

Something to Hope For



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 22

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 2:15; Exodus 3:8; Joshua 13:1–7; Leviticus 25:1–5, 8–13; Jeremiah 24:6.

MEMORY VERSE: “Prisoners, go home! Now you have something to hope for. I am telling you now, I am coming back to you” (Zechariah 9:12, ERV).



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JOSHUA 13–21 contains long lists. These lists talk about the land that God gave to the different family groups in Israel. For the modern reader, these lists may seem boring. But the lists teach us a very important Bible truth. God made a promise to give His people land. The lists are proof that God kept His promise. At the same time, the Israelites worked with the Lord to make those promises happen.

Yes, the land was a gift from God. God promised this land to Israel's fathers. But Israel had a part to do, too: “ ‘I have given you all this land. Go in and take it as your own. The LORD promised he would give the land to your fathers. He promised it to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He also said he would give it to their children after them’ ” (Deuteronomy 1:8, NIV).

This week, we will look at the Bible truths that the Promised Land teaches us. We will try to understand what these Bible truths mean for us today.

EDEN AND CANAAN (Genesis 2:15)

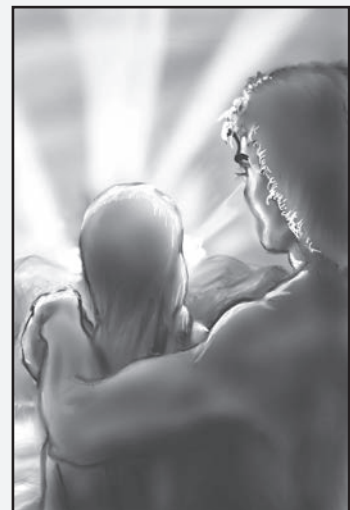
What happened to the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned? Read Genesis 2:15 and Genesis 3:17–24 for the answer.

God gave Adam and Eve a beautiful garden home. God filled the Garden of Eden with beauty. The garden gave Adam and Eve plenty of food and water. Adam and Eve met with God in the garden. God was their teacher. The Garden of Eden was the same as a school. The garden taught Adam and Eve about God and His love. The garden also taught Adam and Eve about God's plan for their lives. When Adam and Eve sinned, they broke their relationship with God. Their sin changed their relationship with the garden home too. Adam and Eve lost their garden home. As punishment, God made Adam and Eve leave the garden. So, Eden is a symbol of the life God meant for Israel to enjoy. The Promised Land will help Israel discover the joys that humans lost in Eden.

What did Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob think about God's promise to give them land? Read Genesis 13:14, 15; Genesis 26:3, 24; and Genesis 28:13 for the answer. What promise about land has God made to us? How does this promise give us hope? (Read Hebrews 6:11–15 for the answer.)

Abraham entered the land that God showed him. Abraham had faith in God's promise. He believed God would give him and his future children the land someday. Abraham's children waited for 400 years for God to keep His promise. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob didn't really own the land. The land belonged to God. The Garden of Eden belonged to God too. Adam and Eve didn't do anything to buy or own the land. Israel didn't do anything to earn the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 9:4–6). God gave them the Promised Land as a gift.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived with hope in God's promises. God kept His promise to them and gave the land to their future children. As Jesus' followers, we also have promises. God promises us better things than He gave Israel (Hebrews 8:6). God will keep His promises to us. But first we must "copy the example of those people who continue to trust God. They continue to be patient when trouble happens to them. People like [the same as] that receive [get] what God has promised to his people" (Hebrews 6:12, EASY).



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THE LAND AS A GIFT (Exodus 3:8)

What was the special relationship between God, Israel, and the Promised Land? Read Exodus 3:8; Leviticus 20:22; Leviticus 25:23; Numbers 13:27; Deuteronomy 4:1, 25, 26; Deuteronomy 6:3; and Psalm 24:1 for the answer.



The Israelites depended on rain for their crops. Only God could control the weather. So, the land helped Israel remember all the time that they depended on God for life.

Land is more than a place to live. Land helps people to know who they are as a people. What you do for a living depends on where you live. Slaves had no land. They belonged nowhere. A slave worked hard for no pay. Someone else collected and enjoyed the pay for the work the slave did. So, owning land was important. When people owned land, they were no longer slaves. That's why the land was so important to the Israelites after God helped them escape slavery. The land helped them to understand who they were, as God's people.

