

The Land Covenant

Just before entering the Promised Land, the chiefs of the twelve tribes of Israel were sent to spy on and survey the land; however, fearful of observed fortified cities and their inhabitants, all but one advised against entering the Land (Num 13:25-32). Because they did not listen to God, none of the Israelites over the age of 20, who left Egypt, would see the Promised Land and, all but three individuals (Moses, Joshua, and Caleb) from this first generation out of Egypt, died during the 40-year wanderings in the desert (Num 14:22-24).

1. Who did God make the covenant with, and where and when was it made in comparison to the Mosaic Covenant?

These are the terms of the covenant the Lord commanded Moses to make with the Israelites in Moab, in addition to the covenant he had made with them at Horeb. (Deut 29:1, NIV)

Carefully follow the terms of this covenant, so that you may prosper in everything you do. All of you are standing today in the presence of the Lord your God—your leaders and chief men, your elders and officials, and all the other men of Israel, together with your children and your wives, and the foreigners living in your camps who chop your wood and carry your water. You are standing here in order to enter into a covenant with the Lord your God, a covenant the Lord is making with you this day and sealing with an oath, to confirm you this day as his people, that he may be your God as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I am making this covenant, with its oath, not only with you who are standing here with us today in the presence of the Lord our God but also with those who are not here today. (Deut 29:9-15, NIV)

2. The Greek title “Deuteronomy” is a translation of two Hebrew words for “Copy of the Law.” Search the word “land” in a concordance. Which book of the Pentateuch used the word “land” the most?

See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the Lord my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.” What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him? And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today? (Deut 4:5-8, NIV)

3. What are the differences you observe between the Land Covenant and the Mosaic Covenant? Discuss your observations and conclusions.

Context:

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Leave this place, you and the people you brought up out of Egypt, and go up to the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants.' I will send an angel before you and drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way." (Ex 33:1-3, NIV)

Now, Israel, hear the decrees and laws I am about to teach you. Follow them so that you may live and may go in and take possession of the land the Lord, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the Lord your God that I give you. (Deut 4:1-2, NIV)

Disobedience, not only results in God's curses (Deut 28:15-63), but culminates in:

Then the Lord will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship other gods—gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your ancestors have known. Among those nations you will find no repose, no resting place for the sole of your foot. There the Lord will give you an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart. You will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day, never sure of your life. In the morning you will say, "If only it were evening!" and in the evening, "If only it were morning!"—because of the terror that will fill your hearts and the sights that your eyes will see. The Lord will send you back in ships to Egypt on a journey I said you should never make again. There you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy you. (Deut 28:64-68, NIV)

All the nations will ask: "Why has the Lord done this to this land? Why this fierce, burning anger?" And the answer will be: "It is because this people abandoned the covenant of the Lord, the God of their ancestors, the covenant he made with them when he brought them out of Egypt. They went off and worshiped other gods and bowed down to them, gods they did not know, gods he had not given them. Therefore the Lord's anger burned against this land, so that he brought on it all the curses written in this book. In furious anger and in great wrath the Lord uprooted them from their land and thrust them into another land, as it is now." (Deut 29:24-28, NIV)

The promise of blessing when you obey with all your heart and all your soul:

When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come on you and you take them to heart wherever the Lord your God disperses you among the nations, and when you and your children return to the Lord your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the Lord your God will gather you and bring you back. He will bring you to the land that belonged to your ancestors, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors. The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live. (Deut 30:1-6, NIV)

4. Circumcision is first introduced as a sign of the covenant between God and Abraham and his descendants (Gen 17:9-13). The Land Covenant introduces circumcision of the heart as a promise of blessing for those who obey and their descendants (Deut 30:6). What is this circumcision of the heart of the Believer and his descendants? What do you observe in these verses about the New Covenant?

“As for me, this is my covenant with them,” says the Lord. “My Spirit, who is on you, will not depart from you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will always be on your lips, on the lips of your children and on the lips of their descendants—from this time on and forever,” says the Lord. (Isa 59:21, NIV)

“This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel
after that time,” declares the Lord.

I will put my law in their minds
and write it on their hearts.

I will be their God,
and they will be my people.” (Jer 31:33, NIV)

The Land Covenant Teacher Notes

Just before entering the Promised Land, the chiefs of the twelve tribes of Israel were sent to spy on and survey the land; however, fearful of observed fortified cities and their inhabitants, all but one advised against entering the Land (Num 13:25-32). Because they did not listen to God, none of the Israelites over the age of 20, who left Egypt, would see the Promised Land and, all but three individuals (Moses, Joshua, and Caleb) from this first generation out of Egypt, died during the 40-year wanderings in the desert (Num 14:22-24).

