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"The Land": God’s Promises and Plans, and Israel’s Possession



By Steven J. Hogan

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About 4,000 years ago, God promised to Abram and his descendants a very special piece of land. And through all the years God has been keeping His promise to His people. As Christians, it’s imperative that we understand this incredible journey of the Jewish people, and how it relates to us. Today, from Genesis to Joshua, we will learn about **God’s promises** about the land to **God’s plans** for the land to **Israel’s possession** of the land.

1) God’s promises of land for Abraham and his descendants:
Genesis 13:14-15- *“The Lord said to Abram after Lot had 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 it to you and your descendants **forever**.’”*

Gen. 12:1-3, 15:6-7, 15:18, 17:6-8, 26:3-5, 35:10-12, 50:24; Ex. 32:13; Lev. 26:42; Num. 34:2-12; Deut. 9:4-6; Josh. 1:1-6. God repeated His promise of land because He wanted everyone to be convinced of its truth and its eternal and utmost importance.

2) <u>God's plans</u> for the Jewish people instructed them how to live in their land: God created the Israeli nation, raised her up, cared for her, provided for her, protected her, led her – and He had His plans for them written down so they would know how they were to live in their land. God dearly loved the Jewish people, for they were special to Him, a treasured possession. He wanted to greatly bless them and their land and, through them, the entire world. Most of all, God wanted them to worship and serve Him forever. Psalm 67:7

In Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, God's plans for the Jewish people are precisely written out. Here are some of them: Deut. 4:1 – *"Listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, so that you may live and go in and take possession of **the land** which the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you."* Deut. 4:37-38 – *"Because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them. He personally brought you from Egypt by His great power, driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in and **to give you their land** for an inheritance."*

Deut. 8:7 – *"The Lord your God is bringing you into **a good land**, **a land** of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills; **a land** of wheat and barley, of vines, fig trees, and pomegranates, **a land** of milk and honey… when you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the Lord your God for **the good land** which He has given you."* Deut. 11:12 – *"… **a land** for which the Lord your God cares; the eyes of the Lord your God are always on it, from the beginning even to the end of the year."* Deut. 11:16-17 – *"Beware that your hearts are not deceived, and that you do not turn away and serve other gods and worship them. Or the anger of the Lord will be*

*kindled against you, and… you will perish quickly from **the good land** which the Lord is giving you."*

Here are several more verses from Deuteronomy about the plans God wanted His people to follow while they were living in their land: Deut. 4:5, 4:13-14, 4:25-31, 4:35-40, 5:31-33, 6:1, 6:10-15, 6:22-25, 7:1-6, 7:12-15, 8:1, 8:6-10, 9:1-6, 10:11, 11:8-12, 11:16-25, 11:31-32, 12:1-4, 12:29-30, 15:4-5, 15:11, 16:20, 17:14-15, 18:9-14, 19:8-10, 21:22-23, 23:19-20, 24:14-15, 25:13-16, 26:1-3, 26:8-11, 26:15-19, 27:1-3, 29:25-29, 31:3-8, 32:45-49.

These verses tell us about the sacrifices the Israelites were to perform, many of which picture the coming Messiah who would atone for their sins, who would save those who believed in Him. They describe their celebrations and feasts, ones which would give them opportunities to worship Him. We learn about God's plans regarding kings, war, sin, justice, tithes, marriage, divorce, food, aliens, being exiled from their land, etc. God was clearly instructing His people how they were to live for Him, be blessed by Him, and glorify Him in their land.

Now think about this: is there any other country in the world that God chose and loved, and then wrote out specific plans instructing them how they were to live in their land? Did God give any other nation laws that they were to obey so as to be blessed, and so God would be glorifed. No! Never! It's critically important that you understland God's amazing and awesome work with the Jewish people.

3) Finally, the land becomes <u>Israel's possession</u>. It was over 600 years after God promised the land to Abram that He directed his descendants to go in to possess their land. These verses from Joshua and Judges tell us a little bit of what happened.
* Joshua 1:4 – *"From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, **all the land** of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory."*

God reminded Joshua of His promise to the Jewish people about their land and its boundaries.
* Joshua 1:11 – *"… you are to cross this Jordan, to go in to **possess the land** which the Lord your God is giving you."* The land the Israelites were receiving from God, the land they were to possess and occupy, was a most wonderful gift – and they did not earn it or deserve it.
* Joshua 2:24 – *"All the inhabitants of **the land** have melted away before us."* The people living in this land were afraid of Israel, and were quickly and easily driven out by her armies.

