

## ***PROMISED LAND 2: Introduction***

**Subject:** In the Old Testament, God spoke through His written word and His prophets.

**Main Idea:** Each Bible reader must choose their response to God's promise-plan.

**Principles:**

1. *God's "promise-plan" includes building a kingdom over which His Son will reign.*
2. *We each choose daily to build into God's kingdom or one of our own making.*

### **Introduction**

I woke early one winter morning and was enjoying looking at the still visible stars in the barely black sky out the window of our home when my neighbor's car suddenly came into view. To my disappointment, the car stopped and sat, pointed directly at my window, the headlights masking the celestial beauty. I silently willed her to finish her phone call (or whatever kept her there), but the car just sat. When it finally crept forward, I hadn't time to feel relieved before it stopped again and then rolled right back to its distracting location. Thus, a slow dance begun as the car repeatedly inched forward then slid back. One glance at the thermometer outside my window provided the explanation. The roadways had surely iced over. My neighbor's vehicle was stuck!

For those who live in places with frigid winter temperatures, stuck vehicles are a common occurrence. Although you may never have seen a car trapped by snow and ice, you may still be sympathetic to the notion of feeling stuck. Last weekend, I had a significant birthday. It was an ideal time to think over my life and goals. I realize that there have been many habits and attitudes that have held me hostage over the years. I've wanted to change and for a day or two I do better. Then I return to the "old way." I have a picture in my mind of the kind of person I want to be in old age, but I realize that I probably will never become that person if I remain stuck. I know God wants something better for me.

The Old Testament is the story of a people who appear stuck with regard to long-term moral progress. One individual or one generation of God's people did well and the next plummeted to a new moral depth. Thankfully, the God of the Bible is not a Creator who stands by and simply observes (as I did, with my neighbor). He has promised to restore us to the freedom in which we were created, and He regularly intervenes in human history to ensure that His *promise-plan* of deliverance, salvation, is fulfilled.

The concept of God's promise-plan is central to the story of the Bible. Since the *Promised Land 2* study begins in the middle of the Old Testament, it is important that we first look back at the story's beginning and trace God's promise-plan up to the books of Samuel. Then, we will briefly consider God's promise-plan as it continues to unfold in the part of the Bible we will cover in this study.

# I. **The Initiation of God’s Promise-Plan** (Genesis – 1 Samuel)

## A. **General Background**

### i. The Integrity of the Bible

1. Those who have taken previous *GOD of the WORD* studies will remember that the Bible’s 66 books were written over approximately 1600 years by some 40 different human authors. Their personalities, levels of education, and occupations greatly varied but amazingly, their writings tell a unified story. This is possible because the Holy Spirit of God superintended the writing. Although the styles of the human writers vary, the Bible is God’s self-proclaimed revelation to humanity from beginning to end. It is His divine word.
2. As with all other ancient literature, as far as we know, the original documents are no longer in existence. However, the abundance of secondary copies (numbering in the thousands) has made it possible to reconstruct the original with nearly complete accuracy. No other ancient text has anywhere near the number of surviving manuscripts as the Bible.

### ii. The Goals of Our Study

1. Sadly, few professing Christians seem to know that the Bible tells one unified story. A primary goal of the *GOD of the WORD* studies is to help us see how all the books of the Bible fit together. One reason it is easy to lose the focus of the larger story when reading through the Bible is that, in the canon of the Christian Bible, the books are not all in chronological order. For example, our Old Testament books of wisdom literature and prophecy have been placed in their own grouping, rather than within the context of the history in which they were written.
2. In addition to seeing how the entire Bible fits together, a second goal of the *GOD of the WORD* studies is personal transformation. God has not only revealed Himself and the meaning of life in His word, He has also revealed the purpose for which we were created and His promise-plan to free us from our rut and bring us back in line with that purpose. Until we are free to live according to our intended purpose, we will never find the satisfaction we seek. Each lesson contains a number of opportunities for you to consider how God’s promise-plan is intended to impact your present everyday life. You will benefit to the degree that you prayerfully meditate on these and ask the Lord to show you how to apply His word to your own personal life and circumstances.

