham, all that is being said is either occurring right at this instant or will occur in the future, so we often use the present or future tense to express the action here. However, one very important consideration is being ignored. God is speaking and He has decreed all that will occur, taking our free will into consideration (which God always does). For God, the One using these verbs, this has already happened. God uses these verbs in the perfect tense, because all that is contained in vv. 4–5 is what God has decreed, so, insofar as God is concerned, these are accomplished events. These things have already taken place because He has decreed them and He is not confined to time.

Let me see if I can present an analogy here that is easier to grasp than saying that God invented time and that God is outside of time. Let’s say you just saw a movie and you thought it was great. At the end of the movie, the hero shoots the bad guy dead and rides off into the sunset with the beautiful girl. It moved you so much, that you take your best friend or significant other to go see it. Now, you know how this movie turns out; you know the end from the beginning. You still enjoy this movie because you are sharing it with a friend, but you know the hero is going to get the girl; and you know that he will shoot the bad guy dead. You, in seeing this movie a second time, are seeing it from a different perspective. All of the events that are future in the movie for you have already occurred and you know what they are. So, in that way, you are standing outside of the time frame of the movie, and all that takes place in the movie has already taken place for you. For your friend, these events are still unfolding; he or she doesn’t know if the hero will shoot the villain yet; he or she has doubts about the hero getting the girl at the end and riding off into the sunset. So, for you, these events have already taken place; for your friend, they are future events and unfolding as the movie continues. You, like God, stand outside of the time frame of the movie, because you have seen it already. You may catch some plot points that you missed before. “Oh, there’s how the hero got a hold of the gun; that’s how he *shot* him.” Even though, during the second time through, the hero has not yet shot the villain, you see it as an action which has already occurred and you even use past tense verbs in your thought process.

For God, because He decreed these things to come to pass, taking into consideration the free will of Abraham and all those associated with Abraham, He knows the end from the beginning. Therefore, God speaks of these things in the past because, God has decreed them, and therefore, they have already occurred. If Abraham were speaking, then he would use the future tense, because the action of these verbs is future for him.

Now, let’s apply this to your life: God knows everything that will occur in your life. Nothing will catch Him by surprised. God, in eternity past, made provision for every difficulty that you would face. The are

difficult situations in your life to come (or situations that you are in right now), and God had designed a solution for them. This may involve you making certain choices with regards to Bible doctrine and they may involve you to **stand back and watch the deliverance of the Lord**. The choice of what you do is based upon your knowledge of Bible doctrine. Your ability to make the right choice is always based upon the Word of God. Do you stand back or do you act? The better you know Bible doctrine, the easier this question is to answer. God obviously knows because He made provision for that difficulty back in eternity past; the better we know God, the easier it is to determine His path for us.

**Gen 17:6** I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you.

Although that is how most Bibles translate v. 6, here is a more literal rendering of it:

**Gen 17:6** I have made you exceedingly fruitful, and I have made you into nations, and kings will come from you.

The first two verbs, where God is the subject, are in the perfect tense—completed action. What God does is a completed action. However, the third verb is in the imperfect tense (continuous or future action) because God is no longer the subject of the verb. *Kings* is the subject of that verb. Abraham is in time and the kings who will come from him are also confined to time; therefore, in the future, there will be kings who will be descended from Abraham. So, if you understand God and His foreknowledge, then the tense of these verbs make perfect sense.

If Abram is the father of many nations, then many kings will be descended from him. All of the kings of Israel are descended from Abraham and our Lord Jesus Christ, Who will rule over this earth, is descended from Abraham as well.

**Gen 17:7** And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants [lit., seed] after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants [lit., seed] after you.

*Will establish* means, in the Hiphil form, *to raise up, constitute; to cause to stand, set, station, establish; to make binding; to carry out, give effect to*. *Descendants* is actually the singular of *seed*, but it may be reasonably translated *descendants*. This covenant or contract that God will establish will be with Abraham and with his descendants as well. Furthermore, this is an *everlasting* covenant. Since God is all-knowing, and because the future to Him is as perspicuous as the past, when God establishes a covenant with someone, He knows exactly what will happen throughout the centuries. The fact that many religious Jews rejected Jesus Christ at the 1<sup>st</sup> Advent did not catch God by surprise. God does not and cannot cancel an everlasting covenant.

The verb *to establish*, is in the perfect tense, because, insofar as God is concerned, this is a completed action. God has already established His covenant between Himself and Abraham and between Himself and Abraham's descendants.

I have mentioned a Suzerain-Vassal treaty on sever occasions. This may be a good time to delve into it.

God first established a covenant with Noah in Gen. 6:18 9:9, 11–17; and He has established a covenant with Abram, beginning in Gen. 15:18. However, in this chapter, we have the word covenant repeated 13 times.

## The Suzerain Vassal Treaty

1. In the Ancient Near East, treaties between kings was common. However, also common in that era were treaties between a superior and his inferior. If the relationship was familial or friendly, the parties are referred to as "father" and "son." If the relationship is bereft of kindness and intimacy, the parties are referred to as "lord" and "servant," or "king" and "vassal," or "greater king" and "lesser king." However, what is often established as a treaty would be between a king and another people, over whom he is clearly superior (he has a much larger army; he rules over a much greater population, etc.).
2. Such a king would establish a treaty between himself (the suzerain) and this inferior people (the vassals). Typically, the people would allow themselves to be taxed by this sovereign, and he would offer them protection.
3. These treaties were quite common in the ancient world, and wikipedia lists the essentials of [Hittite treaties](#).
4. These Suzerain/Vassal treaties begin with two sections:
  - 1) The identification of the Suzerain by his name and titles;
  - 2) The historical survey of the Suzerain's dealings with the vassal. The purpose is to illustrate to the vassal how much the Suzerain has done to protect and establish the vassal who therefore owes submission and allegiance to the Suzerain. These two sections are referred to as the "Preamble."
5. The next section of these treaties list the "stipulations." What the vassal is required to do is spelled out in principal and detail. This section is often concluded with the requirement that the vassal deposit his copy of the treaty in his temple, where he is to occasionally read and study it to refresh his memory concerning his duties.
6. The last section of these treaties contains the blessings and curses of the Suzerain. If the stipulations are met by the vassal, he will receive the Suzerain's blessings, which are listed. If the vassal fails to meet the stipulations, he will receive the Suzerain's curses, which are also listed.
7. The Suzerain would keep one copy of the treaty and the vassal would keep one copy of the treaty. A number of ratifying ceremonies were used depending upon the era and culture. But the most widely used rite was that of cutting the bodies of animals in halves and placing them in two rows with enough space between for the two parties of the treaty to walk side by side. As they walked between the pieces, they were vowing to each other, "May what has happened to these animals, happen to me if I break this covenant with you."
8. This treaty, like any other treaty, was dependent upon the integrity of the people committed to the treaty.
9. When a people no longer cared for the agreement which they had made, often they would rebel, which was what we studied in Gen. 14.

Although this chapter is not, strictly speaking, given in the order above; it is similar, in some ways, to a Suzerain-Vassal treaty in content.

Sources:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suzerainty>

<http://www.fivesolas.com/suzerain.htm>

**Gen 17:7** And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants [lit., seed] after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants [lit., seed] after you.

Because *seed* is in the singular, this promise applies to Isaac, Abraham's son who is yet to be born; and it applies to *Jesus*, Who is also the Son of Abraham. Paul will make this point in Gal. 3:16: **And to Abraham and to his Seed the promises were spoken. It does not say, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, "And to your Seed," which is Christ.** So, this is specifically applied to Jesus Christ. God's covenant with Jesus Christ

The One speaking to Abraham is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Person of the Trinity and this contract is being made with Himself, Who will become confined to time as the God-man.

At the same time, the singular of *seed* is used in such a way as to refer to all of Abram's born-again descendants. This is clear in the next verse:

**Gen 17:8** And I will give to you and to your descendants [lit., seed] after you the land of your wanderings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God."

The land which Abraham is walking through will be given to the Jews for an everlasting possession. God had already told Abraham to walk throughout this land, so that Abraham could appreciate what was being given to him. **"Come, walk through all the land from one end to the other for I will give it to you."** (Gen. 13:17).

God has already specified the boundaries of this land back in Gen. 15:18–21 **In the same day Jehovah made a covenant with Abram, saying, I have given this land to your seed [descendants], from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the giants, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.** This is a huge swath of land, which we studied back in **lesson #153**.

