

Divine Covenants...the Land...
A Series on Divine Covenants: Part 3

1. Read Deuteronomy 29:1-30:10. What has happened up to this point? When was this covenant made and who was it with? Is this part of the Mosaic covenant or is it distinctly different?

Because of their unbelief (Num 13:25-32; 14:22-24), all but three individuals (Moses, Joshua, and Caleb) from the first generation out of Egypt died during the 40-year wanderings in the desert. Free from the experience of Egyptian bondage and just before their crossing of the Jordan River entering Palestine, God reminded the second generation nation of Israel, their special covenant relationship with Him (Deut 29:2-3, 10-15).

This Covenant was known by several names: a) the **Land** Covenant for its promises regarding the inheritance of land, b) the **Palestinian** Covenant for the location of where the covenant was made (the plains of Moab), and c) the **Deuteronomy** Covenant for the location of where the covenant is found in the Bible.

The Land Covenant is distinctly different from the Mosaic Covenant for two reasons:

- 1) it was made 40 years after the Mosaic Covenant, and
- 2) it was made in Moab (instead of the Horeb mountain group specifically Mt. Sinai).

For the first time, the Abrahamic Covenant is not being passed through an individual, and instead the nation of Israel, the children of Jacob. And the covenant is with the descendants of Abraham **both present and not and including foreigners**.

2. The Greek title "Deuteronomy" is a translation of two Hebrew words for "Copy of the Law." What are the differences you observe between the Land Covenant and the Mosaic Covenant in context (Ex 33:1-3, Deut 4:1-2), culmination of disobedience (Deut 28:64-68; 29:24-28), and promise of blessings (Deut 30:1-6)?

Context:

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, "Depart, go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up from the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'To your descendants I will give it.' And I will send an angel before you and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite. Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, because you are an obstinate people, and I might destroy you on the way." (Ex 33:1-3)

"Now, Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, so that you will live and go in and take possession of the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you. You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, so that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I am commanding you." (Deut 4:1-2)

With the Exodus, the nation of Israel is encouraged to "**go up** to the land." In Deuteronomy, after the first generation has died during the 40 years in the wilderness, the nation of Israel is encouraged to "**take possession** of the land."

Disobedience, not only results in God's curses (Deut 28:15-63), but culminates in:

Furthermore, **the Lord will scatter you among all the peoples, from one end of the earth to the other; and there you will serve other gods, made of wood and stone**, which you and your fathers have not known. Among those nations **you will find no peace, and there will be no resting place for the sole of...** (continues)

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your foot; but there the Lord will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul. So your lives will be hanging in doubt before you; and you will be terrified night and day, and have no assurance of your life. In the morning you will say, "If only it were evening!" And at evening you will say, "If only it were morning!" because of the terror of your heart which you fear, and the sight of your eyes which you will see. And the Lord will bring you back to Egypt in ships, by the way about which I said to you, "You will never see it again!" And there **you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but there will be no buyer.** (Deut 28:64-68)

All the nations will say, "Why has the Lord done all this to this land? Why this great outburst of anger?" Then people will say, "It is because they abandoned the covenant of the Lord, the God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt. And they went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods that they have not known and whom He had not assigned to them. Therefore, the anger of the Lord burned against that land, to bring upon it every curse which is written in this book; and the Lord uprooted them from their land in anger, fury, and in great wrath, and hurled them into another land, as it is this day." (Deut 29:24-28)

When the Mosaic Covenant was first discussed, God never mentioned the expulsion from the Land. While God's curses included this possibility, the experience of the first generation's apostasy and resulting 40 year wandering judgment provided an example to the second generation of what happens when one disobeys and fails in their covenant commitments.

The promise of blessing when you obey with all your heart and all your soul:

So it will be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have placed before you, and you call them to mind in all the nations where the Lord your God has scattered you, and you return to the Lord your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul in accordance with everything that I am commanding you today, you and your sons, then the Lord your **God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you.** If any of your scattered countrymen are at the ends of the earth, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. The Lord your **God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will be good to you and make you more numerous than your fathers. Moreover, the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the hearts of your descendants,** to love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul, so that you may live. (Deut 30:1-6, NIV)

Specific to the expulsion and loss of the Promised Land, the Land Covenant expands on the blessings of the Mosaic Covenant. The blessing that is distinctly different from the Mosaic Covenant is God circumcising the heart of the Believer and his descendants.

