

The Promised Land

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[0 : 00] I'd like us to turn to Genesis chapter 15. And I'm going to just read the first seven verses.

Genesis 15 from verse 1. After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision. Fear not, Abram, I am your shield, your reward shall be very great.

But Abram said, O Lord God, what will you give me? For I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus. And Abram said, Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.

And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, This man shall not be your heir. Your very own son shall be your heir. And he brought him outside and said, Look toward heaven and number the stars, if you're able to number them.

Then he said to him, So shall your offspring be. And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness. And he said to him, I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chordains to give you this land to possess.

[1 : 28] Now, we read from the very beginning of the Bible and from the very end. And perhaps I should have said when we were reading it that I want us to try and notice the similarities that are clear between the first couple of chapters of the Bible and the last couple of chapters of the Bible.

It's quite amazing that in between Genesis 1 and Revelation 22 lies 66 books and numerous different authors and generations after generation of history.

And yet between these two bookends, if you like, there are very, very clear themes running through. There is one great message. And that's made very clear by the fact that what you see at the very beginning is actually very similar to what you see at the very end.

For example, at the very beginning you see an emphasis on family. God made Adam and provided him with a wife and told them to have children.

And so family lies at the very heart of God's creation plan. And then at the very end of the Bible you read about the marriage supper of the Lamb.

[2 : 44] You read the language of the bride and the bridegroom. So family is a theme you see at the very beginning and at the very end. Kingdom is another theme.

You see God establishing his kingdom at the very beginning. He creates everything. He is in control. And he delegates authority to Adam and says, So kingdom is a key theme at the very start. And if you go to the very end you see exactly the same thing. You see God speaking from the throne. And the emphasis is again very much that God is king.

And you see also the theme of the fact that God is dwelling with his people. The Garden of Eden was a garden but it was also a temple. Because a temple is simply a place where God dwells with us.

And that's exactly what we had in Eden. God and man together. And when you go to the very end again you see those wonderful verses that we read. Where there's no temple building in the New Jerusalem.

[3 : 46] Because the whole thing is the temple. Because we again are in God's presence. God is dwelling with his people. So it's an interesting exercise to do. You read at the very start of the Bible.

And when you read at the very end you see a lot of similarities. A lot of things that tie together. And these things don't just appear at the beginning and at the end.

They run through the whole Bible. Themes of kingdom. Themes of covenant. Themes of temple. They run through the whole of scripture.

And one of these themes is what I want us to focus on tonight. And that is the theme of land. The whole message of the Bible is a great narrative about land.

There's many other things running through the whole Bible. But land is a key, key theme. And it's mentioned in many places. But we read from Genesis 15 where we read about God's promise to Abraham.

[4 : 49] I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess. Land is a wonderful biblical theme.

And so I want us just to look at it together for a wee while tonight. And we're going to ask three very simple questions. What happened in the Old Testament? What happened in the New Testament? And what does this mean for us? And as we go through, we will be doing some extra readings as we go through. Because I suppose if we're trying to go through the whole Bible in half an hour, we have to be quite quick.

But we will touch on some readings as we go through to try and just see how this theme develops through scripture. So what happened in the Old Testament? Well, at the very beginning, God created the world.

And so he created the universe. He created the world in particular. And he placed humanity in it. And for that reason, the whole of creation really was the land where God's people were to dwell.

[5 : 55] That was where he placed Adam. That is where he wanted them to be. In Genesis 1, God blessed them. And God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.

And have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth.

And every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. So although God placed Adam in Eden, Eden really functioned like a base. Because God wanted them to expand from there.

To fill the earth. To explore the earth. And to care for and to rule over the land. So if you like, at the very beginning, the land was the whole creation.

That was what God had provided. And the clear emphasis of Genesis 2 is that it was beautiful.

[6 : 54] You read about Eden in Genesis 2 and you read just, you try to picture it in your mind. You picture these beautiful stones and jewels that it speaks about.

And the rivers flowing and the trees and the fruit and everything. And you imagine it just must have been stunning. God provided a beautiful land for his people.

But as I'm sure you know, it didn't last. Because in Genesis 3, Adam sinned and broke the instruction that God gave him. And two things happened.

