

May His Rule extend...to the ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of the Promised Land.

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[0 : 00] Well, I'm very thankful for the opportunity to come and to share tonight and then to preach God's word tomorrow morning in the English service. This is actually, in the 11 years that we've been in Malaysia, this is my first time to come to Sarawak.

And so I'm excited. Now there's only one state that I have not yet been to. Anybody want to guess? Every, yeah, Kelantan, yeah.

And someday it's like we're going to go to Kotobaru and, you know, maybe someday we'll get up there. Let's go ahead and let's get directly into the topic.

This is a huge topic and it's a topic that is very significant. Why do I say that it's significant? Well, on the one hand, it is everywhere in the Bible.

So whenever you think about the promised land, you probably immediately think of the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12, verse 7.

[1 : 03] But if you think about it, much of the rest of the book of Genesis is focused on the promised land. The Exodus is focused on God redeeming the people out of Egypt to prepare them to go into the promised land.

The book of Leviticus is about worship in the promised land. Numbers and Deuteronomy, once again, movement towards the promised land. Life and worship in the promised land.

Joshua, Judges, Ruth. Whenever you get to Samuel and Kings, the focus is on the leaders and the administration and largely the unfaithfulness of the people in the promised land.

The prophets are constantly warning of, based on Deuteronomy 28, Leviticus 26, they're warning that if the people are not faithful, they will be exiled from the promised land.

Even the book of Psalms mentions the promised land 30 over times. This is a huge topic in the Bible, and so it's one that we need to understand well.

[2 : 19] On the other hand, it is a huge topic in our world today. Obviously, I am an American.

I grew up with American politics. And no matter which presidential election it is, always the question arises, what is your stance on Israel?

And largely that question comes from people in evangelical churches who say that based on the Bible, we must stand up for the nation and people of Israel.

So is that right? I want us to think about that. A friend of mine, he's actually a pastor in the promised land, he tells the story of a Palestinian Christian who the Palestinian Christian owned a piece of land, this is some 10 over years ago, owned a piece of land, had a house on the land, had a shop on the land, whenever one day the Jewish authorities came to him and said, we are reclaiming this land.

Yes, your family has been on this land for over 100 years, but this is now Jewish land. And so the man ran into his house and he searched around and he pulled out the deed, the title to the land, the title to the house, and he went outside and he said, I have papers.

[4 : 07] And one of the Jewish men held up his Bible and said, I have papers too. This is my land. Is he right? You see, this is a very serious question because it's not just some theoretical thing that we want to think about.

It has actual implications for how we interpret the Bible each and every day. Furthermore, it has implications for how we think about our world today.

Now, as we address this question, typically, whenever you hear it addressed, the discussion begins with Genesis 12, verse 7.

Maybe it starts out in 12, verse 1 and moves to verse 7. But then it builds from that story of the issues with Abraham and the calling of Abraham and the promises to Abraham.

And it just tracks that promise to Abraham. Now, that's a fine thing to do, but I think that first, we need to step further back and say, well, what role, what place does the promised land serve within the whole picture of the Bible, within the whole story?

[5 : 34] So whenever we're looking at the large narrative of the Bible, moving from creation to fall to redemption to new creation or restoration or consummation or whatever word you use there, what is the role of the promised land in this story?

Now, if this is the story that we're going to talk about and think about, then maybe we don't need to start in Genesis 12.

In fact, I would suggest that many of the misconceptions that we have about the promised land arise because we do not take it within the big picture story of the Bible.

And so I want to begin our discussion tonight all the way back in Genesis 1. So if you have a Bible, I hope you do, turn to Genesis 1 right at the very beginning.

And as your eyes scan over this chapter, just notice all of the words that deal with land, ground, place.

[6 : 58] Let me give a few examples. The word land appears 29 times in just Genesis 1. The word for dry ground appears twice.

The word for ground, *adamah* in Hebrew, appears six times. So you see, from the very beginning of the Bible, there is a strong importance that is placed on place, land, ground.

And so whatever happens later on in regards to ground must be taken within this context. Furthermore, whenever we look at Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, we see that there is a strong correlation between the land and those things that live on the land, right?

Obviously, where do you get your food? Well, it says that the land will bring forth vegetation for the animals, for the people.

And notice that it says the land will bring forth the vegetation. The land is served and protected by Adam.

[8 : 23] This is a key verse, but look at chapter 2, verse 15. It says, the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

I'm reading out of the NIV. The words that are used there, *avad*, for to work it, and *shamar*, for to keep it, are the words of serving and protecting that every other time they are mentioned in the Bible are used of priests who serve in the tabernacle and guard it.

