

GILEAD AND LEBANON

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In Genesis 12:1, God called Abram to leave his country and family and go to a land that He would show unto him. Abram, at the age of 75, obeyed God and departed from Haran, and God brought him to the land of Canaan (Gen 12:2-6). *“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”* (Gen 12:7). God later told Abram that it would be many centuries before his descendants would be given the land of Canaan (Gen 15:13-16). After this time in Egypt had passed, God spoke to Moses out of the burning bush about the fulfillment of His promise to Abraham: *“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”* (Exod 3:8). This good land of Canaan would be Israel’s home for the duration of the Old Covenant. This land would also come to symbolize God’s favor and blessings.

Lands of plenty

Gilead and Lebanon are included in Israel’s inheritance, and represent glorious lands of plenty. The richness of Gilead is first mentioned in the Bible in Genesis 37:25, when the Ishmaelites came from there *“with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt.”* Joseph was then sold to these merchantmen by his brothers. Gilead was located on the east side of the Jordan river, and was found to be “a place for cattle” (Num 32:1). It was therefore given to the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh for their possession according to their request (Num 32; Deut 2:36; 3:8-16; Josh 12:6-7; 13:7-12,24-25,29-31; 17:5-6; 22:9,13,15,32; Judg 20:1; Psa 60:7; 108:8). There are many other scriptural references that attest to the blessedness of Gilead (see 1 Chr 5:9; Song 4:1; 6:5; Jer 8:22; 46:11; 50:19; Mic 7:14). Lebanon, to the north of Israel, was also known as a rich land (Song 4:8,11,15; 5:15; 7:4; Isa 35:2; 60:13; Hos 14:6-7). Lebanon was especially known for its great cedar trees (Judg 9:15; 1 Kgs 4:33; 2 Kgs 19:23; Psa 29:5; 92:12; 104:16; Isa 2:13; 14:8). Although we may typically think of Lebanon as a separate nation from Israel, it was actually part of the land that God promises and ultimately gave to Israel for an inheritance, extending all the way to the Euphrates river (Deut 1:7; 11:24-25; Josh 1:3-6; 11:16-17; 13:5-6; 1 Kgs 4:20-21; 9:19; 2 Chr 8:6).

The king’s house of Judah

Jeremiah 22:6 says, *“For thus saith the Lord unto the king’s house of Judah; Thou art Gilead unto me, and the head of Lebanon.”* Thus, God said that, to Him, the king’s house of Judah was like these blessed lands. The royal house of Judah, the house of David, was precious and blessed in God’s sight. God loved David greatly because David loved the Lord, was a man after God’s own

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(continued)

heart and fulfilled all of His will (1 Sam 13:14; 1 Kgs 14:8; 15:5; Acts 13:22). Because of David's obedience, God established David on his throne (2 Sam 5:12; 1 Chr 14:2) and promised to make his house sure for his descendants (2 Sam 7:5-29; 1 Kgs 2:12,24,45-46; 9:2-5; 1 Chr 17:7-27; 22:10; 28:7; 2 Chr 7:18; 13:4-5,8; 17:3-5). Beginning with David's son, Solomon, God was often displeased with David's descendants who sat on his throne, but he continually spared the house of David for David's sake (1 Kgs 11:11-13,32-34; 15:1-5; 2 Kgs 8:16-19; 19:34; 20:5-6). In this way, the king's house of Judah was to God like Gilead and Lebanon. Nevertheless, in spite of God's love for David and all the great things He did for David's sake, there was a point where the Lord was no longer willing to spare wicked Judah and Jerusalem from destruction. Because of the continued wickedness of Judah and Jerusalem, God told Zedekiah king of Judah, "*Yet surely I will make thee a wilderness, and cities which are not inhabited*" (Jer 22:6). In Jeremiah 11:1-5, God sent Jeremiah to remind of the people of the covenant He had made with them, and how He fulfilled His promise "*to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as it is this day.*" The Lord then described the history of rebellion on the part of Judah and Jerusalem (Jer 11:6-10). Jeremiah 6:11-13 says, "*Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them. Then shall the cities of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem go, and cry unto the gods unto whom they offer incense: but they shall not save them at all in the time of their trouble. For according to the number of thy cities were thy gods, O Judah; and according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem have ye set up altars to that shameful thing, even altars to burn incense unto Baal.*"

What will we do?

In the New Testament, we have "a better covenant, which was established upon better promises" (Heb 8:6). Through Christ, we have been given "exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Pet 1:4). Ephesians 1:3 says, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.*" No physical land on earth compares to the blessings we have today as Christians. The question is, Are we going to be like Judah and Jerusalem who forsook the Lord, or will we serve Him like David did? Do we despise God's goodness towards us (Rom 2:4-6)? Hebrews 2:1-3 says, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"