

Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY
TEACHER'S PACKET

3rd - 5th Grade

Sunday Morning

Study 2

Failure to Trust in God's Promises

Failure to Trust in God's Promises

The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verses support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

Objective Using the story of the Israelite rebellion at Kadesh Barnea, demonstrate the seriousness of not obeying God's Word. The rejection of God's Word brings about consequences.

Key Verses

Numbers 13-14—Main Teaching Passage

John 3:36

Romans 6:23

Memory Verse - Deuteronomy 30:19

"I have set before you life and death, blessing and a curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live!"

Hook

Review last week's memory verse, Joshua 1:9

Ask the class, "What happens at home when your parents ask you to do something and you don't do it? Or what happens when they tell you to not do something but you do it anyway?"

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

BOOK

In last week's lesson, we saw that God's Word is true and that He always keeps His promises. If you remember, we studied Joshua 1 and saw that God had fulfilled all that He had promised to Abraham and Moses by bringing the people of Israel back to the Promised Land. Sadly, this was the second time Israel was brought to the edge of the Promised Land. The first time, they were not strong and courageous (Joshua 1:9, our memory verse last week), but rather they disobeyed God by not trusting His Word and not believing that He would bring victory to them.

In Numbers 13-14, we see their first attempt to enter into the Promised Land. Israel was encamped at a place called Kadesh Barnea, and in order to know what was ahead of them they sent some spies into the land. Notice in 13:20 that Moses gives them the same encouragement that God gave Joshua last week: "be of good courage." The spies spent 40 days in the land, and when they returned, they reported that the land was incredible, "flowing with milk and honey." However, the spies also said that the inhabitants of the land were strong, powerful warriors and that the Israelites were "like grasshoppers" compared to them. Ten of the twelve spies said that they should turn back and return to Egypt. Only Joshua and Caleb believed in the promise of God, declaring, "Do not rebel against the LORD. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them" (14:9).

The people, however, rejected the advice of Joshua and Caleb, and more than that, they rejected the Word of God and the promise that He had given them. In 14:11 God said, "'How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them?'" Remember last week we showed that God can be trusted because he has proven himself to be faithful. This is especially true of the Israelites:

- God had fed them every day with manna from Heaven.
- He had given them water to drink when there was none.
- He had delivered them in battle from their enemies.
- He had gone before them every day in a pillar of cloud and every night in a pillar of fire.

He had never left them or led them astray, and yet now, when the Israelites were right on the doorsteps of the Promised Land, they forgot all the things God had done, and turned away from Him.

There was a consequence for all those who rejected God there at Kadesh Barnea. They were not allowed to enter the Promised Land. In fact, the people of Israel all wandered in the wilderness until every last one of those who rejected God at Kadesh grew old and died. It was only then that Caleb, Joshua, and everyone under the age of 20 were allowed to enter into the land that God had promised Abraham and Moses.

See the commentary at the end of the study for more information.

The interpretation and exegesis of the passage. What does this passage mean? How does this passage apply to my life?

LOOK

The rejection of God's Word is a very serious thing. When we reject His Word, we reject Him. My father always used to say (normally when I was getting in trouble for something), "We can choose to do whatever we want, but we cannot choose the consequences." God has given us the ability to choose. In Deuteronomy 30:19, it says that we have two options presented before us, life and death. God is pleading with us to choose life, but all of us have the option to choose death.

When we choose to things our own way, and reject God in doing so, there are consequences. We might miss out on an incredible blessing, or opportunity that the Lord wanted us to have. We might find that we hurt other people and ruin relationships or friendships because we did things our way and not God's way.

The gravest consequence of all is for rejecting Jesus Christ. In John 3:36 it says, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him." For us, like the Israelites, there is a Promised Land. For them it was called Israel, for us it is called Heaven. They rejected the promises of God and were refused entry into Israel. If we reject Jesus Christ as Lord, if we do not submit our lives to Him, then we are refused entry into Heaven. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father except by me."

