



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

All of the old covenant land shadows have been 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**). .

“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 was given by Nehemiah hundreds of years later of the fulfillment of promises to Abraham of land as part of the covenant: **"They captured fortified cities and a rich land. They took possession of houses full of every good thing, Hewn cisterns, vineyards, olive groves, Trees for food in abundance"** ([Nehemiah 9:25 LSB](#)).

"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](#))

“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)

The “better country” for Christians, who are “strangers on earth”, to focus on is the land of the “heavenly one”. 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.

Therefore, Christians are said to **“have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” (Hebrews 12:22 LSB)**. The land of earthly Jerusalem, Christians are told, is **“not . . . a lasting city” (Hebrews 13:14 LSB)**. In stark contrast with **“the present Jerusalem”**, earthly Jerusalem, Christians are encouraged to focus on **“the Jerusalem above” (Galatians 4:25,26 LSB)**.