

Joshua 21:44

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD gave them rest round about, according to all that he sware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand.

Analysis

This verse emphasizes the rest and victory God provided Israel, fulfilling promises made to Moses. The phrase 'the LORD gave them rest round about' (vayanach Yahweh lahem misaviv, וַיַּנַּח יְהוָה לָהֶם מִסָּבִיב) uses nuach (נוּחַ), meaning to rest, settle, or cease from conflict. This rest wasn't merely military cessation but covenant peace—the goal of redemptive history (Hebrews 4:1-11). The phrase 'according to all that he sware unto their fathers' roots this rest in divine oath, particularly Deuteronomy 12:9-10's promise of rest in the land. The comprehensive statement 'there stood not a man of all their enemies before them' (lo-amad ish bifneihem mikol-oyeveihem, לֹא-עָמַד אִישׁ בְּפְנֵיהֶם מִכָּל-אֲבִיָּהֶם) recalls Joshua 1:5's promise that no enemy would successfully resist Israel. The final clause 'the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand' (et kol-oyeveihem natan Yahweh beyadam, אֶת כָּל-אֲבִיָּהֶם נָתַן יְהוָה בְּיָדָם) emphasizes divine agency—Yahweh Himself delivered victories, not Israel's military prowess. This rest typifies the greater rest Christ provides—ceasing from our works to enter God's Sabbath rest (Hebrews 4:9-10). Yet Israel's rest proved temporary; disobedience brought renewed conflict. Christ alone provides eternal, unshakeable rest through His finished work.

Historical Context

The 'rest' Israel experienced lasted through Joshua's lifetime and into the early judges period before cyclical apostasy brought renewed warfare (Judges 2:10-19). This rest fulfilled Deuteronomy 12:10's conditional promise: obedience brings rest, disobedience brings oppression. Ancient Near Eastern warfare was endemic—city-states constantly raided neighbors, requiring perpetual military readiness. Israel's rest from surrounding enemies was extraordinary, demonstrating divine protection beyond natural explanation. The statement that no enemy stood before Israel doesn't mean no conflicts occurred but that no enemy achieved strategic victory or threatened Israel's existence. Archaeological evidence shows the Late Bronze Age/Iron Age I transition (roughly Joshua's period) involved widespread urban destruction in Canaan followed by new settlement patterns—consistent with Israelite conquest and settlement bringing regional stability. The rest experienced during Joshua's generation was partial fulfillment of ultimate eschatological rest promised to God's people. Hebrews 3-4 uses Israel's failure to maintain this rest as warning against unbelief, showing that full rest awaits believers in the age to come when all enemies are defeated and God dwells with His people eternally.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What 'rest' has Christ provided that you're failing to enjoy due to unbelief or self-reliance?
2. How does Israel's temporary rest warn against assuming present blessings will continue without ongoing faithfulness?
3. In what ways does God's giving Israel rest from enemies picture the greater rest from sin, death, and Satan that Christ provides?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּנַח	יְהוָה ה	לָהֶם	מִסָּבִיב	כָּל ל	אֲשֶׁר
gave them rest	And the LORD	H0	round about	H3605	H834
H5117	H3068		H5439		
נִשְׁבַּע ע	לְאֲבוֹתָם	וְלֹא	עָמַד	אִישׁ	
according to all that he swore	unto their fathers	H3808	and there stood	not a man	
H7650	H1		H5975	H376	
בְּפָנֵיהֶם	מִכָּל	אֶל יְבִיָּהֶם	אֶת	כָּל	אֶל יְבִיָּהֶם
before	H3605	all their enemies	H853	H3605	all their enemies
H6440		H341			H341
					delivered
					H5414
יְהוָה ה	בְּיָדָם:				
And the LORD	into their hand				
H3068	H3027				

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 11:23 (References Lord): So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war.

Hebrews 4:9 (Parallel theme): There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

Exodus 23:31 (Parallel theme): And I will set thy bounds from the Red sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river: for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee.