

All God's Promises Came to Pass

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[0 : 00] But we're going to turn now to our reading for this morning. And we are in the book of Joshua. If you don't have a Bible with you, we have plenty of visitor Bibles scattered around the place. And we're looking at chapters 18, 19, 20, and 21.

But I'll not be reading all of it. This will be a selected guided reading through these chapters. And as you'll know, if you've been here the last few weeks, we've been looking at these chapters in Joshua. Joshua and his army have conquered the land and now they are beginning to allocate the land to the various tribes. And so we begin this chapter with the allocations to the remaining seven tribes. So let's begin at chapter 18 and we'll start at verse 1. Then the whole congregation of the people of Israel assembled at Shiloh and set up the tent of meeting there.

The land lay subdued before them. There remained among the people of Israel seven tribes whose inheritance had not yet been apportioned. So Joshua said to the people of Israel, So how long will you put off going in to take possession of the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, has given you?

[1 : 31] Provide three men from each tribe and I will send them out that they may set out and go up and down the land. They shall write a description of it with a view to their inheritances and then come to me.

They shall divide it into seven portions. Judah shall continue in his territory on the south and the house of Joseph shall continue in their territory on the north. And you shall describe the land in seven divisions and bring the description here to me.

And I will cast lots for you here before the Lord our God. The Levites have no portion among you, for the priesthood of the Lord is their heritage. And Gad and Reuben and the half tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance beyond the Jordan eastward, which Moses, the servant of the Lord, gave them.

So the men arose and went. And Joshua charged those who went to write the description of the land, saying, Go up and down the land and write the description and return to me.

And I will cast lots for you here before the Lord in Shiloh. So the men went and passed up and down the land and wrote in a book a description of it by towns in seven divisions.

[2 : 42] Then they came to Joshua to the camp at Shiloh. And Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the Lord. And there Joshua apportioned the land to the people of Israel, to each his portion.

And it begins there in verse 11. The lots of the tribe of the people of Benjamin, according to its clans, came up. And the territory allotted to it fell between the people of Judah and the people of Joseph.

And then you get a detailed description of the land allocated to Benjamin. And that runs through to the end of the chapter. Look with me at chapter 19. The second lot came out for the tribe of Simeon, for the tribe of the people of Simeon, according to their clans.

And their inheritance was in the midst of the inheritance of the people of Judah. Then you get a description of their allotted land. Look at verse 10. The third lot came up for the people of Zebulun. Then you get a detail of their land. Verse 17. The fourth lot came out for Issachar. Verse 24. The fifth lot came out for the tribe of the people of Asher, according to their clans.

[3 : 48] Verse 32. The sixth lot came out for the people of Naphtali. And then finally, verse 40. The seventh lot came out for the tribe of the people of Dan, according to their clans.

And I look down to verse 49. When they had finished distributing the several territories of the land as inheritances, the people of Israel gave an inheritance among them to Joshua, the son of Nun. By command of the Lord, they gave him the city that he asked, Timnath-Sarai in the hill country of Ephraim. And he rebuilt the city and settled in it. These are the inheritances that Eleazar, the priest,

and Joshua, the son of Nun, and the heads of the father's houses of the tribes of the people of Israel, distributed by lot at Shiloh before the Lord at the entrance of the tent of meeting. So they finished dividing the land. Then the Lord said to Joshua, Say to the people of Israel, Appoint the cities of refuge, of which I spoke to you through Moses, that the manslayer who strikes any person without intent unknowingly may flee there.

They shall be for you a refuge from the avenger of blood. He shall flee to one of these cities and shall stand at the entrance of the gate of the city and explain his case to the elders of that city.

[5 : 12] Then they shall take him into the city and give him a place, and he shall remain with them. And if the avenger of blood pursues him, they shall not give up the manslayer into his hand, because he struck his neighbor unknowingly and did not hate him in the past.

And he shall remain in that city until he stood before the congregation for judgment, until the death of him who was high priest at that time. Then the manslayer may return to his own home, and his own home to the town from which he fled.

So they set apart Kadesh in Galilee, in the hill country of Nathali, and Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and Kiriath Arba, that is Hebron, in the hill country of Judah.

And beyond the Jordan east of Jericho, they appointed Bezer in the wilderness on the Tableland, from the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead, from the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan, from the tribe of Manasseh.

These were the cities designated for all the people of Israel, and for the stranger sojourning among them, that anyone who killed a person without intent could flee there, so that he might not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, till he stood before the congregation.

