

# How the Bible fits together: LAND

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 07 August 2016

Preacher: Rev. Thomas Davis

[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Now last week we began a study as to how the whole Bible fits together. We spent some time looking at the very beginning of the Bible and then we spent a bit of time looking at the very end of the Bible and we noted that what we see at the very beginning is what we see at the very end. There are certain themes running through the whole of Scripture.

And in order to help us understand this we made a wee diagram that we have on the screens before us. And don't worry if you weren't here last week it's all fairly straightforward.

You've got the Old Testament and the New Testament. That's the bit running across the middle, the whole Bible. And at the very beginning of the Bible you can see God has established certain things. He placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. There they had a land in which to dwell. We see marriage established and they are commanded to have children. The family unit is created. We see that God and humanity dwell together in a temple. The Garden of Eden was the very first temple. We see God giving instructions to Adam, commandments which constitute God's law. Over it all is the fact that God has entered into a covenant relationship with Adam and Eve. And there God is establishing his kingdom. That's what we have at the very start. And these themes run right through Scripture. And in the Old Testament these things develop as a shadow or a prefigurement of what is going to come.

And that's why the diagram goes up the way at the cross because as you enter the New Testament and as Jesus comes and fulfills all of the Old Testament points towards, all these themes come to their fulfillment through Jesus Christ. And you go to Revelation chapter 21 and you see these same themes coming through in perfect consummation in the new heavens and the new earth. And for our study we are going to go through each one of these topics in more detail to see how they run through the Bible and to see how the whole Bible fits together. And tonight our focus is going to be on the land. Tonight we are looking at this great theme of land. And there are many places where we see this theme coming up. We read Genesis chapter 15 where God said to Abraham, I am the Lord who brought you out from ear of the call of James to give you this land to possess. And in order to study these themes we are going to just ask three very very simple questions. We are going to ask what happened in the Old Testament, what happened in the New Testament and what does this mean for us. Just very very simple time to see how it all pieces together. So first question, in terms of the land, what happened in the Old Testament? Well we are going to go through various events and there will be one or two extra readings because really if we are going to pick up the picture of what is happening in the whole Bible we do have to read a little bit more from various sections. So the readings will come up on the screen as we go through it and I hope that it will build up a picture as we go along. At the very beginning God created everything and when God created the world he placed humanity in it and so what happens there was creation itself was the land where humanity was to dwell. God had made the world, placed man in it, this was our land. And we see that emphasised in Genesis 1.28. God blessed them as Adam and Eve and 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 every living thing etc etc. God is saying to Adam and Eve, fill the earth, explore the earth, be in dominion or in authority, have a caring responsible rule over the earth. This earth is your land. So while we think of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden we should remember that Eden was in many ways like a base from which the whole world was to be explored. God said fill the earth, this is all yours. And so the whole of creation was the land that God provided for us and it was beautiful. It was perfect and you read the Garden of Eden and you read of all the imagery that's described, all the plants and the rivers and the jewels and you can imagine it as absolutely amazing. God placed humanity in a beautiful land. So that's stage one.

So what we're going to do is just to piece this together. At the very start of the Old Testament you have creation. That was the land where God wanted us to dwell. But as we know in Genesis chapter 3 Adam sinned. He disobeyed God's command and he immediately brought sin into the world. And when that happened two things occurred. Humanity was excluded from the Garden of Eden. There was separation. Man was cast out and so that focal point of the land, that place, that what really was a temple was now out of bounds. Humanity was not allowed in there. And so Adam and Eve were separated from Eden, excluded and the whole of creation was cursed. Thorns, thistles, cursed came upon the land. We'll read that in Genesis 3. God said because you've listened to the voice of your wife and you've eaten of the tree which I commanded you shall not eat of it. Cursed is the ground because of you in pain shall you eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth 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, you are dust.

[ 6 : 30 ] To dust you shall return. And then as we jump to the end it says he drove the man, drove out the man. And at the east of the Garden of Eden he placed cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life. So we've gone from creation where everything made was our land to exclusion and curse. We are separated from Eden and the whole of creation is cursed and spoiled. Now this is, we're still at the very beginning of the Bible but some very important things happen at the very start. If you read past Genesis 3 into Genesis 4, 5 and 6 you see that the effect of sin is devastating. Everything gets worse and worse and worse. Everything is disintegrating. It's not a gradual effect that sin has instantly. We see, Cain and Abel, Cain murders Abel and the same sort of pattern that carries on. Evil is just rife across creation. Everything is affected by sin.

And as a result God brings judgment upon the earth which of course was the flood. God brought judgment upon the land, upon this land, this world that he has made. And in many ways the flood is like a reversal of creation because that creation God separated the waters from the land. The waters were gathered into one place, the land was exposed. At the flood God is undoing that and the flood, the waters again cover the earth and judgment is delivered upon a sinful world. Now that tells us two things. It tells us that God's response to sin will be judgment. Sin must be judged. But it also shows us in the flood narrative that God is still committed to the land that he made because although the flood was devastating it was not an outright destruction of the world. Noah's family was preserved, humanity remained and God's purpose remains the same because if you look at Genesis 9 we see that

God tells Noah the very same thing that he told Adam. Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. God still wants all this world to be our land to enjoy. God has created it for us to dwell in. So the flood is telling us that sin will be judged and it's also telling us that God has not given up on his land. So this is the third stage of the pathway regarding the land. Creation, Curs, Flood. Now after the flood we're coming to Genesis chapter 10, Genesis chapter 11 and although God has not given up on creation the Curs is still there and the effect of sin's Curs remains and we see that humanity continues but so too does sin and in the aftermath of the flood things don't improve in fact things get even worse and the low point of it all is in Genesis chapter 11 where we read of the Tower of Babel.

We read that everybody came together in an act of rebellion against God. We read about that in Genesis 11. The people said come let us build ourselves a city in a tower with its top in the heavens let's make a name for ourselves lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth. They're they're rebelling against God. They say let's exalt ourselves.

Doesn't that sound like the modern day but anyway never mind. Same back then people are rebelling against God and God responds he comes down to see it and he says behold they are one people they have one language and this is only the beginning of what they'll do nothing that they've purpose to do will now be impossible for them. Come let us go down and confuse their language so 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 the city. Therefore the same was called Babel because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth and from there the Lord dispersed them over the face of all the earth. Now do you see what has happened? Instead of humanity filling the earth in a fruitful righteous way as God told Adam and as God then told Noah here we see that humanity is scattered across the earth in confusion and in disunity. The whole of creation was meant to be humanity's land but now the whole world is no man's land. People are scattered, people are hostile to one another, people are in rebellion against God, it is chaos. The Tower of Babel is a real low point in the history of humanity. People are rebellion against God and instead of the human race being one united God fearing, God honouring group, they are rebellion against

[ 12 : 04 ] God, they are in hostility to one another and they are scattered all over the place. The world has become no man's land. So that's the low point and from that low point God begins to act and God initiates his plan of restoration. Genesis chapter 12 is a big, big moment in the history of God's purposes because there he chooses Abraham and he begins his plan of restoration and when God came to Abraham what did he say? Let's see. Genesis 12, the Lord said to Abraham go from your country and from your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you and I'll make you a great nation. At the heart of God's promise to Abraham is the land. God is entering a covenant with Abraham and he is promising him this land and that's why the Old Testament goes on to talk so much about the promised land, the land that God promised to Abraham. This was to be the inheritance of the people. Now a really, really important point to note that we must emphasise here.

God has come to make this promise to Abraham. Leave Ur of the Chaldeans, come and inherit this land but in order to do that he must trust God and that's what we read in Genesis 15. He believed the Lord and he counted it to him as righteousness. In order to get these covenant blessings, God must be trusted. God expects to be trusted. So that's the next stage. God enters a covenant with Abraham, promises the land to Abraham. So we're still in Genesis where only 15 chapters into the Bible but a lot has happened. By the end of Genesis Abraham's grandson Jacob who was also known as Israel by this point goes to Egypt and there in Egypt the Jacob family or the Israel family or the children of Israel as the Bible often refers to them grows into a great nation but it is also forged into slavery and that brings us to the next big land moment in the history of the Bible, the Exodus. Here

God takes people out of the land of slavery and brings them into the land of blessing. It's a land flowing with milk and honey. It's a wonderful place. It's a land of privilege and blessing. God brings the people out of one land in order to bring them into another but again the same principle applies. God must be trusted because the people came out of Egypt and they made their way up towards the promised land. They were just about to enter it and as they were about to enter it they sent 12 spies into the land as I'm sure you will remember. You can read about it in Numbers and they went into the land. They went to see what it was like in order to prepare to enter it and when they came back 10 of the spies said we've got no chance. We'll never be able to take the land. They are giants. They are strong. Their cities are fortified. We will never be able to take possession of it and Caleb and Joshua were the two spies who said yes we can but everybody else said no we can't and the people listened to the 10. The people dispaired. The people said why did we ever leave Egypt? Why did we listen to God? They did not trust God and as Numbers 32 tells us 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.

God was to be trusted. They did not trust. Therefore their entry into the promised land was delayed for 40 years. Now that's the next stage, the Exodus. Now we're going through this very very quickly but I hope you're all keeping up okay. So we've reached the point where the children of Israel have come out of Egypt. They are waiting to inherit their land. They have to wait 40 years until that rebellious generation passes away. After 40 years the occupation of the promised land begins. That's what we read about in the book of Joshua and in many ways it's that triumphant moment in the Old Testament. The people enter into the promised land and they take possession at long last of what God promised to Abraham all those years ago. But almost immediately things start to go wrong and in fact from the very beginning they didn't fulfil God's command to drive out the inhabitants and whilst Joshua is a book of triumph, Judges, the book that comes after it is a book of absolute failure because again and again and again the people did not listen to God, the people turned away from him and the results were devastating. Judges 2 summarises it for us.

The angel of the Lord went up from Gilgall to Bochum and said, I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I swore to give you a father and said I'll never break my covenant with you. 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've done? So now I say I'll not drive them out before you but they'll become thorns in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you. If you go home and read the book of judges by the end of judges everything is a desperate mess. And so as the people enter into the land God gives them a clear warning that if they disobey they will lose the land.

[ 17 : 56 ] They've been given the land but if they turn away from God they will lose the land. We see that in Deuteronomy 4 for example. When you grow old in the land your children, your father's children, your children's children, if you act corruptly by making a carved image in the form of anything and by doing what's evil in the sight of the Lord your God is to provoke him to anger. In other words if you turn away from God I'll call heaven and earth to witness against you and 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 you'll be utterly destroyed and the Lord will scatter you among the peoples. Remember just like what happened at Babel if they keep rebelling against God they'll be scattered. They'll be left few in number among the nations. That's the warning that God gives. As you enter the land and this is the state for that the conquest of the land do not turn away from me. So judges a low point. Things improve slightly with the establishment of the monarchy. Saul was the first king and he wasn't great at all but then David and Solomon mark a high point in the history of the land. This describes when Solomon was king. 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. Now Solomon that was the best moment in terms of the land for the people of Israel. That was the time when they had the whole of the promised land in their possession. That was when things were at their best. And so that's a kind of high point in their stage. David and Solomon things were good. But again things very quickly start to go downhill. Solomon's son was called Rehoboam.

When Rehoboam became king the kingdom of Israel split in two. Ten northern tribes made the kingdom of Israel. The two southern tribes made the kingdom of Judah. The kingdom divided and things were starting to fall apart. There's division and then the people again and again and again turned away from God. And remember the warning that God gave at Deuteronomy at the start. If you turn away from me you will lose the land. If you turn away from me you will lose the land. And that's exactly what happened. In 722 BC the northern kingdom was destroyed by the Assyrians. They lost the land. And in 586 BC the southern kingdom was conquered by Babylon. They lost the land and they went into exile. That's the next stage.

So you see what's happened. How it's all gone downhill. They had the land. They were promised the land. They possessed the land. They had it. They turned away from God. They divided. It fell apart. It all ended up in exile. And the people were devastated. And so Psalm 37 says, by the waters of Babylon there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion.

The people realised this was their fault. They had lost the land.

[ 21 : 30 ] Whilst all this was going on the prophets were warning the people. Telling them again and again, don't turn away from God. And at the same time as warning the people the prophets were also promising the people that God had not abandoned His covenant promises.

And at one level we see that this gave hope to the Old Testament people. There was the promise that a remnant will return. Isaiah 10 21, a remnant will return. And we see that happening in the book of Ezra, Nehemiah, prophecies of Haggai, Zachariah and Malachi.

The last books of the Old Testament in terms of the chronological order. People returned from exile. That's really where the Old Testament closes. A remnant had returned. But the return was not a full restoration. They tried to rebuild the temple. It was nowhere near as good as it was before. They longed for God's presence to come into the holies of holy peace. Again, it never did. They longed to have their nation strong. Again, it never was. They were always under the authority of a bigger empire. They never had their own autonomy again. There was not a full restoration. And the prophets knew that. And the prophets were prophesying to something bigger, much, much bigger. They were saying not only would there be a restoration to the promised land, there would be a restoration of the whole of creation. So you see where we are. If you look at our diagram here, we're at a low point here at the end of the Old Testament. The people have returned from exile and everything is nowhere near what it was. And they want a return to the days of David and Solomon.

But the prophets are saying no. The return is all the way back to creation, to the way things were at the very beginning. Because that's what we read when Isaiah says in Isaiah 65, 17, before, for behold, I create a new heavens and a new earth. That's going back to creation, not back to David and Solomon. The former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. Be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create for behold, I create for you, I produce them to be a joy and her people to be a gladness. God's plans are not just for the Middle East. They are for the whole of creation. And the Old Testament closes with this promise awaiting fulfillment. Does that make sense? I hope that that's that everybody's okay with that. There's a lot of information that's spanning, maybe two, two and a half thousand years of history. And it's very, very rushed. But I hope you can see the deterioration. That's the main emphasis of it all. Things are getting worse.

And so at creation, you had Adam with the whole world at his feet. When the remnant returned, you had a few people in the ruins of Jerusalem under the rule of the Persians.

[ 24 : 48 ] Things have gone down drastically. Now, this brings us to our next question, which will be quicker than the last one. That was very long, by the way. The rest won't be as long.

What happens in the New Testament? What changes? What is it that takes place? Well, if you look back over the Old Testament, when you come to Abraham, see the fourth, fifth block along, when you come to Abraham, there we see that God's land promises are confined to a particular part of creation. God says to Abraham, I'll give you this land. And I should have put a map up, but we know where it all is. Where modern Israel is today, where the land of Canaan was that bit at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. That's like a focused part. So God's land is now just a wee bit of the world from Genesis 12 onwards. The land is part of creation. That's the promised land in the New Testament. This changes. The Old Testament is focused on that promised land, that specific area. The New Testament changes that. In fact, the New Testament reverses what has taken place in the Old Testament.

And the key point is that in the New Testament, we see what what we're going to call a spread effect. Things are spreading out. And so the New Testament begins with the great announcement that the kingdom of God has come. God's King, God's Messiah, Jesus Christ, he has come.

And he has come to fulfill all the promises of the Old Testament. He has come to put everything right. He has come to restore all that's gone wrong in the generations before. And again, the same principle applies. God is to be trusted. God's Savior, God's King is to be trusted.

And just as the Old Testament's prophesied, in terms of the land, there's a spread effect. If you look at Jesus, where did Jesus minister? Where did he go in his life? Did he travel all over the world? No, he focused on the promised land. Jesus began his ministry where the Old Testament ends in that area of Canaan, Israel, Judah, Jerusalem, whatever you want to call it, modern day Palestine, that area of the Middle East. Jesus begins his ministry there. That's where nearly all the gospel events take place. But then at the cross, Jesus wins victory over sin. And he destroys the power of the kingdom of evil and of the devil. And Jesus is exalted as King, not as King over Palestine, but as King over all the earth. He dies, he rises, and he is he ascends to the right hand of the Father as

[ 27 : 46 ] King over all the earth. At the cross, Jesus is exalted as King over all the land. And from that moment, things start to spread out. From that moment, the focus is no longer just on the eastern end of the Mediterranean. From that moment, things spread and spread and spread. Jesus himself hinted about that with the woman at the well. Remember, she asked him, she said, our Father, say we should worship in Samaria. You say we should worship in Jerusalem.

Jesus says, it's not a place in the Middle East that matters. She says, the hour is coming, and it's now here when through worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

Jesus is saying it's not about Jerusalem. It's not about Samaria. In fact, in the Beatitudes in Matthew chapter five, Jesus says that the meek shall inherit the earth. They shall inherit it all. And so Jesus wins victory over sin, and he is exalted as King over the whole earth.

And from there, everything spreads. What happened next? We have the day of Pentecost. And what happened at the day of Pentecost? We have every single, all different people coming from all sorts of different nations, and they come together and they all hear the gospel in their own language because the gospel message is for all people, for all nations. It's spreading out, it's spreading out. That's why we had the gift of tongues speaking in different languages because the gospel is not just for the Jews. It is for all people.

It's spreading out and spreading out and spreading out. And if you read through the book of Acts, there's this huge, huge geographical emphasis. At the very start, Jesus said, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and to the ends of the earth. Now that's very important. It says Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria to the ends of the earth. That's exactly what happens in the book of Acts. The disciples go to Jerusalem, then they go to Judea, the surrounding area, then they spread up to Samaria, then they go to the ends of the earth and by the end of Acts, Paul is about to reach Rome, the centre of the Roman Empire. And from there, all nations can be reached. And do you see how what went wrong in the Old Testament is being put right by God? Jesus is now king. That means the failed monarchy of the Old Testament is being reversed. All nations are being included and united as the people of

[ 30 : 22 ] God. That means that the low point of Babel is being reversed. Pentecost is Babel in reverse. Pentecost is putting right that low point all the way back in Genesis chapter 11. God is restoring everything that went wrong in the first half of our diagram. But the amazing thing is that God's work does not stop there. Because Jesus' victory on the cross does not just mean that he is exalted as king. It doesn't just mean that the problem of Babel has been reversed. It means that the whole kersh of Genesis 3 on the land is being undone.

The land, the creation is going to be restored. The kersh that brought forth the thorns and the thistles and the sweat and the labour and the toil is being put right. And do you know that the world is longing for that to happen? And that's what we read about in the wonderful words of Romans chapter 8. The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God, for the creation was subject to futility. That's the kersh, not willingly, it wasn't the creation's fault, it was our fault, but because of him who subjected it.

The creation was kersh. 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. And this is reminding us that the goal of the New Testament is not simply a restored monarchy in Palestine, it's not simply the gospel reaching the ends of the earth. The goal of the New Testament is a new creation, a new land, a new heaven and a new earth. And that's why when you come to Revelation 21 it says, then I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. And I hope you can see the spread effect of how it's spreading out. In the Old Testament our land was part of creation. It was the

Middle East, the Holy Land as it's often called. But in the New Testament the land is once again the whole of creation and the whole kersh is being undone and our separation from it is being undone and as the gospel spreads God's people are filling the whole earth and ultimately the whole new creation will be our land. That's why Jesus said in the parable in Matthew 25 where he says, 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. God is promising the whole new creation as a land for his people. And I hope that you can see that all of this is being fulfilled by Jesus Christ. The goal is the new creation. That's the land promise. That's the real promised land. And it's all being fulfilled by Jesus Christ. As you can see the theme of land is a shadow in the Old Testament that is being fulfilled in the New Testament and the ultimate goal is that we go from creation to new creation where everything, everything has been restored. Now what does that mean for us? That's the whole Bible story in terms of land and although I've taken ages and you've been very patient, we've only scratched the surface. But that's the goal. That's the real promised land, the new creation. But what does that mean for you? And what does that mean for me? Well, there's two things we can say. First of all, there are implications for us now here on earth. And we have been reminded first and foremost that the whole earth is the Lord's. Jesus is King and this is His creation. And that means that as God's people we are to enjoy His creation. And as Christians, the whole of our lives, every part of our lives is God's. Every part of our lives is to be lived to God's glory. That's why Paul says whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. We are living as citizens of God's land. And that means that in everything we do, every single day, we have the opportunity to enjoy

God and to glorify God. It's a reminder that your faith is not part of your life. Your faith is your whole life, every part of your life. Everything we should do should be to the glory of God. And we're all different. We all have different things that we do and we all have different things that we like doing, but they should all be 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 praise of God. If you like gardening, go and work and creep the ground to the glory of God.



[ 36 : 01 ] Whatever you do, whatever your job is, whatever your hobbies are, whatever it is you're learning, whatever it is you're good at doing, whatever it is you do in your spare time, you are doing all of that in God's land. It's all His and we are to enjoy it to His glory. But with these blessings comes responsibility. And if you look at the Old Testament, the land always had ethical obligations associated with it. You didn't go into the promised land and live however you liked. You didn't go to the promised land and eat, drink and be merry. When you lived in the promised land, you lived by God's law. And the land was the place where God was to be obeyed. And in fact, Israel was supposed to stand out as a distinctive nation because they lived differently to the rest of the world. That was what God's law was supposed to be for. And the same principle applies to us. We are to stand out as we live in this world, as we engage in the world, as we do our jobs, our hobbies, our interests, our lives, our pastimes. We are to stand out by our conduct and most especially by our love for one another. That's how people know that we are Jesus's disciples. And that's what makes Christians different from the world. We often use the term worldly in a negative sense and that's why that's wise. But when we use the word worldly, we are not referring to creation, we are referring to the sinful practices of the world. In terms of creation, we want to engage with it. We want to be part of it. We want to enjoy it to the glory of

God. We want to live in obedience to Him. Now, a lot of people think that enjoyment and obedience are contradictory things. If you obey someone, you're not going to enjoy yourself.

If you want to enjoy yourself, ignore the rules. People think that, but of course it's not true. Because I don't need to persuade any of you that immorality brings no lasting pleasure. And through obedience, faithful obedience means enjoying God's blessing in every part of our lives. So we have a lot of blessings just now, but we have responsibilities as well in God's land. But whilst we are here in this life, we are still feeling the effect of the kursh. The ground is still kursh. The ground is longing for restoration. It's not yet restored. And we are waiting for a new heavens and a new earth because our main blessing and the main wonder of the land is not what we have now. It's what is still to come. And the New Testament promises a new creation, a new land. And we can just ask for five minutes, and I will try to be as quick as I can, what will that be like? What is the new creation going to be like? What's God got in store for us? Well, in some ways, there will be continuation. It's a new earth. So it will be similar in many ways. But in many ways, it will be new. And so many of the former things will be passed away. I'm going to say five or six things very, very quickly. First of all, it's a land of outstanding beauty. If we go to Revelation 21, we get a description. 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 Chrysalite, the eighth Beryl, the ninth Topaz, the tenth Chrysalpraise, the eleventh Jasper, and the twelfth Amethyst. These sound beautiful, these jewels. But do you see that is just the foundation? When you go to a building, you can't even see the foundation. And if the most beautiful jewels that we know on earth are what characterises the foundation of God's city, just imagine what the rest of it must be like. That is just the foundation. It's a land of astounding beauty. It's also a land of community. Because remember what we're saying, the curse is being undone. At the curse, Adam and Eve were excluded.

The Babel, people were scattered. All of that's been undone. People are being brought together. It's a place of community. That's why Revelation describes it as a city. Now when Revelation describes the new heavens and the new earth as a city, it's not saying that it's going to be a concrete jungle. It's saying that it's a place where people will be together.

And that means if you are a Christian, you can look forward to being reunited with all your fellow believers who have gone before you. Now you think of those Christians you know and love and whom you miss terribly. You will be reunited with them in that city.