All of the students in the room are being presented with a choice: Accept Christ, trust in His word, and move forward into the promise of new life with Him, or reject Christ and be refused entry. It's important to note that for those who are already in Christ Jesus, the consequence of our sin is not refusal of entry to Heaven. Christ has paid for all of our sins, even the ones we haven't committed yet. We cannot lose our salvation. That being said, our sin is still very serious and hurtful to the Lord, and as said above there are still consequences for sin.

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

TOOK

Invite the students to choose Christ, and pray a prayer of repentance and salvation for anyone who would like to do so.

As a class, memorize Deuteronomy 30:19.

Have the students think privately and silently if there is any sin in their lives that they need to repent of. Ask them in what ways have they rejected God's promises.

Have the students think privately and silently about ways that they have been disobedient to their parents. Encourage the students to apologize and seek forgiveness for those things after the class.

Parent Question: What are the consequences for disobeying God?

FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on Numbers 13 –14 by David Guzik

SPIES ARE SENT INTO CANAAN

A. Spies are chosen and commissioned.

1. ([Num 13:1-3](#)) The sending of the spies.

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel; from each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, every one a leader among them." So Moses sent them from the Wilderness of Paran according to the command of the LORD, all of them men who *were* heads of the children of Israel.

a. **Send men to spy out the land of Canaan:** These men were on a reconnaissance mission; to observe the land of Canaan and bring back a report to the nation. However, it is worthwhile to ask if they really *needed* to go on this mission or if there was useful information they lacked, which would prove vital in taking Canaan.

b. **From each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, every one a leader among them:** According to [Deuteronomy 1:20-25](#), the plan to send spies did not directly originate with Moses, but came from the people. Moses told them simply to go and take the land, and the people suggested this plan to Moses (*everyone of you came near to me and said, [Deuteronomy 1:22](#)*). Furthermore, in [Deuteronomy 1:23](#) Moses said, *the plan pleased me well*.

i. This expedition had an unfortunate result; it may very well be that Moses was wrong in taking this suggestion of the people. Perhaps the accusations of Miriam and Aaron (petty, false, and self-interested as they were) had made Moses hesitant to take strong leadership.

ii. Since the people of Israel initiated this excursion, perhaps Moses only came to God asking *how* to send out the spies, not *if* he should send out the spies. **From each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, every one a leader among them** describes the *method* of sending the spies.

c. **According to the command of the LORD:** Nevertheless, this was in the plan of God. God used the report of the spies as a test of Israel's faith.

3. ([Num 13:17-20](#)) Moses commissions the spies.

Then Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, "Go up this *way* into the South, and go up to the mountains, and see what the land is like: whether the people who dwell in it *are* strong or weak, few or many; whether the land they dwell in *is* good or bad; whether the cities they inhabit *are* like camps or strongholds; whether the land *is* rich or poor; and whether there are forests there or not. Be of good courage. And bring some of the fruit of the land." Now the time *was* the season of the first ripe grapes.

a. **See what the land is like:** Moses' direction to the spies was a subtle manifestation of unbelief. Did he real-

ly doubt that the land was good? Did he doubt that the land was rich? Did he doubt that there were useful forests? Did it matter if the people were strong or many, or if they lived in strongholds?

i. This was an entirely *reasonable* pursuit for Moses, and representative of the *curiosity* of the whole nation. After all, they had never seen this land, nor had any Israelite for some 400 years.

ii. God already told them what the land was like. At Moses' calling at the burning bush, God told him the land of Canaan was *a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey* ([Exodus 3:8](#)), and Moses told the people of the goodness of the land ([Exodus 13:5](#)).

b. **Whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak:** We wonder what the people of Israel thought they would do if a negative report came back. Would they resolve to return to Egypt?

B. The report of the spies.

1. ([Num 13:21-25](#)) The twelve spies in the Promised Land.