[6 : 25] Then the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites came to Eleazar the priest, and to Joshua the son of Nun, and to the heads of the fathers' houses of the tribes of the people of Israel.

And they said to them at Shiloh, at the land of Canaan, the Lord commanded through Moses that we be given cities to dwell in, along with their pasture lands for our livestock. So, by command of the Lord, the people of Israel gave to the Levites the following cities and pasture lands out of their inheritance.

Then you get detailed all the cities that were to be allocated to the Levites. Look on to the end of the chapter, verse 41. The cities of the Levites, in the midst of the possession of the people of Israel, were in all 48 cities, with their pasture lands.

These cities each had its pasture lands around it, so it was with all these cities. Thus, the Lord gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it, and they settled there.

And the Lord gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their fathers. Not one of all their enemies had bestowed them, for the Lord had given all their enemies into their hands.

[7 : 42] Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed. All came to pass. Amen.

May God bless his word to us. It would be a great help to have those chats from Joshua open in front of you.

Please do turn back in your Bibles to those chapters, 18, 19, 20, 21. And this is our final visit in this particular section of Joshua, with all the allocations of the land, all these details about geography, and cities, and borders, and so on.

And it's important to remember that not one word of the Bible is wasted. It takes every word of the Bible to communicate God's message for his people.

His word is for our salvation and for our sanctification. Every word of it. All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for a proof, for a correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

[8 : 57] So says the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3. Is that your conviction? I wonder. Is that your conviction? A conviction perhaps tested by these chapters in Joshua.

We'd be considering what did you make of these chapters in Joshua as we read it earlier. What possible relevance could there be for the church today as we read about cities of refuge, whatever they might be?

The cities for the Levites. What are we doing spending a Sunday morning looking at these chapters, you might think? Well, let me make one big point about why these chapters are here.

And then we'll zoom in a bit in detail and see some of the rich lessons that there are for us here. for God's people in every age. There is so much in here for our good and we do well to listen to it. But here's the big point I think that's been made in these chapters. Look at the very final verse or the verses in this long section that we read earlier. Look at the very end of chapter 21 and look again at the very last verse.

[10:07] And this draws about eight chapters to a conclusion. It says, not one word of all the good promises that the Lord has made to the house of Israel had failed.

All came to pass. That is the conclusion of all that has unfolded in the book of Joshua up until this point. The promises fulfilled here are ancient promises.

Promises made 600 years before to Abraham. Promises of a land. Promises of this specific land. And as we read Joshua, we see that God has done just what he said he would do.

Actual parcels of land would become places to live for some of God's people. Actual tribes of Israel would take real bits of land. God's promises weren't just fantasy.

It wasn't just a nice idea. His promises were solid and earthy. God's promises which is part of the reason as to why we have such detail in these chapters.

[11:15] God really has done what he said he would do. Even though it was an ancient promise, he was able to fulfill these ancient promises. And that is good news for us, isn't it?

Our faith is based on ancient promises. Promises thousands of years old. And these chapters tell us that our God is a God who is able to keep promises, even ancient ones.

He can do it. God was completely faithful to his word. And that fact echoes down through the centuries. That fact that he keeps his promises, that's a repeated refrain down through the years as God's people praise him.

It comes out in their praise that God keeps his promises. When Solomon dedicated the temple many years later, he kneeled, he prayed, and then he rose up and blessed the people. Here's what Solomon said.

Blessed be the Lord who has given rest to his people Israel according to all that he promised. Not one word had failed of all his good promise which he spoke by Moses' servant.

[12:24] You might remember we were looking in the book of Nehemiah last year and the returned exiles confessed their sins to the Lord. But before they did that, they acknowledged God's faithfulness.

Listen to this from Nehemiah 9. Here's what God's people said. You are the Lord, you alone. You have made the heaven, the heaven of heavens with all their hosts, the earth and all that's on us. You are the Lord, the God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham. You found his heart faithful before you and made with him the covenant to give his offspring the land of the Canaanite and you have kept your promise for you are righteous. That was hundreds of years after these events and God's people again praise God because of his faithfulness. He keeps his promises. Our God is a promise keeping God and we know that even more clearly than they did then, don't we?

We know that more clearly than those in Nehemiah's day or Solomon's day or Joshua's day. We know that God keeps his promises because he sent the Lord Jesus. All the promises of God find their yes in him.

[13:43] So these chapters in Joshua, they're here to refresh us in our understanding and appreciation of that reality. Our God does what he says he will do.

He can be relied upon utterly for everything in life and in death. We can trust him. That is the great truth that sits over these chapters this morning.