3. The third goal is to foster a lifelong habit of Bible study. A Christian can never exhaust all God's word has to teach him or her. Having a clear idea of the Bible's unified story and overall message will greatly aid your ability to study its various parts as you go back to them again and again throughout your lifetime. Those who have already been studying it for many years can equally benefit.

## **B. Creation to Israel's Monarchy**

### **i. Beginnings: The Beginning of Human History:**

1. In the first *GOD of the WORD* study, we covered only eleven chapters of the book of Genesis. In these first eleven chapters, God not only reveals Himself as our Creator but also shows that He is personal, that He is powerful, and that He is good. We learn these things about Him in the context of the story of Creation, the fall of the first man and woman (Adam and Eve) into sin, and two judgments God sent to check the rapid deterioration caused by sin. The first judgment occurred through a great flood that wiped out all but a handful of people. The second came when God halted the rapid development of human culture by confusing men's tongues and thus, putting an end to common language. Although God effectively slowed the harmful effects of sin for a time, it is clear by the end of this record of primeval history that a permanent solution is needed. Mankind was stuck in a sinful state, separated from the Creator, and unable to free themselves.
2. God gave the first clue to His promise-plan to free us from sin and fully restore all its damage immediately after Adam and Eve's fall in Genesis 3:15: He would one day send a man, the seed of the woman, to crush the head of our enemy and set us free us. Through the ages, those who awaited His arrival began referring to Him as the *Messiah*.

### **ii. Patriarchs: The History of Israel's Patriarchs**

1. The remainder of Genesis tells that God chose Abraham and his family through whom to accomplish His promise-plan. He made an unconditional covenant with Abraham, promising him the land of Canaan, an abundance of descendants (to include kings), and blessing (both *to* Abraham and to the rest of the world *through* him). Ultimately, this blessing would come through the Messiah, his descendant. God's covenant and its promises passed from Abraham to his son Isaac and from Isaac to his son Jacob (whom God renamed "Israel"). These patriarchs were very imperfect but they were men of faith in God's promises.

2. Before Jacob's death, he and his twelve sons had gone to live in Egypt due to a famine. The fulfillment of God's promise that they would inherit Canaan seemed less possible than ever, let alone the fulfillment of God's promise to bless the world with a Deliverer who would descend from them. Nevertheless, Jacob died in Egypt still clinging to God's promises. Just before his death, he blessed his son, Joseph, as the prince among his brothers but gave his son, Judah, a kingly blessing (one with Messianic implications).
- iii. Exodus: Israel's Journey from Egypt to Canaan
1. The next four books of the Bible tell the story of how the children of Israel were divinely delivered from Egypt (an event known as the Exodus), formed into a nation (with God as their king and Moses as His mouthpiece), and journeyed to the Promised Land of Canaan.
  2. At Sinai, God gave Israel laws, sacred objects, and lessons that, in addition to their practical importance, contained a great deal of symbolism, all of which was intended to teach Israel and other nations about the person and work of the coming Messiah.
  3. On their journey to Canaan, the Israelites repeatedly demonstrated a rebellious spirit. When they finally reached their destination, they were unwilling to trust God to give them the land. God judged their rebellion by refusing to allow the adult Israelites who had left Egypt to ever enter Canaan. Over a total of forty years, they wandered in the wilderness until Moses and all but two individuals from that generation died. Only Joshua and Caleb, men who had believed God without fail, lived to enter Canaan with the younger generation. Before his death, Moses reminded the Israelites that while God had unconditionally promised to give the land to them, their ability to enjoy and remain in the land was contingent on their obedience to God's laws.
  4. This part of the Bible emphasizes God's holiness and that God's promise-plan is to make His people holy. Holiness is the solution to our sin problem. However, we also learn that without the sacrificial death of One who is entirely innocent, we can never be holy (a further insight into the role God's promised Messiah would play).
- iv. Promised Land 1: Israel's Settlement of Canaan
1. After Moses' death, the Lord chose Joshua to lead the Israelites into Canaan. The books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, and the first twelve chapters of 1 Samuel describe Israel's conquest of Canaan and settlement in the land. Joshua was their God-appointed leader during the early years of the conquest. He was also tasked with apportioning the land to Israel's twelve tribes.