Humanity was excluded from Eden. And so there was this separation. Man and Adam and Eve, humanity, were banished from the garden.

And this focal point of the land was now out of bounds. That great beautiful place that we had, we lost. So that we were excluded from Eden.

[7 : 52] And secondly, the whole of creation was cursed. And Genesis 3 makes that clear. To Adam God said, because you've listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree which I commanded you, you shall not eat of it.

Cursed is the ground because of you. In pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you. And you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground.

For out of it you are taken. For you are dust. And to dust you shall return. And so here we see this picture of the fact that the creation, the land, is cursed.

It's not just Adam affected by his sin. Everything is. And we still see the effects of that today very clearly. And then as we read later in Genesis 3, God drove out the man.

And on the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life. So you had this beautiful land, but because of sin you are excluded and there is a curse.

[9 : 01] Now, Adam's sin had a devastating effect on creation. Because if you read Genesis chapter 4, 5 and 6, you see that everything is disintegrating.

The world very quickly becomes a mess. And morality just plummets. Everything is falling apart. And for that reason, God brings judgment on the land.

What was it that he did? It was the flood. We read, in the days of Noah, God brought judgment on the land.

And in many ways the flood is kind of like a reversal of creation. Because remember what happened at creation? God separated the waters from the land. At the flood, it was the river. The waters covered the land once again. And God is emphasizing that his response to sin will be judgment. He has said if you sin, you will be judged.

[10:05] And that's exactly what takes place. So there's this great act of judgment on the land. And so I hope you see the pattern that's emerging. Things are going down. Started off great in Eden.

But progressively, very quickly, things are getting worse and worse and worse. So God judges the land. But at the same time, he shows that he is still committed to his creation.

He is still committed to his land. Because God's purpose remains the same. That's why he tells Noah to do exactly what he told Adam to do.

God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. So God's agenda is still the same. He wants Noah to do what Adam was supposed to do.

He still wants to see his land thrive and flourish. But sin has marred things and spoiled things. So we learn two things from the flood.

[11:06] One, that sin will be judged. But two, God has not given up on his land.

But as I said, things are going down and getting worse. And after the flood, things don't start to get better. They actually get even worse. And that brings us to the real low point, which is Genesis chapter 11 and the Tower of Babel.

Now, that's a fascinating event. Because there, all the people of the world come together to rebel against God.

We can read a few verses from Genesis 11. They said, Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.

And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of man had built. And the Lord said, Behold, they are one people, and they all have one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them.

[12:09] And come, let us go down there and confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building a city.

Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth, and there the Lord dispersed them over the face of all the earth.

Now, do you see what's happening here? God's plan was that humanity should fill the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply in a righteous way.

That was God's plan. But instead, in Genesis 11, humanity is scattered across the earth in confusion and disunity.

And so the whole creation was meant to be humanity's land in beautiful harmony, but now the whole of creation is no man's land, and it's all in chaos.

[13:13] And so you've got this really, really clear pattern from Genesis 3 to Genesis 11, where things start off good, and they go down, down, down, down, down, and Genesis 11 is the real low point, because everything that man was meant to be, they are the opposite of it.

Scattered, divided, confused, and in rebellion against God. And it is at this point that God begins his plan of restoration.

And that is why Genesis 12 begins with God graciously choosing Abraham. And what does God say to Abraham? In Genesis 12, Now the Lord said to Abraham, Go from your country, and your kindred, and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you.

And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you, I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

So God makes a covenant with Abraham, and one of the key things about that covenant is the promise of the land. And that's why the Old Testament talks so much about the promised land.

[14:30] God promised Abraham that this area, which we refer to as Aisios area, I suppose, the modern Middle East area, is the land promised to Abraham.

This is to be their inheritance. This is the promised land. So, at the beginning the plan was for everything to be the land.

But it all went the wrong way. And so now God's starting his plan, and it's focused on a particular land, and on a particular area.