God, Israel, and the land had a special relationship. God gave Israel the land as a gift. The Israelites could own the land while they obeyed the Lord and respected the rules of the agreement between them. In other words, Israel couldn't own the land and have its blessings without God's blessing.

The land also helped Israel better understand God's law and His love. Because the Israelites lived in the land, they always remembered that God kept His promises. Without God's help, Israel wouldn't be a people, and they wouldn't have any land. When the Israelites were in Egypt, the Nile River helped give water to their crops. But Canaan was different. The Israelites depended on rain for their crops. Only God could control the weather. So, the land helped the Israelites remember all the time that they depended on God for life.

Yes, God gave Israel the land. But God was really the Owner. God is the real Owner of the whole earth (Psalm 24:1). So, He can give the land to Israel or remove it. The same is true for us today. Because God is the Owner of the land, we are all really strangers, pilgrims, or visitors. In other words, we are not the owners of the land. We are only guests on God's land.

Read 1 Peter 2:11 and Hebrews 11:9–13 and then answer the questions. What does it mean to you to live as a visitor on this earth? What does it mean to you that your final home will be the earth made new?

WINNING THE LAND (Joshua 13:1–7)

Yes, the land was a gift from God. But what were some of the things Israel needed to do to win the land and keep it? Read Joshua 13:1–7 for the answer.

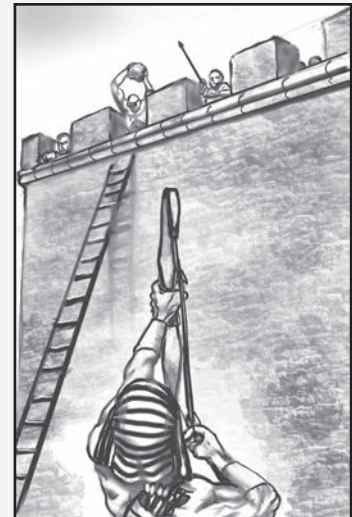
The Israelites lived as slaves for hundreds of years. So, they didn't have the military skills of the Egyptians to win the land in war. The Egyptians were skilled fighters with trained armies. But even with their big armies, the Egyptians never completely won the land of Canaan. The Egyptians couldn't break down the walls of the Canaanite cities. Now God tells the Israelites, who were ex-slaves, to win the land that their Egyptian masters couldn't get full control of! If the Israelites win, they will win only because God helps them. They won't win because of their own effort.

Joshua 13–21 talks about the land that God gives to the different family groups of Israel. The lists of land tell us who gets what land. The lists also show us the land that Israel must win. The Israelites can safely live in the land God gave them because He owns it. The first half of the book of Joshua shows us how God gave Israel the land. God took the land from the Canaanites and gave it to Israel. The second half of the book tells us how the Israelites settled in the land and made their homes there.

The story of Israel in the Promised Land teaches us about God's saving mercy. We are the same as Israel because we can't do anything to earn God's gift (Ephesians 2:8, 9). We can't save ourselves. We need the gift of God's saving mercy. Israel didn't do anything to earn the land (Deuteronomy 9:5.) In the same way, we can't earn God's mercy with our good behavior.

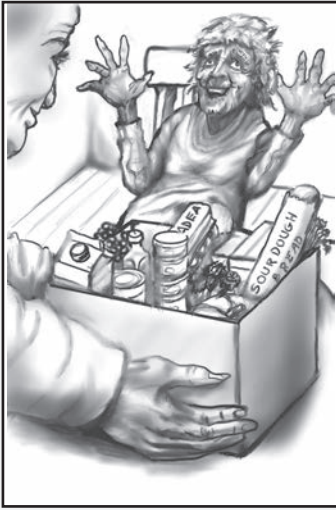
God expected the Israelites to obey Him. They needed to obey Him to live in the land He gave them. In the same way, we must obey the Lord to be citizens of God's kingdom. God gave Israel the land because of His mercy. Because of God's mercy, we get a wonderful gift too: He will save us. But we can lose this gift, if we aren't careful.

What must Christians do today to enjoy the promises God gave them? Read Philippians 2:12 and Hebrews 12:28 for the answer.