So they went up and spied out the land from the Wilderness of Zin as far as Rehob, near the entrance of Hamath. And they went up through the South and came to Hebron; Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, the descendants of Anak, *were* there. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) Then they came to the Valley of Eshcol, and there cut down a branch with one cluster of grapes; they carried it between two of them on a pole. *They also brought* some of the pomegranates and figs. The place was called the Valley of Eshcol, because of the cluster which the men of Israel cut down there. And they returned from spying out the land after forty days.

a. **So they went up and spied out the land:** As these spies toured the land, they saw some of the people and the produce of the land. This spectacular produce included clusters of grapes so big, they had to be carried between two men on a pole.

b. **And they returned from spying out the land after forty days:** The reconnaissance mission took **forty days**. When God tested His people, He often used a period of forty (such as forty days or forty years).

2. ([Num 13:26-29](#)) The report of the land.

Now they departed and came back to Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. Then they told him, and said: "We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this *is* its fruit. Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land *are* strong; the cities *are* fortified *and* very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the South; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the banks of the Jordan."

a. **We went to the land where you sent us:** They seemed to sense they were more on a mission from Israel than on a mission from God; we might already sense the report will be given according to a human perspective, not according to God's perspective.

b. **It truly flows with milk and honey** - what God had promised about the land was indeed true.

c. **Nevertheless:** "nevertheless" means "despite all of that." At that moment, Moses, and every man of faith in Israel should have cried out and said, "Nevertheless nothing! How can one say, 'We went to the land, found it good, and God's promise true,' and then say, 'Despite all this ...?'"

i. Despite God's faithful promise, **the people who dwell in the land are strong**.

- ii. Despite God's faithful promise, **the cities are fortified and very large.**
- iii. Despite God's faithful promise, **we saw the descendants of Anak** [a tribe of large men] **there.**
- iv. Despite God's faithful promise, **the Amalekites dwell ... the Amorites dwell ... the Canaanites dwell** - all the land is taken up, there are no vacancies!

d. **Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there:** It is hard to imagine a report *more* unbelieving and unfaithful to God than this; a report that recognizes the faithfulness of God's promise, the truth of His word, and yet says, "Despite all that ..."

i. What ever the exact nature of God's testing in the minds and hearts of the twelve spies during the forty days in Canaan, it is clear that they have, as a whole, failed the test!

3. ([Num 13:30](#)) Caleb's faithful objection.

Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it."

a. **Then Caleb quieted the people:** Caleb - blessed forever! - commanded the people to immediately (**at once**) trust and obey God and to take the land, because God had made them able.

b. **Let us go up at once and take possession:** It took great courage for this man to stand against the tide of unbelief, of doubt and "despite all that" attitude. Caleb had the spirit of [Romans 3:4](#): *Let God be true but every man a liar.*

4. ([Num 13:31-33](#)) The other spies respond to Caleb.

But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they *are* stronger than we." And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone as spies *is* a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it *are* men of *great* stature. There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

a. **But the men who had gone up with him said:** Their unbelieving response was a potent combination of truth, lies, and exaggeration.

i. It was true from a human perspective that **they are stronger than we** - but to say, "**we are not able to go up against the people**" was a lie.

ii. It was true that they had gone through the land - but to say, "**a land that devours its inhabitants**" was a lie.

iii. Each of the statements, "**All the men whom we saw in it are men of great stature**" or "**the giants**" and "**we were like grasshoppers**" were all terrible exaggerations, plain and simple lies.

b. **The land through which we have gone as spies:** Unbelief often presents itself as being "factual" or "practical" or "down to earth." Yet, the most factual, practical, and down to earth thing we can do is trust the word of the living God. Their unbelief was not according to the facts, but despite the facts.

i. Significantly, two men could see the exact same sights - the same grapes, the same men, the same land, the same cities - one can come away singing in faith, and the other is filled with a sense of certain doom. Ultimately, faith or unbelief does not spring from circumstances or environment, but from our hearts, which God must change.

THE PEOPLE REJECT CANAAN

A. The rebellion of Israel at Kadesh Barnea.

1. ([Num 14:1](#)) Israel rebels by mourning at their dilemma between faith and unbelief.