And God enters this covenant with Abraham. But as part of that covenant relationship, covenant relationship, God must be trusted. That's why Genesis 15, 6 says, he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

Okay, so we're going very, very fast here, but I hope you're keeping up okay, and following okay. God begins his plan of restoration with Abraham. And then we go through the rest of Genesis, we come to the end of Genesis, and Abraham's grandson, Jacob, who was also called Israel, goes to Egypt.

[15 : 36] And there you have Jacob's family, the Israel family. They grow into a great nation, but as you know, they were forced into slavery. And that brings us to the next big land moment of the Old Testament, which is the Exodus.

God brings the people out of the land of Kirsh, and out of the land of slavery, and in order for them to enter the land of blessing, the land flowing with milk and honey.

And so that's God's plan. He wants to bring them out, and he wants to give them the land. But again, the same principle applies. God must be trusted. God's covenant promises must be trusted. And so the people came out of Egypt, and they came to the brink of the promised land, and they were standing at the border, ready to look in, ready to enter, seeing what was there. They sent 12 spies in to see it, and 10 of them came back saying, we can't ever enter this land.

We can't do it. We can't possess it. And they were not trusting God. And therefore, Numbers 32, 13 says, The Lord's anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness 40 years, until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the Lord was gone.

[16 : 54] God was to be trusted, if they were going to get the land. But they didn't. So they had to wander for 40 years. After that, at the end of the 40 years, they begin to occupy the promised land.

That takes us to the book of Joshua. That's what we read about in Joshua. It's a triumphant moment. The people enter the land, and you read Joshua, and it's great, but then you read Judges, and everything starts to go wrong again, because the people are again failing to trust God.

They are not listening to him. They did not do what God commanded. He said, When you go into this land, drive out all the other inhabitants. This is to be your land. But they did not listen.

Judges 2.1 The angel of the Lord went up from Gergal to Bochum, and he said, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers, and said, I will never break my covenant with you, and you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land.

You shall break down their altars, but you have not obeyed my voice. What is this you have done? So now I say, I will not drive them out before you, but they shall become thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you.

[18 : 03] And so you've got this balance. God is promising them good gifts, promising them this land, but they're not listening, and they're rebelling. And God gives an incredibly clear warning that disobedience and unbelief will lead to the loss of the land.

Deuteronomy 4, 25, when your father's children and children's children have grown old in the land, when your father's children and children's children and have grown old in the land, if you act corruptly by making a carved image in the form of anything, and by doing what is evil in the sight of the Lord your God, so as to provoke them to anger, I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that you will soon utterly perish from the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess. You will not live long in it, but will be utterly destroyed, and the Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the Lord will drive you.

So what's happening there? They're about to enter the land, and God is warning them, trust me, obey me, follow me, and you will have the land. Rebel, and you will lose the land.

It's a very, very clear message. So, we're at the end of the book of churches. We come into Samuel, and we see the monarchy established, and there was a bad start with Saul, but then David followed, and then Solomon, and that brings the high point in the history of the Old Testament in terms of the land.

[19 : 30] 1 Kings 4.20, Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by the sea. They ate and drank and were happy. Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines, to the border of Egypt.

They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life. There was the high point. They had the land. They dwelt there. Things were the way they were meant to be, but it didn't last long, and things quickly go downhill.

With Solomon, they had the whole promised land. Solomon's son was Rehoboam, and when he became king, the land divided, and it split in two.

And again, and again, and again, through the history of the Old Testament, the people turn away from God, and eventually, what God warned in Deuteronomy comes to pass, they lose the land. 722 BC, the northern kingdom was conquered by Assyria, and 140 odd years later, in 586 BC, the southern kingdom is taken into exile by the Babylonians.

[20 : 37] And so do you see what happened? They were promised the land, they got the land, they turned away from God, and they lost the land.

And the people were devastated. By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion.

And the main message of the Old Testament is one of failure. But, whilst that was happening, God was still telling his people through his prophets that he had not abandoned his covenant promises. Exactly the same as it was with Noah. The earth, the whole creation was judged, but God did not abandon his plans, he did not abandon his promises, and exactly the same was through here, because he told the people that a remnant shall return, a remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob to the mighty God.

And a remnant did return. And that's what we read about in Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. And so there was a partial return, but it was not a full restoration, because the real message of the prophets was for something much, much bigger.