3. By obeying the Lord your God "with all your heart and soul," God will regather His people from around the world and "bring you into the land" (Deut 30:2-5). Observe the promises of the Land Covenant.

"Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live." (Deut 30:6)

Israel will be regenerated.

"The LORD your God will inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you." (Deut 30:7)

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The enemies of Israel will be judged.

"Then the LORD your God will prosper you abundantly in all the work of your hand, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your cattle and in the produce of your ground, for the LORD will again rejoice over you for good, just as He rejoiced over your fathers; if you obey the LORD your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and soul." (Deut 30:9-10)

Israel will receive many blessings.

4. God speaks of circumcising our heart (Deut 30:6). A tool that can help clarify this idea is to use a concordance for "circumcise" to see if the Bible defines or elaborates upon the term.

There are three places where circumcision of the heart is mentioned (Deut 10:16; Jer 4:4; Rom 2:25-28) and all three passages represent the view that the figurative circumcision of the heart is done by the human being:

So **circumcise your heart**, and do not stiffen your neck any longer. (Deut 10:16)

**"Circumcise yourselves to the Lord
And remove the foreskins of your heart,**
Men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem,
Or else My wrath will go forth like fire
And burn with none to quench it,
Because of the evil of your deeds." (Jer 4:4)

Both Moses and the prophet Jeremiah exhort with the figurative expression "circumcision of the heart" to exhort God's people to live in obedience to the Law and remain faithful to their covenant commitments.

In contrast, God promises in the Land Covenant that He will circumcise the heart of the Believer! God's circumcision of the heart as a promise of blessing for those who obey and their descendants (Deut 30:6). How this circumcision of the heart of the Believer and his descendants is not explained until the New Covenant is revealed.

"As for Me, this is My covenant with them," says the Lord: "My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring's offspring," says the Lord, "from now and forever." (Isa 59:21)

God promises the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

"For this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord: "I will put My law within them and write it on their heart; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." (Jer 31:33)

Through this indwelling of God's Spirit, the Believer will have God's law on his mind and heart. God chose and made a unilateral covenant to be God to Abraham and those who meet His requirements of holiness, those covenant keepers of Abraham will be His people (Rom 2:25-28).

5. What does Moses say immediately following the Land Covenant (Deut 30:11-16)?

"For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that... (continues)

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... we may observe it?' Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?' But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it.

"See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity; in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the Lord your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it. (Deut 30:11-16)

Moses tells the nation of Israel that they have a choice, and that it "is not too difficult or out of reach." The word of God is nearby and accessible. "Love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments," and God will bless you with possession of the Land.

6. What is the significance of the Land Covenant?

The Land Covenant elaborates upon the Land portion of the Abrahamic Covenant! It is a promise that the Land will be populated with Believers without the enemies of God who will be judged, and this covenant is eternal.

While the promise of land to his descendants was made unconditionally to Abraham, the condition of the Mosaic and Land Covenants determined who was a descendant of Abraham, which enabled entrance into the Promised Land. Despite the disobedience of the first generation of Israelites out of Egypt and while the Mosaic Covenant was clear about its conditions for God's blessings, God still reiterates His Covenant with the focus on land with the second and subsequent generations.

Also important to note, while the nation of Israel will eventually irretrievably break the Mosaic Covenant, God does not destroy the nation of Israel nor end His covenant relationship with the nation.

While there is little question the promise of the Land has yet to be fulfilled, there is a presumption that Land in view is the present day Middle East. Will there be a time in human history that the nation of Israel, "descendants of Jacob," will all meet the condition for the Land Covenant where all will return to the Lord and obey His words?

