

# The storyline of the Bible

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## *The End is the Beginning*

God's design in creating the earth is described in Genesis 2. **God's people** to live in **God's land** while experiencing **God's blessing**.

In Genesis 2 God's people are Adam and Eve. God takes them from the wilderness (uncultivated ground) where they were created and by his grace places them in the Garden of Eden where he blesses them.

**Genesis 2:15** The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden

The river of Eden flows from God's presence in Eden through the garden and there waters the earth.

**Genesis 2:10** A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers.

The idea is that Adam and Eve, God's people, will work to extend Eden, God's land, over all the earth and so God's blessing will be in all the earth. (This in part accounts for why Adam and Eve are told to be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it).

To summarise:

People	Adam and Eve
Land	Garden of Eden
Blessing	Walking and living in God's presence

The Fall event appears to frustrate God's purpose. Adam and Eve seem to cease in their disobedience to be God's people. They are cast out of God's land and God's blessing is replaced with the curse.

However God is stubbornly committed to achieving his original design. To do this he calls one man, Abraham, from out of the midst of the region associated with Babylon. Through Abraham God will again have a people in his land experiencing God's blessing.

People	Israel
Land	Canaan, the promised land
Blessing	God dwelling with his people

This is the beginning of a plan to bless all nations and return all the earth to Eden.

**The first half of the OT is about God fulfilling his promises in a shadow form as stage one of God's fulfilling his design.**

In Exodus God makes for himself a people. He takes Israel out of Egypt and at Sinai makes them his people.

The stories of Joshua and David describe how God's people come to possess God's land.

The tabernacle represents God's walking with the Israelites through the wilderness and Solomon's temple represents God's living with his people in their midst.

Once again God's people (Israel) live in God's land (Canaan) experiencing God's blessing (his presence in their midst). In Solomon's time God's promises in their shadow form are realised.

(1 Kings 4:20-21) Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by the sea (people). They ate and drank and were happy (blessed). Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt (land).

The second half of the Old Testament shows the failure of God's people to be God's people – the kingdom splits, the people ignore God's prophets, they are driven out of the land (just as Adam and Eve were driven out of Eden) into exile into Babylon and Egypt – it's like God's creation is un-done.

Nevertheless there were signs of hope:

- The prophets said a remnant of Israel would be saved
- They said God would come in person to save people
- They said that the whole earth would be brought under the rule of God

**In the NT Jesus comes.**

He is God in the flesh.

He is the Son and heir to God's promises to both Abraham and to David.

He is the snake crusher from the line of Adam.

He is faithful Israel-reduced-to-one.

He is also like a new Adam, the beginning of a new humanity.

His work on the cross means that God's Spirit is poured out on believers.

Once again there are a people of God. Initially simply Jesus who is obedient Israel-reduced-to-one. Jesus then expands the people of God to include twelve apostles. From these twelve men other believing Jews are gathered until there are a remnant of many thousands of Jews. Surprisingly God adds to this believing remnant of Israel Gentiles. The people of God are still sons of Abraham but not on the basis of biology but by the Spirit.

[Galatians 3:29](#) If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. c.f. Romans 11 and the Olive Tree illustration.

As God's Spirit is poured out on believers and they became living temples of the Holy Spirit both individually and collectively, it may be said that once more God lives and walks among his people as he did in Eden – and sin is removed.

God has achieved his agenda in relation to God's people experiencing God's blessing through Christ. This is both a *now* experience and a *not yet* experience awaiting Jesus' return.

## But what about the land promise?

In the Old Testament we were under the impression that the land promise relates simply to Canaan. However we know that Canaan was simply a beach head or stage one of God's purpose for all the earth.

Romans 4:13 makes it clear that what God promised Abraham was not simply Canaan but in fact the whole earth.

(Romans 4:13) It was not through 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.

What is the world that Abraham and the sons of Abraham would inherit? The answer is that it is this world but not as it is but rather as a new creation – the new heavens and earth.

In Revelation 22 we read:

Then the angel showed me the river of **the water of life**, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, **the tree of life** with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. **No longer will there be anything accursed**, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They **will see his face**, and his name will be on their foreheads.

The new earth is described as Eden restored. Again there is the river of the water of life coming from God's presence, again there is the tree of life, the curse is removed, people again see God's face as in Eden when Adam and Eve walked with God.

God is faithful to his original design – God's people (from all nations) will live in God's place (the new Eden extended over all the earth) experiencing God's blessing (living in God's presence).

A final note:

The most common description of Canaan in the Old Testament is "inheritance". The same description is the most common New Testament description of our future possession. In other words the OT inheritance of Canaan is a shadow of the eternal inheritance of the new earth.

[\(Revelation 21:7\)](#) He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.