THE LAND: A THEME OF PROMISE 
AND FULFILLMENT(S)

Introduction

The issue of land in the (O)ld (T)estament has been and continues to be a complex interpretive issue in OT studies and (N)ew (T)estament studies.¹ In particular, scholars discuss two issues relating to the land: 1) the land as territory complete with a study of the borders and subsequent fulfillments of the promise of land (Gen. 15:18-21²)³ and 2) the meaning of land as rest, inheritance, and blessings etc.⁴ Scholars wrestle with the former because at times the OT seems to give conflicting reports on the timing of the fulfillment of the promises given to the patriarchs. Regarding the interpretation of the latter, they conclude usually in one of two ways, either the land promises were fulfilled in the OT with the return of the people of Israel under the leadership of Zerubbabel, or they claim these promises await future fulfillment (usually in the


² All Scripture references in the OT are from the Hebrew Bible (BHS 5th). The NT references and translations are from the NA 27. All translations are the writer’s.


Millennial reign according to typical Dispensational synthesis). In both cases scholars do not entertain a NT redefinition of the land or its blessings since both groups claim that a literal/physical fulfillment is necessary.\(^\text{5}\)

Given the fact that the word \(אֶרֶץ\) occurs 2,505 times in the OT\(^\text{6}\) making it the fourth most used word in the OT, this paper will necessarily be selective in its presentation of the land theme in the biblical text. The selected corpus includes the following texts: Deuteronomy, Joshua, selected texts in 2 Samuel and 1 Kings, and the General Epistles (GE) in the NT.\(^\text{7}\)

Although this paper will focus on these texts, it will attempt to show cursory connections to the prior, foundational texts of the Pentateuch. Since this paper assumes a canonical unfolding of the land theme or a progress of revelation in the biblical text, Deuteronomy and Joshua and texts subsequent to these ones develop the foundational texts which first mention land.\(^\text{8}\) By focusing on the few relevant references in Hebrews, the writer will have some space to devote to the NT use of the OT land theme in this book.

This paper seeks to argue that one will best understand the land theme in Deuteronomy (and hence the canon) if one sees Land as a transitional theme in the canon. As Moses paints the picture of the Promised (Sworn) Land for the new generation of Israel, he says the Promised Land will not only contrast with Egypt (Deut. 11:10-11), which will encourage the people never to return to that land (17:16), but he will also compare it to Eden and creation in Gen. 1-2,\(^\text{9}\) which will help identify the people as a new Adam (Gen. 9:1) or Son of God (Ex.

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\(^\text{6}\) According to Bible Works 5.0. Martens, *God's Design*, 114, has 2,504 times

\(^\text{7}\) Although the writer searched the General Epistles for the following words: γῆ, ἱερόν, πόλις, κατάπαυσις(-αύω), οἶκος, τόπος, and κληρονοµία (and derivatives), Hebrews, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter were the only letters to yield any substantive examples of NT development of the OT theme. Unfortunately, space restraints limit detailed analysis to the Land in Hebrews.

\(^\text{8}\) e.g. Genesis 12:1-3, 7. The writer does not deny the presence of some redactional activity in the Pentateuch (e.g. Deut. 34), but he hopes to show that redaction criticism does not help one’s understanding of the matter of the borders of the land promise in Gen. 15 in relation to later texts. Redactional criticism actually seems to obscure a subtle theological point, which the canonical Text is making (see below).
4:22), who is preparing to engage in the original Edenic mission (Gen. 1:26-28; Ex. 19:5-6). Second, after describing the land and the people’s relationship to the land through the law and gift paradigm of the book of Deuteronomy, this paper will then seek to show the progressive fulfillment(s) of the Land promises during the time of Joshua and the Davidic-Solomonic monarchy. Third, this paper will seek to show some connections to the NT. Fourth, this paper will conclude by arguing that the land theme is a great test case for the issues of continuity and discontinuity between the Testaments: 1) through the relationship of type and antitype the land theme brings progress to redemptive history. 2) However, the NT does not transcend the OT paradigms of Promise and Fulfillment and Law and Gift, for although we have come to the eschatological rest in Jesus (Matt. 11:28; Heb. 3:6, 14; 4:3), we still strive to obtain the final blessed rest of the age to come (Heb. 4:11).

Land in Deuteronomy and Joshua

This section intends to work through three issues, which are crucial to the study of the land in the biblical text. First, one must sort out the geographical boundaries of the land promise, since the accounts seem divergent. Second, an attempt will be made to describe the land according to Deuteronomy through lexical categories derived from the usage of the words אֶרֶץ and אַדָּמָה. Third, since Joshua is the continuation or more precisely, the immediate canonical and literary dénouement of Deuteronomy, one must uncover where and how Joshua develops the land theme in the terms, which Deuteronomy presents.

The Boundaries of the Land

On at least four occasions, the patriarchal boundaries are expressed in the text:

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9 See sub-section “Land as Place of Blessing/New Creation” below.
10 The writer only analyzed the usage of these words in Deuteronomy and Joshua. There were 299 occurrences of אֶרֶץ in Deuteronomy and Josh. according to the Hebrew Concordance by Gerhard Lisowsky (304 in Bible Works 5.0). There were 37 occurrences of אַדָּמָה between these two books according to the same concordance. Other methods of analysis such as plot analysis have been pursued elsewhere in the literature, and where considered helpful the writer uses the conclusions of these kinds of studies.
Genesis 15:18-21, Ex. 23:31ff, Deut. 1:7, 11:24, and Josh. 1.2-4.\textsuperscript{11} Though some scholars have detected redactional levels in the description of the boundaries of the land,\textsuperscript{12} there may be another reason for the ambiguity of the borders of the Promised Land. Williamson has pointed out a flaw in any attempt to detect redactional activity, “While this [different boundaries between the texts] has generally been interpreted as evidence of different layers of redaction, the fact that no steps were taken to impose uniformity suggests an element of flexibility difficult to harmonize with rigidly defined territorial borders.”\textsuperscript{13} Since all agree that the boundaries are not uniform, and the redaction critic provides no satisfactory explanation for why the redactor never attempts to bring the alleged disparate accounts into uniformity, the interpreter should seek an alternative explanation.

In order to understand the issue of the boundaries, the intentions of the covenant with Abraham should be discussed briefly. First, was the covenant with Abraham intended to be national or international?\textsuperscript{14} Williamson considers Gen. 15 as a covenant made between God and Abraham and his “seed,” while the covenant in Gen. 17 creates a broadening of the category “seed,” since God changes Abram’s name to Abraham (the inference being אָבִּי in Gen. 17:4-5).\textsuperscript{15} The Abrahamic promise itself contains ambiguities in its presentation of the descendants of Abraham indicating that the land, which God promised to Abraham could not

\textsuperscript{11} Zecharia Kallai, “The Patriarchal Boundaries, Canaan and the Land of Israel: Patterns and Application in Biblical Historiography,” \textit{Israel Exploration Journal} 47 (1997): 69-82. Kallai has a detailed study of these complex issues, which makes three necessary distinctions: the land of Canaan, the land of Israel, and the Patriarchal boundaries. We are only interested in the last of these three distinctions.