That's the type of relationship that Adam is supposed to have with the ground in the garden. Notice that the land has distinctions between various domains.

It defines where the water is, where the boundaries are, where the sky is. These things are all divided and separated. Streams come up from the land and irrigate it.

But then the further you look at Genesis 2, you begin to notice that it's not just the land and the living creatures that have an intimate relationship, but the land and Adam have a very close association.

- [9 : 53] So Adam is made out of what? The dust of the ground. Right? The stuff of the earth.
- Chapter 2, verse 5 says this. Do you remember what it says in chapter 3 whenever Adam sins? So Adam sins, he eats the fruit, he doesn't serve and protect the garden like he's supposed to do, and he eats of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the Lord curses three things.
- He curses the serpent, he curses the woman, and then he curses the ground. The punishment for Adam is a curse upon the ground.
- There's this tight relationship between the man and the ground. furthermore, chapter 3, verse 19 says, from dust you are and to dust you shall return.
- Think about the other significant objects in the garden. The tree. Look at chapter 2, verse 9. These are the trees.
- [11 : 15] It says, the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground. And notice what it says, trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food.
- Of course, later on, Eve will look at the tree that she's not supposed to eat from, and she will say it was good to the eye and it was desirable for food. Right? That's two of the three descriptions that she uses.
- The other trees, though, were desirable to the eyes, good for food. This is what would provide them life. Their work comes from the ground.
- All of these things are tied into the ground. But then, what is Adam's role in this garden, in this ground area?
- What is Adam supposed to do? What is the first command that is given to Adam? chapter 1, be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it.
- [12 : 24] Right? Chapter 1, verse 26 to 28, where God makes the man and the woman. He says, as that first command, be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it.
- That verb that is used, subdue, is a word that is used for rulers and for the leaders of armies.
- It is a verb that entails rulership. Furthermore, Adam is made in God's image, in the image and likeness of God.
- who is the ruler over all this land? God, the Lord, right? And Adam is made in his image. And so, in the garden, in the original land, Adam is supposed to rule as God's chosen king, in a sense, as God's chosen ruler in this dominion.
- thing. But that's not the only thing. I mentioned as well that Adam was supposed to work and to tend to the garden.
- [13 : 43] He was supposed to serve and protect it. As I mentioned before, those verbs that are used specifically deal with the priests everywhere else.
- there are many, many, many comparisons that can be made between the garden of Eden and later the tabernacle or the temple.
- The decorations, if you think about the decorations in the tabernacle, it's fruit, it's things from vineyards, right? It has this garden-like imagery.
- Some of the wording is parallel. This is true in the temple as well. It seems that the author, who I take to be Moses, but ultimately God, in Genesis 1 and 2 and 3 is wanting us to see that the garden is the dominion where God's chosen royal priest guards and protects it.
- But then in chapter 3, whenever the serpent comes in and tempts the woman, Eve, the man fails.
- [15 : 05] He doesn't do what a priest is supposed to do. He doesn't uphold the law. He doesn't teach the law. Instead, he succumbs to his sinful desires.

He doesn't guard. He doesn't protect. He doesn't do the things that a king or a royal priest should do. And so what does God do? What does God do to Adam and Eve after he curses them?

That's right. Kick them out, right? He exiles them. The language that is used is very similar to the language that gets used later on for Israel whenever Israel is exiled from the promised land.

So I think that as we start to think about Genesis 1 and 2, we see some of these connections that are going to be important for how we understand the promised land later on.

Furthermore, think about this. In the garden, the Lord walks in the cool of the day. The Lord seems to speak directly to Adam.

[16 : 22] He brings the animals to Adam. He is in this intimate presence relationship with God in the garden because there is no sin to defile the ground.

There's no sin to defile Adam. And so they are in this close intimate relationship. The presence of God dwells in the garden.

So Adam, to put this together, Adam has a close relationship to the ground. He comes from the ground and it provides him life and blessing. God commissions him to rule over it and to serve it like a priest-like, king-like figure.

The land is the place where Adam can live as this royal priest and receive God's blessing. God dwelt with Adam in his chosen land.

Now, let's go back to the very first commandment. If this is the picture, what is the first commandment? Be fruitful, multiply, then what?

[17 : 39] Fill the earth. So the initial picture is of Adam serving as a royal priest and his descendants who would likewise be royal priests, say a royal priesthood, filling the earth, expanding Eden to cover the globe.