* Joshua 10:42 – *"Joshua captured all these kings and **their lands** at one time, because the Lord, the God of Israel, fought for Israel."* That God Himself fought for Israel is, in itself, compelling evidence that He wanted Israel to possess and keep the land.
* Joshua 11:23 – *"Joshua took **the whole land**, according to all that the Lord had spoken to Moses, and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their division by their tribes."* God divided up the land, and Joshua allotted to each of the twelve tribes their portion.

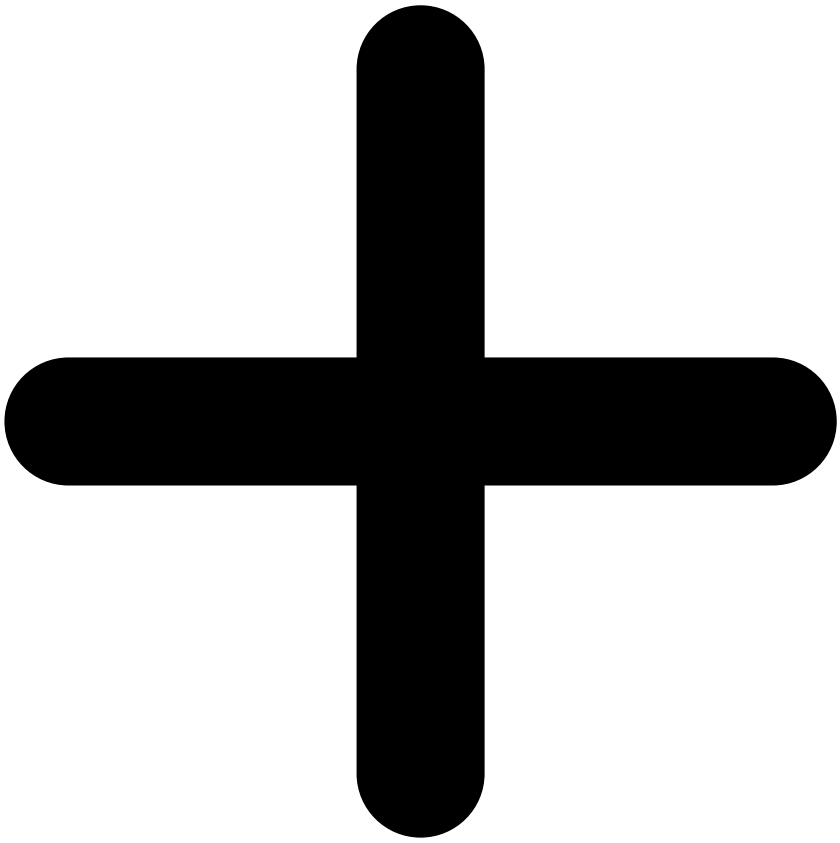
* Joshua 21:43 – *"The Lord gave Israel **all the land** which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed the land and lived in it."* Over 600 years after God initially made His promise to Abram, the Israelites took possession of their land and began to live in it. That God kept His promise about the land clearly shows the fulfillment of His purpose and plans for His people. Isaiah 46:9-10
* Judges 2:1 – *"I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into **the land** which I have sworn to our fathers… I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you.'"* God's promise of land for Israel is an eternal covenant and will never be broken. Israel will live in her land forever and ever.

When we look in God's word and at world history, we can't help but see God's faithful working with the Jewish people. They first entered their land around 1400 BC, and lived there for about 800 years, until 606 BC. Then they were exiled out of their land, but 70 years later, in 536 BC,

reentered their land. They were in their land for over 600 years, but in 70 AD, were again removed from their land. Then in the late 1800s, Jewish people started returning to their land, and in 1948 they miraculously became a nation. And here we are, 75 years later, and there are a great multitude of Israelis living on their land, 7.2 million strong. Not surprisingly, Israel is now in the middle of another punishing conflict, the Hamas / Palestine – Israeli war.

What is going to happen? We know that God is not finished with Israel – He has much more in store for them. The Bible tells us that the years leading up to Christ's return and the rapture of the church will be difficult and painful for both Christians and Jews (Matt. 24:8-31). But shortly after the rapture, a large remnant of Jewish people will be spiritually saved. And in the coming kingdom age, Jewish believers, along with Christians, will inherit the land, that is, the entire earth. Together with Jesus Christ, they will reign over this rennovated world for 1,000 glorious, Christ-exalting years. *"They will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years."* Rev. 20:6; Psalms 47, 67, 96; Heb. 11:39-40

P.S. I cannot stress enough the importance of understanding God's promise of land for the Jewish people, and there possession of it. I would encourage you to read this history article of the Jewish people – *"A Summary of the Work of God from the time of Abraham to Christ's Millennial Kingdom."* And here's a good article on this Thanksgiving Day – *"Being Thankful – the Character of a Christian."*





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