

4. FROM THE GARDEN TO THE CITY

In this last message of the teaching series on the power of hope it wouldn't be right to talk about hope if we didn't look at the ultimate reason for hope. Hope is to do with the future. The ultimate hope is "*Christ in us, the hope of glory*". We need to understand what the glory is this verse is talking about.

I want to take you on a journey from the Garden to the City. In 1666 there was a great fire that swept through old London. Most of the city was burned including the Cathedral. The Bishops decided that they wanted to build a new cathedral – more glorious than the first. So they approached famed architect Sir Christopher Wren and commissioned him to do some drawings. They ended up choosing a design that is today St Paul's Cathedral in London. They commenced building in 1675 and it took 35 years to finish it.

Early on in the construction process a story is told that some gentlemen in their finery – silk stockings and fluffy shirts – wandered on to the building site. They looked around and saw two men digging in a trench. It was hard, sweaty work. The two gentlemen looked into the trench and one asked, "Excuse me, men what are you doing?" The workers stopped and the first man, with some irritation in his voice, said, "I'm digging a ditch." The second worker looked up with a beaming face and said "I'm building a Cathedral for Christopher Wren!"

When you see the big picture, when you see the final thing, then what you are doing in the trench will be worth it and will take on a totally different sense of significance. You and I do those things every day of the week - we are in trenches doing routine, mundane ordinary things most of the time: raising families, building marriages, being educated, learning a career, running a cell group, worshipping God, praying. When you see the big picture it's worth it.

THE GARDEN (ORIGINAL STATE)

Then God said, "Let us make people in our image, to be like ourselves. They will be masters over all life--the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the livestock, wild animals, and small animals. God blessed them and told them, "Multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. Be masters over the fish and birds and all the animals."

Genesis 1:26, 28

God planted a garden and put the first man and woman in it. It was paradise. There were two trees in the garden – the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God set up a test. He said, “Don’t eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” But they did and they sinned. Theologians call it the fall, but often we don’t realise how far we fell.

What were conditions like in the Garden of Paradise? I don’t have time to stop and justify each point. I encourage you to take some time to study and do some research for yourself and come to your own conclusions.

1. Face to face intimacy with God (Genesis 3:8, 9). They talked with God like you and I talk with a friend. God visited them each day
2. Eternal youthfulness and no ageing (Genesis 5; 6:3). They never grew old, but after they sinned they averaged 900 years until the flood. Then after the flood God said man would only live 120 years – that’s supposed to be our life span. Today geneticists confirm this potential lifespan.
3. High intellectual capacity (Genesis 2:19). You think about it, Adam named hundreds of thousands of plants, animals and insects. We struggle over naming two or three children or our pet!

Evolutionists say we were primitive to begin with and have become sophisticated. No, the Bible says we were brilliant to begin with, and we have degraded. If you believe in the myth of evolution you need to ask God to eradicate that out of your memory, because it’s a lie. Jesus said “if you do not believe the writings of Moses, how will you believe what I tell you?” If you do not believe Genesis how will you believe the rest of the Word of God? Evolution is a myth and it will increasingly be proven so. More scientists are turning away from evolutionary theory because it falls apart and they are embracing the theory of intelligent design. That’s because the Word of God is true. I believe the Word of God is proven true by archaeology, by fossil records. Don’t believe the lie of the enemy. Satan is a deceiver. Many scientists still clinging to evolutionary theory only do so because they don’t want to believe in the Living God, for then they would be accountable to him.

4. No war or disease
5. Perfect worldwide mild climate (Genesis 1:6, 7; 8:22). There were no storms,
no seasons prior to the flood.
6. One super continent (Genesis 1:9)
7. No death (Genesis 2:16-17)
8. Equality of resources. There would have been no rich or poor.