2. In the *Promised Land 1* study, we learned that the Canaanites were an exceedingly wicked people. God decreed their death and charged the Israelites with removing all of them from the land. God spared Rahab and her family because she put her faith in Him. However, the Israelites chose to spare many others Canaanites, simply because they were tired of warfare. Over time, the Israelites began intermarrying with these Canaanites and worshipping their gods. This sin on Israel's part perpetuated a cycle in which God allowed enemy nations to subject them, the Israelites cried out to the Lord in distress, the Lord raised up a Judge to deliver them, then the Israelites fell back into idolatry. The 150-350 years in which the Judges led was characterized by Israel's moral failure.
3. The short story of Ruth portrays the loving-kindness and faithfulness of Ruth and of Boaz, mirroring God's faithfulness to His people at a time when they were largely unfaithful to Him. We discover that they were ancestors of King David. Boaz takes the role of "kinsman-redeemer," foreshadowing the role of Messiah.
4. Samuel, Israel's last Judge, also served as a priest and a prophet. Despite God's provision of Samuel's godly leadership, the Israelites tired of depending on the Lord to raise up leaders for them and asked Samuel to appoint a king who would, among other things, produce a natural succession of leaders for them. Although their rejection of the Lord's leadership was very sinful, the Lord told Samuel to give the Israelites what they wanted and appoint Saul as their king.

**Summary Statement:** The story of these Old Testament books is ultimately the story of God's *promise* to send a Messiah to deliver us from our bondage to sin and His *plan* to fulfill that promise through the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Paul summarized God's promise-plan this way: "To bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ" (Ephesians 1:10).

**Principle:** *God's "promise-plan" includes building a kingdom over which His Son will reign.*

Human history will end with all things subject to Jesus. Each of us must decide whether or not we will cooperate with God's promise-plan. Cooperation involves submission to Christ's authority. This is the lesson the Israelites failed to learn as they settled the Promised Land. God gave them the land, but since they failed to submit to God's authority over them, they failed to enjoy all the benefits of dwelling in such a rich land. As we work our way through the remainder of the Old Testament, we will continue to see them struggle with submission.

Like a vehicle stuck on ice, they roll forward a bit only to rock back into their rut. They desperately need God's promised Messiah to free them.

**Illustration:** My neighbor needed a heavier vehicle to tow her to freedom. In order for that to happen, she would need to submit to the control, leading, and power of the tow truck. She could try indefinitely to free herself, or she could submit to the more powerful vehicle and allow it to pull her to freedom.

**Application:** A surprising element of God's plan is that, in order to be free, we too must first submit. Submission is not naturally appealing to us though, is it? It is difficult for us to trust that submission can result in freedom. If I don't want to remain stuck, if I want to become all God wants me to be in Christ, this side of heaven, I need to continually yield to Him. I can't free myself, but He can free me.

What will you do with God's plan to bring us into subjection to Jesus Christ? God's word will force you to decide.

**Transition:** In the books covered by *Promised Land 2*, the promise-plan continues to be traced through the royal line of David and his descendants, the ancestors of Jesus Christ.

Before we resume the storyline, a brief introduction to the approach taken by the *Promised Land 2* study is in order, along with some (hopefully, helpful) suggestions.

## II. The Kingdoms of Israel and God's Promise-Plan (1 Samuel – Malachi)

### A. Same Goal, Different Pace

- i. First Four Old Testament Periods: Previous *GOD of the WORD* studies have covered each chapter of the Bible, from Genesis 1 – 1 Samuel 12. We can summarize the part of the story these books tell largely by remembering the names of those *four* studies:
  1. The *Beginnings* of human history
  2. The history of Israel's *Patriarchs*
  3. Israel's *Exodus* and journey to Canaan
  4. Israel's settlement of the *Promised Land*
- ii. Last Four Old Testament Periods: The *Promised Land 2* study covers the four remaining periods of Old Testament history all in one study. These periods occurred over roughly 600 years between 1000 and 400 B.C.

