

“POSSESS THE LAND” JESUS CHRIST – THE SPIRITUAL PROMISED LAND

All of the things that happened to physical Israel are types of what happens to us as Spiritual Israel. For instance, when Israel left Egypt after the Passover, they used unleavened bread as they left Egypt and headed towards the Promised Land.

We kept our spiritual Passover when we accepted Jesus Christ as our Passover lamb. Clearly, the Passover pointed to Jesus Christ. And the unleavened bread pointed to Him as well. He is the Unleavened Bread of Life. The manna they ate in the wilderness was a type of Jesus. The rock from which they got water was a type of Jesus, the spiritual rock who gives us spiritual water of life. The tabernacle in the wilderness and all its furniture was a type of Jesus. All the sacrifices they gave were a type of Jesus in various ways. Even the fact Israel was in the wilderness for 40 years is a type of the way Jesus fasted in the wilderness 40 days, before Satan tempted Him.

Just as Israel came out of Egypt, so the young child Jesus went into Egypt and came out. Israel came through the Red Sea in a baptism, and God called them “Israel is my firstborn son.” (Exodus 4:22). So Jesus was baptised in the Jordan River and God said “this is my beloved Son.”

The cloud and fire Israel followed for 40 years was a type of Jesus Christ. The High Priest and His garments were a type of Jesus. You can look through Leviticus, Exodus and Deuteronomy, and see so many types of Jesus. The Sabbatical Year and the Year of Jubilee were types of Jesus.

Even the book of Numbers points forward to Jesus Christ.

Numbers 1:2-3 ²“Take a census of the whole Israelite community by their clans and families, listing every man by name, one by one. ³You and Aaron are to count according to their divisions all the men in Israel who are twenty years old or more and able to serve in the army.”

This was the numbering of the armies of Israel. That points forward to the numbering of the spiritual army of Jesus Christ, the soldiers of Jesus. We are that army, He is the Lord and Commander in Chief.

The people were heading towards the Promised Land, Canaan, and it is no surprise that also is a type of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 3:1 “Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest.”

Just as they were to fix their eyes on the Promised Land they were seeking, we are to fix our eyes on Jesus.

Hebrews 3:7-11 ⁷“So, as the Holy Spirit says:“Today, if you hear His voice, ⁸do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the wilderness, ⁹where

your ancestors tested and tried me, though for forty years they saw what I did.¹⁰ That is why I was angry with that generation; I said, ‘Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.’¹¹ So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’ ”

Because of their sin, that generation of Israel couldn’t enter the Promised Land, or the rest. What does that rest picture? It is a type of where we’re going spiritually to God’s rest, which is the Kingdom of God, or Jesus Himself.

Matthew 11:28-29²⁸ “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

Hebrews 3:14 “We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end.”

If we are true to the end, we will share in Jesus Christ—He is our rest, our Promised Land!

Psalms 90:1 “Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.”

Jesus Christ is our food, the bread of life, our living water, our light, our life, the way, the truth and the life, and also is our land, the very land on which we are living. He is our dwelling place.

In Genesis 1:9 we see that the land came out of the waters on the third day. Isn’t it interesting that Jesus came out of the waters of death on “the third day”? After the land appeared, all types of life were produced. After the resurrection, spiritual life began to be produced.

Colossians 2:6 (NKJV) “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.”

He is our land to walk on and in.

Colossians 2:7 (NIV)⁷ “rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness”

We are like plants rooted in the land or soil which is Christ, on which everything stands, and draws life from.

Deuteronomy 8:7 “For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land—a land with brooks, streams, and deep springs gushing out into the valleys and hills;”

Notice what God said the Promised Land would be like, and how it is a type of Jesus in so many ways.

“A good land”—Jesus is of course good, He is the only one who is good. “A land with brooks, streams and deep springs”—Jesus is rich in spiritual water.

John 7:37-38³⁷ “On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink.³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.”

Where does the water come from?

Deuteronomy 11:11 “But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven.”

Both physical and spiritual water come from heaven. Jesus came from heaven. And He still comes to us when we walk with Him, and He lives in us like an endless spring of refreshing spiritual water of life.

We don't have to wait until the resurrection to reach the Promised Land, to reach Jesus Christ. No, we can have Jesus in our life now, with all the blessings He gives us. We don't have to stay in the wilderness; we should go in and possess the land—possess Jesus—draw near to Him and walk with Him and in Him.

Deut. 11:12 “It is a land the LORD your God cares for; the eyes of the LORD your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end.”

And then God will be with us always. It is a land of mountains and valleys (Verse 11). Life has its ups and downs. Jesus had the valley of the Cross, and then the hill of the resurrection.

Back to Deuteronomy 8:7—the valleys and hills mentioned here too.

Verse 8—“a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey;”

The land has plenty of food—7 types are listed.



What does the wheat typify? The incarnate Jesus who died.

John 12:23-24 ²³“Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.”

What does the barley represent?

Leviticus 23:10 “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you enter the land I am going to give you and you reap its harvest, bring to the priest a sheaf of the first grain you harvest.’”

This Wavesheaf was barley, which always ripens first in the harvest in Palestine. It represents Jesus, the Wavesheaf offering. The feeding of the 5,000 was with barley loaves—they multiplied without limit because they pictured the resurrected Christ who has no limits!