\textsuperscript{13} Williamson, “Promise and Fulfillment,” 20-1.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 19-20. Although this writer considers Williamson’s view of two covenants between God and Abraham in Gen. 15 and 17 as flawed, his general exegesis of these chapters is correct.

\textsuperscript{15} Williamson also sees a particular seed or descendent in Gen. 22:17b (20), which is another instance of intentional ambiguity of “seed” in the Abrahamic covenant (cf. Gal. 3:16, 29 where Paul also capitalizes on the ambiguity of the word σπέρμα).
simply be promised to his biological descendants, since he will become the father of many nations.

The second aspect of ambiguity concerns the boundaries of the land themselves and the description of the original inhabitants of the land. In this connection, Williamson asks whether the promised territory is regional or global. After citing the relevant texts, Williamson concludes, “It could reasonably be inferred from this that the map of the promised land was never seen as permanently fixed, but was subject to at least some degree of expansion and redefinition” (21). Beyond the texts which present the boundaries of the land, the imprecise manner of describing the land is further buttressed when one introduces the texts which describe the original inhabitants of the land, the land in terms of the geographical location of the beneficiaries, and the ancestral promise. The textual ambiguity regarding the land, therefore, does not indicate redactional activity, but rather this evidence indicates that the promise of land given to Abraham originally intended to go beyond any delineated borders. Williamson

16 Ibid., 20-22. See also Martens, God’s Design, 116-7. After citing the different text pertaining to the patriarchal boundaries, Martens concludes, “It appears that the land was never defined with geographical precision; one might even say it was to some degree an idea. Yet it was a territory” (117).

17 Compare Gen. 15:19-21 (10 peoples) with Ex. 3:8 (6 peoples). Gen. 17:8 includes a reference only to “all the land of Canaan.” Williamson believes in some of these texts the number of inhabitants are being expanded for symbolic reasons, thus in some texts the number ten and the number seven are included, whereas in the majority of texts only six peoples are mentioned. Williamson suggests that these numbers of perfection may indicate that the reader should see the land and its boundaries as an ideal, not as rigidly defined real estate. See Williamson, “Promise and Fulfillment,” 21, for more texts.

18 Here, Williamson has in mind the references to land which keep the boundaries as vague such as “the land which you see” (Gen. 13:14), “the land of your sojourning” (Ex. 6:4), and “the land on which you are lying” (Gen. 28:13). Williamson includes more texts on p. 21.

19 Williamson’s last category may stretch the evidence slightly, for he refers to those texts in which the patriarchs are named as recipients of the promise. For example, in Gen. 35:12 the land is defined as the land which God gave to Abraham and to Isaac, but in Deut. 1:8, the land is given to the fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. Williamson lists several such examples which may create ambiguity, but it seems better to assume that the reader of the text knows that the land is given to the patriarchs, even if the formula used to communicate the idea has not been standardized. See Williamson “Promise and Fulfillment,” 21.

20 In Romans 4:13, Paul says that, “the promise to Abraham and to his seed, that he is an heir (κληρονόμον) of the world (κόσµον), did not come through law…” Charles Scobie concludes, “Paul does let slip a remarkable comment in Rom. 4:13…Now in Gen 12, what Abraham was promised was not ‘the world (kosmos)’ but the land of Canaan! This suggests that for Paul the Land ‘is a great advance metaphor for the design of God that his
strengthens his point further, when he appeals to the texts which seem to indicate the possibility of the expansion of the land.\textsuperscript{21}

Some implications may be drawn from the above conclusions. First, if the patriarchal promises concerning the Land refer not to a particular piece of real estate in Canaan, but actually stretch far beyond the borders, the promise will not be fulfilled until Abraham’s “seed” fills and occupies the world. Second, although the boundaries mark territory, the ambiguity may also indicate that the land stands for its blessings, making it more of an ideal, rather than a strict geographic entity. Although it is geography, the theological significances for which it stands actually seem to supersede the territory itself.

Usage of “Land” in Deuteronomy

As stated above, the land theme is a transitional theme in the Canon. In redemptive history, the first exodus generation failed to enter and settle the land, which Yahweh had given to them. Now, after the forty years of wandering in the wilderness, Moses preaches to the next generation of Israel about the task that lies before them and about how they will take the land including how they will live in the land. In this transitional context the Land of Canaan, the Sworn Land, becomes a significant motive for the people to settle the land.\textsuperscript{22}

Land as God Given/Sworn/Promised. The ANE background helps to provide some context for the concept of “gift.”\textsuperscript{23} “Gift” does not capture exactly what the English word people should eventually bring the whole world into submission to his healing reign. God’s whole purpose now goes beyond Jerusalem and the Land to the whole world.” See Charles H. H. Scobie, \textit{The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 558. Of course, Scobie may be correct, but Paul seems to conclude that the promise that Abraham would inherit the world was the original design of the land promise. If the conclusions of Williamson are granted, Paul’s conclusion in Rom. 4:13 seems more like good exegesis of the land promise in the Pentateuch, and less like a “slip.”

\textsuperscript{21} He mentions Gen. 26:3-4, Ex. 34:24, Num. 24:17-18, and Deut. 19:8-9. Williamson, “Promise and Fulfillment,” 22. Of these texts, Gen. 26:3-4 maintains a universal focus because God’s gift of the lands and the blessing of the nations is still in view.

\textsuperscript{22} Some of the references to “land” in Deuteronomy and Josh. are insignificant since they refer to “the land of Egypt” or there are references to the Israelites spying out the land. Finally, there are references that are usually translated as “earth” or “ground,” which have no direct theological significance or direct bearing on the people’s relation to the land of Canaan.
denotes, since a gift in the ANE is either considered a reward for faithfulness or it may indicate the land, which the servant works for a king under a contractual arrangement. Moses borrows from this background, but there are also necessary caveats to the theology in Israel. First, Yahweh is the giver and distributor of all lands. One of the first points that appears to the reader of Deuteronomy is that the Land is the Gift from Yahweh, indicating the unconditional nature of “gift.” Indeed, the phrase אָרֶץ אַשְׁר יָהָוָה אֲלָהָנָנוּ נתן לְנוּ and its variations occur in some twenty-seven verses in Deuteronomy and in three places in Joshua. Indeed, Deuteronomy portrays Yahweh as sovereign over the lands, and he gives certain lands to Israel and he denies them other plots. Second, Deut. 9:4-5 makes clear that Israel is not to say that God caused them to enter to dispossess the land because of their righteousness (see next section); thus, the land is ultimately not a reward in Israel for the good that Israel did, but God gives them the land in order that (דברי) he might establish the promise (לְמִית), which he swore to the

The ANE background to Land as Gift in Deuteronomy seems to be linked to the idea of a “royal land grant” found among the Canaanites and the Hittites. Gösta W. Ahlström says, “Kings usually rewarded loyal servants with grants (gifts), such as promotions to the rank of officer or to membership in the priesthood. In some instances the king granted land, as well as the income from it, either as a reward or as a political means of enlisting support for his administration” (601). See Gösta W. Ahlström, “Administration of the State in Canaan and Ancient Israel,” in Civilizations of the Ancient Near East, Vol. 1. ed. Jack M. Sasson et al. (New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1995). Gary Beckman also comments on Hittite Anatolia, “In a free village the peasants would either cultivate their own fields, held privately or in some cases communally, or work royal land under various sharecropping and labor-service arrangements” (538). See Gary Beckman, “Royal Ideology and State Administration in Hittite Anatolia,” in Civilizations of the Ancient Near East, Vol. 1. ed. Jack M. Sasson et al. (New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1995).


It is interesting that these occurrences of a very common refrain in Deuteronomy only occur near the beginning of Joshua. The phrase functions to hold the two books together.

Deut. 2:5, 9, 19.
patriarchs. Third, life in the Land certainly requires obedience to the Lord to a degree which causes one to conclude that Israel does not own the land.\textsuperscript{29}

\textbf{Land as about to be Possessed and Inhabited by Israel.} Israel’s responsibility to take the Land is as significant as Yahweh’s sovereignty in distributing the land. In a few places, the themes overlap.\textsuperscript{30} In Deuteronomy divine sovereignty and human responsibility are friends, and the next category will make this theme even clearer.

\textbf{Law and Land.} The two foregoing usages pave the way to begin talking about one of the more complex matters in the book of Deuteronomy: the relationship of the land to Israel’s obedience to the law covenant. Indeed two aspects emerge from the text: 1) Obedience to the Law as necessary for Israel’s continuation and blessing in the Land, and 2) Obedience to the Law as necessary for entrance into the Land. The first usage is less debated in the literature, while the second usage seems to create problems for scholars.\textsuperscript{31}

As will be examined more closely under the next category, the land is the place of blessing. However, Israel must obey the Lord’s commands in the land in order that they might live, and it might go well with them, and they might prolong their days on the land (cf. Deut. 5:31, 33).\textsuperscript{32}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Deut. 4:5,14; 6:1 et al. Indeed, Israel does not own the Land, but they simply work it and obey Yahweh in it, while enjoying the blessing of it. Waltke says, “More specifically, he [Yahweh] gives lands to the nations as a usufruct—that is, they have ‘the legal right of using and enjoying the fruits or profits of something belonging to another’.” See Waltke, \textit{Old Testament Theology}, 537.
\item Notice in 11:31 that the refrain of God giving the land occurs subsequently to the command to go and possess the land. In 2:31 God says that he has begun to give Sihon and his land over to them followed by the imperative, “Begin, possess, to possess his land (lit.).”
\item For example see von Rad, “Promised Land and Yahweh’s Land,” 91. Von Rad says, “It is nevertheless striking that alongside this presentation of the commandments [for new style of cultus and the new way of life] there is another one, in which the commandments are not seen as the norm of the new life in settled territory, but in which the land may be received and possessed. Israel is to observe the commandments \textit{in order that} he may enter the good land, or may have long life in the land in which Yahweh is going to give him. Does not the promise of the land in this conditional form pave the way for a declension from grace into law” (91). For a refutation of von Rad’s synthesis, see McConville, \textit{Law and Theology}, 13. See also, Martens, \textit{God’s Design}, 130.
\item See also Deut. 6:1, 3; 11:8, 9; 11:13, 14 etc. In each of these sequences the blessing and good life in the land is conditioned upon obedience to Yahweh’s commands in the land.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The second aspect relates to Israel’s access and conquest of the land in the first place. Obedience to the law covenant is essential not only to the blessed life in the land, but also for entrance into the land itself.

How do these aspects harmonize? As noted above, von Rad sees a declension from grace to law in Deuteronomy at this point, which he does not see as reconcilable. However, the matter may be solved within Deuteronomy and by appeal to the larger canonical context. The tension of law and gift does not only apply to the entrance into the land, but to the blessing in the land as well. As J.G. Millar notes, “But the relationship between the fulfillment of promise and obedience extends beyond the successful subjugation of Canaan; this is only a first step towards fulfillment of the promise. Entry into the land and long term successful occupation are repeatedly linked…; obedience is the condition of both.”

God’s action in giving the land is pre-emptive. He chose the patriarchs and promised to give this land to them and to their seed based on nothing found in Israel, but only on God’s election and love of them (Deut. 7:6-10). God’s election of Israel is gift or an act of grace, which solicits an obedient response from Israel. However, as Gordon McConville has astutely concluded, Deuteronomy is not content with this sort of rigid paradigm in which grace requires obedience in a rigid contract. McConville says, “The relationship operates in two directions, not just one. As blessing is unthinkable without righteousness or obedience, so is obedience unthinkable without blessing.” And in another place he says, “The sequence then is this: God blesses, Israel obeys, God continues to bless. God’s action in blessing Israel, therefore, while it had an unconditional aspect in that Israel could

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33 See Deut. 4:1, 6:18; 8:1; 11:8; 16:20; 28:1. Deut. 6:17-18 says, “You shall surely keep the commandment…in order that it might go well with you and you might enter…the land.” Note the use of the Hebrew wqtl form in 6:18. The verbal clause is clearly subjunctive, since it is introduced by יְשַׁמֵּר (yeshom) and continued by a wqtl (יָשַׁמֵּר). This basic construction occurs in 4:1 and 8:1. For more on the syntax see Waltke, Bruce and Michael O’Connor, Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax, (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), §32.2.1d. Also note the conditional in 28:1, “And it will happen, if you surely obey the voice of the Lord…then he will set you over all the nations of the land.”


35 McConville, Land and Theology, 15
not acquire the blessing for itself, becomes conditional upon Israel’s obedience in the land.”\textsuperscript{36}

Therefore, God blessed Israel because of the patriarchs, not because of their own righteousness (9:4-5). In order to receive further blessing in the land, Israel must obey the law of Yahweh. Obedience, therefore, responds to pre-emptive grace (cf. Ex. 19:1-6; 20:1ff. for a similar paradigm) and is also motivated by receiving the subsequent gift and blessing of the land.\textsuperscript{37}

Israel has known since the beginning that they were to enter the land by believing the word of Yahweh and obeying it (cf. Num. 13 and 14; esp. 14:11).\textsuperscript{38} They have already experienced God’s judgment upon them for disobedience.