So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night.

a. **Then all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried:** The children of Israel were confronted with two reports regarding the Promised Land. Two of the twelve spies (Caleb and Joshua) say *Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it* ([Numbers 13:30](#)), but the other ten spies said "what God promised about the land is true; nevertheless, the natives of the land are too mighty, and we cannot overcome them, despite what God has promised."

i. We should not forget that the twelve spies were sent one from each tribe ([Numbers 13:2](#)); in this way, they truly represent the people of Israel, and the lack of faith of the majority of the spies is a lack of faith on behalf of the whole nation.

ii. We also must remember the details of how and why the spies were sent; the idea to send them did not originate with Moses or with God, but with the people ([Deuteronomy 1:19-25](#)); Moses unwisely agreed, and God merely told them how many spies to send and that they should represent the whole nation.

iii. But *why* were the spies sent? There was no military information needed; God had promised them victory over their enemies. Perhaps a reading of the terrain would have been helpful, but Moses told them to see if the land was good, and to see if the people and cities were weak or strong ([Numbers 13:17-20](#)) - and this information indirectly led to the bad report of the ten spies!

b. **And the people wept that night:** The unbelief of the ten spies truly represented the unbelieving heart of the nation. Israel **wept that night** upon hearing that the enemies in Canaan were formidable. This mourning had a distinct character.

i. It was mourning because God would not make it all "easy." We often somehow expect that of God, and resent adversity in our lives, forgetting the example of Jesus, who had it "harder" than any of us - and Whom we are not above.

ii. It was mourning filled with a resentful attitude towards God, blaming Him for their "problem" - denying that He is a loving Father who cares for His children.

iii. It was mourning that gave into the feeling of unbelief and fear; mourning that allowed feelings rule in one's life instead of faith in the living God. Here, their clinging to the feelings of fear and mourning is plain sin and rebellion, and their feelings did not by any means justify their rebellion. Clinging to feelings can be sin.

iv. This was mourning over a loss. We usually mourn because something has died. Here, God was trying to cause something to die - the flesh, the sin-nature, the old man (as much as it could in an Old Covenant sense); and Israel mourned because they wanted the old man to live, not die.

c. **And the people wept that night:** So here, Israel stood barely a year out of Egypt, on the threshold of the Promised Land. Over the first ten chapters of Numbers they had been fully prepared to walk as Promised Land people - they had been ordered and organized; cleansed and purified; set apart and blessed; taught how

to give and how to function as priests; had been made to remember judgment spared and deliverance brought; and had been given God's presence as a guide and the tools needed to lead the people.

i. Now God invited them to take the land - and they rebelled through their mourning. Unbelief made them think of God's good for them (the gift of the Promised Land) as something evil.

2. (2-3a) Israel rebels by murmuring.

And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! Why has the LORD brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims?"

a. **And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron:** Their murmuring was directed first towards **Moses and Aaron**, but since these were the LORD's leaders, they were murmuring against the LORD. The vision of Moses and Aaron (to lead these people into the Promised Land) is the LORD's vision. Their complaint is against the LORD, even if they want to hide it by directing to Moses and Aaron.

i. Probably some falsely "spiritual" folks among the murmurers said, "Oh no, we trust the LORD. We love the LORD. We would never rebel against the LORD. It's Moses and Aaron we don't like."

ii. But Joshua and Caleb knew: *Only do not rebel against the LORD* ([Numbers 14:9](#)), and the LORD Himself knew: *How long will these people reject Me?* ([Numbers 14:11](#))

b. **If only we had died:** The challenge of faith before the people seemed so great - and so grievous - that they would rather have died than go on with what the LORD has for them.

i. Tragically for this generation, God would give them what their rebellious, unbelieving hearts wanted.

c. **Why has the LORD brought us to this land to fall by the sword:** Here, they directly accused the Almighty with sin and evil towards them. They were angry with God, accusing Him of plotting the murder of them and their **wives and children**.

i. This was a deep state of rebellion. God, who can do no evil, with Whom there is no shadow of turning, was called *evil* and a *murderer* by His own people.

ii. Some counsel it is a healthy thing to be angry with God, and to let it all out, so that God and you can be reconciled, as sort of a matter of counseling therapy. While it is true that one may be angry with God, and should take every such feeling to God, it is wrong to ever assume or imply that such feelings are justified. If we are angry at God, we are in sin, because God has never done anything that deserves us being angry. We should honestly bring such sin before God, but never for a moment feeling it to be justified.

d. **That our wives and children should become victims:** The unbelieving among Israel justified their unbelief on the basis of concern for their **wives and children**. Tragically, because of their unbelief they would die in the wilderness and their **children** - a new generation of faith - would inherit the promised land.