There's so much detail here. More that we can fully get into this morning. But that's the big thing. God keeps his promises. And we'll note a few aspects of that, what that looks like.

And we'll move quickly through these chapters. We'll take in three big chunks. Chapters 18 and 19, the final allocations to the land, the seven tribes. And then chapter 20, the cities of refuge.

And then finally, the cities of the Levites in chapter 21. So first, chapters 18 and 19, this is the remaining tribal allocations.

[14:43] And we see here God's promised provision of land. The first few verses set out the context for this remaining allocation. It firstly gives us a theological context regarding the tabernacle.

Look at verse 1. Then the whole congregation of the people of Israel assembled at Shiloh and set up the tent of meeting there. The land lay subdued before them. This is a new day for God's people. A new central location for the worship of God at Shiloh. They've moved location now. They're now at Shiloh. And that would remain a key center for the worship of God for many hundreds of years before they took Jerusalem.

And then Joshua gives instructions to men from each tribe to go and map out the land. He's basically trying to recruit some quantity surveyors to go out.

Let's have a look at the land. Let's divide it up. And so they send these three men from each tribe to travel throughout the land to map it out. And they were to describe it.

[15 : 43] Look at verse 5 and 6. They would divide it into seven different portions. And then they would bring that description back to Joshua and they would cast lots before the Lord and apportion the land out accordingly to all the people.

The first allotment went to Benjamin, the next Simeon, and so on. And the list concludes with the inheritance to Joshua at the very end of chapter 19.

So two things to note in particular here. One, there is something of a hint of warning at the beginning of this section.

Look at chapter 18 verse 3. Joshua said to the people of Israel, how long will you put off going in to take possession of the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, has given you?

Joshua is issuing something of a rebuke here to the people, isn't he? He rebukes their laxity. Come on, guys. The Lord has given you the land. Go and take it. Why aren't you taking it?

[16 : 46] They've been a bit slow off the mark. What had been promised now needs to be possessed. And as we've seen already in Joshua, as we've seen constantly through the Bible, God's sovereignty doesn't excuse our responsibility to act, to do things.

God's sovereignty doesn't excuse our responsibility, but it requires it. It insists upon it. God's promises, says one preacher, are to act as a stimulant to activity, not a sedative leading to laziness. And that seems to be what Joshua is taking aim at here. The people are maybe a bit laid back. Oh, the Lord's promised that it will happen. But no, no. He's saying, come on, get up. Go and take the land.

Take possession. All the good things that God gives us, his promises, his gifts, they are not primarily to give us a life of greater ease, but actually of greater work.

Joshua had to remind them to get on it, to get to it. Stop putting off the hard work ahead of you. Go and take what is yours. That's the warning at the beginning. Second thing to note, and this is a big picture observation relating to the allocation of the land.

[18 : 04] The second thing is that God's people were given their lot by the Lord. Joshua is very clear. He's gone to great lengths to ensure that this is an equitable allocation.

There's no favoritism going on here. He took three men from each tribe. Their task was to go and map out the land, come to an agreement and have to divide it up and come back to Joshua. There could be no accusation of favoritism or bias, could there?

Doing it by lot was a clear statement that the sovereign Lord was determining who got what. Wasn't Joshua choosing? This is in the Lord's hands. No one could claim to be more important than any other tribe because of the land they got.

There was no choice in it. No tribe was above another. Nobody got the prime land because it was their merit. No, no, it was the Lord's decision. Your allocation is based not on merit but the sovereign choice of God.

And it shows, doesn't it, that the Lord knows the human heart so well. He knows how prone to pride we really are. This was a very visible, tangible reminder that each tribe was part of something bigger.

[19 : 24] They were part of one body, one people of God. No tribe could be tempted to think because of the land they got that they were somehow better than the others. This was a great way, wasn't it, to prick elitist bubbles.

It's a reminder to us that none of us is part of God's family because of any merit in ourselves either. All of us are here by the grace of God.

Each of those tribes receive that land because of the grace of God, not because of any merit. John 1.16 says that from His fullness we have all received grace upon grace.

1 Corinthians 12 says that for in one spirit we were all baptized into one body. Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, and all were made to drink of the one spirit. Grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift, Ephesians 4.

We need to remember that, don't we? All of us have an equal share in the Father's wealth. All of us are part of His family by grace alone.

[20 : 36] All of us need to accept the lot that we have in life. Like these tribes had to accept the lot they were given, the land that the Lord gave them, they had to accept it.