\textbf{Land as Described as place of Blessing/New Creation.}\textsuperscript{39} This category will attempt to aggregate all of the references in which Deuteronomy describes the land with vivid, almost otherworldly imagery and where the imagery seems to refer retrospectively to the original creation. Rest and inheritance are also included under this rubric. This section assumes that the promise made to Abraham in Gen. 12:1-3 was instituted in order to bring about a new creation. Therefore, references that could be understood as referring to the Abrahamic covenant may also refer to the new creation.

In several places, Deuteronomy describes the land as הובטח והשתמש.\textsuperscript{40} Waltke interprets these images as metonymies of effect, associated with luxurious pasturelands and

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 17

\textsuperscript{37} This motif is found in circumcision in Deuteronomy, as well as in particular laws (e.g. 23:20, the law of charging interest). Deut. 30:6 anticipates a day when God will circumcise the hearts of his people (pre-emptive grace), so that they will love him (guaranteed obedient response), in order that they might live (further blessing).

\textsuperscript{38} Waltke’s point concerning the Edenic typology within Gen. 1-3 is also relevant in this connection. Israel knows that to disobey the law of God means exile. In this case Israel did not even reach the promised land, but they were banished to the wilderness because of their disbelief and their disobedience. Waltke, \textit{Old Testament Theology}, 150.

\textsuperscript{39} It is difficult to decide whether to name this category “New Creation” or “Restored Creation.” In the final analysis, Scripture uses the terms “New” with reference to creation (e.g. Is. 65:17); even though only a full restoration or redemption of the original creation seems to be in view (Rom. 8:20ff.).

\textsuperscript{40} See. Deut. 6:3; 11:9; 26:9, 15; 27:3; 31:20.
flowers. These references may echo God’s own declaration of the good creation in Genesis 1. Note also that the gold is called “good” in Gen. 2:12, even though the gold is not situated in Eden.

Deuteronomy 1:25 refers to the fruit that the spies bring back from the land. The original story in Numbers 13:23ff contains a description of the one cluster of grapes which required two men to carry on a pole. The fruit of the land was clearly bountiful and delectable to the people. Yahweh will also bless the fruit of the ground, when they enter the land (Deut. 7:13). The theme of blessing the fruit of the ground occurs again in the blessings of the covenant in Deut. 28:4. Not only will the fruit of the ground be blessed, but also the fruit of the womb and the fruit of the livestock will be blessed (cf. 28:4; 7:13). In connection with proliferation of “seed”, Deut. 7:14 states that they will be blessed among all the peoples, no male or female among the people or among beasts will be barren.

Deuteronomy 8 contains references to the original creation and applies them to Israel. Deut. 8:1 contains a reference to God’s blessing the people based on obedience. Included in this blessing is Yahweh’s promise that they will “multiply” in the land. Deut. 8:13 employs the same verb three times in reference to the multiplication of cattle and flocks (livestock), silver and gold (precious metals), and everything they own. Gen. 1:28 contains the original command “to multiply,” and Deuteronomy reveals that the fulfillment of this mandate is linked to the Land.


43 See also Ex. 23:26 which states that there will be no miscarriage or barrenness in the land.

44 The verb רָבָּה has 11 relevant occurrences in Deuteronomy. The Hiphil occurrences are as follows: 1:10, 7:13, 13:18, 28:63, 30:5. The Qal occurrences are as follows: 6:3, 8:1, 8:13(3x), 30:16. Indeed, 1:10 claims that they have already multiplied “as the stars of heaven” (cf. Gen. 15:5).
Deut. 8:7 employs the plural form of a less frequently used word in the Pentateuch, חאנים, usually translated “springs,” to describe one of the water sources of the land.\textsuperscript{45} The waters are described as “flowing” (נחלים) through the valleys and mountains (cf. Gen. 2:10ff). Deut. 8:8-10 contains a vivid description of the land and its resources. Verse 8 contains a listing of the various produce of the land: wheat, barley, vines, fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil, and honey. Verse 9 contains the mineral resources of the land: its stones are iron and the hewing of bronze from its mountains. In the middle of these descriptions is the astounding phrase, “a land which will have no poverty, you shall eat bread in it, you shall not lack anything at all in it.”\textsuperscript{46}

One last image which may hark back to Eden and the original creation is the many references in Deuteronomy to “life” and the “prolonging of days.”\textsuperscript{47} Although the people would not live forever as Adam in the garden, the theme of the long, blessed life in the land typifies the blessed eternal life that Adam enjoyed in Eden. In Deut. 30:20, Israel must hold fast to Yahweh, for (אウィ) Yahweh is their life and Yahweh is their length of days that they may dwell in the land… Although the point should not be pressed too strongly, this text seems to transfer the blessing of the land to Yahweh. In the majority of contexts, life is tied to obedience to Yahweh in the land, but here Deuteronomy calls Yahweh life itself.\textsuperscript{48}

Two more themes in Deuteronomy remain for exploration: inheritance and rest. Deuteronomy presents the land as an inheritance to Israel (cf. 4:21 et al.). Inheritance (נחלות) is primarily a legal term, referring to the lawful handing down of property from fathers to sons (cf. 

\textsuperscript{45} occurrences 8x in the Pentateuch with three of those occurrences in Gen. 1:2; 7:11; 8:2. In Gen. 49:25 and Deut. 33:13 the “deep” signify a place from which great blessings come.

\textsuperscript{46} communicates real emphasis on the fact that this land will provide for the needs of all who inhabit it so that there will be no need at all.

\textsuperscript{47} Gen. 3:22 ends on the note of eating from the tree of life and living forever. For references to prolonging of days in the land see: 4:26; 4:40; 5:16; 5:33; 6:2-3; 11:9; 25:15; 30:18, 20; 32:47.