Although God gives the land of Canaan to Israel, there will be times throughout history—particularly during the Church Age—when they do not live in this land. During the Age of Israel, Jews will live in this land, apart from the times that they have been removed under the principle of the 5<sup>th</sup> stage of national discipline (these stages will be taught in Lev. 26). However, these stages of national discipline are taught **here** and **here**.

I mentioned that the covenant here is between God and those who are born again from Abraham's seed. We find this at the end of v. 8, where God says, **"And I have been to them God."** *Jehovah* (or, *Y<sup>e</sup>howah*), Who is speaking to Abraham, is not the God of the Muslims; He is not the God of those trying to keep the Law and the Sabbath for salvation; but He is God to those who believe in Him; and He is known to us today as *Jesus Christ*. For those who have been born again through faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:1–18), the same have *Y<sup>e</sup>howah* as their God.

This does not mean that the land of Palestine has been transferred over to Church Age believers. God gives this to *Abraham and his descendants*; the land is *an eternal possession*; and the One speaking to Abraham is their God as well.

This possession is forever. The Hebrew word is 'ôwlâm (עוֹלָם) [pronounced *gó-LAWM*], which means *what is hidden [time]; of [in] times past, from ancient time, old, antiquity, long duration, forever, perpetuity*;

for future time, futurity; of the world, worldly. Strong's #5769 BDB #761. As you can see, this word not only means forever, in perpetuity; but it is tied very specifically to this world. As long as there is a world, this promise stands.

**Gen 17:9** And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.

V. 9 is one of the few times there is a responsibility laid upon Abraham with regards to this covenant with God. When God spoke to Abraham before, the covenants which He made with Abraham were unconditional covenants, meaning, God was going to fulfill those promises to Abraham and his seed no matter what. However, this time, God tells Abraham, "You will keep My covenant." Furthermore, Abraham's seed would keep this covenant as well.

The verb here is the Qal imperfect of *shâmar* (שָׁמַר) [pronounced *shaw-MAR*] and it means *keep, guard, watch, preserve*. Strong's #8104 BDB #1036. This is a very common verb and the emphasis is not as much on *obedience* as on *preservation*. And what the Jews did for hundreds of years, for over 3 millennia prior to the printing press, is preserve the Word of God, which contains His covenants to Abraham and to the Jews in general.

At first, the Old Testament was preserved in all consonants and by its being read to the people. And then, because they would not pronounce the name *Y<sup>e</sup>howah* aloud, they realized that they had lost its true pronunciation, which was not preserved in Scripture, because they recorded only consonants. They knew what it said because they read, re-read and studied these words. However, their language was changing, and the Bible was in danger of becoming just a list of consonants that no one understood. Then they had the brilliant idea of adding vowel points. The Jews understood the value of the manuscripts that they had been preserving; they understood this to be the Word of God. They could not just fix the manuscripts by simply adding vowels into the mix, so they developed a set of vowel points, which were dots, and squiggles and short lines, placed above and below and, sometimes, in the midst of the consonants, so that the consonants remained unchanged. In fact, if you mentally blocked out all of these vowel points or covered up what is above and below the consonants, you would read the Word of God exactly as it had been recorded hundreds of years ago. So:

רַמְשֵׁתִּי תִּירְבֶּנָּא (My cvnt y will kp) became רָמַשְׁתִּי תִירְבֶּנָּא (My covenant you will keep)

In this way, the scribes brilliantly preserved the words of God, just exactly how they were written originally, but added in the vowels in such a way that, they did not change the text but so that subsequent generations would know how to pronounce these words. This pointing occurred sometime between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.<sup>6</sup>

The preservation of God's Word, entrusted to the Jews, is certainly something to behold. In the late 1700's, two separate lists of known Hebrew manuscripts were made, one listing 615 and the other 731. Since then, there was a discovery of some 200,000 Hebrew manuscripts in Old Cairo, Egypt (called Cairo Genipa), 10,000 of which are Biblical. These manuscripts reflect a full millennium of time (from 870–1880).

I have mentioned the Dead Sea Scrolls discovery in previous lessons, which takes us back to a pre-Christian era, around 100 B.C. As a result of these and other discoveries, today, we know of tens of

<sup>6</sup> Norman Geisler and William Nix; *A General Introduction to the Bible*; Chicago; Moody Press, ©1986, p. 339.

thousands of Old Testament manuscripts (these are not complete manuscripts, but books and fragments of books). We do have a handful of complete Masoretic manuscripts as well. So, the Hebrews devoted themselves to preserving God's Word, as did many other groups of people. Apart from the New Testament, no other writing has been so well-preserved.

**Gen 17:9** And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.

When God makes this contract, it is not between Abraham, his household and his seed; it is between God and Abraham; God and Abraham's household; and between God and Abraham's seed. God is on one side of the contract, Abraham, Abraham's household and Abraham's seed are on the other side of the contract. Abraham does not get to negotiate this contract; this contract stands based upon the provisions which God is making, which indicates that this most closely follows the format of a suzerain-vassal contract, as God is laying down all of the provisions.

Then God tells Abraham exactly what he will do for his part of the covenant:

**Gen 17:10** This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised.

What God requires here will require a lot of faith from Abraham. He and all of the males with him will be circumcised. The verb *to circumcise* is in the Niphal (passive) stem. The verb *to circumcise* originally meant *to cut*. We may have evidence of circumcision in Egypt going back to around 2300 B.C., which is only a few hundred years before these words are being said. Therefore, this may not have been the beginning of circumcision in the world (however, most archeologists who have an opinion believe that circumcision pre-dated Abraham).

God first told Abraham what He has done for him; then God tells Abraham what he will have to do. "Every male from among you will be circumcised."

**Gen 17:11** You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you [all].

As an adult male, thinking about circumcision gives me the heebie jeebies. As an infant, my feelings about the matter were probably made known when it occurred. Fortunately, I have forgotten that.

Circumcision would be a sign between God and Abraham and all of his descendants (*you*, in this verse, is in the plural).

Why circumcision and what does it mean? God's relationship to the Jew is going to be a familial relationship. That is, this will be a race of people who all come from Abraham; those who are his seed. Every time that Abraham urinated, he would be reminded of this covenant with God and he will be reminded that this covenant will be with Abraham's physical descendants (those which are his seed). From time to time, throughout history, various individuals would adopt themselves into the Jewish race, and worship their God. In the Old Testament, this almost invariably would be someone who would believe in Jehovah Elohim, and therefore, be deemed righteous by imputation. The idea is, there would be a race of people who are directly related to God through Abraham's seed.

I am related to my grandfather on my father's side and I am related to my nephew of my youngest brother. We are genetically related. Every Jew is genetically related to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is fully human and fully divine. Mary is the mother of His humanity, and in His humanity, Jesus is physically related to every Jew who is alive today and every Jew who has ever lived (apart from those who became Jews by choice, and even some of them are still related to Jesus, like Rahab the prostitute).

So, every time, Abraham urinated, he would see his circumcised penis and be reminded that God has made a covenant with him and with all of his descendants. It is a familial thing.

All men are born with a sin nature. It is a part of being human. We inherit this sin nature from Adam; it is the distorter of the soul. It is the tempter of the soul. The sin nature the sign that we are fallen creatures. Circumcision, for the Jews, will be the outward sign of their relationship with God; the outward sign of their inward regeneration.

**Gen 17:12a** He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised.

God had a particular, familial relationship to the Jews, even though, at this point in time in Genesis 17, just what that means and how it will come to pass is unclear. However, just add this to the "lucky guesses" found in Genesis—God establishes here that there will be a familial relationship between Abraham and his descendants and God. That relationship will be developed more fully in prophecy and then it will come to pass in time. Genesis is often called the book of beginnings and the seeds of the most fundamental and important doctrines are found in this book. This is one of them—that the Jews have a familial relationship with God.

Many of those genealogies that you see in the Bible take us from Abraham to the humanity of Jesus Christ. Again, this is the concept of progressive revelation. The seeds are all planted in Genesis, and, as we move through the Bible, are revealed with greater and great depth.

In this lesson, we will see exactly what circumcision signifies. Circumcision is a picture of regeneration. The basis of the Jewish race is regeneration; that is, they believe in Jehovah Elohim and they are regenerated (born again) and made righteous.

*Circumcision* is the cutting away of some skin at the end of a male's phallus. *Regeneration* refers to the act of being born again. Circumcision represents the act of regeneration.