3. (3b-4) They rebel by longing for the memory of Egypt.

Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?" So they said to one another, "Let us select a leader and return to Egypt."

a. **Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?** This was *not* better. In the first ten chapters of Numbers, God led Israel through a process intended to change them from a slave-minded people to being a "promised-land" people. Here, they completely revert back to their slave mentality, preferring slavery under

cruel, murdering masters than the walk of faith God has for them.

i. Make no mistake; what Israel rejected here was a walk of faith. If God was going to lead them into a deeper trust than they had before, they wanted no part of it. If He made it all easy, that was fine with them - but they did not want a walk of *faith*.

b. **Let us select a leader and return to Egypt:** This was pure rebellion. They said that they did not want God's plan, they did not want God's leaders, and they did not want God's land. They believed that they knew better than God.

i. Notice how *man-centered* their rebellion was: **They said to one another** (the decision was made among themselves, believing their majority vote had more wisdom than God). **Let us select** (they didn't like God's selection, so they wanted a leader who would truly represent them - in all their rebellion against God).

4. ([Num 14:5-9](#)) The reaction of the godly against the rebellion of the people.

Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel. But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, *who were among those who had spied out the land*, tore their clothes; and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: "The land we passed through to spy out *is* an exceedingly good land. If the LORD delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, 'a land which flows with milk and honey.' Only do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people of the land, for they *are* our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the LORD *is* with us. Do not fear them."

a. **Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces:** Moses and Aaron were older and wiser and therefore knew how bad the situation was. They simply prostrated themselves in prayer, and said not a word to the people (knowing it would do no good), but they knew that they must cry out to God for a miracle if Israel is to be spared.

b. **But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh:** Joshua and Caleb, the two faithful spies, are younger and more optimistic, so they attempt to persuade the people.

i. They **tore their clothes**, showing utter grief and mourning; acting as if someone had died - or was about to die.

ii. **The land ... is an exceedingly good land;** they reminded the people of the faithfulness of God's promise. He promised the land would be good, and it was - they saw it with their own eyes. If God promised we could take possession of it, they could trust that promise also.

iii. **Only do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people ... the LORD is with us:** Their fear and unbelief was willful rebellion. Therefore Joshua and Caleb appealed to their will of the people, asking them to decide to give up their rebellion and return to the LORD. The people of Israel didn't have to give in to their feelings of fear, of anger to the LORD, of unbelief. By God's grace they could choose to submit to Him and trust Him.

5. ([Num 14:10](#)) Two responses to the appeal of Joshua and Caleb.

And all the congregation said to stone them with stones. Now the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of meeting before all the children of Israel.

a. **All the congregation said to stone them with stones:** This was the response of the people. Rebellious, carnal man cannot endure the men of faith, who came with the challenge of faith. They would *kill* Joshua and Caleb for calling them to forsake their unbelief and to trust God.

i. Nothing can be more vexing, more aggravating to the child of God in rebellion than another child of God who is full of faith and submission to God - and who has godly counsel.

b. **The glory of the LORD appeared:** This was the response of the LORD. We are not yet told what the glory of the LORD would do, but it isn't hard to figure out. Their actions and feelings were not consistent with the glory of the LORD.

- Was it consistent with the glory of the LORD to be unbelieving?
- Was it consistent with the glory of the LORD to mourn because the walk of faith was hard?
- Was it consistent with the glory of the LORD to long for death?
- Was it consistent with the glory of the LORD to accuse God of plotting murder?
- Was it consistent with the glory of the LORD to go back to the slavery of Egypt?
- Was it consistent with the glory of the LORD to reject God's leaders and go with "the people's choice"?
- Was it consistent with the glory of the LORD to threaten to kill those who call you to a deeper life of trust in God?