1. Many of these Biblical books are not in chronological order. For example, the wisdom literature of the Old Testament (that is, the books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs) was predominantly written during the period of Israel's monarchy. Of the four major books of prophecy (plus Lamentations) and the twelve minor ones, some were penned near the end of Israel's divided monarchy, some belong to the period of Israel's exile, and some were written during the postexilic resettlement.
2. It is difficult to make sense of these books without knowing what was going on in the period in which they were penned. Therefore, rather than progressing through the Old Testament chapter by chapter, the *Promised Land 2* study takes a "bird's eye" view. Doing so will better enable us understand how each contributes to the greater, unified story of the Bible.
3. It will be most helpful to you to memorize the four periods of history into which each Biblical book falls. If you do, you will never be lost in the larger story. These are:
  - a. *Israel's United Monarchy*
  - b. *Israel's Divided Monarchy*
  - c. *Israel's Exile*
  - d. *Israel's Postexilic Resettlement.*

### iii. Completing Your Weekly Lessons

1. Not unlike the lessons in earlier studies, Lesson One of this study covers only three chapters of 1 Samuel. After Lesson One, most lessons cover many chapters (some several books) of the Bible. For this reason, it may be difficult (if not impossible) for you to find time to read every covered chapter. I want to assure you that, while you will greatly benefit from reading every chapter, you will have no trouble completing your lesson without doing so. Each section of the lesson lists the chapters it covers and then directs you to read or skim specific chapters or verses that summarize the rest.
2. If you have completed previous studies and it was your habit to do your entire lesson in one sitting, you will find it much easier to complete the *Promised Land 2* lessons by answering the 15 questions in 5 separate sittings (as they are divided).
3. Please read through the questions completely before you begin your Bible reading. If you are brand new to Bible study, attempt to read as many of the listed verses as you can and attempt to answer one question from each of the five subdivisions.
4. Although the *Promised Land 2* study covers a larger portion of the Bible than any of the other studies, many people have also found it to be unusually rewarding.

## B. The United Monarchy

- i. Three Kings: Our first five lessons cover the period of Israel's United Monarchy. Saul, David, and David's son Solomon were the only three kings to rule over all 12 tribes of Israel. Since Abraham lived around 2000 B.C., just under 1000 years of history passed between Genesis 12 and the beginning of the United Monarchy. Saul, David, and Solomon each ruled for approximately 40 years, making the period of the United Monarchy around 120 years in length.
- ii. Transition to Monarchy
  1. *A Desire for Unity*: As stated earlier, Israel's last Judge, Samuel, appointed Saul king over Israel. The request for a king came, in part, from the Israelites eagerness to be "like the other nations" (1 Samuel 8:5, 20) who, among other things, had a natural succession of leaders. However, this was not the only reason. Since they had settled in Canaan, their twelve tribes had acted as a loose confederation, not as a united people. Most of Israel's Judges had been regional leaders. They wanted a king to unite them, especially for the purpose of defeating their enemies (1 Samuel 8:20).
  2. *Rejection of the Lord*: Because the Israelites were unwilling to submit to the Lord, their true King, and look to Him to meet their needs, their request for a human king amounted to rebellion. When the Lord appointed Saul as king, He gave them the kind of leader for which they had asked.
- iii. King Saul: As we will discover in Lesson 1, Saul bore sons who could succeed him, and he led the Israelites in battle against their enemies, but these were not the only ways in which Saul was the kind of leader for which Israel asked. Just as the Israelites had largely rejected the Lord, Saul also refused to follow His commands. Because Saul was disobedient, the Lord rejected him as king and no royal dynasty proceeded from his line. However, ever working to protect His promise-plan, God replaced Saul with David, a man after God's own heart and, by no coincidence, a descendant of Judah.
- iv. Kings David and Solomon
  1. In addition to appointing David king, the Lord also made a covenant promising that that one of David's descendants would always sit on the throne (2 Samuel 7). The role of the coming Messiah and God's promise-plan continues to be unveiled!