### **Circumcision Represents Regeneration**

1. The circumcision of Abraham will establish new life in Abraham and new life in Sarah. At this point in time, Abraham is too old to have sex and Sarai is too old to conceive. God will change this. God will give them new life.
2. When Abraham steps out in faith and has himself circumcised, God will revitalize him sexually. His sexual organ will be brought back to life. In this way, Abraham will be reborn.
3. Circumcision is therefore connected to rebirth or to regeneration.
4. Abraham was sexually dead; God will make him sexually alive and potent. This is a picture of Abraham moving not only from death to life, but this is the key to the fulfillment of all God's promises to him. As uncircumcised (sexually dead, unregenerated), none of God's promises can be fulfilled to Abraham. As circumcised, Abraham is sexually revitalized, which represents regeneration; and so all of God's promises to Abraham can be fulfilled.
5. So there is no misunderstanding, Abraham was spiritually regenerated many years ago.

## Circumcision Represents Regeneration

However, all of this is done to develop an analogy of rebirth, an analogy to rebirth that was set up 4000 years ago and still has meaning today.

6. Sarai had never given birth to a child, so we may reasonably assume that she was barren all of her life. Now, she is too old to have children. So, she is doubly-barren: barren throughout her life and now, simply too old to conceive.
7. As a result of God's covenant, which included the circumcision of Abraham, Sarai will be made fertile. Her reproductive system will be given new life.
8. Circumcision therefore means, that which is dead is made fully alive.
9. In our illustration, Abraham and Sarah, who have never before had children of their own, and, therefore, cannot see God's promises to them fulfilled, will be given life more abundantly than they ever had before.
10. Therefore, we need to understand that circumcision is taking that which was dead and giving it life again. Doctrinally, this is regeneration. Circumcision represents being born again.
11. Jesus explains the concept of regeneration (being born again) to Nicodemus. **There was a man from the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Him at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher, for no one could perform these signs You do unless God were with him." Jesus replied, "I assure you: Unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "But how can anyone be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked Him. "Can he enter his mother's womb a second time and be born?" Jesus answered, "I assure you: Unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I told you that you must be born again. The wind blows where it pleases, and you hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."** (John 3:1–12).
12. Paul expresses this doctrinally, tying circumcision to regeneration: **And when you were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive with Him and forgave us all our trespasses. He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and which was in opposition to us, and He has taken it out of the way by nailing it to the cross** (Col. 2:13–14).
13. Understand that circumcision is a (visible) sign of God's relationship to Abraham. It is a visible sign of this covenant between Jehovah Elohim and Abraham.
14. However, in most situations, we cannot simply look at someone and say, "Yeah, he's circumcised." Unless you go to the gym with your buddies, and use the showers there, you do not know which of them are circumcised and which are not. That is, a person who is circumcised is unknown to the outside world; your family members know this, but the rest of the world, for the most part, does not know. Therefore, circumcision is a good representation of regeneration, which occurs in a number of people, but you cannot just look at a person and say, "Oh, you are regenerated." Circumcision is real but not something that we can readily see; regeneration is real, but not something that we can readily see.
15. Circumcision is a ritual, and, as a ritual, it must mean something. God does not have us go through meaningless rituals; all of the rituals in the plan of God have great meaning. Circumcision means that God will take that which is dead and make it alive. Abraham is sexually dead, and God is going to revive his sexual apparatus.
16. Note an additional piece of information concerning this ritual: God has come to Abraham right before he has been sexually revitalized. This represents regeneration. We are not regenerated on our own; God the Holy Spirit regenerates us.
17. All Jews must be regenerated (born again) in order to have a permanent relationship with the

## Circumcision Represents Regeneration

- God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Abraham's son and grandson).
18. Every male Jew views his phallus several times a day when urinating, and he recalls this portion of the Bible, where God will physically regenerate Abraham's sexual potency along with Sarai's womb, and this represents the spiritual regeneration which establishes a familial relationship between man and God. The family relationship must take place in order for God's promises to man to be fulfilled. Ideally speaking, all believers, several times a day, take note of their spiritual status and their relationship to God.
  19. Every Jew, when he urinates, ought to recognize that he is related directly to God and that this ritual goes back in time 4000 years. It is God's desire for such a one to ask himself, "Just what does this mean? Am I circumcised for no reason? Why did God, 4000 years ago, determine that all Jews would be circumcised?"
  20. All rituals have meaning, and if we do not know what they mean, then we are wasting our time participating in them. The only clearly required ritual for the Church Age is the Eucharist, where Jesus's death for our sins is represented by eating the bread and drinking the cup.
  21. Regeneration means that, God takes that which is dead and He makes it alive again.
  22. Our free will is a part of this decision process. I must admit, if I were Abraham, I may not have had the same faith to agree to circumcision. But Abraham, by an act of his free will, trusts God here; and he trusts that God will regenerate Abraham so that he is able to father children once again.
  23. The act and affects of circumcision are real and last a lifetime; the act and affects of regeneration are real and last forever.
  24. Even Moses later helped to interpret the concept of circumcision in Deut. 30:6 **And Jehovah your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your seed, to love Jehovah your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.** God will circumcise our hearts, with the purpose that, we will live. Since the ritual circumcision is performed upon living males, circumcision of the heart must therefore refer to an internal regeneration.
  25. The physical act of circumcision is not the same as the spiritual act of regeneration; circumcision only represents regeneration.
  26. The act and affects of circumcision are real and last a lifetime; the act and affects of regeneration are real and last forever. You cannot go from being circumcised to being uncircumcised, just as you cannot go from having been regenerated back to being unregenerate.
  27. God, through Ezekiel, describes this circumcision of the heart: "Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God." (Ezek. 11:19–20). "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them." (Ezek. 36:26–27). God gives those with *hearts of stone* a new heart; God takes that which is dead and makes it alive so that they may live unto Him.
  28. Paul teaches this in Rom. 2:28–29a **For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that outwardly in flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart.** Salvation is regeneration; not being physically circumcised. It is the *circumcision of the heart* which God looks upon. Jews were not related to God because they were physically circumcised; they were related to God because they had been circumcised of heart; their heart had been regenerated.
  29. This is all related to the new covenant between God and Israel, which will come to pass in the Millennium: "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with

## Circumcision Represents Regeneration

the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” (Jer. 31:31–34).

30. Because circumcision is a ritual, it is not the ritual that is important but what the ritual represents. Circumcision represents regeneration. **“You must be born again.”**
31. We as believers in the Church Age are not called upon to be circumcised. Some of us are and some of us are not. God does not require us, when we are born again, to be circumcised. Paul explains that circumcision is a Jewish ritual, and that it has meaning, but it is not required of believers in the Church Age: **In Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not done with hands, by putting off the body of flesh, in the circumcision of the Messiah. Having been buried with Him in baptism, you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And when you were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive with Him and forgave us all our trespasses** (Col. 2:11–13). God making us alive is regeneration. The key to our relationship with God is regeneration and not circumcision. Just as baptism represents being dead in our trespasses and sins, and then being raised up; so circumcision ultimately represents regeneration.
32. There were legalists who came into Galatia and tried to convince the gentiles in the Galatian church to be circumcised. Paul writes to them, saying: **For both circumcision and uncircumcision mean nothing; what matters instead is a new creation** (Gal. 6:15). It is regeneration which is the key; not whether a person has been circumcised or not. In fact, Paul spends much of 2 chapters telling the Galatians that they do not need to be circumcised (Gal. 5–6). Since this was a problem in the early church, Paul reiterates this position in 1Cor. 7:18–19 **Was anyone already circumcised when he was called? He should not undo his circumcision. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? He should not get circumcised. Circumcision does not matter and uncircumcision does not matter, but keeping God's commandments does.**
33. Therefore, circumcision is a ritual which God required of the Jews. This ritual both emphasized regeneration and His familial relationship with the Jews.

To the best of my knowledge, I do not believe that this relationship has been formally established in theology before. Gill mentions it as an aside in his exegesis of Col. 2:11, as does the Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary. The closest I saw to a completely developed doctrine was in some writings by Spurgeon.

However, there are several Christian individuals who have already recognized this relationship. And, unfortunately, this connection is posted on some legalistic websites and on, quite frankly, weird websites.<sup>7</sup> Personally, I put together this concept, and then searched the internet to see if this had been developed before by anyone of note. So this relationship has been previously noted, but not really developed into a complete doctrine.

<sup>7</sup> One place that I found this connection was at the *Global Oneness (co-creating a happy world)* website under the banner *Christian Dream Interpretation*.