[22 : 03] The prophets were not simply talking about a restoration of the promised land in the Middle East. They prophesied a restoration of the whole of creation.

Isaiah 65, 17, For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind, but be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create.

For behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy and her people to be a gladness. So the Old Testament reveals two things. It reveals, first, that the people of Israel failed in terms of their own dealings with the land.

But the Old Testament also tells us that God's plans are much bigger. God's plans are not just for the land of Israel. They are for the whole of the land of creation.

So, that was the Old Testament very, very fast. What happened in the New Testament? Well, as we said, from Genesis 12 onwards in the Old Testament, the land concept is confined to a particular part of creation, to Canaan, Palestine, Israel, whatever we would call it, that area that we know of, the promised land.

[23 : 20] In the New Testament, this changes. And the key point is that in the New Testament, we begin to see a spread effect. effect. The New Testament begins with a great announcement that the kingdom of God has come.

God's king, the Messiah, Jesus Christ, has come. He has come to fulfill God's promise. He has come to put everything right. And the same principle still applies.

God must be trusted. And just as the Old Testament prophesied, there is going to be a spread effect in terms of the land. To begin with, the focus is on the promised land, that geographical area in the Middle East.

Jesus ministered in that area. That's where virtually all the events in the Gospel takes place. And leading up to the cross, that is where Jesus is focused, that narrow point of land in the Middle East. But at the cross, Jesus wins victory over sin. And he conquers the kingdom of evil and he is exalted as king over all the earth.

[24 : 28] and from that point, things start to spread out. And Jesus hints about that in his ministry. In John 4, in the discussion with the woman at the well, she says, our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.

That's talking about a narrow part of the land. Jesus said to a woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.

Jesus is hinting that his plans are much bigger than just for the eastern end of the Mediterranean. He's saying it's not about Jerusalem, it's not about Sumeria.

In fact, Jesus' plans are that the meek shall inherit the earth. So at the cross, Jesus defeats sin once and for all and now he reigns over the whole earth.

Now what happens next? This is very exciting, I think. At Pentecost, what happens at Pentecost? All the nations of the world have come together in Jerusalem.

[25 : 40] People from all different places have come together and they are at Jerusalem. And there, they share in the blessing of the Holy Spirit being poured out.

And what does God do? He unites their language so they understand each other. Now remember what happened all the way back in Genesis 11 in Babel?

He confused their languages. At Pentecost, he's putting that right. And from this point, things are spreading out. And if you read the book of Acts, there's this huge geographical emphasis.

Jesus says, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

And so Jesus, as king, is reversing the failure of the Old Testament kingdom. All the nations are being brought in and the low point of Babel is being reversed by the amazing events of Pentecost.

[26 : 42] And so Jesus is initiating this spread effect that no longer is just this area in Palestine the place where God is worshipped. And no longer is this small country the place where God's people dwell.

But it is for all nations, for all people. But not only that, Jesus' victory on the cross means that the curse on creation is being undone.

and the wonderful point is that the land is being restored. And Paul speaks about this in Romans 8 where he tells us that creation is longing for this to take place.

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subject to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. This is where we see that the ultimate goal of the New Testament is a new creation.

[27 : 51] That's why Genesis, why Revelation 21 begins with the words, Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth have passed away.

And I hope you can see the spread effect that is being emphasised here. In the Old Testament, our land was part of creation. But in the New Testament, our land is to be all of creation.

And as the gospel spreads, God's people are filling the whole earth. We are being fruitful and multiplying, filling the earth as Adam was supposed to do in the first place.

And ultimately, the whole new creation will be our promised land. That's why Jesus said in Matthew 25, Then the king will say to those on his right, Come, you who are blessed by my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

world. The Old Testament begins big and it narrows right down to a land that was lost. The New Testament begins in that lost land and it spreads and spreads and spreads and spreads and culminates in the new heavens and the new earth.

[29 : 12] This great pattern of reversal in terms of the land. Now, you've been so patient because that has bombarded you with information and I hope that you've been able to follow that okay.