B. Moses' spectacular intercession for the children of Israel.

1. ([Num 14:11-12](#)) God's charge against Israel and offer to Moses.

Then the LORD said to Moses: "How long will these people reject Me? And how long will they not believe Me, with all the signs which I have performed among them? I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they."

a. **The LORD said to Moses:** God does not even speak with the nation; He knows they are past hearing Him. He will speak with Moses, and Moses alone.

i. Many of child of God in rebellion wonders why they do not hear the voice of God anymore; why should they? They are rejecting what God has already said, do they think they can be open to what more He might say?

b. **How long will these people reject Me?** God had been only good to Israel, and had demonstrated His loving strength towards them countless times. Israel's rejection of God makes no sense.

c. **I will strike them ... and disinherit them ... I will make of you a nation greater and mightier:** This is a dramatic offer to Moses; God says He will give rebellious Israel what they deserve - judgment (indeed, what they said they wanted - to die in the wilderness! [14:2]), and He will fulfill His promises of a land, nation, and blessing to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob through Moses instead!

i. This was heady stuff for Moses; he is offered the position of "patriarch" - to become a father for Israel in the same way Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were. Moses knew of their greatness and fame - he was used of God to compile their stories in the book of Genesis!

ii. We must regard this as a real "offer" from God; the LORD does not speak make-believe words. If Moses were to do nothing, this plan of God would go into effect - the nation would perish, and somehow, God would start all over again with Moses - and the new nation would be better (**greater and mightier**) than the present one!

iii. Moses had a similar "offer" from God back in [Exodus 32:7-14](#); will Moses react in the same way now as then?

2. ([Num 14:13-16](#)) Moses intercedes for Israel, appealing to God's glory.

And Moses said to the LORD: "Then the Egyptians will hear *it*, for by Your might You brought these people up from among them, and they will tell *it* to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, LORD, *are* among these people; that You, LORD, are seen face to face and Your cloud stands above them, and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. Now *if* You kill these people as one man, then the nations which have heard of Your fame will speak, saying, Because the LORD was not able to bring this people to the land which He swore to give them, therefore He killed them in the wilderness."

a. **And Moses said to the LORD:** Moses did not entertain God's offer for a moment. Instead, he pled for the nation and loved them despite their rebellion, and he was zealous for the glory of God.

b. **Then the Egyptians will hear it, for by Your might You brought these people up from among them:** Moses' zeal for God's glory was evident. He knew that if God wiped out the present nation and started again with Moses, it would be a black mark on His reputation before the nations - especially Egypt.

i. Perhaps then the nations could claim that **the LORD was not able to bring this people to the land**. It could be said that the sin and rebellion of man was greater than the power and goodness of God.

c. **Which He swore to give them:** Moses brought God's promise before Him. He begged God to not give the nations any opportunity to think God has not been true to His word.

3. ([Num 14:17-19](#)) Moses intercedes for Israel, appealing to God's power and promise.

"And now, I pray, let the power of my LORD be great, just as You have spoken, saying, 'The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth *generation*.' Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now."

a. **Let the power of my LORD be great:** Moses glories in the power of God, but asks that God would use His power by showing mercy and longsuffering to a rebellious Israel.

b. **Just as You have spoken:** The list of [Numbers 14:18-19](#) is almost a quote from the words of self-revelation God spoke to Moses in the dramatic encounter Moses had with God in [Exodus 34:6-8](#).

i. **Long-suffering ... abundant ... forgiving iniquity and transgression ... by no means clears the guilty ... mercy:** Each of these are mentioned first in [Exodus 34:6-8](#).

ii. Moses basically said: "LORD, you have revealed Yourself to me by Your word. Your word declares who You are. Now LORD, please act towards Israel according to who You have declared Yourself to be in Your word.

c. **Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy:** Moses knew God's power, and appealed to it; Moses knew God's promise and appealed to it, and Moses knew God's glory and appealed to it. This was a spectacular example of intercession.

i. What made this intercession spectacular was not primarily Moses' method (appealing to God's glory, power, and promise); but Moses' heart. Here, Moses is totally others-centered, not concerned for his own glory, but only for Israel. He displays he shares the heart of God towards His people, and that is what made Moses' intercession spectacular.

ii. This, of course, was God's intention all along: To develop and draw out of Moses just this kind of heart, transforming Moses into the image of His Son ([Romans 8:29](#)), long before the time of Jesus.