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THE YEAR OF JUBILEE: A SPECIAL TIME OF REST (Leviticus 25:1–5, 8–13)



Our Father in heaven wants His children to share with people who don't have as much as we do.

The land was very important to God's people, Israel. God divided the land between the 12 family groups of Israel (Numbers 34:13–18). God divided up the land so that every family group could own part of it. This plan kept the land from belonging to only a few rich and powerful people.

Why did God ask the Israelites to celebrate the Year of Jubilee or special time of rest? Read Leviticus 25:1–5, 8–13 for the answer.

In Egypt, the citizens often lost their land. Then they became the slaves of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. God didn't want that to happen to the Israelites. So, no one outside the family group could own a family's land. In God's plan, no one could sell the land. You could rent your land to someone until the time of the next Year of Jubilee. So, if someone needed to sell his land, his family members must try to buy back the land before the Jubilee (Leviticus 25:25).

The gift of the land helps us to see what is in God's heart. Our Father in heaven wants His children to share with people who don't have as much as we do. Every seven years, God commanded His people to use their land to feed other people. When we own the land and use it to help other people, we learn to respect them. We learn to be kind to people who are poor and suffering.

God also gave the land to His people to teach them to work hard. God wanted His people to have a new start too.

The Good News about Jesus also gives us a new start. The Good News shows us that, rich or poor, we are all the same in God's eyes. Every one of us needs God's mercy.

Sad to say, Israel didn't honor God's commands. Hundreds of years later, God finally did what He warned the Israelites He would do. He removed His people from the land that He gave them (2 Chronicles 36:20, 21).

How do the Sabbath and the rules God gave Israel about buying back the land teach us that we are all the same in God's eyes? How can the Sabbath help us to say "no" to the evil habit of buying too much?

GETTING BACK THE LAND (Jeremiah 24:6)

Read Jeremiah 24:6; Jeremiah 31:16; Ezekiel 11:17; Ezekiel 28:25; and Ezekiel 37:14, 25. What promise did God make about Israel's coming back to the Promised Land? How did God keep that promise?

When the Israelites were carried away to Babylon, they learned an important truth about their relationship with God. Their relationship with God didn't depend on their living in the Promised Land. God continued to be their God, even while they weren't in the land. When the Israelites confessed their sins, they looked to the Lord with all their hearts. Then God kept His promise again. He brought His people back to their land. Their coming back to their country showed that God accepted them again.

However, God never promised that the Israelites would continue to live in the land forever if they sinned (Deuteronomy 28:63, 64; Joshua 23:13, 15; 1 Kings 9:7; 2 Kings 17:23; Jeremiah 12:10–12). At the same time, the prophets, God's special messengers, announced that a future King would come from the family line of David. This future King would give the Israelites back their glory. He would help them to enjoy success as a people again (Isaiah 9:6, 7; Zechariah 9:9, 16). God kept this promise in the life and death of Jesus. Jesus woke up from the dead to show Israel that He was God's promised Savior.

In the New Testament, we also are told that God kept His promises to Israel when He sent Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 1:20; Romans 15:8). When we understand this Bible truth, we will see the Promised Land as a symbol of spiritual blessings. God plans to give us these blessings both now (Ephesians 2:6) and in the future.

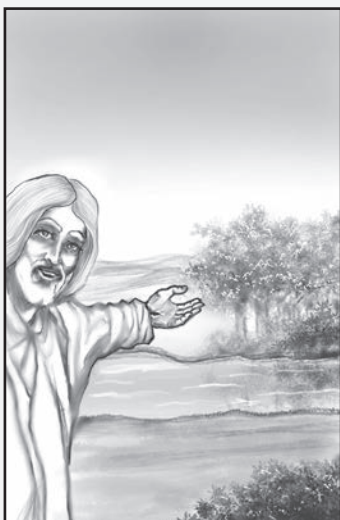
When we live on the new earth, God will keep His promise of rest. We will live on earth with no more sin and evil. So, as Christians, our hope comes from Jesus' promise that He will come back. After 1,000 years in heaven, Jesus will start His kingdom on the new earth. When that happens, God will keep all His promises to us about the land.