It was the Lord's best for them. And not all the plots of land were identical, were they? They weren't the same. Some were by the coast, some were in the hills.

They all had their benefits and drawbacks. Some had lovely views, others not so much. But each tribe had to accept its lot. And we too need to accept, because we believe in the sovereignty of God, that the lot we've been allocated is the right one for us.

the Lord makes no mistakes as He apportions each His lot in life. The Apostle Paul in an address to the Areopagus, makes this very point.

He says this, And He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on the face of the earth, having determined a lot of periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place that they should seek God.

[21 : 48] The implication of that reality, as Paul says elsewhere, is that each person should lead the life the Lord has assigned to him and to which God has called him.

That's our task in life, isn't it? To live the life the Lord has assigned to us. And that can at times be hard, can't it? That can be a hard reality for us to come to terms with.

We rail against it at times, don't we? Our circumstances, we find them tough, because often they are tough. We do have to face difficult things.

Perhaps we look at the lot that others have in life and we think, I wish I had that lot. I wish I had someone else's circumstances, not my own. But the thing is we don't actually know the lot that others have in life often.

We may just see the Instagram version of someone's life. We see the highlights, the good bits. We don't see the relational heartaches. We don't see the personal betrayals.

[22 : 54] We don't see the financial troubles. We don't see the health conditions they quietly live with. The Lord, in his good and perfect plan, sees all things, doesn't he?

He sees eternity. He sees far more than we do. And so the question is, will you trust him with your lot in life? Will you ask him to give you godliness with contentment?

For that is great gain. I think that's part of the message. As we see these allotted bits of land, each tribe was given its lot by the Lord.

They'd have to accept it. It was their lot in life. And we too have been given so much. And the lot in life we've been given is the lot the Lord intends.

Well, we must look on. Chapters 18 and 19 bring the tribal allocations to a conclusion. But there still remain some final matters to round off. There are still promises that the Lord has made that need to be squared off, that the Lord needs to fulfill.

[24 : 10] And it's all to do with the allocations of various cities, which would provide a special function for the nation. And the first set of cities, you see in chapter 20, these cities of refuge.

And we see here God's promised provision for justice. Chapter 20 gives a list of six cities within Israel that served as places of protection for those who were guilty of manslaughter.

They were commonly called the cities of refuge. They were special places because in God's mercy, God provided a sanctuary for those who unintentionally caused someone's death.

In a city of refuge, a manslayer could be spared capital punishment at the hands of the avenger of blood. Now, these cities became crucial, a critical part of the structure of Israel's society, a society that in all its ceremonious and civil properties taught the people about God's ways and pointed the people to him.

These special cities served as tools to educate Israel about the way the Lord looked at life and death and to promote both mercy and justice in the land.

[25 : 35] These cities, they taught Israel then and today that God is a God of mercy. He's a God of grace. In his love, he reaches out in pity and provides refuge and safety to all who flee to his appointed place.

Now, this concept of the cities of refuge wasn't new. You can read some detail about them. If you go back to Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, you get great detail about these cities.

Clearly, these were of great concern to the Lord and so God's people, as they took possession of the land, the land long promised, the establishment of these cities was a priority.

It might strike you as strange as we read through this, that such time would be given to these six cities, but it's important. It was an important part of the life of God's people.

And you see, the Bible deals with reality, doesn't it? The Bible deals with life in a fallen world and people are sometimes unintentionally killed in terrible accidents.

[26 : 43] There was perhaps no fault or intent on behalf of the person whose actions led to someone's death. And so there needed to be a place where such a person could flee to, where they could run to, where they know they might reach safety and see justice executed.

The matter could be properly looked into and investigated. And the very fact of these cities, the very fact that the Lord insisted upon these cities being present and set up, it speaks, doesn't it, of the value of human life, the way in which the Lord treasured and protected human life.

He cares for human life. The tragic death of one person should not lead to unwarranted further bloodshed of someone who has unintentionally killed them.

more bloodshed is not the answer. Capital punishment was a thing in Israel. It was to be enacted when somebody was guilty of intentional murder, but not manslaughter.

And the Lord knows, doesn't he, that in our fallen world, people, they might well jump to hasty conclusions. They've seen an accident take place, they've seen the person who was involved and they think they must be guilty.

[28 : 00] they jump to a conclusion, especially in a heated moment like that, a very difficult moment where someone's lost their life.