One of the fascinating things is, in do-your-own-thing, degenerate San Francisco, there is a **movement to ban performing a circumcision** in the city limits. This is simply one of the movements to separate the United States from her Judeo-Christian roots.

The key to the relationship between God and Abraham's seed is regeneration, which establishes a familial relationship between God and man.

### The Familial Relationship between God and Abraham's Seed

1. The ritual of circumcision establishes a familial relationship between God and Abraham (and his seed). Circumcision is a ritual, so, by itself, it means nothing. However, what is important is what circumcision represents. Circumcision represents sexual regeneration which establishes this familial relationship between Abraham and God.
2. At this point in time, this familial relationship between God and Abraham is undefined.
3. In fact, at this point in time, in Gen. 17, Abraham does not even have any children by his wife Sarai.
4. It will be prophesied and then it will come to pass that Abraham and Sarai will have a son.
5. This familial relationship is part and parcel of being born again. In regeneration, we have the option of knowing God and having fellowship with God.
6. God is personally involved in this regeneration. God the Father planned the cross, Jesus Christ went to the cross, and God the Holy Spirit both reveals this to us and regenerates us. Therefore, we have 3 "men" who will come to Abraham in the next chapter. This is representative of the Trinity involvement in our regeneration and in our spiritual lives.
7. Abraham is already regenerated spiritually. When he believed in Y<sup>h</sup>owah Elohim, God imputed righteousness to him. Gen. 15:6
8. However, what is being established here is a familial relationship based upon circumcision which represents regeneration.
9. God will continue to maintain His covenant with Abraham through his son Isaac and through his son's son, Jacob, down through the ages.
10. The circumcision of Abraham will establish new life in Abraham and new life in Sarah.
11. At this point in time, Abraham is too old to have sex and Sarai is too old to conceive. God will change this. God will regenerate both of them sexually (which represents our spiritual regeneration to new life).
12. Abraham and Sarai do not have the ability to revitalize their own reproductive organs; only God can do this. Similarly, we have no innate ability to revitalize our human spirit. Only God can do that. Only God can regenerate us.
13. When Abraham steps out in faith and has himself circumcised, God will revitalize him sexually. He will become capable of fathering a child and Sarai will become capable of conceiving a child.
14. Circumcision is therefore connected to a rebirth or to regeneration.
15. God tells Abraham: "I will keep My covenant between Me and you, and your descendants after you throughout their generations, as an everlasting covenant to be your God and the God of your offspring after you. And to you and your offspring after you I will give the land where you are residing--all the land of Canaan--as an eternal possession, and I will be their God." (Gen. 17:7-8).
16. Further, God tells Abraham: "This is My covenant, which you are to keep, between Me and you and your offspring after you: Every one of your males must be circumcised. You must circumcise the flesh of your foreskin to serve as a sign of the covenant between Me and you. Throughout your generations, every male among you at eight days old is to be circumcised. This includes a

## The Familial Relationship between God and Abraham's Seed

slave born in your house and one purchased with money from any foreigner. The one who is not your descendant, a slave born in your house, as well as one purchased with money, must be circumcised. My covenant will be in your flesh as an everlasting covenant." (Gen. 17:10–13). Therefore, every male child associated with the Jews is to be circumcised. The circumcision is a sign of their rebirth as well.

17. God has attached great importance to Abraham's posterity and this covenant. They are related to Abraham and, somehow, they are related to God.
18. Every time a male Jew urinates, he looks down, and he is reminded of this familial relationship which is established, beginning with Abraham and going down through Isaac and Jacob. This is the visible sign between God and the Jews throughout all their generations.
19. Even very secular Jews today must wonder, now and again, what is my relationship with God all about? What is this circumcision all about?
20. Think about this for a moment—how would man come up with a concept like circumcision? What man, who knows nothing about circumcision, would look down on his phallus and say, "I've got a great idea: I think I should cut some of the skin away from this"? We have no idea how exactly circumcision originated; but God, in Gen. 17, uses it to establish a relationship between Him and Abraham.
21. Throughout history (until the Church Age), Jews will all be circumcised; Gentiles will not (although now, many gentiles are circumcised, particularly in countries where there are a lot of Christians). Therefore, every man who is circumcised is genetically (or in a familial way) related to Abraham (I am speaking in principle here; obviously, those coming from the outside and becoming Jews are not genetically related to Abraham; however, either their children or their grandchildren will be through intermarriage).
22. This is important because Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Universe, will be genetically related to Abraham, even though He existed in eternity before Abraham ("Before Abraham, I existed eternally" John 8:58).
23. From the very beginning, God has been establishing this familial relationship between Himself and regenerated man.
  - 1) God said to the serpent after the fall: "I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel." (Gen. 3:15). So there is a promise to be fulfilled in the Seed of the Woman, and the Seed of the Woman would crush the head of the serpent (Satan).
  - 2) The woman later recognizes that God has given her a new seed in Seth, after Cain murdered Abel (Gen. 4:25).
  - 3) God's covenant would then be with Noah and his seed after him (Gen. 9:9).
  - 4) God establishes his covenant with Abraham and his seed in Gen. 12:7 13:15 15:18 17:7–8 24:7; and continues this covenant with Isaac and his seed (Gen. 26:3–4). Isaac transfers this covenant to his son Jacob in Gen. 28:4, which God confirms in Gen. 28:13 35:12.
  - 5) Jehovah God later promised: "The Lord Himself shall give you a sign. Behold, the virgin will conceive and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel [which means, *God with us*]." (Isa. 7:14). This is expanded in Isa. 9:6 "For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given; and the government shall be on His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."
24. Through the virgin Mary, all of this would be fulfilled. Jesus would be born to her, a virgin, so that He is genetically related to Mary and therefore, to all Jews. Luke 1:35 2:11 Matt. 1:23 28:18 John 1:1–2, 14 Heb. 1:8 1John 4:14

## The Familial Relationship between God and Abraham's Seed

25. Therefore, Abraham, the father of the Jews, is genetically related to Jesus Christ.
26. In fact, when a few of the genealogies of Scripture are strung together, we have a straight line between Abraham and Jesus.
27. In the book of Genesis are the seeds of many of the doctrines which would later be expounded upon as time went on. This is known as progressive revelation. We learn more and more about a doctrine as time goes on; God the Holy Spirit reveals more and more about a doctrine as time goes on.
28. Believers in the Church Age are sons by adoption. Rom. 8:15 Gal. 4:5 Eph. 1:5
29. Adoption in the ancient world is somewhat different than we think of it. A king or a rich man may look among his own sons and see no one worthy of taking his place or inheriting his fortune. However, he may have an adult slave who is hardworking, intelligent and moral. So, the king or rich man will "adopt" this slave as his son—even though he may be fully an adult—in order to inherit what belongs to the king or to the rich man. A familial relationship is established by means of adoption. This describes our relationship to God.
30. However, God does not look at us and think, "Yes, yes, yes, this person is worthy to be My son." He looks at Jesus Christ, and He alone is worthy; but we are sons of God because we are in Him and we share His Sonship. **But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, coming into being out of a woman, having come under Law, that He might purchase those under Law, so that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father (Gal. 4:4–6).**
31. This is established through faith in Jesus Christ. **For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26).** See also John 1:12 1John 3:2

In conclusion, Jews are actually genetically related to Jesus Christ through the Virgin Mary. However, they must exercise faith in Jehovah Elohim in order to be regenerated (Gen. 15:6 2Kings 18:5 Psalm 2:12 5:4 9:10 13:5 Ezek. 36:26–27). In the Church Age, we are sons of God by means of adoption. We believe in Jesus Christ and we are adopted as God's sons in the Beloved.

One of the things that Christians may find confusing is the fact that there is an actual genetic relationship between Jews and Jesus; but that the true relationship between Jews and Jesus is their exercising faith in Him so that they are regenerated (in the Old Testament, this was exercising faith in Y<sup>e</sup>howah Elohim). This is actually a clearer issue for believers in the Church Age—we are not Jews, so we are not genetically related to Jesus Christ (except in the sense of being human). However, we are adopted into the family of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul will spend an entire chapter of Romans discussing these issues, a study which we will insert into this Genesis series (in 10 or so lessons).

