

SERMON:

Introduction to Numbers

God's People "In the Wilderness"

Numbers and I Corinthians 10

REVELATION 3:7-13

⁷"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: "The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens. ⁸"I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. ⁹Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie---behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet and they will learn that I have loved you. ¹⁰Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. ¹¹I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. ¹²The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. ¹³He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

REVELATION 2:12-17

¹²"And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: 'The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword. ¹³I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. ¹⁴But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. ¹⁵So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. ¹⁶Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth. ¹⁷He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.'

Proposition: To understand Numbers well we need to understand how it fits into the bigger story. Once we understand how it fits into the Old Testament story and the New Testament story, then we can begin to understand how Numbers applies to us.

A. Putting Numbers in its place

B. What is the story of Numbers?

C. What does Numbers have to do with us?

PUTTING NUMBERS IN ITS PLACE

Where does Numbers fit into the story?

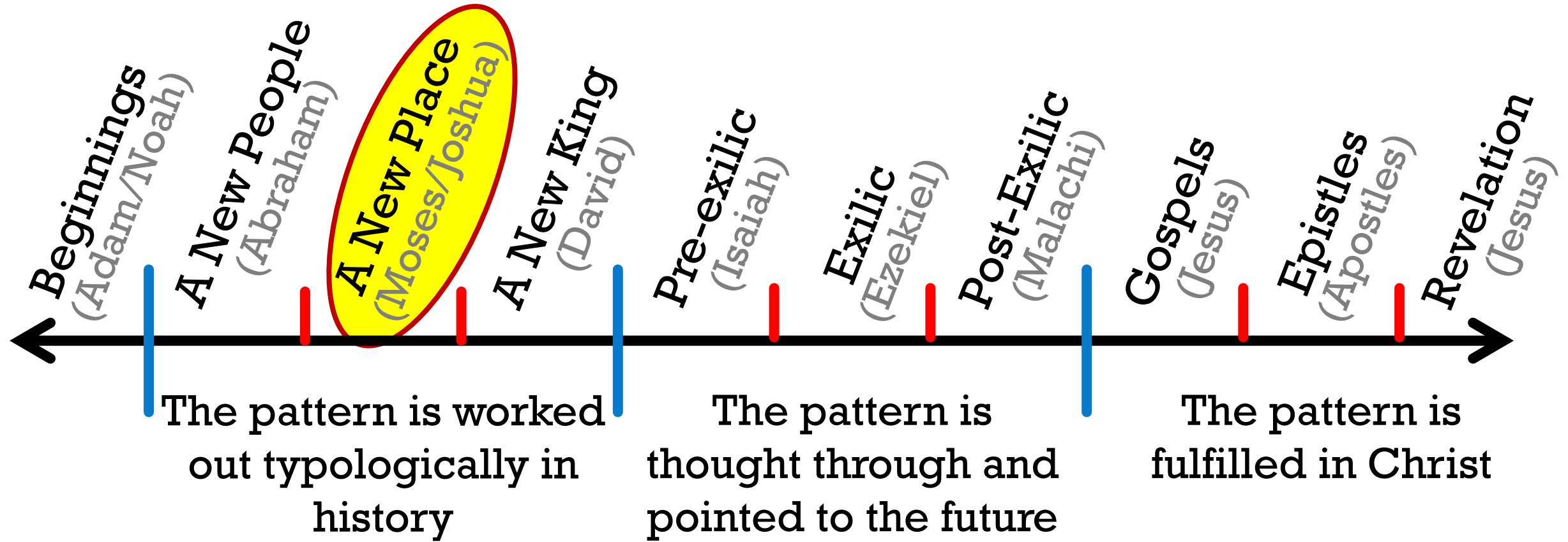
A Quick Review of Biblical Theology

THE STORY OF THE BIBLE

Histories

Prophets

New Testament



THE PROMISE OF LAND: EXODUS – JOSHUA

Exodus

Leviticus

Numbers

Deuteronomy

Joshua

God's People are redeemed from slavery and enter into covenant with God

God's People are taught the holiness that is required to dwell with God

God's people travel from Mt. Sinai to the Promised Land, but experience hardships

God's people are reminded again of the holiness that is required to dwell with God

God's people take possession of the land and divide it as their inheritance

WHAT IS THE STORY OF NUMBERS?

