

Joshua 21:43

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein.

Analysis

This verse powerfully testifies to God's complete faithfulness in fulfilling His covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The phrase 'the LORD gave unto Israel all the land' (vayiten Yahweh leYisrael et-kol-haarets, וַיִּתֵּן יְהוָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ) uses the perfect tense emphasizing accomplished action—God's gift was complete. The phrase 'which he sware to give unto their fathers' (asher nishba latet laavotam, אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לָתֵת לְאֲבוֹתָם) roots fulfillment in the patriarchal covenants, especially Genesis 12:7; 13:15; 15:18-21. The promise given 600+ years earlier to Abraham now reaches complete historical realization. The final clause 'they possessed it and dwelt therein' (vayirshuha vayeshvu bah, וַיִּרְשׁוּהָ וַיֵּשְׁבוּ בָּהּ) indicates not merely military conquest but actual settlement and habitation. From a Reformed perspective, this demonstrates God's absolute sovereignty in accomplishing His decreed purposes across centuries despite human faithlessness. The promise endured through Egyptian bondage, wilderness rebellion, and conquest warfare, proving that God's elective purposes cannot fail (Romans 9:6-8, 11:29).

Historical Context

This statement summarizes Israel's territorial possession after approximately seven years of conquest under Joshua. The entire land from Dan to Beersheba, from the Mediterranean to the Jordan (and Transjordan territories), was now under Israelite control. The comprehensive language 'all the land' doesn't mean

every village was occupied but that Israel controlled the promised territory and broke Canaanite political-military power. Remaining pockets of Canaanite resistance existed (Judges 1-2) but posed no existential threat. Archaeological evidence shows widespread destruction of Late Bronze Age Canaanite cities followed by Iron Age I Israelite settlement patterns—consistent with Joshua's campaigns. The patriarchal promises included both the land itself and descendants to inhabit it; both promises converged in Joshua's generation. This fulfillment validated God's covenant faithfulness, demonstrated His justice in judging Canaanite wickedness, and provided Israel with the inheritance necessary for national development. The conquest's success depended entirely on divine power—Israel's army, though numerous, lacked the military technology (chariots, iron weapons) of their enemies, yet conquered through God's supernatural intervention and strategic guidance.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What long-delayed promises of God are you tempted to doubt, and how does God's faithfulness to Israel after 600+ years encourage your faith?
2. How does God's complete fulfillment of every promise to Israel demonstrate His trustworthiness regarding New Testament promises to believers?
3. What does Israel's actual possession and dwelling in the land teach about appropriating God's promises through faith-filled action?

Interlinear Text

לָתַת	יְהוָה	לְיִשְׂרָאֵל	אֶת	כָּל	הָאֲרָץ	אֲשֶׁר
gave	And the LORD	unto Israel	H853	H3605	all the land	H834
H5414	H3068	H3478			H776	
נִשְׁבַּע	לָתַת	לְאֲבוֹתָם	וַיִּכְשׁוּ	וְהָ	וַיֵּשְׁבוּ	בָּהּ:
which he swore	gave	unto their fathers	and they possessed		it and dwelt	H0
H7650	H5414	H1	H3423		H3427	

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 13:15 (Parallel theme): For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

Genesis 28:4 (Parallel theme): And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham.

Psalms 44:3 (Parallel theme): For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them.

Exodus 3:8 (Parallel theme): And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

Deuteronomy 11:31 (References Lord): For ye shall pass over Jordan to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God giveth you, and ye shall possess it, and dwell therein.

Genesis 12:7 (References Lord): And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.

Deuteronomy 17:14 (References Lord): When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me;

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