

# The Home of the Church

Throughout the Bible, God repeatedly said that He was giving the land of Canaan to the Israelites as an everlasting possession:

**Genesis 13:14-15:** “And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.”

**Genesis 17:8:** “And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”

**Genesis 48:4:** “And said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession.”

There are many more verses which record this fact (too many to list here). One of the themes of the Bible that God gave the land of Canaan to the Israelites as an everlasting possession, and it will always belong to them.

This is a significant fact. God didn't say that the land of Canaan belonged to the Israelites until the world ended. Instead He said that He was giving it to them forever. There are promises that will end when the world ends (such as Genesis 8:22), but that isn't one of them.

The reason this matters is because one day God will destroy this world and create a new one:

**Revelation 21:1:** “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.”

This new earth will be perfect. It will never see sin, or suffering, or pain, or death. It's the destiny of mankind to live forever in this new earth with God Himself, who will dwell with us:

**Revelation 21:3-4:** “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

In this new earth (which is literally lit by the glory of God), there will be nations of saved people:

**Revelation 21:24a:** “And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it:...”

**Revelation 22:2:** “In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”

Since the land of Canaan will belong to Israel forever, and

since there are nations in the new earth, there's reason to believe that in this new earth the Israelites will *still* have the land of Canaan as their possession. (God did give it to them forever, after all.)

But what about the church? The promises that God made to Israel are different from the promises that He made to the church. God chose to not give *any* land to the church as an inheritance. Instead He has decided to give us something else:

**Hebrews 11:14-16:** "For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."

The church hasn't been given the land of Canaan, or any other land. Instead we've been promised a city. We can find this city in the book of Revelation:

**Revelation 21:9-10:** "And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,"

The angel said that this heavenly city was the home of the bride of the Lamb (who by this point had become the wife of the Lamb). Who's that referring to? The church.

How do we know that the bride of the Lamb is the church? We can see this in several passages. John the Baptist referred to

Jesus as the bridegroom and His church as the bride:

**John 3:29:** “He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.”

Jesus also referred to Himself as the bridegroom:

**Mark 2:20:** “But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.”

The apostle Paul taught that the church was the bride and that Christ was the bridegroom:

**2 Corinthians 11:2:** “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”

In Revelation 19 we're told that before Jesus returns to this world at the end of the tribulation to defeat the antichrist, the marriage of the Lamb will take place in Heaven. That's when the bride of Christ will become the wife of Christ:

**Revelation 19:7-8:** “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.”

Revelation 21 tells us that in Heaven there's a holy city named Jerusalem, and one day it's going to be the home of the

church. In the new earth (which God will create after the final day of judgment), that is where the church will live. That will be our everlasting home.

The Bible tells us quite a bit about this city. This is the famous city that has streets of gold and gates of pearl (Revelation 21:21). It contains the river of life and the Tree of Life (Revelation 22:1-2). The city is a square, and each side measures 1500 miles in length – which means it's a little smaller than the moon (Revelation 21:16).

There are some people who think that the New Jerusalem is Heaven, but that's not the case. Instead the Bible says that this city is located *in* Heaven (much like Chicago is located in Illinois). After God creates the new earth, this city will descend out of Heaven and the nations will walk in its light:

**Revelation 21:23-24:** “And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.”

Since this city is descending (but is never said to land anywhere), and since all the nations of the world walk in its light, it's quite possible that this city will orbit the earth and give light to it (much like the moon orbits this world and gives light at night).

Many people will be saved after the rapture. However, they won't be part of the church. This means their home will be on the earth. We know there will be many nations on the earth because the New Jerusalem will give them light. It seems those nations will be populated by people who are saved after the rapture. (The nations will even have kings, which is interesting.)

If all of this is true, then in the new earth the church will live in a city in the sky, which will brilliantly illuminate the whole world with the glory of God. The Israelites will live in their

everlasting possession on the earth (the land of Canaan), and the Gentile nations will also live on the earth in the territories that God will give them.<sup>1</sup>

But our home will be in the heavenly city that God has prepared for us (a home that will *not* remain in Heaven forever, but will one day be moved to a much better world).

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1 Are there Jews who are saved, and therefore part of the church *and* part of Israel? Absolutely. That would be the best of both worlds. It's quite possible that those individuals will have *two* homes: the promised land, plus the heavenly city.