You can imagine the scenario, can't you? People want to take justice in their own hands. They think they know what's happened. But even in less serious situations, we are, aren't we, very quick to come to judgments.

judgments when we're not often in full possession of the facts. We think we know what's gone on, we think we know what's happened, we think we've got the right judgments. But actually we would do well, wouldn't we, to let a bit of dust settle, to allow the guilty party to retreat to a place of safety, to allow things to be heard and thought, to allow the evidence to be presented.

See, our God is a God of justice, isn't he? He loves life, he protects life, and these cities are refuge. They are a very visible demonstration of the character of God, his love of life, and his love of protecting it, to avoiding shedding innocent blood.

And as his people today, we are no longer the church, we're not a nation state. The scales of justice are not in our hands, but they're in the hands of the judiciary, the legislators.

[29 : 31] But as a church, as the church today, we ought to demonstrate, mustn't we, and advocate for God's love of life, and his hatred of death, particularly unjust death.

The character of God which led to these cities being established should be the character that we see in the church. As the church, we ought to demonstrate and advocate God's love of life, life.

It was absolutely right, as we prayed about earlier, that Christians voiced their strong opposition to the assisted dying bill, because we love life. We want to protect it.

It's absolutely right that we continue to voice our concerns about the way in which our society values life, both at its beginning and at its end. moment.

We ought to be vocal advocates for human life, wherever we find it. See, our God is a God of life, and so must his people be too.

[30 : 35] That's what we see here with these cities of refuge. Is that a mark of our church's life, that we speak for those who can't speak for themselves, us, that we protect life.

And note one more thing about these cities of refuge. It's almost a passing comment. Just note about those who could flee to these cities of refuge. Look at verse 9 in chapter 20.

It says, these were the cities designated for all the people of Israel and for the stranger sojourning among them, that anyone who killed a person without intent could flee there. that's been a constant refrain through the book about the stranger, about the someone outside of the people of Israel coming in, outsiders being welcomed.

That has been a drumbeat through the book of Joshua. Think about Rahab chapter 2. Think about the Gibeonites chapter 9. Not only included within God's people, his love, but also his justice.

Here in Joshua we see the nature of our gracious God who delights to bring near those who are far off. They're welcomed in. Those we would probably want to write off and exclude.

[31 : 55] No, no, the Lord says they're welcome. Now these six cities of refuge, they're actually a subset of a wider group of cities which we see in the final chapter of our section this morning and that's the cities of the Levites.

So we're seeing God's promised provision of land, we're seeing God's promised provision of justice, but now we also see God's promised provision for the priests. Look at chapter 21 verse 1. Then the heads of the fathers' house of the Levites came to Eliezer the priest and to Joshua the son of Nun and to the heads of the fathers' house of the tribes of the people of Israel.

And they said to them, Shiloh, in the land of Canaan, here's their plea, the Levites come, here's what they say, the Lord commanded through Moses that we be given city to dwell in, along with their pasture lands of our livestock.

So, by command of the Lord, the people of Israel gave to the Levites the following cities and pasture lands out of their inheritance. Again, what we're seeing here is promises kept.

The Levites, they're not dreaming up their own idea here, they're not just making a plea for extra cities, they are relying on promises already made, promises already given by the Lord, a promise that would ensure that the Levites were provided for.

[33 : 21] The Levites, they were a select tribe within the people of God, they would lead Israel in their worship of the Lord, and they had amongst all the tribes a unique calling, and the Lord provided for them in a unique way.

See, the Lord would not allow them to have their own land, they didn't have, a tribal allocation of land, they had no inheritance, but the Lord would ensure that they were provided for, that they could live, they could feed themselves.

Even within the Levites, there was diversity of role, and yet all were provided for. We'll not get into all the details, but there are basically four subsets within the Levites, four different groups, and they each have particular tasks to do with the worship of the Lord on the tabernacle.

And the Lord provided for all of them. That is underlined in great detail in this chapter. And the fact that he provides for them in this way is a very real demonstration that the Lord honors those who serve him.

And these were particularly set aside to serve him in a special way. Whether it was carrying the various bits of equipment for the tabernacle, some had to pack it down, lift it up, and carry it to different places.

[34 : 38] Others were responsible for baking bread and singing praise in the tabernacle. They had different roles. Everyone played a role. And God treated their occupations diverse as they were.

All of them were of value. None was deemed more important than the other. It's a wonderful thing to see that as you read through that chapter. the way in which the Lord makes sure that each part is provided for.

And in the church today, some of us, because we are a priesthood of believers, some of us are called to positions of leadership, ministries which are perhaps more visible, while others serve in quiet, behind-the-scenes sorts of ways, which, although it may be unnoticed by most of us most of the time, are so valuable, so integral to the functioning of the church.