Now, before we move directly into Abraham, let's jump to the other end of the Bible and think about if our story begins with this picture of Eden, this blessed land where God dwells with people and he has this intimate relationship with his royal priest Adam, what does it look like at the end of the story, where things are moving?

So turn to the other end, Revelation 20 to 22. There is much imagery in these final three chapters of the Bible that look back to the garden.

You can't miss it. Think about some of the things that are mentioned. the curse, it says, is overturned. It refers to it as a new heavens and earth.

In language that goes back to in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The tree of life is here in the new heavens and earth, just like it was in the garden.

[19 : 27] A river proceeds from both. Both passages mention the sun, the sea, light, darkness, sun, moon, precious stones, gold, and so on and so forth.

The new heavens and new earth, the new creation provides humans with life and blessing. Whereas sin brought death, pain, and tears, there is now no more death, crying, or pain.

Aren't you excited for that day? I'm excited for that day. But think about how this is working. In Eden, they had this intimate relationship and dwelt with God.

Here we see at the end there is no temple. Why? Because the Lamb, God, is there in the midst of the new creation.

creation. It says that this new creation, it works according to God's order, and it's global.

[20 : 41] There is no more sin. There is no more wicked nations. This is a global image. And finally, look at chapter 20, verse 6.

Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

Priest reign. What is happening at the end of the story? Everyone who has been redeemed by the lamb, everyone that is in Christ is now a royal priest in this global dominion where God is intimately present where the language looks time and time again back to Eden.

Scholars are unanimous that the vision that God gave John in Revelation 20 to 22 alludes back to the original creation to show that the new heavens and earth are superior to the original.

That the new Eden is superior to the original. So we know where the story begins, Eden.

[22 : 17] We know where the story is going, new heavens a new earth or a new Eden. But we also know that in the middle of that story, we have, oh, a few thousand pages of the story of redemption.

The story of redemption. So how do these things fit within that? Sorry, I probably should have shown you all those. But we don't have time.

Sorry. Well, the question we need to ask from the very beginning is whenever we start to look at the promised land itself, whose land is it?

This is an essential question. Whose land is it? Today, people will say, oh, the land is the Jews, or oh, the land is the Palestinians.

the land must not be sold permanently because the land is mine, and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers.

[23 : 24] The land is the Lord's land. Ultimately, he gives it to Israel. In this passage, it's given to them at the time, and this is talking about the Jubilees and all of this cycle of the festivals that they live in.

But ultimately, the land belongs to the Lord. So how does the land fit within this big redemption story? Turn in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 12.

I want to read verses 1 through to 7. As we consider Canaan in particular, how does Canaan fit in the story that is moving from Eden to the new Eden?

The Lord said to Abram, go from your country, your people, and your father's household to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation.

I will bless you. I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you, I will curse, and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

[24 : 45] So Abram went as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was 75 years old when he set out from Haran. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all the possessions they had accumulated, and the people they had acquired in Haran.

And they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there. Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moray at Shechem. At that time, the Canaanites were in the land.

The Lord appeared to Abram and said, To your offspring, I will give this land. So he built an altar there to the Lord who had appeared to him.

This is the first promise of Canaan, and it is specifically given to Abram. And notice the context of the promise. It says that it is within this greater promise of making him into a great nation, of blessing him so that he can bless others, in fact, so that all the peoples on earth shall be blessed.

It has a global focus, but the main focus is on great nation. That's the first thing that's mentioned. And so he will have descendants who can fill up this nation that is in mind here.

[26 : 12] If you flip over to chapter 15, you see a similar type of promise. I'm going to read a few passages from this.

Look at chapter 15, verse 4. Then the word of the Lord came to him, This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.

Oops. Will be your heir. He took him outside and said, Look up at the sky and count the stars, if indeed you can count them. Then he said to him, So shall your offspring be.

Abraham believed the Lord and he credited to him as righteousness. righteousness. He also said to him, I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.

And then there's this wonderful ceremony that they go through and I want us to move down to verse 18. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, To your descendants I give this land.

[27 : 21] From the wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites.

Now the image here, based on chapter 12 and chapter 15, is that God will give Abram's descendants, physical descendants, this land, a specific land, because he mentions the peoples that live in the land, he mentions some of the physical borders of the land as well.

And he says that he'll give him abundant descendants, physical descendants, who can live in this land and make it a great nation for the purpose of being a blessing to all the peoples on the earth.

But look at chapter 17. Chapter 17 is a little different. When Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, I am God almighty, walk before me faithfully and be blameless.

