

An Everlasting Possession

On several occasions the Lord promised to give the entire land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants. Now, if God had only mentioned that promise one time and never spoke of it again, that would have been enough to make His will clear. This is because God never goes back on His word:

Malachi 3:6: “For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.”

Numbers 23:19: “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?”

Whatever He promises will always come to pass. In this case, though, the Lord didn't mention it only once. Instead He repeated this promise on multiple occasions. God wanted to make it absolutely clear, beyond any possibility of doubt, that He was giving the land of Canaan to the Jews.

The first time God made this promise was when Abraham first arrived in Canaan:

Genesis 12:5-7: “And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came. And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then

in the land. And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him.”

As we can see, the Lord promised to give the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants. At some point after God made this promise a famine arose and Abraham left Canaan and traveled to Egypt. When he left Egypt and returned to Canaan the Lord repeated His promise:

Genesis 13:14-15: “And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.”

As He had done before, the Lord promised to give all of the land of Canaan – including all the land that Abraham could see – to Abraham and to his descendants *forever*. No conditions were placed on this promise, which meant Abraham didn't have to do anything to keep the land. The promise was unconditional. God was going to give the land to him *and* to his descendants, and it would belong to them forever. This promise couldn't be annulled or forfeited.

Some time later, after Abraham defeated the kings that had kidnapped his nephew Lot, the Lord once again repeated this promise:

Genesis 15:18: “In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:”

This was the third time God said He was giving the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants. That's not the last time, however. Shortly before Abraham's son Isaac was born the Lord promised to give the land to him yet again:

Genesis 17:4-8: “As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”

God promised to give the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants a total of *four times*. The Lord said on two separate occasions that the land would be theirs **forever**: once in Genesis 13:14, where He said that the land would be theirs “for ever”, and again in Genesis 17:8, where He said the land would be their “everlasting possession”. No conditions were placed on this promise! The Israelites didn't have to do anything in order to keep the land. The Lord was giving it to them freely. It was their land forever and they could never lose their right to it. The land was a permanent, irrevocable gift.

It's true that during the time of Moses the Lord said that if the Hebrews disobeyed Him then He would evict them from the land. However, that eviction would be temporary and they wouldn't lose their title to the land. Even if they weren't living in

the land it would remain theirs. We find this in the book of Deuteronomy:

Deuteronomy 29:24-28: “Even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land? what meaneth the heat of this great anger? Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt: For they went and served other gods, and worshipped them, gods whom they knew not, and whom he had not given unto them: And the anger of the Lord was kindled against this land, to bring upon it all the curses that are written in this book: And the Lord rooted them out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as it is this day.”

The Lord made it clear that if the Hebrews forsook Him then He would curse them and root them out of the land. However, the loss of the land wouldn't be permanent. If they repented He would bring them back to the land:

Deuteronomy 30:1-5: “And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, And shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; That then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and

will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee: And the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers.”

While disobedience could get them removed from the land, even *that* wouldn't cause them to lose the land forever. The land still belonged to them, and the Lord would never break His covenant with them or cast them away. We find this in the book of Leviticus:

Leviticus 26:42-45: "Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land. The land also shall be left of them, and shall enjoy her sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them: and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity: because, even because they despised my judgments, and because their soul abhorred my statutes. And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the LORD their God. But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God: I am the LORD."

The phrase “covenant of their ancestors” is very

important. It does *not* refer to the Mosaic Law because when the Lord said these things He was in the process of giving that Law to Israel! The covenant God was talking about was the one He made with their ancestor Abraham – the promise to bless Israel and give them the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession. Regardless of what Israel did, the Lord would never utterly cast them away or allow them to be annihilated. The Jews would always be His people, just as surely as the sun shines by day and the stars shine by night:

Jeremiah 31:35-37: “Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD.”

I want to be absolutely clear on this point. God gave the land of Canaan to the Jews, and it's theirs and theirs alone. He gave it to them with no conditions attached; it was to be theirs forever as an everlasting possession. If Israel rebelled against God then He would evict them from the land, but that eviction wouldn't be permanent. He would remember His covenant with Abraham and would one day bring them back. No matter what happened, the land would always be theirs.

Some might argue that God placed the condition of circumcision on the covenant that He made with Abraham. It's true that He said this:

Genesis 17:11: “And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you.”

