



The Old Covenant always was primarily relational (with God), not material

Many think the promises of living in the promised land of ancient Israel for God's people are permanent. However, the Old Covenant was cancelled, and today God operates through the New Covenant and its reality.

**“The old system under the law of Moses was only a shadow, a dim reflection of the good things to come, not the good things themselves”—Hebrews 10:1 NLT**

**“These are shadows of the things to come; the reality belongs to Christ”—Colossians 2:17 NAB**

The old covenant shadows were fulfilled in the new covenant substance of reality.

The main covenant is the Abrahamic Covenant (**Genesis 12:1-3**). The **“land”** was promised by God to Abraham's **“descendants”** (**Genesis 12:7**). **“The law . . . was added”** to the Abrahamic Covenant (**Galatians 3:19 NIV**). **“The land”** was promised to the Israelites under the Law Covenant, with a warning about pagan peoples and against serving other **“gods”** (**Exodus 23:30-33**).

*“By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore. All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.” (Hebrews 11:8-16 NIV)*

Residing in the land of promise was only a temporary assignment, because the covenant always was primarily relational (with God), not material. The New Testament interprets the Abrahamic Covenant as finding consummation in a relationship with God. Residency in Canaan was only intended to be a prelude.

“The land is not to be permanently sold because it is Mine, and you are only foreigners and temporary residents on My land.” (Leviticus 25:23 HCSB) “If you defile the land, it will vomit

you out as it has vomited out the nations that were before you.” (Leviticus 18:28 HCSB) The land belongs to God, not humans. Israel was a tenant on God’s land. The land was never at Israel’s disposal for its own purposes, Israel was always at God’s disposal.

Deuteronomy 29:9-28 gives explicit warnings to keep the covenant and not break it.

Israel broke the covenant:

*“They have violated my covenant and been unfaithful to my Law.” (Hosea 8:1 NJB)*

*“But not like the covenant I made with their ancestors the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of Egypt, a covenant which they broke, even though I was their Master, Yahweh declares.” (Jeremiah 31:32 NJB)*

“This was how Yahweh gave the Israelites the entire country which he had sworn to give to their ancestors. They took possession of it and settled in it. Yahweh granted them tranquility on all their frontiers just as he had sworn to their ancestors and, of all their enemies, not one succeeded in resisting them. Yahweh put all their enemies at their mercy. Of all the promises that Yahweh had made to the House of Israel, not one failed; all were fulfilled.” (Joshua 21:43-45 NJB) All the promises of God to capture and control the land (Genesis 15:18) were fulfilled by Joshua’s time.

Testimony by Nehemiah of the fulfillment of promises to Abraham of land as part of the covenant: “You gave them kingdoms and nations, allotting to them even the remotest frontiers. They took over the country of Sihon king of Heshbon and the country of Og king of Bashan. You made their children as numerous as the stars in the sky, and you brought them into the land that you told their parents to enter and possess. Their children went in and took

possession of the land. You subdued before them the Canaanites, who lived in the land; you gave the Canaanites into their hands, along with their kings and the peoples of the land, to deal with them as they pleased. They captured fortified cities and fertile land; they took possession of houses filled with all kinds of good things, wells already dug, vineyards, olive groves and fruit trees in abundance. They ate to the full and were well-nourished; they reveled in your great goodness.” ([Nehemiah 9:22-25 NIV](#))