Then I will make a covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers. Abram fell face down and God said to him, as for me, this is my covenant with you.

[28 : 41] You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram, your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations.

I will make you fruitful, I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for generations to come to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.

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.

Now I want to suggest something to you that maybe you haven't thought about before. How many nations come from Abraham? Did you ever sing the song growing up?

Father Abraham had many sons and many sons had Father Abraham. I am one of them. But wait, I'm a Gentile. And so are you. You look like Gentiles to me.

[29 : 55] So let's just praise the Lord, right? Our Father Abraham, right? What does he say there? He says he will be the father of a multitude of nations.

The word that is used for multitude is the word that is used to describe the roaring of a massive crowd. It's a word that you use to describe an army.

So this is not a handful of nations. The image here is many nations. Okay, so we have Jacob and he becomes Israel and we have Isaac, you know, Isaac becomes Jacob and Esau.

Esau becomes the Edomites. You have the Ishmaelites. One, two, three. Okay, well Genesis 25 says that after Sarah died, Abraham married Keturah and it mentions one or two others.

Multitude or not? I would suggest to you that for Genesis 17 to come true, this must be referring not just to his physical descendants, descendants, but to his spiritual descendants as well.

[31 : 20] In fact, this is exactly how Paul interprets it in Romans chapter 4. Let me read to you verses 16 and 17. Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who have the faith of Abraham.

He is the father of us all. As it is written, I have made you a father of many nations. He is our father in the sight of God in whom he believed, the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.

He's speaking to Romans. Now surely the Roman church had Jews, but it had countless Gentiles as well. And he's able to say that by faith Abraham had many descendants.

In fact, it is this aspect of the covenant that God in chapter 17 verse 17, I'm sorry, chapter 17 verse 7 says is everlasting.

But who is the recipient? Is it the physical descendants or is it the spiritual descendants as well? Most importantly, notice that Genesis 17 verse 8 says that and God will be their God.

[32 : 49] I will be their God. This is a phrase that is used throughout the Old Testament. I don't have time, I have some of the passages marked here, I don't have time to get into them, but it is a phrase that deals with an intimate relationship with God.

God. The type of relationship that Adam had in the garden. So what is the purpose of the physical land in this arrangement?

Think about it. What is the purpose of this land? Well, if you're going to have a nation, you have to have a land. You can't be king over a dominion unless there is some dominion.

There has to be a place where God can meet directly with his people. There has to be a place where God can show his blessings so that all the world can look at this place and this people and say, wow, what kind of God you have.

We want to be like you. We want to have the God whom you have so that all the families of the earth could be blessed through this people in this place.

[34 : 05] In Exodus, we see that the promised land has a specific purpose. The great calling of Israel in Exodus 19 verses 4 through 6 says in verse, well, it says in verse 4, you know, the Lord brought you out of Egypt, he carried you on eagle's wings, and then in verse 5 it says that there are three things that they are supposed to do.

Number one, they are supposed to listen to God. Second, they are supposed to obey his covenant, and third, and you missed this in some of the translations, but it is a direct command in Hebrew, they are to live as his treasured possession among the nations.

And if they do those three things, verse 6 says, you will be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

So the calling for Israel was in the midst of this land that God has given them, that they listen to the Lord, that they obey his covenant, and that they live as his treasured possession, so that they become a royal priesthood, a nation of atoms.

So we see that the land provides the place where the priests can do their sacrifices, it's the place where a nation can live and uphold God's justice, so that the other nations might want to be like this, and so that this nation and this blessing from God might spread to all the peoples of the earth.

[36 : 00] In a sense, the promised land was to be a microcosm of Eden, where people live rightly with God and show the nations a picture of what life could be if they turn from their gods and turn to faith in Yahweh, the living God.

In fact, this is exactly what God calls them to do, to be this royal priesthood, this holy nation, in the midst of the nations because all the earth is mine.

But how does the rest of the Old Testament interpret the land promise? Well, how do God's people use the land? God's people have been in the land?

Wow, they don't uphold justice very well. In fact, there are possibly hundreds of years where they do not keep the festivals.

In the time of Hezekiah, they seem shocked that he would restore these festivals. Have you ever noticed in the book of Judges how there's only one or two priests mentioned and they're both evil?

[37 : 17] even from early on, they're not living for the Lord. They're not doing the things. They're not listening to Him, obeying His covenant, living as His treasured possession.

And so the warning of Deuteronomy 28 comes true. In that passage, it says that the Lord will vomit them out of the land if they do not keep the covenant.

covenant. Does God dwell among them? Yeah, certainly. He dwells among them in the tabernacle.