Read John 14:1–3; Titus 2:13; and Revelation 21:1–3. What hope do these verses give us? Why does Jesus' death give us proof that we can trust God to keep all His future promises to us?



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ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Controversy Ended,” pages 672–678, in *The Great Controversy*.



“The Bible has a name for what God promises to give us. The Bible names this gift ‘a country’ (Hebrews 11:14–16, KJV). In this country, Jesus is the same as a Shepherd who leads His flock to the living waters.”

“When we enter the city, we shall be saved. Then we may rejoice that we are saved. But until then, we need to remember what Paul said: ‘So be careful that none of you fails to receive [get] it [God’s promise]’ [Hebrews 4:1, NIV]. The Israelites knew about the land of Canaan. They sang songs about the land. They rejoiced at the promise that they would enter the land. But their knowledge, songs, and joy didn’t bring them into the Promised Land or its olive gardens. The Israelites needed to have faith in God. They needed to obey Him. They need to do their part. Then God could keep His promise to them to give them the land.”—Ellen G. White, *The Youth’s Instructor*, February 17, 1898, adapted.

“The Bible has a name for what God promises to give us. The Bible names this gift ‘a country’ (Hebrews 11:14–16, KJV). In this country, Jesus is the same as a Shepherd who leads His flock to the living waters. The tree of life grows new fruit every month here. The leaves of the tree will heal and help God’s people. In this country, many streams flow. The water is clear, the same as glass. Next to the streams, trees shade the paths that God will make for His people to walk on. This country is filled with plains and hills that are very beautiful. Behind them are tall mountains. God’s people have been pilgrims and wanderers for a very long time. Now they will make their homes on the plains. They will live next to the living streams.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 675, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 The Promised Land is a symbol for the wonderful life that Jesus promised us (John 10:10). What does the Promised Land teach us about God’s plan to save us?
- 2 What does it mean to be a citizen of God’s kingdom? As members of this kingdom, how should we live?
- 3 As humans, we often feel disappointed when people break their promises to us. Why can you trust God’s promises?
- 4 How can we make the promises of a new earth real now?

NOT THE BEST WAY TO SHARE JESUS

Kim Sun, a South Korean teenager, studied at the Adventist University of the Philippines. Not long ago, Sun invited a man to Bible meetings. The man got baptized. Sun wondered if he could earn a living knocking on doors and inviting people to Bible meetings. Sun wasn't Seventh-day Adventist. This experience was his first time going door-to-door.

Sun talked with a pastor who went door-to-door with Sun and the other students. Sun asked, "What is the name of the work we are doing? Is this community work?"

The pastor smiled. "No, it's work for God or mission work."

Sun asked, "Can someone do this work full-time?"

The pastor said, "Yes. It's called being a Bible worker."

Sun asked, "Can I have this job?"

The pastor said, "Yes. The pay for this job is very little. But you can do it."

Sun asked, "How do I start?"

The pastor answered, "You'll need to change your studies from nursing to religion."

Sun said, "Oh. I'll need to ask my mom first."

Sun was studying in the Philippines because his parents wanted him to do something special with his life. Before Sun came to the Philippines, he lived to please himself.

Sun asked his mother if he could study religion and not nursing. He wanted to serve the church. Mother said he could study religion if he also finished his nursing studies.

Sun said, "But I don't really like nursing."

Then Mother had an idea. She didn't want her son to be rich. She wanted him to be a good person. She said, "If you study religion, can you drink or smoke?"

When he said no, she said, "Then please change your studies!"

Sun loved studying religion. He learned the Bible truth about the seventh-day Sabbath. He read the end-time messages about Daniel and Revelation. Then he got baptized.

When Sun went home for vacations, he tried to ask his parents to accept his new beliefs. Sun said, "Mom and Dad, sit down and let me talk to you. Sunday is not the Sabbath day. Saturday is the Sabbath. Do you know Daniel's explanation about King Nebuchadnezzar's dream?"

Sun didn't understand why his parents didn't want to learn about Bible truth. He was upset when Mother finally asked him to stop preaching. She said, "You take your God. I'll take mine!"

Sun said, "But they're the same God! We must obey the Bible."

Read more about Sun next week.

INSIDE *Story*



**"You take your God.
I'll take mine!"**



Kim Sun