Just think about the place we are now. The lights, the heat. How does that happen? Who pays for that? Who makes sure that the bills are paid? We don't see that happening, but it's crucial, isn't it? And such differences in gifting and role, they are a reflection, aren't they, of God's sovereignty. In His providence, He provides all sorts of people for His church. Each member of the body needs every other member of the body.

[36 : 07] If we're going to function as God's church, we all need one another. If some of us drop out, the church will not function as it ought to do. And the priests here, they all needed to be provided for.

Despite the variety of their role, despite what they were doing, the Lord ensured that all were provided for. people. But it wasn't just provision we see here, it was the fact and the nature of the distribution of these cities.

I'm not going to provide another map this week, I'm afraid. But if you were to look at a map of where all these cities were, they were scattered around the whole promised land. There were 48 of them, 48 cities spread across the entire promised land.

And that's a reminder of the whole purpose of the people. They were to be a light to the nations. How were God's people going to do that? How were they going to be a light to the nations? By living God's way. How would they do that? Well, through the sacrifices for sins and through sanctified lives.

[37 : 15] And the priests, the Levites, were absolutely crucial to both of those things. they ensured the sacrificial system was working and they were to teach the people the way of the life for the redeemed.

They were teachers, instructing God's people in God's ways. And the people needed constant exposure to God's word. That's part of their purpose. Calvin says that they were appointed as a kind of guardian in every district to retain the people in the pure worship of God.

That is how God's people would be a light to the nations, constant exposure to the word of God. Holding firm to God's word, that was the task of the Levites then, and it's the task of Bible teachers today, proclaiming among God's people regularly, his word is absolutely essential if we're to be a light to the nations.

You strip away the teaching, and pretty quickly, the people will go adrift. God's word. That's why they were scattered around the promised land.

You're never very far away from a priest who will be teaching and proclaiming God's words. And often, the reality is that's unpopular work. Just think about how many Bible teachers were treated down through the history of God's church.

[38 : 39] Things that were hard need to be said, and often they were rejected for it. And it's the same today, isn't it?

That something you hear from the pulpit ruffles your feathers from time to time, that is okay. We are sitting together, aren't we, under the authority of God's word.

And it ought to often jar with our own thinking. we spend our weeks, our Mondays to Saturdays, we are out in the world, we are breathing in the cultural air of Babylon.

The ideologies, the soundbites, they seep into our brains. And the world that we live in can't not shape how we think, how we feel about things.

And so we always need to be brought back, don't we, to the truth, to reality, to be woken up to God's word and his ways. We always need to be brought back to reality.

[39 : 42] And we need the mutual encouragement, don't we, of fellowship together, of hearing, believing, responding to the scriptures. We have to know God if we're going to follow him.

That is why God provided the Levites in these 48 cities across all the land of Israel. And it's why he provides under-shepherds today for his people, to feed his precious flock, to see them grow in maturity in Christ.

This is yet another example of the Lord keeping his promises, providing all that his people needed. If they were going to be his people, a light to the nations, this is what they needed.

Now, these chapters, they might have seemed a little bit tedious as we set out, but they are rich. There is so much for us here. They are rich with promises fulfilled.

And the writer's careful, isn't he, to make his point with great detail that not one word of all the promises of God, not one of them, fail to come to pass.

[40 : 50] Not even the allocations for the tribe of Dan, not even the cities of refuge, not even the tribes of Levites would not get their cities. Every word was fulfilled.

all came to pass. And that is our God, friends. He keeps his promises. And as we sung earlier, engraved as in eternal brass, his mighty promises shines.

Nor can the powers of hell erase those everlasting lines. His every word of grace is strong as that which built the skies. The voice that rolls the stars along speaks all the promises.

So shall my leaping heart rejoice to know my heaven secure. I trust his all creating voice and faith desires no more.

Let's pray and then we'll sing together. Our Father God, we thank you that you are a promise keeping God.

[42 : 05] Even in the slightly obscure chapters in Joshua, we see that shining through, that you are a God who does just what he says he will do. And so would you help us to be a people that trust in all that you've promised, that we would trust your word to us, your people, that in this gospel age, you have promised to never leave or forsake us.

You have promised to be with us to the very end of the age if we seek to make disciples of Jesus Christ. And not just in this life, but through death and into eternity.

Help us to trust you. Help us to be a people who walk not by sight, but by faith. Help us, for we ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.