\textsuperscript{48} Cf. John 11:25, where Jesus claims to be the resurrection and the life. Similar phrases occur in the Gospels. Cf. Matt. 11:28, “Come to me all you who are weary…and I will give you rest.” The attribution of rest to the person of Jesus, which would normally be understood of the land, indicates a change from space to person. The attribution of the blessings of the land was already applied to Yahweh in the OT.
1 Kings 21 with Naboth’s vineyard [Note the reference in 21:3: דָּלֶת אֲבָהָת]. 49 Rendtorff gives a sufficient overview of the meaning of the word, but his theologizing remains incomplete, for he does not draw the final implication. “Inheritance” emphasizes patrimony, which means that Israel is God’s son. The land is called Yahweh’s inheritance (cf. 2 Sam. 20:19); therefore, Israel as God’s son receives the land as an inheritance; therefore, they are not able to give the land to whomever they choose or do with it whatever they please. 50

The themes of inheritance and rest converge in Deut. 12:9-10. The implication, therefore, is that when the people have inherited and settled the land, they will also be at rest. “Rest” (מנוחה), primarily, means rest from enemies and securely dwelling in the land. 51 However, others have discerned another meaning when the term applies to the land. Alexander says, “This [redemption from Egypt as the ground for the Sabbath command in Deut. 5:15] suggests that the deliverance of the Israelites from bondage in Egypt and their subsequent settlement in the promised land were viewed as in some manner paralleling God’s rest following the completion of his creative activity.” 52 Alexander’s point indicates that the “rest” offered in the land may be legitimately tied to the rest of God in the pre-Fall context. The Land functions already as a type of the rest from work, which God entered on the seventh day. 53

49 Rolf Rendtorff notes the legal meaning, but he sees this usage of the word as secondary to “gift.” Concerning inheritance as gift he says, “It expresses the fact that the land is given over to Israel for its disposal and use, but that it remains God’s possession. The figurative meaning of this term comes to expression in the divine assurance and gift of the whole land to Israel.” See Rolf Rendtorff, The Canonical Hebrew Bible: A Theology of the Old Testament, trans. David E. Orton, (Leiden: Deo Publishing, 2005), 458.

50 Concerning the very important point of sonship, see Millar, “Land,” 625-6.

51 The Hebrew phrase מָלֵא אֲבָהָתָם מָכסָב in Deut. 12:9-10 will be very important as the story unfolds.

52 Alexander, “Beyond Borders,” 38-9. The fourth command in Ex. 20 is also important to Alexander’s position, since the commands in Deut. 5 and Ex. 20 are intertwined. If one grants this point, then the redemption of Israel from Egypt to the promise land may be seen as a rest patterned after God’s rest after Creation. See also Dumbrell, Covenant and Creation, 121-2. Dumbrell says, “This [the notion of ‘rest’ to which the book of Deuteronomy makes frequent reference] means no more, however, than that Israel will enjoy the gifts of creation in the way in which they had been meant to be used. In this theology of rest we are clearly returning to the purposes of creation set forth in Gen. 1:1-2:4a and typified by the Eden narrative, namely that mankind was created to rejoice before the deity and to enjoy the blessings of creation in the divine presence.”
Fulfillment themes in Joshua

Joshua continues the story that Deuteronomy began. This section will briefly examine three themes in the book of Joshua, which relate to the land them: 1) the positive reports concerning the land, 2) the negative reports concerning the land, and 3) progress towards a new creation.

Positive Reports of Fulfillment. Several places in Joshua indicate that the initial conquest of the land resulted in entire fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham. There are two references to the land at rest from war.54 Three times Yahweh caused them to rest from their enemies in fulfillment of Moses’ promise to the people in Deut. 12:9-10.55 On two occasions a variation of this very comprehensive statement occurs, “Not one promise (הָעָלֶה) of all the good promises which Yahweh spoke to Israel failed (טָמוּם). All came to pass.”56 These texts actually cause tension within the narrative of Joshua since negative reports exist alongside these reports.

Negative Reports of Unfulfillment. Even though the book of Joshua presents a comprehensive fulfillment of the promise made with Abraham, enough evidence in the book remains to conclude that this fulfillment was not ultimate. Some interpreters have seen in Josh. 13:1-7 the end of the optimism begun in Josh. 1:2-9.57 The references made to Joshua’s old age and the large remnant of land that remained to be possessed indicates that not all is fulfilled.

53 “Type” works in both historical directions in this context. Moses’ audience understands the rest in terms of God’s rest on the seventh day. When they enter the land, they will be entering into God’s rest. However, as will become apparent in the remainder of the story, the people can never seem to achieve this rest by entering the land. Something better will have to happen in the future, if the people are to enter the rest of God.

54 Josh. 11:23 and 14:15. The word שָׁרֵך in the Qal means to be quiet or undisturbed.

55 Josh. 21:44, 22:4, and 23:1. The Hiphil הָנִים communicates that Yahweh has given rest to Israel from their enemies.

56 Josh. 21:45 and 23:14. The narrator makes the first statement, while Joshua makes the second; thus, the narrator and a main character make the same statement concerning the fulfillment of the promises of God.

Josh. 23:2ff also emphasizes the reality of unpossessed land, since Joshua, advanced in years, exhorts the people to go and take the allotted land. Concerning successive fulfillments, Waltke makes an insightful observation, “Future generations must play their part (Judg. 3:1-4). The Chronicler (1 Chron. 13:5) uses Joshua 13:1-7 to present David as greater than Joshua because he rules from Shihor of Egypt to the entrance of Hamath.”

Judging from these reports and later inter-textual references, the reader of the Canon must expect a greater fulfillment of the promise in the future.

Towards a New Creation. Although the second generation did not attain ultimate fulfillment of the promise, the text does present their conquest and settlement as a progression in the Edenic mandate (cf. Gen. 1:28). Gordon McConville, working from the dissertation of H.J. Koorevaar, adopts an a-b-b-a literary structure of the book of Joshua.

According to Koorevaar’s analysis, Josh. 18:1 becomes a crucial text for understanding the book. This verse employs an important theme and an important word: the statement of the subdued land combined with the erecting of the tabernacle. If the tabernacle is patterned after Eden as another dwelling

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59 Gordon McConville, *Grace in the End: A Study in Deuteronomistic Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 101-2. This four part structure depends on catch words, which Koorevaar interpreted as leading words in each section. Section 1 is 1:1-5:12 (ﻊֲבֹדָה), 2 is 5:13-12:24 (וֹלֵךְ), 3 is 13:1-21:45 (וֹלֵךְ), and 4 is 22:1-22:33 (וֹלֵךְ). The assonance of the key words combined with the frequency of each catch word in their respective sections indicates the literary structure of the book according to Koorevaar. [Koorevaar’s dissertation was written in Dutch and was not able to be accessed for the writing of this paper. All of this research comes through McConville and Dempster.]

60 Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 126-7. Dempster also accedes with Koorevaar’s structure as well as his interpretation of Josh. 18:1.

61 The Niphal of לְכֵל is certainly significant in this context. First, before this occurrence, the word is only found in Gen. 1:28 and Num. 32:22, 29. Gordon Mitchell makes an unnecessary either/or distinction between Gen. 1:28 and Num. 32:22. Only one of these two texts can be the background for Josh. 18:1, and he favors the military conquest of Num. 32:22. See Gordon Mitchell, *Together in the Land: A Reading of the Book of Joshua*, (JSOTSup 134; Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1993), 103. However, from a canonical standpoint, it seems better to understand both Num. 32:22 and Josh. 18:1 as dependent on Gen. 1:28. Second, Greg Beale makes an interesting observation concerning the relationship between the tabernacle/temple and rest. The dwelling place of God is set up after rest has been achieved. It is worth citing Beale in full, “God’s rest both at the conclusion of creation in Genesis 1-2 and later in Israel’s temple indicates not mere inactivity but that he had demonstrated his sovereignty over the forces of chaos (e.g. the enemies of Israel) and now has assumed a position of kingly rest further revealing his sovereign power. Similarly…the building of a shrine for divine rest occurs only after the powers of chaos have been
place for Yahweh, then Josh. 18:1 and subsequent fulfillments of the land promise suggest that the continuation of the original Edenic mission is in view. Israel as the son/image of God is fulfilling the mandate to subdue the earth. If one accepts this creation interpretation, then the land grants in the book of Joshua (15-21) also indicate fulfillments of the Abrahamic promise, “for Edenic real estate.”