9. Vegetarian (Genesis 1:29; 9:3). Both animals and people.

For further research check www.answeringenesis.org and www.creationresearch.net

The purpose of Adam and Eve was to fill the earth with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord and to prepare it to be a dwelling place for God to come and live among mankind. All that was lost. And we fell. A curse came upon the earth – the curse of sweat in work, the curse of pain in giving birth. Aren't these the two things our lives are involved about – work and giving birth, not just to children but also giving birth to dreams and visions? Now it involves pain and sweat.

God had to send Adam and Eve out of the Garden and as they walked away His heart broke. He couldn't let them stay in the Garden eating of the tree of life. But, He had a plan to redeem them back; that once again they would live with Him.

THE TEMPLE (PRESENT STATE)

God had a plan.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16

What a glorious truth. If you have seen the film The Passion of the Christ you know what that verse cost our Jesus. When we read John 3:16, we think of personal salvation. We think, "I'm saved if I believe in Jesus, and when I die I'll go to heaven." That's true and that's part of it, but there is a bigger part.

"Build me a tabernacle where I can live among them." Exodus 25:8

God said to Moses to build a tabernacle or tent where **I** can **live** among them. That was God's heart when He created us and put us on earth. He created the earth as our domain and He always intended that He would live among His people. It was lost at the fall and God could no longer live among that which is unclean. If He did, we would be consumed in an instant by the fire of a Holy God unable to co-exist with sin. So He had to send Jesus. And Jesus died on a

Cross, took the sin on Himself, took the punishment for our wrongdoing on Himself that we could be forgiven and be set free.

We were ejected from the Garden, but God created a Temple. **Whilst in Moses day it was a tent of canvas and in Solomon's day it was a temple of stone, today it is a spiritual temple.**

We are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. We who believe are carefully joined together, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. Through him you Gentiles are also joined together as part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.
Ephesians 2:20-22

Where does God live on earth today? In His church, among His people, Paul said, “*you are the temple of the Holy Spirit.*” It is easy to understand that when we gather together to worship, but when you go out into the workplace, neighbourhood and school you carry God's presence. Wherever the Church of Jesus Christ is found in the world, that is the dwelling place of God on earth by His Spirit.

We lost the Garden forever, but God created the Temple as a temporary way of meeting mankind. God's heart has always been to build a place where He can live and we sell ourselves short if we think we are saved only to get to heaven.

Heaven is an awesome place. Hebrews 12:22-24 says it is the place of God's throne, the place of His angels, and the place of the spirits of believers who have died already. It is a place Paul couldn't even describe when he saw it in a vision in 2 Corinthians 12:2-4. It is an amazing place, a glorious place, but eternity will be spent on earth not in heaven! We are headed for a city, that's where God is taking us.

THE CITY (FUTURE STATE)

Let's fast-forward through some events here – through the rapture, the return of Jesus, the resurrection of the dead, and the judgment.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a beautiful bride

prepared for her husband.

I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, the home of God is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will remove all of their sorrows, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. For the old world and its evils are gone forever."

And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making all things new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true." And he also said, "It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega--the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give the springs of the water of life without charge!"

Revelation 21:1-6

Does that remind you of what God said to Moses – “*build a tabernacle that I may dwell among them*”? It’s the same heart that was beating as He watched Adam and Eve get ejected from the Garden and His heart broke. And He instituted a plan to restore His ability to dwell and live on the earth with His people. “*Look the home of God is now among His people, He will them and they will be his people.*” The old world and its evil are gone forever.

So he took me in spirit to a great, high mountain, and he showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.

Revelation 21:10

It was filled with the Glory of God and sparkled like a precious gem. Crystal clear. Unlike anything on earth. People who have died and come back from heaven describe gold streets that are translucent like crystal, building and mansions.

The angel who talked to me held in his hand a gold measuring stick to measure the city, its gates, and its wall.

No temple could be seen in the city, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its light. The nations of the earth will walk in its light, and the rulers of the world will come and bring their glory to it. Its gates never close at the end of day because there is no night.

Revelation 21:15, 22-25

The city is 2,200 kilometres long, wide and high.