C. The fate of Israel after the rebellion at Kadesh Barnea.

1. ([Num 14:20](#)) God's promise of pardon in response to Moses' intercession.

Then the LORD said: "I have pardoned, according to your word;

a. **I have pardoned:** The heart of Moses and his method of intercession were successful. These are sweet words for any sinner to hear.

b. **According to your word:** This means that Moses' prayer *mattered*. Some may wonder if prayer is some elaborate game, where God threatens to do something He will never do anyway, and we pray, pretending to believe God will do what He has threatened, and when God hears us pray, He forgets His idle threat and does what He was going to do anyway. Prayer definitely does not work that way.

i. We don't understand the relationship between the eternal, sovereign plan of God and our prayers; but we know it is no game. God never wanted Moses to think of it as a game, and wanted Moses to at least think that his prayers had directly affected the outcome: **I have pardoned, according to your word!** We should pray as if life and death, heaven and hell, would be decided by our prayers!

2. ([Num 14:21-25](#)) The fate of the rebels and the fate of the faithful.

"But truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD; because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it. But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it. Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwell in the valley; tomorrow turn and move out into the wilderness by the Way of the Red Sea."

a. **But truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD:** God's response to Israel would be full of and reflective of His glory. He would show mercy and pardon, but in a way consistent with His glory.

b. **They certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it:** Therefore, those who put God to the test and rebelled against His promise, would not see the Promised Land. But the faithful like Caleb would inherit the land.

i. Look at the high praise heaped upon Caleb: **My servant Caleb ... he has a different spirit in him ... [he] has followed Me fully ... I will bring into the land.** Caleb's stand of faith seemed futile when Israel rejected him; but it was richly rewarded by God.

c. **Tomorrow turn and move out into the wilderness:** God had brought them to the threshold of the Promised Land, but they rebelled against Him, and did not enter - so God will send them back to the wilderness.

i. Israel has demonstrated they are still slave-minded; they do not think like Promised Land people. It will take more wilderness training until they are a people ready to live in the Promised Land!

3. ([Num 14:26-35](#)) The death sentence upon the rebels.

And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, "How long *shall I bear with* this evil congregation who complain against Me? I have heard the complaints which the children of Israel make against Me. Say to them, 'As I live,' says the LORD, 'just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you: The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above. Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in. But your little ones, whom you

said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised. But *as for you*, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness. And your sons shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years, and bear the brunt of your infidelity, until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness. According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, *namely* forty years, and you shall know My rejection. I the LORD have spoken this; I will surely do so to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die."

a. **All of you who were numbered ... from twenty years old and above:** God gave the message to the nation - this generation must die in the wilderness and would never see the Promised Land. It was as if God said to them, "You didn't want it when it was offered to you, so now you will never have it."

i. They said, *If only we had died in this wilderness!* ([Numbers 14:2](#)). God will now give them their desire. If they preferred death to a walk of faith, God would make that their destiny.

b. **Except for Caleb ... and Joshua:** These men of faith were the glorious exceptions. They would enter into the land of promise because they have the hearts and minds of new men.

i. Not even Moses and Aaron were excepted. They would also not enter the Promised Land, each for their own reasons. But we remember that Moses was not guiltless in this whole tragedy, having agreed to the request of the people to send out spies instead of just boldly taking the land by faith.

c. **But your little ones:** When excusing their unbelief, Israel had claimed concern for their children ([Numbers 14:3](#)), accusing God of wanting to murder them. Now, ironically, their children would inherit the land, while they perished in the wilderness.