**Gen 17:12a** He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations,...

A question that some might have is, *why are males circumcised only; why is there no circumcision for women?* This is because, it is through the man that the sin nature is passed. Men and women are both born with sin natures, but the sin nature is passed down from the man to his children, both males and females. However, only his sons will pass along the sin nature to their children. This is why Jesus is known as the Seed of the Woman (Gen. 3:15). This is why there is the virgin birth (Isa. 7:14 Matt. 1:23). This is why the Coniah curse (which curse represents the sin nature) is so closely tied to two lines of Christ and why one line—the line to Joseph—was cursed (Jer. 22:24, 30). God does not simply devise a miracle because it is way cool; the virgin birth is necessary. Jesus cannot be born without a sin nature

unless there is no male involved. Therefore, only males are circumcised, as this represents regeneration, a cutting away and a removal of the old nature.

Being born again means that we can now have a relationship with God through the human spirit. However, in order for that to occur, the sin nature must be shut down temporarily. This is what it means *to be in fellowship*. The body, soul and spirit are all functioning; and the sin nature is set aside or momentarily shut down. When we sin, the spirit is shut down temporarily; our temporal relationship with God is shut down (*we are out of fellowship*), and our sin nature is in control again. The mechanics are simple and have been covered before: we name our sins to God, and our fellowship is restored; we sin, and we are out of fellowship. Although we have studied that in numerous places, most recently this was found in the doctrine **The Spiritual Life Implied and Stated so far in the Book of Genesis**.

The difference between the man and the woman goes back to original sin. The woman was deceived when she sinned; the man knew exactly what he was doing when he sinned. He could choose between his woman outside of the garden or God inside of the garden, and he chose the woman. Because the man knowingly violated the one prohibition that God set up to test man's volition, the sin nature is passed down through the man.

Therefore, the virgin birth is not just some parlor trick, but absolutely necessary to the incarnation. In order for someone to be born without a sin nature, they must be born apart from a man's genetic contribution, because with that contribution comes the sin nature. Since Jesus is virgin-born, He is born without a sin nature. This is why the Bible is very careful to record the two lines of our Lord: the legal line, in which is the Coniah curse (the sin nature) which goes to Joseph (Matt. 1); and the biological line which goes through Mary (Luke 3:23–38).

**Gen 17:12** He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring,

The faith of the Jews was to be evangelistic. We tend to think of Christianity as evangelical, but not the faith of the Jews (the correct understanding of their faith). The Jews had an outreach mission to the nations around them. We find this illustrated in the **Book of Jonah**, where Jonah goes to Nineveh and evangelizes the Assyrians there (if Jonah had his druthers, he would have preferred to watch God destroy these Assyrians).

I like the New Living Translation of v. 12: **From generation to generation, every male child must be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. This applies not only to members of your family but also to the servants born in your household and the foreign-born servants whom you have purchased.** Although the New Living Translation does not give a careful word-for-word translation, it sometimes conveys an accurate understanding not quite found in the careful word-for-word translations. If you are looking for a very readable Bible, I found the New Living Translation to be among the best.

Let's look at the latter half of v. 12 combined with v. 13:

**Gen 17:12b–13** Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant.

Regeneration is designed for all mankind. God worked through the nation Israel then much as God works through certain nations today (e.g., the United States, South Korea) to spread the good news of Jesus Christ. Some men were sent out (like Jonah) and some people gravitated toward Israel (like Ruth the Moabite or the Queen of Sheba) and some became a part of Israel through slavery.

At this particular point in time, there is no Israel; there is Abraham, the father of the Jews, and God has appeared to him again to restate His covenant with Abraham and to add the circumcision clause.

Foreigners brought into the nation Israel, whether of their own accord (like Ruth) or those taken in slavery, were to become a part of this covenant that God was making with Abraham. As we will find out, every man in Abraham's camp would be circumcised. God's identification with his people was to be cut into their flesh.

Circumcision was the ritual. The act and affects of circumcision are real and they last a lifetime; just as regeneration is real and it lasts forever. You cannot be un-circumcised (going from circumcision to uncircumcision) just as you cannot be un-regenerated. Once you have trusted in Jesus Christ—an act which takes a few moments—you are forever regenerated; you are forever saved.

What God is doing is establishing a new race of people. Up until now, men were descended from Shem, Ham or Japheth, and there were essentially 3 races of people. God herein will establish a new race, the Jewish race, whose foundation will be regeneration.

Therefore, what we have is all of these people scattered all over the earth; but there is this one group of people who have been regenerated, born again. These people have the potential of having fellowship with God. God has given them a sign—the sign of circumcision, which differentiates them from other peoples. Again, no one could look and see if you are circumcised, under normal conditions, just as no one can look at you and superficially determine whether or not you have been born again.

Although we do not have the word *Jew* yet, we do have the word *Hebrew*, by which this new people will be known. Abraham was called a Hebrew in Gen. 14:13, and that designation comes down to us even today (although our pronunciation is quite different).

**Gen 17:14** Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people [lit., *her peoples*]; he has broken My covenant."

Such a person has chosen to ignore the commands of God, which are a ritual to teach regeneration (in this instance). In most cases, this would be the fault of the parents who do not see their relationship to God as being important or defining. If the parents do not have their male children circumcised, this simply indicates that they do not see themselves as being a part of the Abrahamic covenant. A parent who did not see himself as related to God would certainly not teach his children about Y<sup>e</sup>howah Elohim; so, his children would not be regenerated either.

Let me draw your attention to the phrase *his people*; this is a masculine plural noun with a 3<sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular suffix; so, even though your Bible reads *his people*, it should read *her peoples*. Any time that we find a feminine singular suffix, then we need to figure out, *to what does it refer?* The closest feminine singular noun is *covenant*. So, we are talking about the *peoples of the covenant* here. This covenant is this agreement or contract between God and Abraham. What God has done here is bind those who come after Abraham, for many generations, to this covenant. This was first made clear in v. 7: "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and [between Me and] **your seed** after you in

their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God to you and to **your seed** after you.” One portion of this covenant now included circumcision.

The plural of *people* is also interesting. The singular form of this word is ‘am (אָם) [pronounced *gahm*], which means, *people; race, tribe; family, relatives; citizens, common people; companions, servants; entire human race; herd [of animals]*. Strong’s #5971 BDB #766. When found in the singular, ‘am is often refers to Israel (Isa. 62:12 63:18 Dan. 8:24 12:7) or to a particular non-Israeli people (Ex. 21:8 Deut. 28:32 Ezek. 3:5). It can even stand for Israel and for Gentiles in the very same context (Deut. 28:9–10). In the plural, the word is ‘ammîym (אָמִים) [pronounced *gahm-MEEM*], which means, *peoples, nations; tribes [of Israel]; relatives of anyone*. In general, when in the plural, 99% of the time it stands for Gentile nations (Deut. 4:19, 27 6:14 13:7) or for all nations of the earth (Deut. 7:6 32:8). I mention this because it is odd to find it here with regards to the covenant. We tend to think of this covenant as being between God and Abraham and between God and Abraham’s descendants, as it says here. However, this covenant of relationship, this covenant of rebirth, will be extended to many peoples and countries.

We find this in many passages, such as Acts 13:47–48 **For so the Lord has commanded us, "I have set You for a Light of nations, that You be for salvation to the end of the earth."** [Isa. 49:6] **And hearing, the nations rejoiced and glorified the Word of the Lord. And as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. And Paul to King Agrippa said, "Having obtained, therefore, help from God to this day testifying to both small and great, saying nothing but what the Prophets and Moshe said was going to occur; that the Messiah was to suffer, and by His resurrection from the dead He should be the first to proclaim light both to the people [Israel] and to the [gentile] nations."** (Acts 26:22–23).

So God knew that His covenant would be with all believers in the earth, with both gentiles and Jews. And so there is no mistake, this is not covenant theology; this is simply the proclaiming of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Jew first and then to the gentiles (Rom. 1:16). So the peoples of the covenant would not just be Abraham’s seed (in which case, *people* would be in the singular), but this covenant was offered to all men from all nations.

This translation would help to explain *her peoples*.

**Gen 17:14** Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from the peoples of the covenant; he has violated [or, *made ineffectual*] My covenant."

Let’s pull this altogether. Circumcision refers to Abraham’s sexual regeneration which speaks of his **spiritual regeneration**. So, in order to remain a part of this covenant, men had to be circumcised, which *means* they must be regenerated. No man has a relationship with God apart from being spiritually regenerated; or, as Jesus said, **"You must be born again."** (John 3:7b). What we find in Genesis sets the stage for all that will follow in the Bible. Genesis is the foundation for our spiritual lives and for all truth. And this covenant of relationship, this covenant of regeneration, is offered to all peoples of the earth.