He dwells among them in the temple. Remember the scene where Solomon dedicates the temple with that wonderful prayer that lasts for a few chapters and the presence of the Lord through fire, through His power, descends on the temple?

Yeah, He dwelt with them. But eventually, due to their sin, in a tragic passage, in Ezekiel chapter 48 verse 27, the prophet sees a vision of the Lord leaving the temple.

[38 : 33] And historically, what happens right after this? Jerusalem is destroyed. The temple is destroyed. So does Israel live as a holy nation, as a kingdom of priests?

Do they bring God's blessing to all the peoples of the earth? No. And so they are rejected from the land. But then how is this promise going to be fulfilled?

God does not take away His promises. God is faithful. I know that you believe that. God is faithful to His promises. And so during this time, the prophets, the prophets start proclaiming a new covenant.

Not like the old covenant, but a new covenant. And this new covenant, the people are going to be able to keep. Why? Because He's going to set up His chosen king over His people.

He's going to give His people His spirit. He's going to write His law on their hearts. He's going to take out their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.

[39 : 43] And they're going to be able to live for the Lord. But where is this new covenant going to happen? Where is this new covenant going to happen?

Well, we see hints of what this king, this chosen Messiah, and His kingdom will look like. listen to Zechariah chapter 9 verse 10.

It says that the Messiah's rule will extend from sea to sea and to the ends of the earth. It also says that in Psalm 72 verse 8.

Isaiah chapter 11 verse 10 says that the banner of the Messiah will be for the peoples and the nations will rally to Him.

and then it says that this Messiah's resting place will be with the people. Which people? The nations.

- [40 : 50] In other words, this Messiah, who will be God's chosen royal king, will dwell with Israel and the nations, nations, and he will have a dominion that has expanded from sea to sea to the ends of the earth.

Amos 9 describes all of the nations who belong to the Lord coming under a new Davidic king. I could go on and on with passages from the prophets that look forward to this new covenant where the picture moves from a particular king over Israel to God's chosen Messiah king over all who trust in him, all who turn to him as their rock, as their hiding place, the imagery that is used in the Psalms.

And God will dwell with these people under the new covenant because he will reside in them by his spirit.

Whether they are Jew or Gentile, he will pour out his spirit on all flesh, it says in Joel. This fulfills the full scope of Exodus 9, 5 to 6.

Thank you for going ahead with the slides because I'm totally forgetting it. This fulfills Exodus chapter 19 verses 5 and 6. The passage states that the whole earth is mine for you will be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

- [42 : 36] Under the new covenant, God's people can finally do this. So how does the promised land fit within this new covenant?

Well, it seems to expand. Just as the Messiah king is no longer a king just over Israel, but is now king from sea to sea to the ends of the earth, so passages like Isaiah 65 start looking to a new heavens and a new earth, a global picture of God's peace, of God's restored Eden.

In fact, the prophets specifically described the new creation as a new Eden. Isaiah 51 verse 3, Ezekiel chapter 36 verses 33 to 35, and in some other places as well.

We only have 20 minutes, so we need to scoot ahead to the New Testament. But I think you're going to see that the New Testament follows this trajectory moving from Eden to New Eden, or from creation to new creation, as we've seen in the Old Testament.

So praise God for our salvation, Jesus brought the new covenant. And so at the Lord's Supper, he says, this cup is the blood of the new covenant, right?

- [44 : 16] And all of us who are united to Christ by his blood, are part of that new covenant. We have had our heart, our uncircumcised heart taken out, we've been given a heart of flesh, we have been indwelt with the Spirit of God, his law is written on our hearts so that we can live by the law of Christ.

These things have come true. Jesus has brought forgiveness of sin, Jesus is a better priest than any of the failed priests in the Old Testament.

He is a better king than even David or Josiah. Yes, Jesus has brought the new covenant and the church.

Isn't it interesting? As we think about this progression, the church is described as the temple with Jesus as the chief cornerstone where God dwells by his spirit.

Now, maybe you've noticed as you read through the Bible, if you're doing your annual Bible reading plan and you come to the New Testament and you've been following the themes from the Old Testament, Canaan is barely mentioned.

- [45 : 38] In fact, Canaan is mentioned two times and the promised land is mentioned another two times. Only one of these four passages specifically relates to the new covenant.

Hebrews 11 verses 9 and 10. Let me read this to you. It's really interesting. I read this just in my devotional time a couple mornings ago and I thought, oh my, I've got to put this in the notes.

