

# *Joshua 11:23b*

## *The Promised Land Rested*

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### **Read Joshua 11:23**

This study of *the Promised Land* and *the rest in the land* has been influenced by the following books:

1. *The Temple and the Church's Mission* by Greg Beale
2. *Kingdom Prologue* by Meredith Kline
3. *God, Heaven, and Har Magedon* by Meredith Kline
4. *A New Covenant Perspective on the Land* by O. Palmer Robertson in *The Land of Promise: Biblical, Theological, and Contemporary Perspectives*

### **Remembering the structure of the Book of Joshua** CROSS TAKE DIVIDE SERVE

**Why focusing on the phrase ... *the land had rest*** The terms *land* and *rest* have very important meaning in biblical theology, especially when occurring together in the Bible

- The phrase *the land had rest* occurs only one time in the Book of Joshua (11:23)
- In the Book of Judges, however, the phrase *the land rested* is one of the key motifs
- Judges 3:11, 30; 5:31; 8:28
- The *land rested* motif is interwoven with another motif: *the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD*

- Judges 3:7, 12; 4:1; 6:1; 8:34
- What we see is the indictment, the judgment of the people of Israel through the juxtaposition of the two themes: *the land rested* and *disobedience of Israel*
- What does it mean when the Bible says *the land rested*?
- What is the divine purpose in giving of the land?
- What is the meaning and significance of the Promised Land in the Bible?

**Let's begin at the beginning** The land and the Garden of Eden

1. The creation record in Genesis 1-2 parallels the construction of the tabernacle:
  - God's work of creation is described in an organized and detailed way
  - The construction of the tabernacle (Exodus 35:4 through 39:43) follows detailed instructions from the LORD God regarding priestly garments, the lampstand, the materials for the tabernacle, the altar of incense and of burnt offering, the bronze basin
  - After finishing the work of creation, the LORD God pronounces everything that He had made good and blesses the day of rest (Genesis 1:31-2:3)
  - After finishing the construction of the Tabernacle, Moses proclaimed: *And Moses saw all the work, and behold, they had done it; as the LORD commended, so they had done it. Then Moses blessed them.*
2. Thus, we may, *by good and necessary consequence deduce from Scripture*, (Westminster Confession of Faith, I.6) that the original land, the Garden of Eden was created/constructed by the LORD God as His sanctuary, His temple, where He would freely fellowship with Adam and Eve, while Adam would be the priest and king (viceregent), keeping the garden and guarding it against all impurities
3. In the same way, we should conclude that the purpose of the Promised Land was to establish a place where God chose to dwell among His people, the place where God is their God and the Israel is His people, the place where Israel can freely worship and serve the LORD God

4. We need to look at the Promised Land from the theocentric perspective rather than anthropocentric perspective: the land is first and foremost for God to build His dwelling place, His Temple, not for the Israel to possess the real estate (Deuteronomy 12:5-7)
5. *The theological idea of the land as a framework for experiencing the blessing of God originates in Paradise* – O. Palmer Robertson

**Whose Land It Is?** The land belongs to the LORD God, creator of the heaven and the earth:

1. *The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein* – Psalm 24:1
2. *The land shall not be sold in perpetuity for the land is mine* – Leviticus 25:23
3. The way the Bible speaks about the Land, the Land designations also point to God's ownership:
  - *These are the statutes and rules that you shall be careful to do in the land, that the LORD the God of your fathers **has given you** to possess all the days that you live on the earth* – Deuteronomy 12:1
  - *Therefore, when the LORD GOD has given you rest from all your enemies around you, in the land that the LORD your God **is giving you** for an inheritance to possess ...* – Deuteronomy 25:19
  - *See, I have set the land before you. Go in and take possession of the land that the Lord **swore** to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, **to give** to them and to their offspring after them.* – Deuteronomy 1:8
4. The LORD God promises and gives the land to His people – the gift implies the ownership
5. The land belongs to the LORD God, the Israel is given the responsibility of stewardship of the land, that task of guarding it, keeping it pure, unpolluted – similar to Adam's responsibilities in the Garden of Eden

**The movement motif** Throughout the redemptive history we can observe the *movement* motive: into the land vs. out of the land:

1. God creates the earth (the land) and places Adam and Eve in the garden where they enjoy an intimate relationship with Holy God (*movement into the land*)
2. The sin of our first parents polluted the garden and resulted in expulsion from the garden, from the close fellowship with the LORD God – *the movement out of the land* – (the sin and the sinners removed from the garden; the garden is guarded by the Cherub)
3. The expulsion from the garden, due to the pollution of sin is paralleled by the expulsion from the land due to disobedience of Israel
4. *Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean, and the land became unclean, so that I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. But you shall keep my statutes and my rules and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you (for the people of the land, who were before you, did all of these abominations, so that the land became unclean), lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you. – Leviticus 18:24-28*
5. *You shall therefore keep all my statutes and all my rules and do them, that the land where I am bringing you to live may not vomit you out. – Leviticus 20:22*
6. **The possession of the land, dwelling in the land is NOT unconditional. It is conditioned on Israel's obedience.**
7. The LORD God calls Abram **out of** Ur of the Chaldeans to give him the land to possess (Gen. 12:1; 15:7)
8. The LORD God brings Israel **out of** the land of Egypt, the house of slavery into the promised land (Exodus 20:2)
9. The entrance into the land is accomplished by God and God alone
10. The movement *out of the land of slavery/sin into the land of promise* is fully realized in the New Testament – *He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son Colossians 1:13*

**The Land Rested** The motif of *rest of the land* and *rest in the land* in the Bible:

1. The idea of *rest* appears in the Bible for the first time in Genesis 2:2-3. We read about God finishing His work and resting on the seventh day
2. God's work of creation is the work of building His Temple, His dwelling place, so that He can dwell with His people (Adam and Eve)
3. The establishing of the divine Tabernacle/Temple involved bringing order out of initial chaos (Gen. 1:2): *The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*
4. So, we can see that the rest in Genesis is associated with the time **after** preparatory work of ordering and cleansing the creation for God's Temple
5. The same applies to the Promised Land: it had to be cleansed (by conquest and warfare) from the pollution of the Canaanites in order to be the land where God dwells among His people – *Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean, and the land became unclean, so that I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. But you shall keep my statutes and my rules and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you (for the people of the land, who were before you, did all of these abominations, so that the land became unclean)* Leviticus 18:24-27
6. So, the rest of the land in Joshua 11:23, our starting verse, refers to God's work of cleansing the land, preparing it for His dwelling place, as finished and accomplished
7. We are encouraged in this interpretation by what follows Joshua 11:23 – apportioning of the promised inheritance, the covenant renewal and the building of the tabernacle
8. We see the theme of building of God's temple during the time of rest in the lives of David and Solomon; although David wanted to build the LORD's temple, he was a man of war and bloodshed so the LORD appointed David's son, Salomon, to build His house (see 2 Samuel 7:18-29; 1 Chronicles 17:1-15; 22:8)
9. David's greater son, the Lord Jesus Christ, declared *I will build my church* (Matthew 16:18). The future tense indicates that the time of

this pronouncement was the time of preparation, the time of cleansing, the time of warfare. Only after His triumph on the cross, confirmed by His resurrection and ascension into heaven, the building of His church commenced – see Colossians 2:13-15 *And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. **He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.***

**The Land and Rest in the New Testament** The ultimate fulfillment of the land and rest motifs is revealed in the New Testament

1. After Genesis 2, the rest in the Old Testament serves as a shadow of the rest/sanctuary fulfillment revealed in the Book of Revelation 21-22:5
2. The people of Israel did not experience true rest in the land – according to the Book of Judges the land rested periodically for 40 years
3. *For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.* – Hebrews 4:8-10
4. Abraham was not looking to the land as his final destination: *By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. ...But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one.* Hebrews 11:8-10; 16
5. Abraham is the heir not of the land, but of the world – *For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be **heir of the world** did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith.* (Romans 4:13)
6. The concept of the land in the Old Testament is enlarged to *the earth* – *Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.* – Matthew 5:5

**Summary** The final conclusions:

1. God does not abandon His people in their sin but graciously and generously redeems them and provides a place (the land, the new earth and the new heavens) where He can dwell among His people
2. ... *whereas the early chapters of Genesis focus on the loss of the land as a result of disobedience, Abraham is portrayed as gaining the land due to obedience and trust in God* T. Desmond Alexander *From Paradise to the Promised Land*