In the five or ten minutes left, let's ask the question, what does this mean for you? Our aim tonight is not just to fill you with a whistle-stop tour of the Bible in terms of land.

What does it mean for you? Why should we think about this? Why should we know about this?

Well, this whole theme of the land has incredibly important implications for us now because first of all we have been reminded that the whole earth is the Lord's.

The whole earth is his. He is the king and this is his creation and that means that we as God's people have the amazing privilege of enjoying his creation.

We go outside and we walk along our island on a beautiful day and we worship the God who has made it and we enjoy the splendor of his creation.

[30 : 24] And as Christians all of life is to be lived to the glory of God. Every part of life is his and for him. That's why Paul says in Colossians 3.17 whatever you do in word or deed do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks to God the Father through him.

So we are living our lives as citizens of God's land and in everything we do every single day we have the opportunity to glorify and enjoy God.

And it's such an important reminder that faith is not part of our lives. Faith is our whole lives and everything is to the glory of God. If you like being outside go outside and praise God for his creation.

If you like painting paint things to the glory of God. If you're musical play music to the glory of God. If you like gardening work and keep the ground to the glory and honour of God.

Whatever your job is whatever your hobbies are whatever you are learning whatever you are good at doing you are doing that in God's land. And so we do it for him and we do it to his glory and we enjoy the amazing blessings that he has given us.

[31 : 40] So we enjoy immense privileges as citizens of God's land but with privilege comes responsibility. And that's why if you look at the Old Testament there were always ethical obligations associated with the land.

In other words the land was the place where God was to be obeyed. The land of Israel was supposed to stand out as a light to all the nations because they were to be different.

They were to be different from the other nations. That's why they were to drive out the nations because they were there to be different. To stand out and to be a light to the whole world. And exactly the same is true of us.

We are to stand out as a light to everyone around us. We are to stand out by our conduct and most especially by our love.

By this all people will know you are my disciples if you have love for one another. And that's what makes Christians different from the world.

[32 : 48] We enjoy the land in obedience to God. Now many many people think that there's a contradiction between enjoyment and obedience. People think that to enjoy yourself you've got to do something bad.

But of course that is so untrue. because immorality brings no lasting enjoyment. And we know that ourselves. But through obedience means enjoying and discovering God's blessing in every part of our lives.

So we've got this practical benefit for us. We enjoy blessings and we live up to the responsibility given to us. but within our lives just now we still feel the effect of the curse.

Remember at the very beginning the land was cursed. And you and I still feel the effect of that. If your health is struggling or if you face challenges related to the land or if we see shortages of food we see disasters we see difficulties we see the fact that the effect of the curse is still affecting the land.

And we live in that tension and that difficulty and this is because for the Christian the main blessings of the land are still to come.

[34 : 27] 2 Peter 3.13 according to his promise we are waiting for the new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

That is now the promised land. The new heavens and the new earth and new land for God and his people.

And the question that immediately arises in our minds is what will it be like? What's it going to be like? The new heavens and the new earth what will it be like? Well at one level there will be continuation.

It's a new earth. That means it won't be totally different. There will be things that we recognize. There will be things about this earth that still seem similar.

It is a new earth. It won't be totally different. There will be similarities in exactly the same way. You look back at Eden. There were things in Eden that we still have.

[35 : 25] Trees, rivers, plants, fruit. fruit. We still have these things. There will be continuity in that regard. There will also be newness because it's a new earth.

In a lot of ways we don't know exactly what it will be like. The New Testament does tell us some of these things that await God's people. In many ways I want this to be the way you end your communion weekend looking forward to the promised land that God has got for his people.

And we learn three or four things from the New Testament about what this promised land is going to be like. First of all it's going to be a land of astounding beauty.

We read in Revelation 21 and let's read what it says. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth

topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst.

Now I'm no expert in jewels but they all sound beautiful. And did you notice that that is just the foundation? That's just the foundation of this promised land.

[36 : 47] It will be a place of astonishing beauty. You think of how beautiful this cursed world can be. How beautiful will the new world be?

So it's a land of astounding beauty. Secondly, it will be a land of community. Because remember what happened at the very beginning? There was exclusion and separation with the curse. That is going to be undone and the curse will be gone. It will be a place of wonderful community. That's why Revelation describes it as a city. Now when I hear the word city, I tend to think of a concrete jungle.