We need to possess the land, possess Christ, i.e. suffer with Him as a grain of wheat from time to time, but also experience positive resurrection life as barley by realising we have the unlimited, inexhaustible Jesus Christ in us, shining through our attitudes and actions, so we can help others and climb mountains with Him guiding us.

What does the vine represent?

John 15:1, 5 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

The fig trees?

Judges 9:11 “But the fig tree replied, ‘Should I give up my fruit, so good and sweet, to hold sway over the trees?’”

Sweetness and good fruit. Surely that pictures Christ.

The pomegranate is similar, a rich, sweet fruit full of seeds, demonstrating the abundance and beauty of life.

The olive tree. The oil pictures the Holy Spirit, and could also refer to Jesus Christ.

Honey?

Psalm 119:103 “How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”
The Word of God is sweeter than honey. The Word is Jesus.

Deuteronomy 8:9 “a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills.”

Plenty of bread. Bread of course pictures Jesus. The rocks represent Jesus, Christ our rock (1 Cor 10:4). The iron and copper represent the strength of Christ. He will rule with a “rod of iron.”

¹⁰ “When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land He has given you. “

Praise God for the good land He has given you, and enjoy it. Compare this with Ephesians 1:18: “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in His holy people.”

We have been called to a glorious inheritance—a promised land to inherit, just as Old Testament Israel had a promised land as an inheritance. Our inheritance, our promised land, is Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:22-23; also 2:6 ²² “And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way. ⁶ to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves.”

This is the land, the place we have now come to, so let’s possess that land and enjoy the spiritual blessings of being in Christ, having the spiritual water of truth, bread of life, the vine, the barley of resurrection, the olive oil of the Spirit, the honey of the sweetness of God’s Word!

Scholars have commented on the correspondence between the books of Joshua and Ephesians. Joshua describes Israel entering their promised possession of Canaan. Ephesians describes Christians entering the possession of the inheritance of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1 describes the spiritual blessings of being in Christ (the section heading in NIV after V2: “Praise for Spiritual Blessings in Christ”). Chapters 2, 3 and 4 continue in that theme.

Ephesians 2:1 “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins”

Israel went through the Jordan River to come into Canaan—we go through the waters of baptism.

Ephesians 3:8 summarises the gospel as “the unsearchable riches of Christ.” That’s what Paul was preaching—the promised land of the future, the reward of following Jesus Christ, which we experience now to some degree, and more fully in the future resurrection.

Ephesians 2:6 is past tense: we are enjoying this now.

Verse 7 is future tense. “in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus.”

Ephesians 3:17B,18 ¹⁷ “And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,¹⁸ “may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.”

The Israelites checked out the promised land from the North, South, East and West. So we can experience the vastness of the love of Jesus Christ in every direction!

When Israel entered Canaan, there were many battles to be fought, and Ephesians 6:10ff shows that this happens to the Christian as well. There are evil armies of heavenly realms (V12) which try to keep us from entering in and possessing the fantastic spiritual riches of the Promised Land, the riches that are in Jesus Christ.

Psalm 95:7-11 ⁷ “for He is our God and we are the people of His pasture, the flock under His care. Today, if only you would hear His voice, ⁸ “Do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the wilderness, ⁹ where your ancestors tested me; they tried me, though they had seen what I did. ¹⁰ For forty years I was angry with that generation; I said, ‘They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they have not known my ways.’ ¹¹ So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’

Although God did miracles for them and wanted only the best for them, they rebelled, were lacking in faith and obedience. So God said they wouldn’t enter “His Rest” (Verse 11). What is that referring to? The Promised Land. Some weren’t allowed in. They had to die in the wilderness before they got to Canaan. So we need to be sure we enter God’s spiritual rest. There is a spiritual Promised Land as well. We see this in Hebrews 3:7-11, what we’ve just read in Psalm 95.

Why they didn’t enter:

Heb 3:18-19 ¹⁸ “And to whom did God swear that they would never enter His rest if not to those who disobeyed? ¹⁹ So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.”

There is still a Promised Land—a spiritual one.

Hebrews 4:1 “Therefore, since the promise of entering His rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it.”

We have to believe it; they didn't.

4:2 “For we also have had the good news proclaimed to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed.”

4:3 “Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, “So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’ And yet His works have been finished since the creation of the world.”

We who have believed enter that rest. We enter into Jesus Christ and possess the wonderful spiritual riches of the Kingdom of God when we believe the gospel.

4:6 “Therefore since it still remains for some to enter that rest, and since those who formerly had the good news proclaimed to them did not go in because of their disobedience,”

Those ones didn't enter the Promised Land. But we can. They had a physical promised land, we have a spiritual one.

4:9-11 ⁹“There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; ¹⁰for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. ¹¹Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience.”

They had a physical High Priest, we have a spiritual one.

4:14 “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.”

Jesus Christ is our spiritual High Priest, our spiritual bread of life, our spiritual rock, our spiritual Promised Land, our dwelling place and inheritance forever.

Just as the Promised Land was a place of wonderful blessings, food and wine, precious metals and abundant crops; so our spiritual Promised Land, Jesus Christ is a place of wonderful spiritual blessings and riches.

Just as armies fought Old Testament Israel and tried to keep them out of the land, so Satan's armies fight us and try to keep us from the Kingdom of God. Let's be bold and courageous like Joshua was, and continue to fight the enemy and possess and enjoy the wonderful spiritual riches of life in Jesus Christ.