Again, I do not want you to think that this is covenant theology. Covenant theology teaches that the Jews were so bad and so rebellious that God just tossed them aside and presented His gospel to the gentiles instead, and that all of His promises made to the Jews were “spiritualized” and transferred over to the church. There are several problems with this approach. First, it suggests that God was unable to look down the corridors of time and realize that the Jews would not only reject His Son, but crucify Him. However, Isa 53:3 indicates that none of this caught God off guard: **He was despised and rejected by people, One Who experienced pain and was acquainted with weakness; people hid their faces from Him;**

He was despised, and we considered Him insignificant. So God knew what was going to happen and this was a part of His plan.

There are specific covenants made to Jews only. To the Jew specifically is **the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the temple service, and the promises** (Rom. 9:4b). With respect to the Jews, the covenant with Abraham (and with others to follow) pertains to a specific geographical area. However, to all people, whether in **the Church Age** or in the **Age of Israel**, there is the covenant of regeneration and relationship. The covenant of regeneration is, **"You must be born again."** (John 3:7b). The covenant of relationship is, **You are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ** (Gal. 3:26).

Again, all of God's rituals had great meaning, and this meaning—that circumcision represents regeneration—would be preserved as long as the ritual was continued.

My point in all of this is that **Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from the peoples of the covenant; he has violated [or, made ineffectual] My covenant;**" is consistent with the rest of the Bible, with both the Old and New Testaments. Circumcision is being established at this point as a sign of regeneration and as a sign of relationship with God. It is a ritual which has meaning, which meaning was **previously discussed** in great detail.

**Gen 17:15** And God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.

R. B. Thieme, Jr. has always taught that Sarai means *contentious, bitch*; and that Sarah means *princess*. However, I have been unable to confirm this for the name *Sarai*. Many times in the Hebrew, proper nouns are identical to specific words or it is clear that they come from specific words. Not so with *Sarai*. Sârây (סָרַי) [pronounced *saw-RAY* or *saw-RAH-ee*] is possibly taken from the noun *sar*, which means *prince, leader, commander*. The yodh ending is then taken as the 1<sup>st</sup> person masculine singular suffix, so that gives us *my prince, my leader, my commander*. Although a lexicon with feminize this and say it is *my princess*, there is no feminine ending to her name. When her name becomes *Sarah*, that hê ending "feminizes" her name in the Hebrew.

I want you to think back on two incidents. Sarai told Abraham that he needed to have sex with her personal servant, Hagar. Abraham obeyed her. Later, she was pissy about Hagar and her pregnancy, and she was mad at Abraham for having impregnated her. So, Abraham finally says, "Look, you do whatever you want with her; she is your servant girl." So twice, Abraham is recorded as taking orders from Sarai; and both times, this obedience on Abraham's part was clearly a mistake. In this way, Sarai was acting as Abraham's *prince* or *leader*. So, had Abraham said, "She is your servant girl, Sarai; do whatever you want with her;" he would be essentially saying, "She is your servant girl, my leader [my prince]; do whatever you want with her."

However, if Sarai's name is now *Sarah*, then Abraham no longer calls her *my prince* but he calls her *princess*. God has feminized this woman. And what is more feminine than having a child?

Now let's look at this piece by piece:

**Gen 17:15a** And God said to Abraham, "Sarai, your wife—you will no longer call her name Sarai;... Now God speaks to Abraham about Sarai, his wife (or, *woman*). The negation along with the imperfect tense of a verb can be reasonably translated *no longer*. So, for 30 or 40 years—however, long Abraham has

known Sarai, he has known her by the name Sarai (*my prince*). Yet, at this point in time, both Abram and Sarai will have new names: Abraham and Sarah, by which they will be known forever more.

The new names both mean something and they represent their rebirth; God has added to their name just as He has added human spirits to their persons. Sarah and Abraham have been regenerated for awhile; they have had human spirits for awhile now; but the beginning of the fulfillment of the promises will now begin to kick in for these people with new names. Their relationship with God will no longer be some promise off in the future, but these promises will begin to be fulfilled.

[Gen 17:15b...because Sarah \[is\] her name.](#) Nowhere does God say, “Her *new* name is Sarah” or “I have *renamed* her Sarah.” This simply reads, “[Because Sarah \[is\] her name.](#)” This strikes me as being interesting, so let me offer up a theory. We are known, generally, by the name the our parents gave us: Charley Brown. However, God “remembers” us in a different way. There are very likely people in the Bible who had one name at birth, but, without fanfare or even a mention, are given a different name in the Bible. That is, God the Holy Spirit recalls a person by a slightly different name. Although this is not a great example, few of us think back on President Roosevelt (the second Roosevelt president) by his full name. Most of us know him by FDR. Even though these are simply the initials of his name, it is how many people recall him. That may be the case for many names in the Bible. Some are renamed so that we know about it (Abraham, Sarah, Peter and Paul), but it is very likely that some people were given a different name in Scripture because God wanted us to remember them with that name and what the name signified. So, from time to time, we are going to come across this or that old Bible guy, and it will appear that his name is very apt. From what happens in his life, we may think to ourselves, “this name makes a lot of sense; he does act just like a *Charley Brown*.” That is probably because God the Holy Spirit chose for the writer of that portion of Scripture to give him a more descriptive name, often one that is a play on his given name from birth.

I state this with some hesitancy: *Abram* and *Sarai* are their names as unregenerated; and *Abraham* and *Sarah* are their names as having been born again. As they are born again, they are given new names for the Kingdom of God, just as a child is given a name when he (or she) is born. Again, these new names did not come at the same time as their rebirth; but the new names come with the circumcision (which signifies the new birth) and with the pregnancy of Sarah, which indicates the beginning of the fulfillment of promises to both of them. Now, I said that I state this with hesitancy, because it is not your job or your pastor’s job to think of a new name for you.

Their new names have a significance; and what was significant in your new birth was, God regenerated you; God formed or made alive the human spirit within you, which allows you to store information about Him and allows you communion with Him. That human spirit is the target for Bible doctrine; that human spirit is the target for divine truth. Through the accumulation of doctrine in your human spirit, you begin to know and understand God, as well as His plan for you.

What believers too often do is, at salvation, they find some incident or set of incidents in the Bible, and then they copy these incidents. Just like this renaming of Abram and Sarai. They read that and decide, “My name should not longer be *Charley Brown*; it should be Charlemagne!” Now, has God come to you and renamed you? Are you either 99 or 100 years old and you and your spouse have no children and God will bless you with children now? Has God given promises to you that a new race of people will come from you? So you are not really copying what has happened here. You are just lifting some superficiality out of context and doing that. Now, quite obviously, there are not many churches that do this. I am aware of one cult which, as far as I know, is pretty much dead now. I mention this because this is an unemotional topic for you. You can look at this and recognize that, giving yourself a new name

or having some spiritual leader rename you is obviously not something that you need to do in order to make your Christian walk a little bit better. You recognize that simply copying this incident is sort of silly.

The Bible is filled with mandates. The Bible is filled with things that God tells us to do or not to do as believers (there is even guidance for unbelievers). Copying a portion of some set of circumstances in the Bible as best as you can is not the spiritual life. In some cases, it is lunacy.

Therefore, let's first see what Abraham was actually responsible for, according to the Word of God:

I found it interesting that God did not sit down with Abraham at one point in time, give him all of the promises, and then let Abraham take over from there. There are several reasons for this: (1) doctrine is built upon doctrine; (2) repetition is important to the spiritual life; (3) God gave Abraham enough to apply, and then let Abraham apply it; and (4) God is not a deist. That is, God does not set everything in motion, and then walk away from it, letting us fend for ourselves with what He left us. God is intimately and regularly a part of Abraham's life; therefore, we will expect God to contact Abraham regularly.

You will notice that God's message to Abraham becomes more complex with time.

The reason that we are looking at these all at once is so that we can see just what things God told Abraham. What follows is every recorded word of God to Abraham.

### God's Covenants with Abraham

#### Scripture

#### Commentary

Abraham is in Charan (or Haran), which is about 1700 miles northwest of Ur of the Chaldees. Ur is Abraham's likely birthplace, which is not far from the Persian Gulf. God is telling Abraham to move a few hundred miles to the southwest into the Land of Promise.

Now Yahweh said to Abram, "Get out of your country, and away from your relatives, and away from your father's house, to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation. I will bless you, and make your name great. You will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you. In you will all of the families of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 12:1–3).