Conclusion

One may make two conclusions from the above study: 1) the Land theme is an important case study for the paradigm of Promise and Fulfillment, and 2) the land theme is an important paradigm for the Law and Gift issue. Not only have these issues been extracted from the above material, but these issues will be crucial for the remainder of this study.

Land as Substantial Paradigm for Promise and Fulfillment. Thus far, the promise of land given to Abraham has been placed in its canonical context. The promises made to Abraham responded to the failures of Gen. 1-11, and it is therefore clear that God has not shunned the nations by electing Abraham, but now God has chosen to install his reign over the earth through Abraham and his “seed.” Deuteronomy and Joshua significantly define the promises more clearly and how they will be fulfilled. As was argued, Deuteronomy defines the land in terms of Eden and new creation, for Israel is God’s son and the land will contain God’s tabernacle/temple. Joshua maintains that fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises also indicates preliminary fulfillment of the original creation mandates.

Land as Substantial Paradigm for Law and Gift. The paradigm of law and gift or grace and obedience in relation to the occupying of the land in Deuteronomy and Joshua will be important for the study of the NT texts in Hebrews.


62 Dempster, Dominion and Dynasty, 128.

63 Space was not available to trace out the actual obedience or disobedience of the people of Israel, when they went in to take the land. It seems that when they obeyed, God gave them the land as he initially promised
Fulfillments under David and Solomon

As anticipated, the Land theme will have more fulfillments, but not ultimate fulfillment under the monarchy. This section has space only to comment on David’s rest and desire to build the temple in 2 Sam. 7 and on Solomon’s rest and building of the temple in 2 Kings 4 and 8.

David’s Rest

2 Samuel 7 is one of the more important passages in the OT, for in this text Yahweh makes a covenant with David (cp. Ps. 89:3), which will secure his dynasty as the charter for humanity.64 The Davidic dynasty’s role for ruling the nations is secured forever according to 2 Sam. 7:13-14 (cf. Is. 2:1-4 seems dependent upon the Davidic covenant for where else in OT are the nations dependent upon Zion for the instruction from the Lord?). However, as the Davidic narrative unfolds, it becomes clear that David himself is only another fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise.

2 Sam. 7:1 echoes the rest that Yahweh promises to give the second generation in Deut. 12:9-10 and the rest that he gave to Israel at the end of Joshua.65 However, 2 Sam. 8-10 clarify that David did not have real rest from his enemies “on all sides,” since he continues to conquer the enemies that remain in the Land. David’s desire to build the temple or house of God is significant in chapter 7, since building the dwelling place for God follows a period of rest.66

64 2 Sam. 7:19 means “and this is the charter for humanity.” This is David’s response to Nathan’s oracle concerning the “house” that Yahweh will build for him.

65 See notes 50 and 55. Yahweh is recorded to have given David rest from all his enemies on all sides.

66 Beale, The Temple and the Church’s Mission, 62.
David, the Canon receives another level of fulfillment of the land promises, but the Canon also receives the guarantee that these promises will find eventual fulfillment in the Davidic dynasty. Will Solomon (שלום) bring these promises to completion (שלום)?

**Solomon’s Rest**

Solomon provides some basis to see ultimate fulfillment of the Land promise. When Solomon ascends to the throne, he does not have external enemies, but only internal enemies to subvert (cf. 1 Kings 2:12ff). Once these enemies are subverted and the alliances are made at the borders of the land of Israel, the narrator says, “Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is on the shore of the sea, for a multitude. They were eating and drinking and making merry. Now Solomon was ruling throughout the entire kingdom, from the River to the land of the Philistines and unto the border of Egypt.”67 The reference corresponds to the promised boundaries of Gen. 15:18, thus bringing a real measure of fulfillment to the Abrahamic promise. Another strong reference to fulfillment occurs in Solomon’s dedication speech in 1 Kings 8:56. Solomon says, “Blessed be the Lord, who has given rest to his people, Israel, according to all which he promised (דבר). Not one word (דבר) of all of his good promise (דבר) which he spoke through Moses, his Servant, has failed.” This recognition of fulfillment matches almost exactly the one in Joshua 21:45.

Solomon’s reference to rest (מנוחה) in the context of the building and dedication of the Temple is significant. The monarchy, to a less than perfect degree, has achieved the rest in the Land which accords with the promise given to Abraham and spoken through Moses in Deut. 12:9-10. The temple as the dwelling place of God is also significant. Beale concludes, “The cumulative effect of the preceding parallels between the Garden of Genesis 2 and Israel’s tabernacle and temple indicates that Eden was the first archetypal temple, upon which all of Israel’s temples were based…We are not left, however, with a collection of similarities that show

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67 1 Kings 4:20-5:1a. The reference to “the River” is to the Euphrates river. See Kallai, “Patriarchal Boundaries,” 73.
how comparable Eden is to a temple. Indeed Ezekiel 28 explicitly calls Eden the first sanctuary, which substantiates that Eden is described as a temple because it is the first temple, albeit a ‘garden-temple’.”

For Solomon, the temple functions as a new Eden for the kingdom of God. The subdued land under his reign represents the incomplete task of the Edenic mandate in Gen. 1:28.

The reign of Solomon was august. However, the Exile will prove that this fulfillment cannot be interpreted as the ultimate fulfillment, for as Williamson notes, the post-exilic generation would expect Yahweh to fulfill this promise for them, as he had done for Israel and David in the past.

Conclusion

The Land theme in the story of the OT has demonstrated the “already and the not yet” hermeneutic within a broader Promise and Fulfillment scheme. The various references to fulfillments of the land promise are always followed by disappointing unfulfillments indicating that the promise is fulfilled and yet, not ultimately fulfilled. The interpretation of the land promise given to Abraham taken in this paper is that the promise was originally designed to go beyond the borders given in Gen. 15:18ff (see above). The Land of Canaan was to be a new creation, while the established temple was pictured as a new Eden from where the image of God would extend the Kingdom of God to the ends of the earth (cf. Ps. 2:8). Only the perfectly obedient image/son of God will be given the ends of the earth as an inheritance. According to the OT this image of God has not arrived. Adam, Noah, Israel, David, and Solomon all fail to subdue the earth, but there is hope of a greater fulfillment in the OT, in which God will send his Servant par excellence, the future David, who will accomplish his will perfectly and will restore

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68 Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 79-80. See Beale’s list of “similarities” on pages 66-80.

all things and bring God’s rule to the nations.  