However, note that circumcision was a *token*, or sign of the covenant. Any individual Jew who wasn't circumcised would be “cut off” (as it says in verse 14), but their disobedience did *not* abrogate the covenant as a whole because *the covenant was unconditional*. No matter what happened, no matter what the Israelites did, “all the land of Canaan” was theirs “for an everlasting possession”.

The reason I'm emphasizing this is because many people have no idea that Israel has any special significance to God. They see nothing prophetic about the modern nation of Israel and don't believe that Israel has a right to land in the Middle East. They incorrectly think that God has abandoned Israel forever and the Jews are no longer God's chosen people.

This is a very great error. As we saw in Jeremiah 31, God has made it clear that there's *nothing* Israel can do to get Him to abandon them. They will always be His people because His covenant with Abraham was unconditional.

It's true that after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem the Jews were exiled for a long time, but that exile was actually the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy. In fact, not only does the Bible predict a long exile, but it even foretells the date when Israel would become a nation again. We can find all of this in the book of Ezekiel:

Ezekiel 4: “1 Thou also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and portray upon it the city, even Jerusalem:

2 And lay siege against it, and build a fort against it, and cast a mount against it; set the camp also against it, and set battering rams against it round about.

3 Moreover take thou unto thee an iron pan, and

set it for a wall of iron between thee and the city: and set thy face against it, and it shall be besieged, and thou shalt lay siege against it. This shall be a sign to the house of Israel.

4 Lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it thou shalt bear their iniquity.

5 For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel.

6 And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year.

7 Therefore thou shalt set thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem, and thine arm shall be uncovered, and thou shalt prophesy against it.

...

13 And the Lord said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them."

In this prophecy God was using Ezekiel as an object lesson. The Lord was going to punish Israel for 430 years (390 years + 40 years), and to illustrate this He commanded Ezekiel to lie on his side for 430 days. Although this was done as a sign to the house of Israel, the Jews paid no attention to the warning. Instead of repenting of their sins they hardened their hearts. God's judgment then came upon them, exactly as Moses had warned in the book of Deuteronomy. Since the Jews rebelled against God, He removed them from the land. The Jews were carried into captivity and spent the next 70 years in exile.

Back in Deuteronomy the Lord said that if He exiled the Jews *and they repented* then He would regather them to the land.

After the 70 years were over God kept His promise and returned the Jews to the land. However, even then the Jews still refused to repent. Because of this the Lord only allowed a remnant of the Jews to return to Israel in 536 BC¹. The rest of the nation remained scattered abroad, exactly as the Lord had said.

When the Jews returned from exile only 70 of the appointed 430 years had taken place, which still left 360 years of punishment. However, the fact that the Jews didn't learn their lesson during the first 70 years activated this provision of the Mosaic Law:

Leviticus 26:23-24: “And if ye will not be reformed by me by these things, but will walk contrary unto me; Then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you yet seven times for your sins.”

God said that if He punished the Israelites and they refused to repent, He would multiply their punishment by seven:

$$360 \text{ years} \times 7 = 2,520 \text{ years}$$

Since the Bible uses 360-year days in its prophecies², that would equal 2,483.8 of our calendar years. The math:

$$2,520 \text{ years} \times 360 \text{ days} = 907,200 \text{ days.}$$

$$907,200 \text{ days} / 365.25 \text{ days per year} = 2,483.8 \text{ years.}$$

If you add 2,483.8 years to the spring of 536 BC (because there was no year 0, only 1 BC and then 1 AD), you arrive at the spring of 1948. (Math: 1948 + 536 = 2,484.) When did Israel become a nation again? On May 14, 1948³.

1 Source: <https://ibtministries.org/viewcourse.php?crd=93>

2 Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prophetic_Year

3 Source: <https://www.gov.il/en/departments/general/declaration-of-establishment-state-of-israel>

This time, however, more than just a small remnant returned to the land. There are now millions of Jews living in Israel, and more continue to move there as time goes on.

On top of this, Israel became a nation in a *single day*, just as the Lord foretold through Isaiah:

Isaiah 66:7-9: “Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? Saith the Lord: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? Saith thy God.”

It seemed very unlikely that Israel would become a nation again in a single day, but that's exactly what happened! The modern regathering of the Jews to Israel isn't a random historical event; it's the fulfillment of prophecy. In fact, when God said that He would disperse the Jews He also said that He would regather them a *second time*:

Isaiah 11:11: “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again **the second time** to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.”

The Israelites have been dispersed twice: once when they were exiled to Babylon and once when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. The first time they were regathered was in 536 BC after spending 70 years in Babylon; the second time was in the

modern era. That means the modern nation of Israel represents the *second time* God has regathered them. God promised to bring His people back to the land and He has done so.