God first tells Abram that he must move—that is a command. Then God promises that He will make a great nation from Abram and bless him and make him famous. Furthermore, Abram would be a blessing to others. Then God promises to bless those who bless Abram and curse those who curse him. Finally, God promises that *in Abram* all the families of the earth would be blessed (which is a promise of Messiah).

As we have studied, God first spoke these words to Abraham when he was in Ur of the Chaldees (Acts 7:2–3). Abraham half-obeyed God. He moved west, but he stopped at Charan; and he brought much of his family with him. Abraham was not quite up to complete obedience until his father, Terah, died in Charan (Gen. 11:32). It appears that God came to Abraham again, while he was in Charan, and spoke these words to him a second time (Gen. 12:1–3). Or, Abraham called these words to mind. Abraham then almost completely obeys God, except that he will take his nephew Lot with him.

Abraham enters into the Land of Promise.

## God's Covenants with Abraham

### Scripture

### Commentary

Abram passed through the land to the site of Shechem, at the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. But the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "I will give this land to your offspring [= seed]." So he built an altar there to the LORD Who had appeared to him. From there he moved on to the hill country east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and worshiped Him (Gen. 12:6–8).

God first tells Abram that He will give his seed (Seed) the land in which he stands. Abram goes into Canaan and God tells him that this will be the land of his offspring.

These are all promises from God to Abram; and Abram has preserved them. He preserved them and taught them to his wife and eventually to his son Isaac. Apparently Rebekah, his wife, will be aware of these promises; and they both taught them to their sons, Jacob and Esau.

God waits for Abram to first separate from Lot, which he chooses to do from his own volition.

Yahweh said to Abram, after Lot was separated from him, "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 to you, and to your offspring [= seed] forever. I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then your seed may also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it to you." (Gen. 13:14–17).

God then promises Abram a huge chunk of land, which would be as far as Abram could see in all directions. Furthermore, those who have been descended from Abram will be like the dust of the earth (i.e., an old and childless Abram would have millions of descendants). Therefore, God has expanded upon His promises from Gen. 12.

Then God tells Abram to wander throughout the land which He has given him—a *commandment* which Abraham obeyed (and which he preserved in the book of Genesis).

For the next passage, Abram has just enjoyed a tremendous military victory and he has met with the great High Priest, Melchizedek, Who is a type of Christ. There is a chance that Abram was given the Holy Scriptures at this point as well (the first 10–12 chapters of Genesis; and perhaps the book of Job). Or what Abraham had and what Melchizedek gave him made up together the first portion of Genesis and the entire book of Job.

After these things [the rescue of Lot and the great military victory] the word of Yahweh came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Don't be afraid, Abram. I am your shield [and] your exceedingly great reward." (Gen. 15:1)

God explains to Abram what He is to him. God is Abram's shield, as was proven in the previous chapter when Abram and his men defeated a great army and literally changed world history in that battle. Furthermore, God is Abram's great reward.

Abram said, "Lord Yahweh, what will you give me, seeing I go childless, and he who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" Abram said, "Behold, to me you have given no seed: and, behold, one born in my house is my heir." (Gen. 15:2–3)

However, rather than show gratefulness, Abram starts out by complaining that he is childless and that his heir will be someone to whom he is not even related.

## God's Covenants with Abraham

Scripture	Commentary
Behold, the word of Yahweh came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir, but he who will come forth out of your own body will be your heir." Yahweh brought him outside, and said, "Now look toward the sky, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." (Gen. 15:4–5a)	God makes it clear that Abram's heir will come directly from him. Then God <i>repeats</i> His promise, that Abram will have billions of descendants (using stars this time as an illustration).
He said to Abram, "So will your seed be." He [had] believed in Yahweh; and He [God] imputed it to him [Abram] for righteousness. (Gen. 15:5b–6)	Abram's faith is counted to him as righteousness. Abram had believed in God back when he was in Ur. That was when God imputed righteousness to Abram. Here, God speaks, and Abram believes Him; that is righteousness imputed to Abram in time. You will note that, even in time, God does all the work, God makes all of the provisions, and Abram is allowed to take from that—and it is considered righteousness to Abram. Abram is the model for all believers in this.
He said to him, "I am Yahweh who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give you this land to inherit it." (Gen. 15:7)	God then <i>repeats</i> the promise that Abram would inherit all of the land upon which he stands.
He said, "Lord Yahweh, how will I know that I will inherit it?" He said to him, "Take me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon." (Gen. 15:8–9).	What God is doing here is making a covenant with Abraham. This is how Abraham <i>knows</i> that God will keep His promises.
He took him all these, and divided them in the middle, and laid each half opposite the other; but he didn't divide the birds. The birds of prey came down on the carcasses, and Abram drove them away (Gen. 15:10–11).	God illustrates what will happen in the future. The land will be given to the Jews, and various groups will continually try to take this land away from them, and God, through the Jews, will continually have to drive them away. The birds of prey are the heathen nation; and Abram symbolizes God here.  God is not dealing with Abram's unbelief, at this point, but the unbelief of the generations which will follow him.

## God's Covenants with Abraham

### Scripture

### Commentary

When the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. Now terror and great darkness fell on him. He [God] said to Abram, "Know for sure that your seed will live as foreigners in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them. They will afflict them four hundred years. I will also judge that nation, whom they will serve. Afterward they will come out with great substance. (Gen. 15:12–14).

Then God prophesies to Abram what would happen to his descendants over the next 400+ years. Again, God is not as concerned with Abram's lack of faith as He is with the generations which will follow him.

God tells Abram what the future will be for his seed.

But you will go to your fathers in peace. You will be buried in a good old age. In the fourth generation they will come here again, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full." (Gen. 15:15–16).

Much of the Bible is prophetic, and this information would stay with Abraham and his son Isaac and his son Jacob. And because Abraham keeps, guards and preserves these words, they are known to the children of Israel over the next 400+ years.

The Jewish slaves in Egypt will call out to this God of Abram for their deliverance. This means they had to know about Abram and about his God. This indicates that Abram preserved God's commands and ordinances.

It came to pass that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold, a smoking furnace, and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. (Gen. 15:17).

The smoking furnace and the flaming torch are ways that the Preincarnate Christ and God the Father revealed Themselves to Abram. These things represent judgment, and God's judgment will always be a part of His relationship to mankind.

In that day Yahweh made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites." (Gen. 15:18–21).

God becomes very specific about the land which He is giving to Abram and to his descendants: the land which lies between the Nile (the River of Egypt) and the Euphrates River. This would include a small portion of modern Egypt, along with all of Jordan, Israel, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and most of Iraq. Right now, Israel occupies approximately 0.2% of the Middle East; God is giving to them approximately half of the Middle East (this is because most of the Arabs who occupy this land today will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire).

Unfortunately, at the urging of his wife, Abram will misapply this doctrine in Gen. 16 and he will father a child by Sarai's personal servant girl, Hagar.

## God's Covenants with Abraham

Scripture	Commentary
<p>God appears again to Abram to straighten him out about who his true heir will be. God comes to Abram at a time when he is 99 and his bastard son Ishmael is about 13 years old.</p>	<p>God tells Abram to walk as a mature believer before Him. God tells Abram to pay close attention to what He says.</p> <p>Over this period of time, Abraham has reached a point where God can command him to be spiritually mature.</p>
<p>When Abram was ninety-nine years old, Yahweh appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty. Walk before Me, and be complete [spiritually mature]. I make My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly." (Gen. 17:1–2).</p>	<p>What had not been promised before is, Abram would be a father of many nations.</p> <p>God changes Abram's name from <i>Abram</i> (<i>exalted father</i>) to <i>Abraham</i> (<i>father of a multitude</i>).</p>
<p>Abram fell on his face. God talked with him, saying, "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you. You will be the father of a many nations. Neither will your name any more be called Abram, but your name will be Abraham; for the father of a multitude of nations have I made you. (Gen. 17:3–5).</p>	<p>God promises dried up old Abraham that he would be made exceedingly fruitful.</p> <p>Finally, all of the land through which Abraham is walking, would be given to him and to his seed. "I will be their God" indicates that this does not go to everyone descended from Abraham but specifically to those who have a relationship with God.</p>
<p>I will make you exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of you. Kings will come out of you. I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your seed after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God to you and to your seed after you. I will give to you, and to your seed after you, the land where you are traveling, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession. I will be their God." (Gen. 17:6–8).</p>	<p>Abraham has seemed to forget what God has promised him, from time to time, so God is going to make certain that he remembers this time.</p> <p>Circumcision is hidden from others, but the male who is circumcised is aware of it. Every time a male urinates, he is reminded of his circumcision.</p> <p>As we have studied, circumcision represents the new life; taking that which was dead and making it alive once again (specifically, this is a reference to Abraham's sexual potency, which represents life where there was once death).</p>
<p>God said to Abraham, "As for you, you will keep My covenant, you and your seed after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant, which you will keep, between me and you and your seed after you. Every male among you will be circumcised. You will be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin. It will be a token of a covenant between me and you. (Gen. 17:9–11).</p>	