2. David was a fierce and skilled warrior. Through his victories, he completed the task of possessing all of the land God had promised Israel, a task the Israelites had left undone for several centuries. While some scholars do not believe Israel has ever possessed *all* the land God gave her, during the reigns of David and his son Solomon Israel undoubtedly reached the height of her splendor. David's battles paved the way for the peace and prosperity Israel experienced during Solomon's reign (a peace the Israelites had never known previously, nor have they since).
3. After David's anointing, many trying years passed before he actually became king. The jealous Saul attempted to kill him on several occasions. These hardships resulted in the writing of many of David's Psalms, songs that expressed his faith as well as his fears. Solomon also authored much of what is today called "wisdom literature." He is traditionally credited with writing the bulk of the Proverbs and the books of Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs. After we complete five lessons on the United Monarchy, we will have a lesson that is devoted entirely to the wisdom literature of the Bible.
4. Although David desired to build a permanent house for God, that privilege was reserved for Solomon, the man of peace. The construction of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem was a hallmark of Solomon's reign.

v. The Role of the Prophet

1. During the period of Israel's monarchy, another important office emerged, that of the prophets. Previously, Moses and a few others had been defined as prophets; in fact, Moses was Israel's greatest prophet. Nevertheless, not until the time of Samuel did the role transition to what is known as the "prophetic office." Samuel was the first to hold it. The need for the office resulted from the fact that God required Israel's kings to submit to His authority (1 Samuel 12:14-15). Therefore, beyond what was written in the Law of Moses, God's will was revealed to the kings through His prophets. Since they were God's mouthpiece, essentially their role was functionally superior to that of the king.
2. Although the books bearing the prophets' names fall at the end of the Old Testament in our Christian canon, most of these individuals lived during Israel's monarchy. A few were God's voice to His people during their exile and a few also lived during the postexilic period. In this study, we will examine the writings of each prophet within the context of the history in which he lived and prophesied.

### C. The Divided Monarchy

- i. The North and the South: Solomon's son Rehoboam lost the confidence of the northern tribes of Israel. As a result, the kingdom was divided and, thereafter, the ten northern tribes constituted *the Kingdom of Israel* and the 2 southern tribes became *the Kingdom of Judah*.
- ii. The Kingdom of Israel: The kings of the north were notoriously wicked. As a result, the Lord never gave any one of them a lasting dynasty. Some had descendants who succeeded them for a few generations but eventually a new family came to power. Like their ancestors, idolatry was the predominant sin that kept them in its grip. The Lord was patient with the Israelites in the north for just over 200 years. In 722 B.C., He gave them over to the consequences of their sin. Just as Moses foretold (Deuteronomy 28), He sent a foreign power (the Assyrians) to ruin them and carry them into exile.
- iii. The Kingdom of Judah
  1. The descendants of David ruled over Judah. We will see that some of these kings were godly and some were not, but all were David's descendants. God was faithful to His covenant with David and, in so doing, ensured the fulfillment of His promise-plan.
  2. The Kingdom of Judah lasted about 135 years longer than the northern kingdom. Although a couple of her kings attempted massive reform near the end, the "vehicle" no sooner rolled forward than it returned to its former situation: the Judahites and their kings were enslaved to the Canaanite god Baal, just as their northern relatives had been.
  3. In the years leading up to the destruction of the northern and southern kingdoms, the Lord repeatedly pled with His people to repent through His prophets. Isaiah and Jeremiah were among those who issued warnings and eventually witnessed the destruction of these lands.
  4. In 586 B.C., the southern kingdom of Judah fell to the Babylonians, the Temple was destroyed, and the capital city of Jerusalem was razed. In several groupings, the greater part of the population was carried into exile. As we read about the exile of the people through whom God was preserving His promise-plan, we find ourselves wondering whether God would abandon His promises and plan altogether.

## D. The Exile

- i. The Diaspora: The dispersion of the people of Israel as a result of these exiles is known as the Diaspora. During their years in exile, the tribal identity of most of the Israelites was lost. For this reason, some today still refer to the “ten lost tribes of Israel.” Those from the southern kingdom of Judah (the “Judahites”) maintained their sense of tribal and familial identity to a greater degree. During their exile, they began to be called “Jews.”
- ii. God’s People in Exile: Those with spiritual sensitivity recalled and clung to the words of Isaiah and Jeremiah foretelling their release from captivity at the end of 70 years (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1, 13; Jeremiah 29:10). Until then, God told the people to settle down in the lands of their captivity and to seek the welfare of those lands (Jeremiah 29:4-7). Meanwhile, God ministering to His exiled people through prophets like Ezekiel, and He continued to use His people to bless the world: Esther was a Jewess who became the Queen of Persia and Daniel, a Jew of royal descent, served as an advisor to the kings of more than one world empire.