Outline and Message

OUTLINE OF NUMBERS

1. Census at Sinai (Numbers 1)
2. Arrangement of the Camp (Numbers 2)
3. Organization of the Levites (Numbers 3-4)
4. Addressing Uncleanness (Numbers 5)
5. Promoting Separation (Numbers 6)
6. Consecration of the Tabernacle (Numbers 7)
7. Levite Careers (Numbers 8)
8. Passover (Numbers 9)
9. Setting Out (Numbers 10)
10. Complaint 1: Hardship (Numbers 11:1-3)
11. Complaint 2: Meat (Numbers 11:4-35)
12. Complaint 3: Miriam and Aaron (Numbers 12)
13. Complaint 4: Report of the Spies (Numbers 13-14)
14. Sacrifice, Sins, and Remembering (Numbers 15)
15. Complaint 5: Korah's Rebellion (Numbers 16-17)
16. Duties of Priests and Levites (Numbers 18)
17. Laws for Purification (Numbers 19)
18. Complaint 6: Water (Numbers 20)
19. Complaint 7: Food and Water (Numbers 21:1-6)
20. The Bronze Serpent (Numbers 21:7-9)
21. Defeating the Amorites (Numbers 21:10-35)
22. Balaam's Oracles of Blessing (Numbers 22-24)
23. Zeal for Holiness (Numbers 25)
24. Census at Shittim (Numbers 26)
25. Zeal for God's Promise (Numbers 27:1-11)
26. A New Leader (Numbers 27:12-23)
27. Offerings and Vows (Numbers 28-30)
28. Defeating Midian (Numbers 31)
29. The Firstfruits of the Land (Numbers 32)
30. Looking back and looking forward (Numbers 33)
31. The Land and the Tribes (Numbers 34)
32. Cities for the Levites and Cities of Refuge (Numbers 35)
33. Zeal for God's Promise (Numbers 36)

OUTLINE OF NUMBERS

1. Census at Sinai (Numbers 1)
2. Arrangement of the Camp (Numbers 2)
3. Organization of the Levites (Numbers 3-4)
4. Addressing Uncleanness (Numbers 5)
5. Promoting Separation (Numbers 6)
6. Consecration of the Tabernacle (Numbers 7)
7. Levite Careers (Numbers 8)
8. Passover (Numbers 9)
9. Setting Out (Numbers 10)

10. Complaint 1: Hardship (Numbers 11:1-3)
11. Complaint 2: Meat (Numbers 11:4-35)
12. Complaint 3: Miriam and Aaron (Numbers 12)
13. Complaint 4: Report of the Spies (Numbers 13-14)
14. Sacrifice, Sins, and Remembering (Numbers 15)
15. Complaint 5: Korah's Rebellion (Numbers 16-17)
16. Duties of Priests and Levites (Numbers 18)
17. Laws for Purification (Numbers 19)
18. Complaint 6: Water (Numbers 20)
19. Complaint 7: Food and Water (Numbers 21:1-6)

20. The Bronze Serpent (Numbers 21:7-9)
21. Defeating the Amorites (Numbers 21:10-35)
22. Balaam's Oracles of Blessing (Numbers 22-24)
23. Zeal for Holiness (Numbers 25)

24. Census at Shittim (Numbers 26)
25. Zeal for God's Promise (Numbers 27:1-11)
26. A New Leader (Numbers 27:12-23)
27. Offerings and Vows (Numbers 28-30)
28. Defeating Midian (Numbers 31)
29. The Firstfruits of the Land (Numbers 32)
30. Looking back and looking forward (Numbers 33)
31. The Land and the Tribes (Numbers 34)
32. Cities for the Levites and Cities of Refuge (Numbers 35)
33. Zeal for God's Promise (Numbers 36)

OUTLINE OF NUMBERS

- A. Preparing to set out with God in holiness to the promised land (Numbers 1-10)
- B. The cares of this world distract God's people and disqualify them from entering the land (Numbers 11-20)
- C. As a new generation arises, God renews His promise of redemption and blessing resulting in renewed holiness (Numbers 21-25)
- D. A new generation sets out toward the promised land with their eyes set on the promise (Numbers 26-36)