## God's Covenants with Abraham

Scripture	Commentary
<p>He who is eight days old will be circumcised among you, every male throughout your generations, he who is born in the house, or bought with money of any foreigner who is not of your seed. He who is born in your house, and he who is bought with your money, must be circumcised." (Gen. 17:12–13).</p>	<p>Spiritually, this refers to being born again. The circumcision speaks of being born into a new life (the concept of being <i>born again</i> did not begin with Jesus speaking to Nicodemus in John 3).</p> <p>The idea is, the relationship between Abraham and God—which is founded upon new life—was to be passed down to all his descendants.</p>
<p>[God continues speaking to Moses]: "My covenant will be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. The uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that soul will be cut off from his people. He has broken my covenant." (Gen. 17:14)</p>	<p>Note here that there are some commands, and with these commands are consequences. The person descended from Abraham who is not circumcised was to be cut off from Abraham's seed, because he has broken God's covenant with Abraham. The idea is, the lack of circumcision represents a lack of this new life.</p>
<p>God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you will not call her name Sarai, but her name will be Sarah. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. Yes, I will bless her, and she will be a mother of nations. Kings of peoples will come from her." (Gen. 17:15–16)</p>	<p>As has been discussed, there have been some cults out there that make a big deal out of changing a person's name when they enter into the cult. When names are changed in the Bible, generally speaking, God is doing the name change Himself.</p>
<p>Then Abraham fell on his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, "Will a child be born to him who is one hundred years old? Will Sarah, who is ninety years old, give birth?" (Gen. 15:17)</p>	<p>Abraham has the objection that, what God is suggesting is simply impossible. They are simply too old to have children. However, this is the key to circumcision; which represents this new life being given to Abraham.</p>
<p>Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before you!" (Gen. 15:18)</p>	<p>Furthermore, in Abraham's eyes, fathering a child by Sarah is unnecessary, because he already has a son, Ishmael (and Abraham clearly loved Ishmael).</p>

## God's Covenants with Abraham

Scripture	Commentary
<p>God said, "No, but Sarah, your wife, will bear you a son. You will call his name Isaac. I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his seed after him. As for Ishmael, I have heard you. Listen, I have blessed him, and I will make him fruitful, and I will multiply him exceedingly. He will become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this set time in the next year." When He finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham (Gen. 17:19–22).</p>	<p>Ishmael is not going to be Abraham's heir. Recall that, he will be a wild ass of a man, indicating that he has no authority orientation. Furthermore, his descendants will be evil. God is able to know this.</p> <p>It is amazing that this holds true, even until today. If you were given the choice of living in some Middle Eastern nation, you would choose Israel. In fact, Israel is so different from every other nation in that region that, you may not have even associated them with the phrase <i>Middle Eastern nation</i>.</p>
<p>Now, how does God know, 4000 years ago, that Abraham's son Ishmael was not the family to watch, but Abraham's yet unborn son Isaac was the man to watch? God knew this 4000 years ago, and the results are clear for us to see, even today.</p>	
<p>The rest of Gen. 17 is a narrative about Abraham circumcising those in his encampment.</p>	
<p>God appears to Abraham once again:</p>	
<p>Y<sup>e</sup>howah appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and saw that three men stood opposite him. (Gen. 18:1–2a).</p>	<p>The 3 men represent the Trinity, even though only one of them is the Revealed God.</p>
<p>When he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself to the earth, and said, "My Lord, if now I have found grace in Your sight, please don't go away from Your servant. Now let a little water be fetched, wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. I will get a morsel of bread so you can refresh your heart. After that You may go your way, now that You have come to Your servant." (Gen. 18:2b–5a).</p>	<p>You will note that this time, Abraham immediately recognizes Y<sup>e</sup>howah God. The meal is a picture of fellowship. Abraham was excited and happy to see God. With Abraham's continued spiritual growth, spending time with his LORD became more and more a time of pleasure and enjoyment.</p>
<p>They said, "Very well, do as you have said." (Gen. 18:5b).</p>	<p>Because of the dispensation in which we live, and what has gone before, we enjoy fellowship with all 3 members of the Trinity.</p>
<p>Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Quickly make ready three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes." (Gen. 18:6)</p>	<p>Abraham involves his wife in this fellowship with God. God has promised Abraham that he would father a uniquely-born son through her.</p>

## God's Covenants with Abraham

### Scripture

### Commentary

Abraham ran to the herd, and fetched a tender and good calf, and gave it to the servant. He hurried to dress it. He took butter, milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them. He stood by them under the tree, and they ate. (Gen. 18:7–8)

Abraham organizes a large meal, and everything is made from scratch. He does not offer up leftovers, as Lot will appear to do in Gen. 19.

They said to him, "Where is Sarah, your wife?" He said, "See, in the tent." He said, "I will certainly return to you when the season comes round. Behold, Sarah your wife will have a son." Sarah heard in the tent door, which was behind him. (Gen. 18:9–10)

The Revealed Member of the Trinity for the first time puts a rough date on the birth of their promised child and tells Abraham that it is Sarah who will have his child (which God told Abraham before).

Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age. It had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. Sarah laughed within herself, saying, "After I have grown old will I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" (Gen. 18:11–12)

The writer of Genesis makes certain that we know that Abraham and Sarah are past the age of having sexual relations; and Sarah is past the age of bearing children.

Because God designed all the rules of biology, He can modify and overrule them if He so chooses to.

Yahweh said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Will I really bear a child, yet I am old?' Is anything too hard for Yahweh? At the set time I will return to you, when the season comes round, and Sarah will have a son." Then Sarah denied, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid." He said, "No, but you did laugh." (Gen. 18:13–15)

In order to parallel and foreshadow the birth of Jesus, this birth needs to be miraculous. God asks Abraham if there is anything too difficult for Him to do.

I doubt that there is any race or family of people which now resides in the land which they originally lived in. Abraham, as a Jew, moved to the Land of Promise, and God gave him that land. And the Jews are still there today, 4000 years later, despite the absolute insane hatred which is felt by most of those who live around them.

The reason that we reviewed these promises, is so that we can have a list of everything which God told Abraham that Abraham recorded (prior to the birth of Isaac). These are all the things which God spoke to Abraham, insofar as we are aware.

I have left out Gen. 18:17–33, where God uses Abraham in order to establish the concept of a pivot; and where Abraham steps in as an intercessory between God and Sodom.

I have left out the interchange between God and Abraham, when Sarah, having given birth to Isaac, wanted Hagar and Ishmael out of her house. God told Abraham that was okay, and Abraham obeyed Him. Gen. 21:9–13

I have left out God telling Abraham to offer up his uniquely-born son, Isaac (Gen. 22:1–14). However, *after* Abraham offered up his uniquely-born son, God said this:

And the Angel of Y<sup>e</sup>howah called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares Y<sup>e</sup>howah, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." (Gen. 22:15–18)

This is what God said to Abraham after he showed himself to be willing to offer up his son.

We see an interaction between increased obedience and increased blessing (*your descendants will possess the gate of their enemies* is a new blessing).

The Covenants of God (graphic); from [Slide Share](#); accessed May 28, 2015.

(Adamic)	Noahic	Abrahamic	Mosaic	Davidic	New
Gen 1-2 Hos 6:7	Gen 9	Gen 12 Gen 13 Gen 15 Gen 17 Gen 22	Exo 19-24 Deut 26-28	2 Sam 7	Jer 31:33-34 Ezek 36:23-36
<u>Conditional:</u>	Unconditional:	Unconditional:	<u>Conditional:</u>	Unconditional:	Unconditional:
Provision & protection enjoying God's presence on Earth	Earthly stability & blessing	A Seed A Blessing To become a blessing . . . to all nations	Exclusive devotion and absolute obedience to YHWH	Eternal Rest Eternal House Eternal Throne Eternal Kingdom	Forgiveness Regeneration Holy Spirit Restoration <hr/> Provision & protection enjoying God's unlimited presence

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