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**Land in the NT**

The study of “land” in the NT remains a challenge since “land” is not a frequent word in the NT. This section seeks only to demonstrate the Land theme in a few places from the GE. In particular, Hebrews develops the land theme through the various words of land, rest, inheritance, and city.

**Land in Hebrews**

With the OT scheme of Promise-Fulfillment(s) in place, this presentation of the land may proceed to the presentation of the NT fulfillment in Hebrews.

Perhaps the clearest presentation of the Land theme in Hebrews may be found in the author’s argument in 3:7-4:13 and in chapter 11. Heb. 3:7ff offers a warning to the people based upon David’s reflection on the rebellion of the wilderness generation in Ps 95. The key words in this section are as follows: κατάπαυσις, σήµερον, and ε/uni1F30σέρχοµαι. The author claims that the people are the house of God, if they hold fast to the end (cf. 3:6), as the author reflects on generation which experienced the amazing deliverance out of Egypt, and how that same generation was denied access into the Sworn Land because of their unbelief and their disobedience. Thus the audience learns that to be delivered out of Egypt is an incomplete deliverance unless they are delivered into the Sworn Land.

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70 Peter Gentry, “Rethinking the ‘Sure Mercies of David’ in Isaiah 55:3,” *WTJ* 69 (2007): 279-304. Gentry concludes, “The faithful or obedient acts of love are those of the Servant King in Isa 53 whose offering of himself as an ‘asham and whose resurrection enable him to bring to fulfillment the promises of Yahweh in the Davidic Covenant and is at the same time the basis for the New or Everlasting Covenant. This future King then fulfills the roles required of the king in Deut 17 and 2 Sam 7 by bringing the divine instruction or Torah to Israel (Deut 17) and, indeed, to all the nations (2 Sam 7:19)” (301).


72 The author expounds the wonderful quality of this deliverance and the woefulness their disobedience in 3:16-19. The generation that rebelled was the same generation that was led out of Egypt by Moses.
The author now shifts to the rest/land theme as it relates to his audience and to the
generations of the past. He states that the audience must fear, lest they fail to enter into the rest
(4:1), which indicates that the author believes that the “rest” is still available for his generation.
The reason why the previous generation failed was the word of the message did not profit those
who did not join with the ones hearing with faith. But the author asserts that all who have
believed are entering into the rest. However, one will only understand the author’s point if one
traces his exegesis of the “rest” in the OT. The author ties Ps 95 to Gen. 2:1-3 via
κατάπαυσίν μου. Ps 95 originally refers to the land of Canaan, but the author sees a more
ultimate rest to be entered in Gen. 2:1-3, when God rested from his work of creation; hence the
emphasis is on “my rest.” The author draws his conclusion in 4:6-7, “Therefore, since for
some to enter it remains and the former generation did not enter on account of disobedience, he
again has fixed another day, Today, saying through David after so long a time…Today…” The
rest is available to enter today, because David spoke about it in Ps 95. The author explains that
Joshua [who is located between Gen. 2 and Ps 95 in redemptive history] did not give the people
rest, for if he had, he [God?] would not have spoken of another day [Today in Ps 95] after these
[probably a reference to the events in Canaan].

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73 This writer heard D.A. Carson use the phrases “saved out of Egypt” and “saved into the Land” at the

74 This is almost certainly a reference to Joshua and Caleb, whom the rest of the rebellious spies did not
join in hearing God’s word with faith in Num. 13-14.

75 The present tense of εἰσερχόµεθα should be viewed as a true present in 4:3. See Andrew T. Lincoln,
(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982; reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1999), 211-12.

76 See note 51 for an understanding of the rest being connected to God’s rest in Gen. 2:1-3 via the fourth
commandment in Ex 20 and Deut 5.

77 The author actually performs good exegesis; since, Ps 95 indicates that God has a rest, and the author
thinks to what that rest may be, and he remembers God’s rest in Gen. 2:1-3.

78 There are many interpretive difficulties, but the crux revolves around the author’s statement
concerning the rest Joshua did not give them [note the 2nd class conditional, which is generally considered contrary
to fact.]. Two options present themselves. 1) Surely, the author is aware of the many statements in Joshua where
the Lord gave the people rest. However, it seems that by this point in the argument, the author has already joined
the eschatological rest with the rest of Gen. 2:1-3; thus, Joshua did not give them the final rest or ultimately fulfilled
Sabbath rest remains for the people of God, for the one who enters into his rest he also will rest from his works just as God did from his. The final exhortation is crucial, “Therefore let us be diligent to enter into that rest, lest some one falls by the same example of disobedience.”

The author reveals two salient points to his audience: 1) the eschatological rest of Ps 95 and Gen. 2 is the antitype of the type of the rest of the Land. The same typological relationship obtains whether the type be interpreted as such because it is physical or simply because Joshua achieved incomplete rest. The land’s rest is closed, but God’s rest is available today for all who believe. The people are not exhorted to return to the types of the rest consisting of the land of Canaan or the Sabbath day, but rather they are exhorted to enter God’s ultimate rest, which consists of membership in the house of God (3:6b). 2) The paradigm that Deuteronomy and the OT generally exhibits for the obtaining of the rest remains unchanged. The author continues to apply the straightforward meaning of Ps 95 [Do not harden your hearts], and he has not used the antitype to repeal human responsibility or obedience for the entering into the final rest. Rather, God’s word is depicted as a sword which parses the thoughts of the heart, and all is laid bare before God, to whom we direct our account.  

After the author argues that Jesus is the better high priest and that he has fulfilled the functions of the temple in chaps 7-10, he then returns to the land in chap 11-12. The author employs several terms including γῆ, πόλις, τόπος, κληρονομία, and Ἱεροσολύµατι ἐπουρανίῳ in these chapters to communicate that the Land of Canaan was simply a type of the better land to come.

Heb 11:8 commences the discussion of the Land by simply recounting the facts of Gen 12:1-3. Abraham obeyed God and he went to the place (τόπος) which he was about to receive rest, but only the physical rest. See Paul Ellingworth, Hebrews, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 252-3. 2) The author may not be making a physical/true rest distinction, but he may simply be reading the rest passages in Joshua as incomplete fulfillments, whereas now, the fulfilled rest is available for those who believe and make every effort to enter it.

79 Harold W. Attridge, Hebrews, (Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 133-4. Attridge says, “The application focuses on God, the all-seeing Judge. It is thus a stern word of warning which will be balanced by the following remarks of Christ as merciful High Priest, a balance Hebrews will observe often.”
as an inheritance (κληρονομία). Verse 9 then indicates that Abraham did sojourn in the “land of promise” as an alien dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise.