The Bible goes on to say that the nation of Israel will never be destroyed again:

Amos 9:15: “I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.”

The reason God has regathered them is to save them and turn their hearts to Him. One day He will accomplish exactly that:

Hosea 3:4-5: “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.”

Do you see what this is saying? Israel did “abide many days” without a king, a sacrifice, or even a country. Now they've returned “in the latter days”, just as it says in verse 5. The passage is saying that when Israel is regathered they will seek the Lord, and ultimately the Messiah as well. (I realize that hasn't happened yet, but one day it will. After all, Romans 11:26 tells us that one day all Israel will be saved.)

What I want to focus on is that in the sight of God, the land of Israel belongs to the Jews alone. It doesn't belong to anyone else and it never will. God made that promise to Abraham and He later confirmed it to Jacob, thus making it clear that the land was being given to the *Jews*:

Genesis 35:11-12: “And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land.”

God was very specific when it came to the ownership of the land. The Arabs are the descendants of Abraham's son Ishmael, but the land of Canaan wasn't given to them. The Edomites were the descendants of Abraham's grandson Esau, but the land wasn't given to them either. The land of Canaan was given only to Jacob's offspring, the Jews. Even the city of Jerusalem was given specifically to the Jews:

Zechariah 8:7-8: “Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country; and I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.”

There's one other point that needs to be brought out. The land promise wasn't the only promise that God made to Abraham. There's something else as well. We can find it in Genesis 12:

Genesis 12:3: “And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”

As Christians we know that Jesus is the descendant of Abraham who God used to bless the entire world. In Him all the families of the earth are blessed indeed! However, it's easy to overlook the rest of the verse. God was talking about more than just Abraham here. He was promising bless those who blessed the

Jews *and to curse those who cursed them*. God had some very harsh words for those who would try to harm the Jews:

Zechariah 2:8: “For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.”

Later in Zechariah God had more to say about this topic. The Lord made it clear that one day He was going to destroy all nations that sought to harm Israel:

Zechariah 12:9-10: “And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.”

These verses are describing a time when Israel (the “house of David”) will finally realize that Jesus is the Messiah and will repent as a nation. It says they will “look upon me whom they have pierced” – a reference to Jesus. The point that I want to emphasize is verse 9, where God says that He will seek to destroy “all nations that come against Jerusalem”. God takes attacks on Israel *personally*.

The Lord makes this even more clear in the book of Joel:

Joel 3:1-2: “For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the

valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land.”

Here God says that when He has returned the Jews to the promised land and has given Jerusalem back to them, He would gather all nations and judge them. The reason God will be angry with the nations in that day was because they had scattered the Jews and “parted my land”. In other words, God was extremely angry with the nations because they had *taken land away from Israel*. Taking land away from Israel *really* upset God because He considers that land to belong to Him.

Zechariah expounded on this further and pointed out something very important:

Zechariah 14:2-4: “For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.”

In verse 2 we see the same language as in Joel 3:2. However, an immensely important detail was added: on the day when the Lord will gather all nations to Jerusalem so that He can judge them, He will fight against them *in person!* Verse 4 says

that “his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives”. This event is quite famous; people usually call it the Second Coming. When Jesus Christ returns at the end of the Day of the Lord (a time also known as the tribulation), the city of Jerusalem will be under attack. The nations of the world will have gathered around the city and captured it. In response to this assault Jesus will return to Earth, destroy those nations, and *personally* put an end to all those who threatened Israel. To put it another way, at the Second Coming the Lord Jesus Christ returns *to defend Jerusalem on Israel's behalf*. He comes back so He can (among other things) *personally* kill all those who dared to attack Israel and take what God has given to her. *That's how much this upsets Him.*

God makes one point very clear: the land of Israel belongs to the Jews, and He gets *very upset* when people try to take that land away from her. The Lord said “He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye”, and He meant it. The day will come when God will get so upset at what the nations are doing to Israel that He will return *in person*, with the armies of Heaven, to destroy all those who have come against her.

Taking land away from Israel is a *really big deal* in God's sight. He hates it. He gave that land to the descendants of Jacob and it belongs to them alone. Those who try to take it away from her do so at their peril.

The Bible tells us that one day the nations of the world will gather against Jerusalem to destroy her and her people. They will invade the city and sack it, but then the Lord Jesus Christ will return to this world in person to destroy them all. In that day He will put an end to those who seek to trouble His people.