## E. The Post-Exilic Resettlement

- i. Leadership in Resettling: Just as the prophets foretold, in 538 B.C., King Cyrus of Persia allowed displaced peoples to return to their homelands. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Ezra, and Nehemiah, a number (but certainly not all) of the Jews returned to Jerusalem and began rebuilding it. The rebuilding of the Temple and the city’s walls were particularly important. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah challenged and encouraged the people. God was not finished working through Abraham’s descendants after all!
- ii. Obstacles: The prophets’ encouragement was greatly needed since those who were working to rebuild Jerusalem were often discouraged. The new Temple paled in comparison to Solomon’s Temple. Also, the Jews no longer had the Promised Land to themselves. More recent occupants of the land often worked against them in their efforts to rebuild. On top of all that, the Jews were not politically independent. During the 100-plus years of recorded Biblical history in which Jewish people re-settled the land and the 400 years of Biblical silence between the Old and New Testament, the Persians, the Greeks, and eventually the Roman Empire controlled the land. Although God faithfully enabled His people to re-settle the land, the glory of the Lord never returned.

- iii. The 400 Silent Years: The history of the Old Testament ends 400 years prior to the coming of Christ. During these years, the Jews were so divided over their ideas about the Law of Moses and the future of Israel that different sects of leaders emerged. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Zealots were among these. Some of the Jews were more eager than ever for God's promised Messiah to deliver them. They came to think of this deliverance in political terms. Others were entirely disillusioned. These last 400 years are often referred to as the 400 "silent years," because no prophet spoke during that period of time. In our final *Promised Land 2* lesson, these 400 years (the time between the Testaments) will be highlighted. At the end of the Old Testament, we are once again left to wonder, along with the Jews, whether God had perhaps abandoned His promise-plan. We don't find out until we turn the page to the New Testament.

**Summary Statement:** None of the dynasties of the northern kingdom of Israel endured. The house of each king rose and fell. None of the wealth of these kingdoms remained. The empires of Assyria, Babylon, Greece, and Rome also fell, each in turn. The Psalmist wrote, "Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain" (Psalm 127:1a). But there is one house, one kingdom, that has endured. It is the kingdom the Lord God promised to His Messiah. Christ's kingdom is eternal because God's promise-plan is unchanging and unstoppable. His kingdom is still being built today, and although at present we only see it reflected in the lives of His followers, one day it will be revealed in all of its glory! His promise-plan is to build a house (a kingdom) that is indestructible.

**Principle:** *We each choose daily to build into God's kingdom or one of our own making.*

**Application:** Over the weekend, as I pondered my 60 years, I realized that if I want to be the person God created me to be in Christ, this side of heaven, I need to seize opportunities to prioritize *His* kingdom every single day. This means I have decisions to make: I cannot become an unselfish person and at the same time, keep protecting my own interests. I can't keep investing in the American dream and be truly committed to Christ's kingdom. It doesn't go both ways. I've lied to myself for too long, thinking I could "have my cake and eat it too."

To find real life, I must first be willing to die a kind of death. I have to say "no" to some of my habits and ways of thinking in order to say "yes" to God's promise-plan. "Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life" (John 12:24-25). But this is a joyous realization! There *is* a road to abundant life, a richer life in Christ in which I can take part.

Will I be like the majority of Israel's kings and people and try to serve both God and other interests? Or will I be one of the wholehearted, God-centered few? The only investment we can make with a guaranteed return is an investment into the kingdom God is building. In what are you investing? Your own plans or God's? What evidence is there in the daily choices you make?

### Conclusion

This question had also been on my mind that winter, as I stood looking out my back window watching my neighbor's struggle. I had hoped to enjoy the stars. I had plenty of other things I thought I needed to do, but I realized that this was one of those decision-making moments. I could turn my back and finish my coffee, or I could join in God's promise-plan and help free my stuck neighbor. All around us are opportunities to build God's kingdom and unite with Him as He fulfills His promise-plan. Each of us must *chose* the things into which we will build.

May the Lord use this *Promised Land 2* study to familiarize us with the ways in which God intervened in human history to fulfill His promise-plan, challenge us to avoid the icy pathways on which the Israelites became stuck, and encourage us to invest wisely.