But verse 10 immediately confirms that the patriarchs did not consider this dwelling in any way a fulfillment of the promise, for (γάρ) he was looking for a city having foundations whose architect and builder is God.80 Verse 16 functions as an interpretive remark, “But now they are searching for something better, that is heavenly. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.” In the case of the patriarchs, they seem to know that the Promised Land is not the ultimate fulfillment of God’s promise, since they are dwelling upon the land as strangers and sojourners (11:13). Rather they knew to search for the heavenly city, whose builder is God. This interpretation requires the patriarchs not simply to be looking forward to the day when their seed will inherit the promises, but they themselves are actually looking forward to the fulfillment of the promises.81

Heb. 11:39-40 is very significant to the argument, “And all these, although being commended for their faith, did not receive promise, since God foresaw something better for us, lest they be made perfect without us.” The OT saints did not receive the promise, yet the NT saints have received something better, so that they would not be perfected without the NT saints. The author uses the word “better” to refer to the person and work of Christ, which has already occurred in history; therefore, the NT saints stand in a better place in redemptive history, but they do not stand in a place which was not anticipated by the OT saints.82

80 See Peter W. L. Walker, Jesus and the Holy City: New Testament Perspectives on Jerusalem, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 212. Walker says, “These positive descriptions of the physical land [land of promise and inheritance], however, are eclipsed by his insistence that the real focus of the promise to which Abraham ‘looked forward’ was the ‘city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. This eschatological view is repeated in verse 16…” Note also the use of the Imperfect ἐξέδέχετο. Verses 8-9 use the aorist tense three times to describe Abraham’s actions, but v. 10 begins with the Imperfect, and emphasizes that Abraham was continually looking forward to another city.

81 Ibid, 212. Walker says, “They ‘saw through’ the promise of the Land, looking beyond it to a deeper, spiritual reality. The promise concerning the Land, whilst real and valid on its own terms, pointed typologically to something greater. Any subsequent focus on the Land would then be misplaced; for the faith commended by the author was one which looked beyond such things.”
that this better place in redemptive history does not preclude the necessity of perseverance and finishing the race that was set before them. They live in a better place, a heavenly city, but they must finish the race, they must continue to obey the Lord in order to finally obtain the blessing.\(^83\)

The final references to city in Heb 12-13 remain to be analyzed. After the author describes Mt. Sinai and its terrors as the place to which they have not come (12:18-21), he turns to tell the readers about the place to which they have come (12:22-24). The contrast is between the places: Mt. Sinai in contrast with Mt. Zion. The author further defines Mt. Zion as the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. Because Christ’s blood speaks better than the blood of Abel, they have come to a mediator of a new covenant. This reference to city is the last reference until 13:14, where the author speaks explicitly about the earthly Jerusalem, “For we do not have an abiding city here, but we seek one to come.”\(^84\) This final point completes the contrast between the present city of Jerusalem and the abiding or heavenly city, to which the audience has come. Instead of treasuring the earthly city, they must go out of the city to bear the reproach of Jesus. By following Jesus outside of the earthly city, the author says they seek the city to come (13:14).

### Conclusions

Hebrews certainly depends upon the OT presentation of the land as rest, inheritance,

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\(^82\) Attridge, *Hebrews*, 352. He says, “Hints has been given that the patriarchs and prophets of old looked forward to or foresaw a final and decisive divine intervention into history. What they sensed was God’s own eschatological will at work.”

\(^83\) This theme of perseverance in the calling for the purpose of receiving the final inheritance pervades 1 Peter. 1 Peter 3:9 places the inheritance of the blessing in the context of holy behavior (1:15ff.). It says, “Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary bless because to this you were called so that you might inherit (κληρονοµέω) a blessing.” Peter has already used the noun (κληρονοµία) in 1:4 to speak of the inheritance, which is stored up in heaven for believers who are being guarded through faith by the power of God for the salvation prepared to be revealed at the last time. Peter says they are being guarded through faith, by the power of God. Human responsibility in faith is part of what guards believers for the prepared salvation. Salvation is both past (1:1-3) and future (1:4-5; 3:9). On the role of righteous living in 1 Peter, see D.A. Carson, *1 Peter*, in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Gregory K. Beale and D.A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 1037.

\(^84\) One cannot miss the force of the exhortation in 13:10-14. In the OT, the carcasses of the sacrifices were burned outside of the camp (13:11). Therefore, Jesus suffered outside of the gate (πύλη), which is probably a reference to the city gate, in order to sanctify the people by his blood. The author exhorts, “Therefore, let us go outside of the camp to him bearing his reproach.” If Jesus dies outside of the city, then they must follow him.
promise, and city etc. However, the author does not present the Land theme as unfulfilled or independent of the person and work of Christ. Rather, Christ’s work has brought the people out of sin (cf. Heb. 2:10ff; corresponding to Egypt) and he has brought them to God’s ultimate rest, the heavenly Jerusalem (corresponding to the Land of Canaan and Jerusalem). In short, Hebrews presents the Land theme in the OT as typical of the antitypical reality realized in Jesus Christ. However, this new reality actually heightens the people’s responsibility and necessity for perseverance (Heb. 2:1-4 and the other warnings in the book).

**Conclusion**

This paper argued that the OT Land of Canaan is a rich theme where many themes converge. The Land in Deuteronomy and Joshua represented the place of blessing and new creation for Israel as God’s son. After being subdued, the Land was the place where God would establish his dwelling place in continuity with Eden, whence his Kingdom would spread through the work of his image or son. As this theme unfolds in the OT, the promise was given to Abraham, but ultimate fulfillment of it was always elusive because of the disobedience of the image of God (Adam, Noah, Israel, David, and Solomon etc.). However, the OT certainly testifies to varying fulfillments of this promise, which establish the already not yet paradigm within the OT story itself. The OT also teaches that blessing comes as a result of God’s pre-emptive grace, but that further blessing depends on obedience to Yahweh’s commands.

Hebrews testifies to the fulfillment of the land theme when one enters God’s rest. One enters this reality through faith and abiding participation in God’s house or God’s people (Heb 3:6b). As a result, the patriarchs looked past the Land of Promise to God’s greater eschatological program revealed in the heavenly Jerusalem. New Covenant believers have come to this city, and they are exhorted to follow Jesus out of the earthly city, for they have no abiding city here, but they seek the one to come, which must refer to the heavenly Jerusalem, whose architect and builder is God (cf. 12:22; 11:10). Although Hebrews clearly indicates that redemptive history
has progressed from type to antitype, Hebrews maintains that without diligence and obedience to the Lord, the people of God will not finally enter into all the of the blessings, to which the Land pointed.