

The Promised Land

I. The loss of Eden

- We were created to have a *place*, a home. Human beings began in perfect symbiosis with their home, the earth.
 - Adam's name comes from the Hebrew *adamah*, which means "soil" or "ground." He's "ground guy"/"earthling."
- Eden was just the beginning: God gave Adam and Eve the entire world as their own (Gen 1:26–28).
- But Adam and Eve rejected God's authority. They seized the forbidden fruit, and so they were made wanderers, exiles from Eden (Gen 3:24; cf. 4:12).

II. A shadowy inheritance: Canaan

- In God's grace, he promised a new delightful home to Abraham and his offspring: the land of Canaan (Gen 12:1, 7; 13:17; 15:7, 18–21; 17:8).
 - It will be from the Nile river to the Euphrates river (Gen 15:18–21).
 - It will be a good land, flowing with milk and honey (Exod 3:8).
- But they must receive the land by faith.
 - Initially, they reject the land out of fear of the Canaanites (Num 14).
 - Then, under Joshua, they take the land. But at every step (e.g., Jericho's walls falling in Josh 6:20, the hailstones in Josh 10:11), God shows that the land is ultimately a gift from him.
- God gave Israel the land like he promised. Josh 11:23: "So 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 tribal allotments. And the land had rest from war." (cf. Josh 21:45).
 - Grace! Josh 24:13: "I gave you a land on which you had not labored and cities that you had not built, and you dwell in them. You eat the fruit of vineyards and olive orchards that you did not plant." (cf. Deut 6:10–11).
- Even when the people receive the land, there are many signs that it is less than ideal:
 - The people fail to completely drive out the Canaanites (Josh 13:13; 15:63; 16:10; 17:13, 16; 23:13).
 - The people are bound to sin: "You are not able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy God" (Josh 24:19).
 - The land is subject to drought, famine when the people sin (1 Kgs 17:1).
 - God doesn't give a land inheritance to the Levites, for the Lord himself is their inheritance (Josh 13:33: "But to the tribe of Levi Moses gave no inheritance; the LORD God of Israel is their inheritance").

III. Landless but looking to return

- Israel repeated the sin of Adam and Eve. By their idolatry, they defiled the Lord's land:
 - Jer 2:7: "I brought you into a plentiful land to enjoy its fruits and its good things. But when you came in, you defiled my land and made my heritage an abomination."
 - They polluted the land by offering child sacrifice to idols (Ps 106:38).
- Result:
 - God made the land desolate, a scorched ruin (Jer 4:7, 26; 9:10; 12:11).

- Israel was forcibly removed from the land by the Assyrians and Babylonians (2 Kgs 17, 24–25).
- The land fell to foreign control: “Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers, Our houses to aliens” (Lam 5:2).
- But the Lord’s promise of a lasting inheritance to Abraham still stood! The prophets point to a return to the land (Deut 30:3–5; Isa 57:13; 65:9; 61:7–9; Jer 23:8; 29:14; 30:3; 32:14–15, 37, 43–44)
 - Ezek 47:13–23: a new apportioning of the land! But something new: Ezek 47:21–23 says the nations have a portion too (see also Ps 87:4, 6; Jer 12:15).

IV. The end-times promised land given in Christ

- God has shown himself faithful to give us the ultimate land through the work of Christ, but we have not yet received it. Our situation corresponds to that of Israel in the wilderness (Heb 4:1)
 - “[W]e are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pet 3:13).
- The new creation is what God promised all along to Abraham (Rom 4:13; Heb 11:10,16)
 - It will never pass away (1 Pet 1:4; Rev 21:1), nor will it ever be defiled (2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:27)
 - Only those who are humble like Christ will inherit his everlasting land (Matt 5:5).
 - But Christ makes us worthy: “[We give] thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light” (Col 1:12).

V. Applications

- This old creation is not our home. We are sojourners and exiles here (1 Pet 1:1, 17; 2:11).
- The modern nation of Israel founded in 1948 is just another non-Christian nation that needs the gospel like any other nation. Do not be distracted by Christians who say that God still promises Israel to the Jews (cf. Rev 3:9). This position does not take into account our present place in the story of redemption.
- Land matters to God: the way we care for the earth should reflect how we will care for the new creation (Gen 1:28; 2:15; Ps 104:23).