And the angel showed me a pure river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, coursing down the centre of

the main street. On each side of the river grew a tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, with a fresh crop each month. The leaves were used for medicine to heal the nations.

No longer will anything be cursed. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him. And they will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads.

Revelation 22:1-4

They will see His face. That's the ultimate in the city. They will see His face. Face to face.

This city is an awesome place. Three things about it:

1. **It is a city** – cities have authority, they have leadership, they have order, there is government, there appears to be nations and kings in the new earth and the new heaven.
2. **It is the Bride** – this speaks of love. It will be our home. There is only one marriage in the new heaven and earth and that is the Bride of Christ married forever to Jesus.
3. **It is the Temple of God** – it speaks of the presence of God. It is the Kingdom of God fully and physically manifest on earth. It is the home of Christ and His Church with God and is accessible to the saved nations.

Note there are some parts of the Garden present. There is a river and there is a tree. What tree is missing? The tree of the knowledge of good and evil. There will never again be any potential to sin.

“The end of God's ways is loveliness” Freidrick Oetinger

WHAT THIS MEANS NOW FOR US

It should totally revolutionise the way we view the Church. The Church is more than a local congregation. She is the Body of Christ. She is house of God. She is the temple of living stone. She is the instrument to extend the Kingdom of God. She comprises believers on earth and in heaven. She is Bride of the Lamb destined to become co-regent over a new earth and a new heaven.

The entire Bible is a history of God building a dwelling place that He could come and live among His people. Jesus said, “*I will build my church.*” He means He is building a universal church on earth. He means I am preparing a Bride.

But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised first; then when Christ comes back, all his people will be raised. After that the end will come, when he will turn the Kingdom over to God the Father, having put down all enemies of every kind. For Christ must reign until he humbles all his enemies beneath his feet. And the last enemy to be destroyed is death. For the Scriptures say, "God has given him authority over all things." (Of course, when it says "authority over all things," it does not include God himself, who gave Christ his authority.) Then, when he has conquered all things, the Son will present himself to God, so that God, who gave his Son authority over all things, will be utterly supreme over everything everywhere. 1
1 Corinthians 15:23-28

That is what Jesus will do. He will humble all His enemies beneath His feet. The devil and all his demons will be beneath His feet. Sickness, death, rebellion against God, poverty and war will be beneath His feet. When He has done that He brings it to His Father and says, "It is all for you."

There is a day coming when our God will be utterly supreme over everything, everywhere. That's where we are headed. That's where God is taking you. You look out at the earth today and it doesn't look like that at the moment, but Jesus reigns. He is building the invisible temple – the media and the people who only look with natural eyes can't see it. He has millions and millions of believers and more people are getting saved in some places like Africa than are being born. God is at work by His Spirit. God is doing it, He knows the end is coming and He is not willing that any should perish but that everyone should have everlasting life.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.
1 Corinthians 15:58

This is the last verse of 1 Corinthians chapter 15 – a chapter about the resurrection and ultimate triumph of Jesus over all things. Therefore, or because of these things, don't have an escapist mentality, just wanting to leave this world and get to heaven, but live responsibly here and now.

This should make us see all of life as our field of work. What we do here will have reward there. I believe in continuity in the new earth. Economics, science, technology, work, art, music etc will be there. God will waste nothing we do here, if done for Him.

Love His appearing. Fix our hope on this. Live well now. Endure hardship now. Keep digging in the ditch and keep seeing what is being built. Be steadfast and immovable; abound in the work of the Lord.

“That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are quite small and won’t last very long. Yet they produce for us an immeasurably great glory that will last forever! So we don’t look at the troubles we can see right now; rather we look forward to what we have not yet seen. For the troubles we see will soon be over, but the joys to come will last forever.” 2 Corinthians 4: 16-18(NLT)

You are good and what you do is good
Storms to resist, shelter from or endure
Hope! You raise me up
God will dwell among His people