Notice this. Beginning in verse 8, By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place, he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

By faith he made his home in the promised land, like a stranger in a foreign country. He lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.

For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. What city?

[46 : 46] It's like he's looking forward to the promised land, to Canaan, right? Well, this says he's looking forward to the city of God.

Flip over to Hebrews chapter 13 and look at verse 14. Think about how this language comes up again. For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.

Is it possible that by faith Abraham was looking beyond the temporary physical place to an eternal new Jerusalem, new heavens, new earth, comprehensive city, the same city that we are called to look forward to?

There are a couple other passages that might refer to the land, but these passages seem to expand the promises to include more than just Canaan. Let's look at a few of these.

Okay, so I put them up here. Matthew 5, 5. We know this. It says, the meek shall inherit the earth. Let me read to you Psalm, oops, went too far.

[48 : 10] Let me read to you Psalm 37, 11. Psalm 37, verse 11 is what this comes from. And it says, but the meek will inherit the land and enjoy peace and prosperity.

Now, it's interesting that in the Old Testament in Psalm 37, it's clearly referring to Canaan.

But here, whenever it says, the meek shall inherit the earth, it's using the larger Greek word to refer to the earth.

Craig Blomberg, a New Testament scholar, says, the future reward echoes Psalm 37, 11, but generalizes the promise of inheriting the land of Israel to include the whole earth.

Christian hope does not look forward to inhabiting a particular country, but to ruling with Christ over all the globe and ultimately to enjoying an entirely recreated earth and heavens.

[49 : 22] Let's look at Romans chapter 4, verse 13. It says this, it was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.

The word world there is cosmos. Cosmos, everything, right? It's the big picture of even the entire universe is the image.

image. The idea is that by faith Abraham would truly bring blessing to all the families of the earth, but as the spiritual father of all global believers, as the father of many nations, the dominion of the kingdom expands to include an inheritance of the whole world.

Ephesians chapter 6, 1-3, every parent knows this passage. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. I know, you've quoted it to your children, I've quoted it to mine, right?

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with a promise, so that it may go well with you, and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.

[50 : 51] But wait a second, he's quoting Deuteronomy 5, 16, but that's not what Deuteronomy 5, 16 says. Deuteronomy 5, 16 says, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

But Paul is taking Deuteronomy chapter 5, speaking to a Gentile Ephesian church, and saying, tell your children, obey your parents and the Lord, this is right, so that it will go long for them, or so that they will live long on the earth.

In other words, the promise is expanded to include Ephesian children, and American children, and Malaysian children, as the global perspective comes into view.

think about all of Abraham's promises as they are interpreted in the New Testament. Who is it that inherits the promises to Abraham, which include the promise of the land?

Galatians chapter 3, verses 26 to 28, says, quote, so in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.

[52 : 16] for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Listen to this, if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. Now, let me be very clear what I am not saying.

I am not saying that the church has replaced Israel. I'm not saying that at all. But I am saying that according to this passage, we are all by faith brought into the promises to Abraham.

Paul states only a few verses before this that the promises were made to Abraham and his seed in verse 16. And then he says this, he says, quote, meaning one person who is Christ, end quote.

In other words, it is Jesus who has fulfilled the promises to Abraham and all of us who are united to Jesus by faith can now receive the inheritance and the blessings of that promise.

[53 : 39] cross. Consider what he says in Ephesians chapter 2 verses 11 through 18. He discusses how the cross brings together both the uncircumcised Gentiles and the circumcised Jews.

And in verse 12 and 13 he says this. Listen to this. This is interesting. Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from the citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise without hope and without God in the world.

But now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. If they were separated from Christ and the covenants of promise but are now brought near by the blood of Christ are believing Gentiles now also equal citizens alongside Israel?

Are they now partakers of the covenants of promise? Yes. And this is what Paul says in verse 19. Look down a few verses.

Consequently you are no longer foreigners and strangers but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household.

[55 : 12] What happens to members of the household? They receive the inheritance. This is exactly what Paul says in the next chapter. In chapter 3 verse 6.

The mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel. Members together of one body and shared together in the promises in Christ Jesus.

So how do we put all of this together as we think about the big picture story of the Bible? As the story moves from Eden to a new Eden, from creation to a new creation, Canaan serves as a microcosm of Eden in the midst of the world.

Israel as a kingdom of priests is a microcosm of Adam. So if Adam was supposed to be a priest in Eden, so Israel are supposed to be a kingdom of priests in Canaan.

And they are supposed to receive God's blessing, live out God's blessing, and bring God's blessing to all the peoples of the earth.