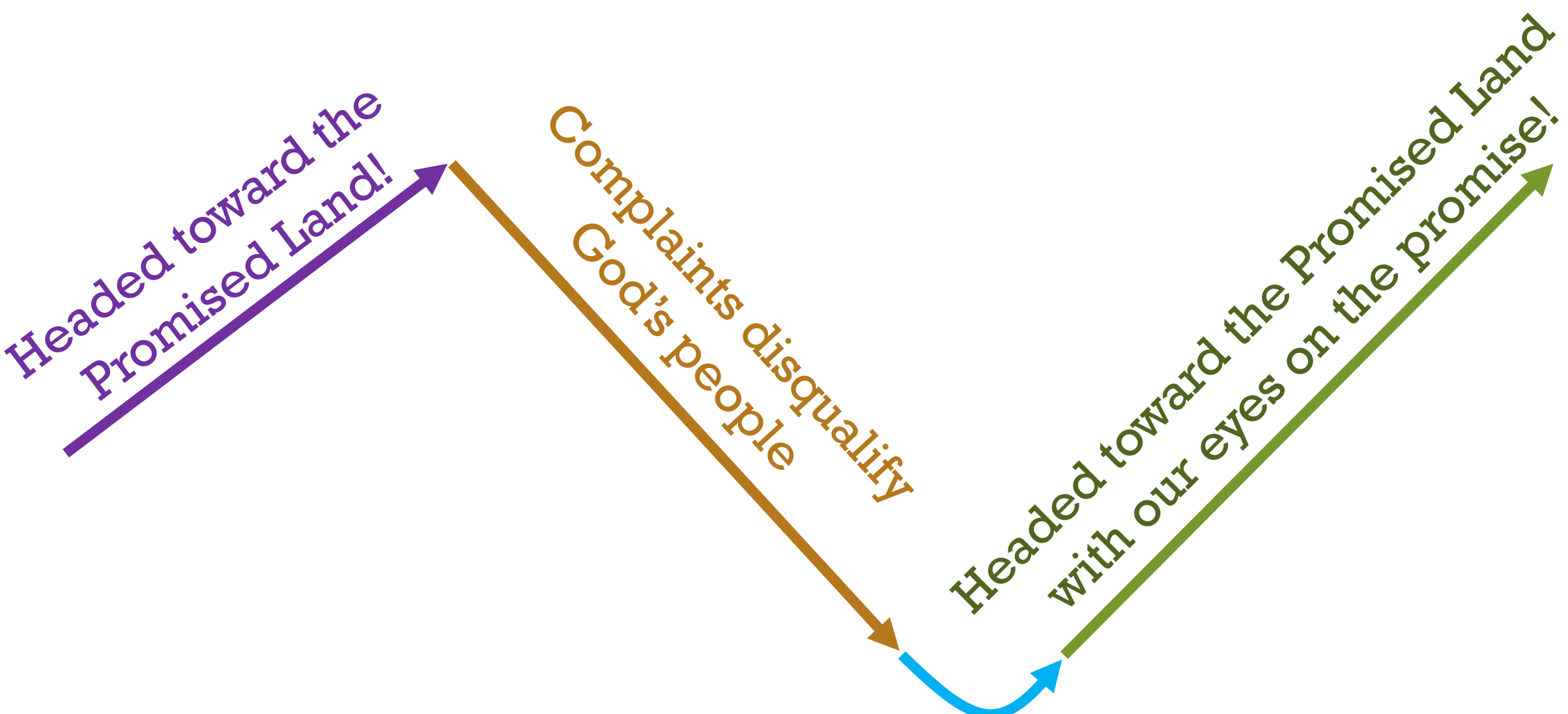
OUTLINE OF NUMBERS

Headed toward the Promised Land!

Complaints disqualify God's people

Headed toward the Promised Land with our eyes on the promise!

Redemption and Blessing for a New Generation



WHAT DOES NUMBERS HAVE TO DO WITH US?

Numbers and the New Covenant

I CORINTHIANS 10:1-5

¹For I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, ²and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³and all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. ⁵Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown[“] in the wilderness.[”]

Paul is telling the story of Numbers!

I CORINTHIANS 10:6-10

⁶Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. ⁷Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." ⁸We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. ⁹We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, ¹⁰nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer.

I CORINTHIANS 10:11-13

¹¹Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. ¹²Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

I CORINTHIANS 10:1-5

¹For I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, ²and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³and all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. ⁵Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

I CORINTHIANS 9:24-27

²⁴Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. ²⁵Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. ²⁶So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. ²⁷But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

NUMBERS AND US

- Numbers is explicitly written for us!
1. Numbers is a **sober warning** to us of the dangers of falling away due to the cares of this world and a reminder that God demands holiness of His people
 2. But Numbers is also a **precious promise** that God will provide what we need to persevere
 3. So Numbers calls us to **keep our eyes on the promised land** and keep following God in holiness

ROMANS 11:22

²²Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off.

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Numbers describes the movement of God's people from covenant to consummation and therefore is the Old Testament book that perhaps most represents our situation as well in between covenant and consummation.

Therefore the book stands as a **sober warning** to us: perseverance is required to obtain the promise. But the book holds out a **precious promise** as well: God will not abandon His people and the truths of the Gospel will be our preservation.

Numbers therefore calls us to value holiness by trusting in redemption and keeping our eyes on the promise.

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Numbers reflects us in the now and not yet and warns us against falling away while encouraging us with the gospel to keep going on toward the promised land.

KIDS' QUESTION:

FOR WHOM IS NUMBERS WRITTEN?

The Book of Numbers is written for us, those who are redeemed and are going toward the promised land.

KIDS' QUESTION:

TO WHAT DOES NUMBERS CALL US?

Numbers calls us to devote ourselves to holiness, keeping our eyes on the promise and holding fast to the gospel.