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Help the student with his observation. Encourage him to underline the passage that answers the question.

Who is the covenant made with? Encourage the student to underline: "I am making this covenant, with its oath, not only with you who are standing here with us today in the presence of the Lord our God but also with those who are not here today."

Answer: The covenant is with the descendants of Abraham both present and not and including foreigners.

When? Answer: The covenant was made 40 years after the initial Mosaic Covenant.

Where? Encourage the student to underline: Moab and Horeb.

Answer: The Mosaic Covenant was made on Mt. Sinai which was a mountain within the group of mountains called Horeb. The Land Covenant was made east of Jordan in the territory of Moab.

2. The Greek title "Deuteronomy" is a translation of two Hebrew words for "Copy of the Law." Search the word "land" in a concordance. Which book of the Pentateuch used the word "land" the most?

See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the Lord my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him? And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today? (Deut 4:5-8, NIV)

Help the student use an online concordance. For example, go to Biblegateway.com and, in the search bar, type in "land." The search result should be very obvious.

3. What are the differences you observe between the Land Covenant and the Mosaic Covenant? Discuss your observations and conclusions.

Context:

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Leave this place, you and the people you brought up out of Egypt, and go up to the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants.' I will send an angel before you and drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way." (Ex 33:1-3, NIV)

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Ask the student what they see when the land is mentioned. With the Exodus, the nation of Israel is encouraged to **"go up to the land."** In Deuteronomy, after the first generation has died during the 40 years in the wilderness, the nation of Israel is encouraged to **"take possession of the land."**

Disobedience, not only results in God's curses (Deut 28:15-63), but culminates in:

Then **the Lord will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship other gods**—gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your ancestors have known. Among those nations **you will find no repose, no resting place for the sole of your foot.** There **the Lord will give you an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart. You will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day, never sure of your life.** In the morning you will say, "If only it were evening!" and in the evening, "If only it were morning!"—because of the terror that will fill your hearts and the sights that your eyes will see. **The Lord will send you back in ships to Egypt** on a journey I said you should never make again. There **you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves**, but no one will buy you. (Deut 28:64-68, NIV)

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Explain to the student that when the Mosaic Covenant was first discussed, God never mentioned the expulsion from the Land. While God's curses included this possibility, the experience of the first generation's apostasy and resulting 40 year wandering judgment provided an example to the second generation of what happens when one disobeys and fails in their covenant commitments.

To help the student understand the culmination of God's curses and elaboration of the Mosaic Covenant, have the class list the results on a chalk board (or something similar). The bold text in the above passage is essentially what the student should observe. Allow time for the student to question and discuss what the results mean.

The promise of blessing when you obey with all your heart and all your soul:

When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come on you and you take them to heart wherever the Lord your God disperses you among the nations, and when you and your children return to the Lord your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, then the Lord your **God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you** and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the Lord your **God will gather you and bring you back. He will bring you to the land that belonged to your ancestors, and you will take possession of it.** He will **make you more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors.** The Lord your **God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants**, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live. (Deut 30:1-6, NIV)

Specific to the expulsion and loss of the Promised Land, the Land Covenant expands on the blessings of the Mosaic Covenant. Help the student carefully observe the blessings by listing each one on a class board. The bold text above is essentially what he should see.

The blessing that is distinctly different from the Mosaic Covenant is God circumcising the heart of the Believer and his descendants.

4. Circumcision is first introduced as a sign of the covenant between God and Abraham and his descendants (Gen 17:9-13). The Land Covenant introduces God's circumcision of the heart as a promise of blessing for those who obey and their descendants (Deut 30:6). What is this circumcision of the heart of the Believer and his descendants? What do you observe in these verses about the New Covenant?

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"This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the Lord.

I will put my law in their minds
and write it on their hearts.

I will be their God,
and they will be my people." (Jer 31:33, NIV)

Explain to the student that while Moses exhorts the nation of Israel, "circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer" (Deut 10:16, NIV), God promises in the Land Covenant that He will circumcise the heart of the Believer!

Ask the student what he observes in the two passages pertaining to the New Covenant:

God promises the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Through this indwelling of God's Spirit, the Believer will have God's law on his mind and heart.

God chose and made a unilateral covenant to be God to Abraham and those who meet His requirements of holiness, those covenant keepers of Abraham will be His people.