[ 41 : 24 ] You will be reunited with them. It's a place of community. But it's also a place of purpose. A lot of people think that heaven will be so boring. You're just going to be sitting on a cloud plain of harp, not at all. It's a place where we have purpose. If we ask the question, will you work in heaven? Will you? Too right you will. Because if you go back to pre-Fall Eden, Adam and Eve had work to do. Work was never meant to be a hardship.

Work was meant to be a pleasure and a joy. And if back in Eden, Adam and Eve were working to keep the ground, to look after it, so too will we in the new creation. It'll be a place of learning, a place of discovery. It'll be a place of purpose, a place of satisfaction, a place where work will be thrilling, will be wonderful, will be amazing, where we will be seeing all sorts of amazing things. Those of you who like to travel around, who like to go around the world, you look at the world. This world is an amazing place to explore, isn't it? You think of all the amazing countries, landscapes, cities, all the beauty of exploring this world. Well, if exploring this world is amazing, then exploring the new world is going to be just incredible. And we will be exploring it together for eternity. And it will be thrilling. It'll be a land of purpose. But at the same time, it'll be a land of rest. For us in this world, work has become extremely difficult. And we have stress, we have pain, we have suffering, we have tiredness. In the new land, the new creation, we will have rest. A Sabbath rest awaits the people of God. We will have perfect peace, perfect security, perfect joy. Now, you think of everything that stresses you in your life and that causes you anguish, you will be at rest. It'll be a land of rest. It'll also be a land of harmony with nature. And this is a really important point. We've been saying this all the way through, the curse is being undone. The land was cursed, the new heavens will be an uncursed land. And there'll be harmony with nature. And we know this because it's prophesied beautifully in the Bible, both in the Old Testament and in the new. In Isaiah 11, read these words,

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, 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 whole of a cobra, And the winged child shall put his hand on the adored serpent, They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, Where the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, As the waters cover the sea. You see the beauty of that picture.

You look at nature, it is hostile to each other. Animals tearing each other apart. All sorts of animal species trying to survive.

The threat, the prey, the danger, that is all part of the curse. And the curse will be gone. And Jesus' miracles are a foretaste of this.

[ 44 : 42 ] He brought a calmness and a harmony to nature. And the same thing is said in Revelation 21. This amazing verse, He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, And death shall be no more, Neither shall there be mourning, Not crying, nor pain any more, For the former things have passed away.

You think of every way in which your life is affected by that curse of Genesis 3. You think of every physical ailment that you have. You think of every emotional anguish that you've suffered.

You think of every trauma that you have faced in your life. You think of every time your heart sinks at events that take place in the world, And at events that take place in your own life.

You think of all the effect of the curse on you. All of that will have passed away.

There will be none of these former things in the new creation. We will be in harmony with the land.

[ 45 : 49 ] It'll also be a land where we are in harmony with one another, but that's going to take us into next week, well, two weeks time's theme, which is family. It'll be a land of worship and fellowship with God that, again, we'll look at under the heading of temple.

But this land will be an amazing place. But do you know the most amazing thing of all?

Is that if you are a Christian, this land is your home. This land is your home.

That's what Jesus meant when he said, I am going to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself that where I am, you may be also.

When you enter that land, it will be our homecoming because it is there that you belong.

[ 47 : 03 ] That land is your home. If you are a Christian, you have an indisputable right to that land.

That's why the Bible calls it your inheritance. It's your home. It's where you belong.

That new creation is our homeland and then the spread effect will be complete and all the wonder, the beauty, the harmony, the joy, the excitement, the exploration, the wonder of that place will be ours.

It's your home. That's why Paul said, I desire to depart and be with Christ because that is far better.

Far better. And as Christians, we should not be reluctant to die.

[ 48 : 19 ] So often we are. We're nervous of dying. We're reluctant to die and we love a lot of things about this world.

But when we think about this promised land, the true promised land, we should never be reluctant to go home.

Right through the Bible, we have this amazing promise of land. And it reminds us that for the believer, the best is yet to come.

But please remember that the same principle applies. God must be trusted.

That's why we must all put our faith in Jesus Christ. And then this land will be your home and mine.

[ 49 : 27 ] Amen. Let us pray.