d. **The land which you despised:** We may imagine many in Israel objected saying, "We did not despise the land. We wanted it. We were just afraid." But they did despise it, because as much as anything, it was a land of faith for people of faith, and the unbelieving and rebellious do despise the land.

e. **Forty days ... forty years:** The spies, representing the nation, failed in the test of 40 days. Now the nation would be tested 40 years - and they would come forth purified, ready to inherit the Promised Land, but only after the man of unbelief and rebellion has perished in the wilderness.

i. The old man, the man still slave-minded to sin, can *never* enter into God's promises; the old man must die - and God will do whatever it takes to make that happen.

ii. This turning point in Israel's history is an essential lesson for every believer, and is trumpeted to us in [Psalm 95:7b-11](#): *Today, if you will hear His voice: Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, when your fathers tested Me; they tried Me, though they saw My work. For forty years I was grieved with that generation, and said, 'It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'*

iii. *Then they despised the pleasant land; they did not believe His word, but complained in their tents, and did not heed the voice of the LORD. Therefore He raised up His hand in an oath against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness, to overthrow their descendants among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands.* ([Psalms 106:24-27](#))

iv. *But they and our fathers acted proudly, hardened their necks, and did not heed Your commandments. They refused to obey, and they were not mindful of Your wonders that You did among them. But they hardened their necks, and in their rebellion they appointed a leader to return to their bondage.* ([Nehemiah 9:16-17](#))

v. [Hebrews 3:7-4:16](#) makes it clear: God has a place of rest and promise for every believer to enter in to, and it

can only be entered by faith. The man of unbelief, self-reliance, and self-focus can never enter into God's rest and abundance.

4. ([Num 14:36-38](#)) An immediate death sentence upon the ten unfaithful spies.

Now the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation complain against him by bringing a bad report of the land, those very men who brought the evil report about the land, died by the plague before the LORD. But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive, of the men who went to spy out the land.

a. **Now the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land ... died by the plague before the LORD:** If the death of the unbelieving generation would take some 38 years (the number of years left to make a total time of the exodus forty years), the death of the ten unfaithful spies was be immediate.

b. **Died by the plague before the LORD:** God has one prescription for the old man, and the flesh: *to kill it*. It can't be reformed. We are not called to turn over a new leaf for God. The old man dies, and only then can the new man patterned after Jesus Christ, can inherit God's land of rest and promise.

5. ([Num 14:39-45](#)) Aftermath: Failure of the attempt to take the Promised Land by man's strength and wisdom.

Then Moses told these words to all the children of Israel, and the people mourned greatly. And they rose early in the morning and went up to the top of the mountain, saying, "Here we are, and we will go up to the place which the LORD has promised, for we have sinned!" And Moses said, "Now why do you transgress the command of the LORD? For this will not succeed. Do not go up, lest you be defeated by your enemies, for the LORD *is* not among you. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites *are* there before you, and you shall fall by the sword; because you have turned away from the LORD, the LORD will not be with you." But they presumed to go up to the mountaintop; nevertheless, neither the ark of the covenant of the LORD nor Moses departed from the camp. Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that mountain came down and attacked them, and drove them back as far as Hormah.

a. **The people mourned greatly:** They were indeed sorry; many people are sorry for the consequence of their sin. But they were not so sorry as to turn their hearts to a genuine trust of the LORD.

b. **They rose early ... went up to the top of the mountain ... "Here we are, and we will go up ...we have sinned!"** They wanted to make it all better with a few religious works and words but their hearts were not changed. All this was on their initiative, as a way of doing God's will *their way*, and hoping to reap the same blessings. It could not work. Moses spoke rightly: **For this will not succeed.**

c. **The Canaanites who dwelt in that mountain came down and attacked them, and drove them back as far as Hormah:** It did not succeed because God was not with them. They made a futile attempt in the flesh to accomplish what they had rejected by faith, and it ended in defeat. It was now back to the wilderness.

i. When God was with them, they did not think it was enough; now that God was *not* with them, they thought they could do it.