

What is the significance of the land of Canaan in the Bible?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/land-of-Canaan.html>

The land of Canaan in the Bible refers to the ancient geographical area God promised to give to Abraham and his descendants. It is not merely the land where the Israelites would live, but the sworn inheritance of God's chosen people: "The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God" (Genesis 17:8; see also Exodus 6:4; Leviticus 25:38; Deuteronomy 32:49; 1 Chronicles 16:18; Psalm 105:11).

Where is Canaan now? The boundaries of the ancient land of Canaan included territory on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea west of the Jordan River, which today encompasses modern Lebanon, portions of southern Syria, and Israel.

Noah's grandson was Canaan, the son of Ham, from whom the Canaanite peoples originated (Genesis 9:18). The Canaanite race was cursed probably because of the sin of Ham against his father, Noah (Genesis 9:25-26). The Bible does not specify the sin of Ham (in which Canaan may have been involved), but the act was disgraceful enough for God to pronounce judgment on Canaan's descendants, the Canaanites.

Canaanite is also a term used to designate the Northwest Semitic languages of the people living in the land of Canaan.

When the Israelites led by Moses arrived at Canaan, they found the inhabitants of the land to be mighty people, giants even, with many large, fortified cities (Numbers 13:28). The Canaanites worshiped numerous foreign deities, and their religion and

culture were known to be extremely immoral and wicked (Genesis 10:19; Exodus 13:5; Leviticus 18:27; Judges 1).

Canaan was also an exceptionally fertile region, described in the Bible as “a land flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:17; Numbers 13:27).

In Deuteronomy 7:1, as Israel was poised to take possession of the land of Canaan under Joshua’s leadership, seven separate nations inhabited the region: Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Gergashites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites.

Scripture depicts the people of Canaan as idolatrous and superstitious (Deuteronomy 29:17). God warned the Israelites not to follow in the detestable practices of the Canaanites: “When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, be very careful not to imitate the detestable customs of the nations living there. For example, never sacrifice your son or daughter as a burnt offering. And do not let your people practice fortune-telling, or use sorcery, or interpret omens, or engage in witchcraft, or cast spells, or function as mediums or psychics, or call forth the spirits of the dead” (Deuteronomy 18:9-11, NLT; see also Leviticus 18:26).

God’s chosen people were to conquer the Canaanite nations, utterly destroying them and occupying their land. They were to show them no mercy, make no treaties with them, or intermarry with them (Deuteronomy 7:23-24; Joshua 23:12; Judges 2:2). God strictly warned Israel, “Do not bow down before their gods or worship them or follow their practices. You must demolish them and break their sacred stones to pieces” (Exodus 23:24; see also Deuteronomy 7:5, 25).

Moses encouraged Joshua and all of Israel not to fear the Canaanites. The same God that had brought them out of Egypt would take them into the Promised Land: “Be strong and courageous! For you will lead these people into the land that the LORD swore to their ancestors he would give them” (Deuteronomy 31:7, NLT; see also Deuteronomy 7:17-18).

The land of Canaan beautifully signifies the believer’s blessings in Jesus Christ. Some Bible readers mistakenly view Canaan—the Promised Land—as a portrait of heaven. But Christians do not have to go to war to gain entrance into heaven. Conquering Canaan represents living the victorious Christian life, which involves hard-fought battles as well as abundant blessings. Israel’s conquest of the land of Canaan also symbolizes entering into God’s rest, which is the victory won for believers through faith in Jesus Christ (Hebrews 4-5).

Joshua led Israel into the land of Canaan and thus became a type of Christ. It is Jesus who takes believers into the place of spiritual rest and victory and gives them their promised inheritance. As Joshua assigned the tribes of Israel their allotted inheritance of land, so Jesus has granted us our spiritual inheritance (Ephesians 1:3-23).