[56 : 34] They were to live as God's royal priest in the midst of the nations for the sake of the nations. Let me give a few comparisons between Eden and the promised land.

The promised land, like Eden, is a distinct place that has a special role in God's plan. The promised land, like Eden, is described as a holy sanctuary and the place of the dwelling of God's presence.

The promised land, like Eden, demands holiness as a condition for those who live in it. The promised land, like Eden, is defiled and cursed as a result of ungodliness.

The promised land, like Eden, is under a covenant. The punishment for breaking the covenant is forfeiting the right to live in the land and exile.

The promised land, like Eden, is the sphere of God's reign. This reign is supposed to extend until it reaches the ends of the earth, fill the earth, and subdue it.

[57 : 42] The promised land, like Eden, is supposed to be the setting for an ideal society and authentic humanity. But think also of comparisons between Israel and Adam.

Israel, like Adam, is supposed to multiply and fill the earth. Israel, like Adam, is endowed with a royal and a priestly vocation.

Israel, like Adam, plays the role of a vice regent, representing God on the earth and representing humanity in the presence of God.

Israel, like Adam, has a global mission. Israel, like Adam, loses its right to the promised land and her priestly and royal vocation due to disobedience and is exiled.

Israel, like Adam, loses her capacity to be a blessing to the nations. Yes, Israel failed as a microcosm of Eden, but God did not fail because Jesus fulfilled Israel's role in the old covenant.

[59 : 03] He did everything that Israel was supposed to do. He listened to God. He obeyed the covenant. He lived as his treasured possession.

Now, much more could be said. In fact, I could go on for hours and hours and hours and hours, but I have five minutes. Okay? There is so much more that could be said, but hopefully this outline, I have ten minutes?

All right. Hopefully this outline shows you how to think about the big picture here, moving from Eden to New Eden, and hopefully thinking about it in terms of the beginning and end of the biblical story helps you to see how Canaan fits within that.

Because like I said earlier, it's easy to begin our discussion of the promised land with Canaan and miss how it fits within the big picture.

It has always been God's plan that his relationship with his people through his chosen royal king that those people would be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it.

[60 : 21] That was the plan for Israel and in Christ as a royal priesthood like 1 Peter chapter 2 says, that is our calling as well.

Turn to 1 Peter chapter 2. I love this passage. Notice this.

As you come to him, the living stone rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him, you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house like a temple to be a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Now skip down to verse 9. But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Once you were not a people but now you are the people of God. Once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy. And so now through Jesus who has fulfilled the calling to Israel we as the royal priesthood and chosen nation are supposed to live as the royal priesthood and the holy nation so that we may proclaim his excellencies to the ends of the earth.

[62 : 09] What a calling for us as believers today. I'm going to stop there. Did you want to ask, did you want to do a Q&A;?

We can continue? Okay, so I was going to ask, so how does this answer some of the questions that we had at the beginning? So, for instance, in American politics, does the Bible and the Old Testament promises give a right to modern day Jews to live in the promised land, or in Canaan, sorry, to live in Canaan and to kick out the others that are there.

Now, there may be political reasons, there may be economic reasons, there may be other reasons, but I do not believe that the Old Testament promises give that right today to that people because now by faith we all receive the inheritance to Abraham that is far greater than Canaan.

It is a promise of an expanding kingdom and a king that rules over all the nations that we will certainly see definitively when Christ returns again.

So, should Christians defend the modern state of Israel's territorial claims? I know you get lots of WhatsApp messages too. I get lots of WhatsApp messages about this, like, you'll never believe what happened in Israel.

[64 : 00] This is a sign that, you know. Well, I don't think, I don't think that that's what we are supposed to be about. Because, in fact, it seems that now, as Christians, we are united with Christ alongside Israel as citizens, as inheritors of the promises.

promises, and so it's not just about one plot of land, because the purpose of the plot of land was always to be a dominion for God's rule and for his presence to dwell.

But that's already happening. The spirit is living in us, and we are living in all the nations of the earth, and whenever Christ returns, then he will establish the global kingdom in the new heavens and the new earth, which is a whole other topic unto itself.

So how do non-Jewish Christians relate to the promised land? Well, as Gentile Christians, which I assume, is anybody in here a Jew? Okay, good, I got that clarified.

Okay, as non-Jewish Christians, we can all find joy in the promises of Romans 4.13, that those of us who are justified by faith will inherit the world.

[65 : 35] The purpose of inheriting the world is so that we can dwell with God and live as his kingdom of priests, exactly what Revelation 20 and then 21 and 22 speaks about, that we will be priests of God and of Christ and reign on the earth.

All right, that's all I have. That's the time. Back to Brian. Thanks very much, Kyle.

You've given us a feast, I think, and I could have listened to you for another half an hour. but I've asked Kyle to finish at a specific time, just so that we can have a bit of time for Q&A; because I know this topic sometimes elicits a few questions.

So here's your opportunity now. If you've got any questions for Kyle, something you want him to clarify in his talk, maybe he spoke too fast and you just want him to repeat a point, or you just have another question for him, here's your chance.

So I think if you could just raise your hand, if you don't mind, and then just speak loudly and then I'll try to repeat your question through the mic as well.

[66 : 53] So I just want to give this opportunity to anyone who has any questions. Dennis, correct me if I didn't get your question correct, but Dennis wanted to know, the question is, at the beginning of your talk, you spent a bit of time on Genesis 1 verses 26 to 28, specifically the first command to Adam, but our brother here isn't quite sure what relevance that has to the rest of your talk, so maybe you could clarify that for us.

I got the question correct? It doesn't, I just needed to fill time. I'm just teasing, no, no, no, no, it definitely does. And so the purpose of man within the original creation was to have many descendants to be fruitful, multiply, to fill the earth, and to bring God's image, the image of God, to all of the dominion that had been created.

created. And so if we take that Adam is being a royal priest in this passage, because there is definite royal language, there is definite priestly language, then he is supposed to extend God's royal priesthood through descendants, through moving, obviously filling the earth, to all the ends of the earth.

earth. And so my contention is that that is always the purpose. That's the purpose with Israel, that they are supposed to be a blessing to all the peoples of the earth, that his dominion is supposed to start with Israel as a microcosm of Eden, but then expand to fulfill the very first promise that was given to Adam.

So that's how it fits. And can I be, I mean, I know this can be a difficult topic because of political issues today, right?

[69 : 06] So it's like we want to fall on one side or the other. So my family in America, I'm from Texas. Can you guess which political party my family is from? We are all Republicans.

And so it is very, very, very, I mean, it's like committing a sin in America. If you disagree, in my family, in my circles, if you disagree with any political issue, such as the purpose of Israel.

And I know in Malaysia that there is one group of people that strongly support the reestablishment of a Palestinian nation. And so I know that that can add some to it.

But we need to set aside those political questions and really think about the biblical questions first before we even bring those political questions to mind. probably your last opportunity to ask any questions.

So I think Kyle will probably hang around for another 10 minutes or so if you prefer to speak to him personally, which I don't think he'll mind at all.

[70 : 19] And I forgot to bring it down. If you just again need time to work through these things in your brain, there's actually a book in our church library that I forgot to bring down called These Brothers of Mine.

If you've forgotten the title, just come and ask me again. If you're interested in exploring issues of what the Bible says about the promised land or how it relates to the movement sometimes known as Christian Zionism, that's a book that you can check out of our church library as well and that will again say a lot of the things that our brother Carl has mentioned tonight.

Okay? But if not, then we'll just call it a night for tonight. Like I said, our brother Carl is around if you want to chat to him more personally. You can chat to me too, but I won't be able to answer questions as well as he would.

And next Sunday, we've got Dr. Peter Lau with us, another Old Testament scholar, and he'll be thinking about a related issue, not quite the same, although related, which is he'll be thinking when we talk about the people of God in the Bible, who are we actually talking about?

Are we talking about Israel? Are we talking about the church? Are we talking about both? Are we talking about something else entirely? So that's next Sunday as well. Let me just pray and then we'll end the night.

[71 : 44] Heavenly Father, thank you so much for the Lord Jesus. Thank you that through him we are justified by faith and we have become citizens of your household and we have become heirs to the promises of Abraham.

Thank you that in Christ we can look forward to that city that is to come, the new Jerusalem, where indeed we will be your kingdom of priests, praising you and ruling over the new heavens and the new earth.

Thank you that the Lord Jesus caused us his brothers and sisters and that privilege is only ours because of the cross and so we can never thank you enough.

And Father, as we just wrestle with some of these issues, perhaps for the first time we've never really thought about it, Lord, please continue to give us hearts and minds that are teachable, that are submissive to what the whole counsel of God has to say and help us to align our thinking, our perspective, our worldviews, our mindset with what you have to say and live accordingly as your representatives on this earth to be that holy nation and declaring your praises to the people around us.

All this we pray in the name of Christ. Amen.