But that's the wrong way to understand it. Because the emphasis in Revelation is not on concrete. When it uses the term city, it is emphasized in the fact that it will be a place where we are together. A place of community. A place of togetherness. Christ. And so if you are a Christian, you can look forward to entering that promised land with all of your brothers and sisters in Jesus.

[37 : 57] Now you think about how wonderful that will be. And you think about every fellow believer who is no longer with you, who you desperately miss, and who you long to see, they will be fellow citizens with you in that city.

It's a place of community, a place of togetherness. It will be a land of purpose for us all. Some people ask the question, will we work in heaven? I think the answer must be yes.

Because if you look at God's pre-fall command to Adam, it was to work and to keep the garden. And the new heavens and the new earth will be a wonderful place of learning, of discovery, of purpose, of satisfaction.

Exploring the old creation is amazing. So just imagine how amazing it will be to explore the new creation. It will be a wonderful place of purpose and satisfaction.

It will also be a land of rest. And that's one of the big emphases of scripture. God promises his land as a resting place for his people.

[39 : 14] And that means an end to all of the awful things that spoil this life. And it means perfect peace, everlasting joy, and total, total security.

You know how wonderful it feels to rest. rest. When you are under pressure, when you are stressed, when you are pushed, when things are weighing you down, you long for rest.

The promised land of the new heavens and the new earth will be a land of rest. It will also be a land of harmony with nature, because the curse will be undone.

Remember, at the curse, the earth brought forth thorns and thistles, and so the emphasis there is on hostility between ourselves and creation. That's the curse, and the curse will be reversed, and there will be harmony with nature, which is why Isaiah says, the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together, and a little child shall lead them.

The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox, the nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the wind child shall put his hand in the adder's den, they shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

[40 : 43] And exactly the same thing is emphasized in Revelation 4, the 21 verse 4, where we have the beautiful words, that he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more, for the former things have passed away.

Now you think about every way in which the curse has affected your life. You think of every way in which the curse is affecting your life today, or this week.

And that is probably especially true of us who are getting old. You think of how the curse has affected your body, and your strength, and your vitality, and your mind.

there will be none of these former things in the new creation. It will be a place of family, where we dwell together in harmony with one another.

It will be a land of worship and fellowship with God as we dwell in his holy temple. But most of all, most of all, this land will be our home.

[41 : 58] This land will be our home. That's what Jesus said. That's what Jesus meant when he said, if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, that where I am,

you may be also.

When you enter into the promised land as a believer, when you enter into the new heavens and the new earth, it won't be strange, you won't be out of place, it will be a homecoming.

In other words, it's a land where we all belong. And if you are a Christian, you have an indisputable right to this land.

It is yours, that is why the Bible calls it your inheritance. And do you see what God is promising? God has adopted you as his child, God has brought you into his family and now you are his heir. And this promised land is your inheritance.

[43 : 18] inheritance. And so when you arrive there, you are arriving where you belong. You are going to finally be home. The new creation is our homeland.

And that great spread effect that we've been trying to talk about will be complete. You will belong there as one of God's precious, precious children.

Now, please let these things rest in your mind. And please let them rest in your heart because this is where God's plans for you reach their climax.

You ask the question, what does God want for you? What does God want for you? Well, you can say God wants your sins to be forgiven. Well, that's true. God wants you to be part of his church. Well, that's true. God wants you to be sanctified and to become more holy.

Well, that's true. But God's plans for you are way bigger. He wants to give you the whole new creation as your home, as your inheritance, as his child for you to enjoy for all of eternity with no curse, with no tears, with no pain, with no sorrow, with perfect fellowship with one another, and perfect fellowship with God through Jesus Christ.

[44 : 48] That is yours if you are a Christian, and that is why as Christians, we should never be scared to die.

God is going to be far better in every way.

And so right through the whole Bible you have this promise of the land, and God is promising it to you, and the best is yet to come.

But the same principle still applies. God must be trusted.

And I hope that's what we all do. Amen. Let us