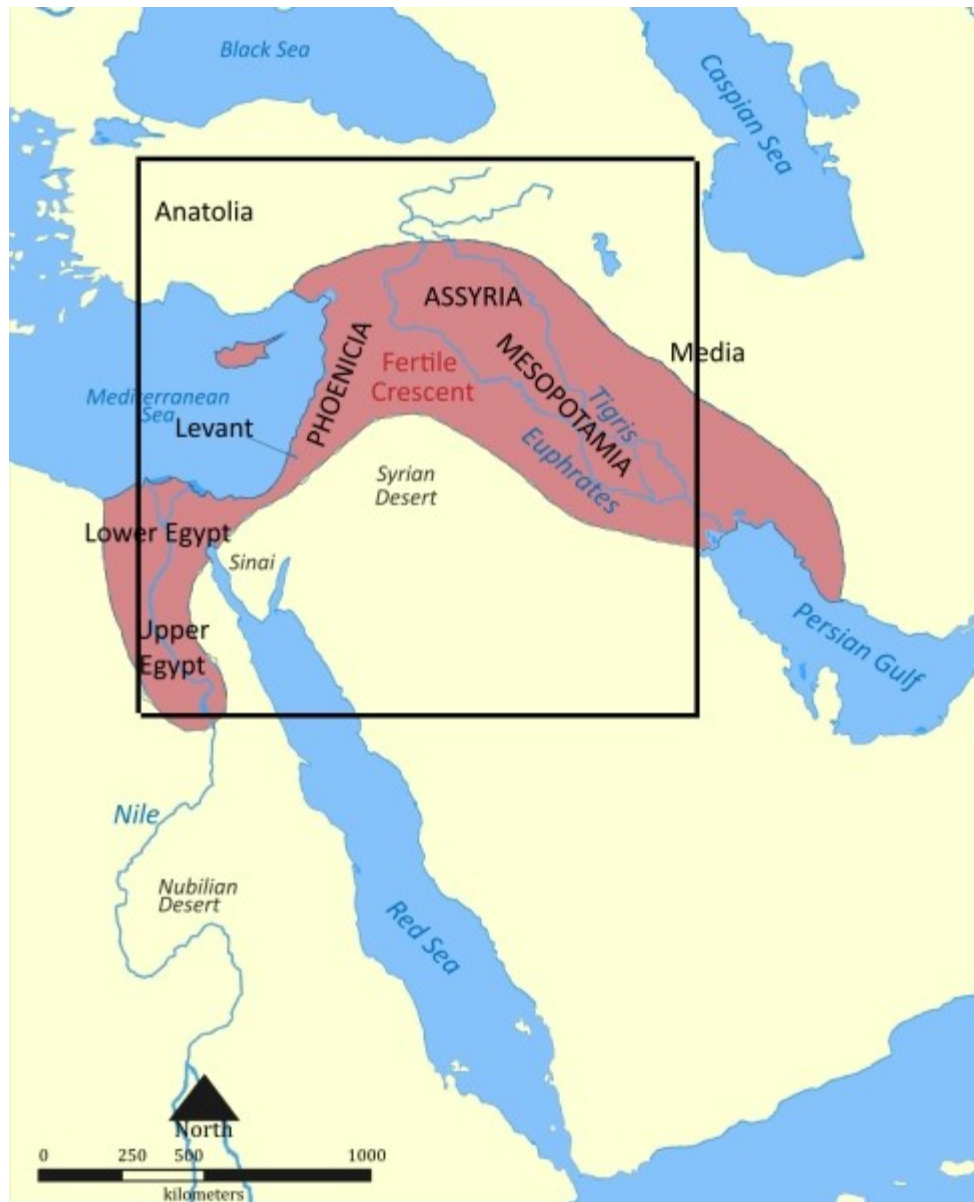
The answer is yes! Just as God introduces His covenant in Genesis, He reveals how He will completely fulfill His promises to Abraham in Revelation! The apostle John describes a new Jerusalem:

The city itself is laid out as a square cube; its width, length, and height measures about 1400 - 1500 miles (Rev 21:15). It was made of pure gold like clear glass (Rev 21:18), and its streets were pure gold like transparent glass (Rev 21:21).

There is no temple in the new Jerusalem! God and His Son are effectively the temple (Rev 21:22). The glory of God powers the lamp of His Son and illuminates the city (Rev 21:23; 22:5). It is significant that there is no temple in the new Jerusalem; the new Jerusalem is the heavenly Holy of Holies!

The elegance and beauty of God's word becomes apparent. God fulfills His promise of land with new Jerusalem. Although, new Jerusalem is a square, its area encompasses the entire land promised by God!

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