

Numbers 14 - Thursday, September 2nd, 2010

14:1 So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night.

- After hearing of the bad report from 10 of the 12 spies, the whole congregation of the Israelite's now begins to weep and mourn.
- Notice that they're not crying because they're remorseful for their unbelief, they're crying and complaining because of the bad report.

"When children cry for nothing, they soon have good cause for crying, and such was the case in this instance; but do we never fall into the same sin ourselves."

Charles Spurgeon

2 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!

- They then complain against Moses and Aaron because they wished that they had died back in Egypt or even there in the wilderness.
- This is hard to imagine when you think about it. After all God has done for them, and they wish they'd just stayed in Egypt and died.

"What a shameful slur they cast upon Jehovah when they asked whether he had brought them out to slay them, and truly we are equally guilty when we imagine that after leading us so far on the road to heaven, He will leave us to our enemies."

Charles Spurgeon

3 Why has the LORD brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?" 4 So they said to one another, "Let us select a leader and return to Egypt."

- Now their rebellion gets even worse when they accuse God of bringing them out of Egypt so that He could kill them and their children.
- They even ask if it wouldn't have been better for them if at this point they could just return to back to Egypt, which by the way is in ruins.
- Then, after saying that, what they say next is utterly shocking. They decide amongst themselves to select a leader and return to Egypt.

"To avoid one evil they would rush into a worse. Without the cloud to guide them, or the manna to feed them, they talk of going back to Egypt. Unbelief is insanity."

Charles Spurgeon

5 Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel. 6 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;

- Now we see how Moses, Aaron and Joshua respond to their wicked insanity. Moses and Aaron fall on their faces before all of them.
- Joshua responds by tearing his clothes which was a custom when someone died because it was a symbol of mourning that death.
- The common denominator in all their responses is that they know what's coming. This kind of rebellion and sin leads to death.

7 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. 8 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.' 9 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."

- It's almost as if they are begging the Israelites as they try to reason with them by telling them that they should reconsider everything.
- They go on to tell them not to rebel against the Lord or fear the people because the Lord is with them, and has given the land to them.
- As we'll see in the next verse, this will be to no avail, and the reason is that you cannot reason with one who is given over to rebellion.

10 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.

- So instead of responding by a softening, their hearts are so hardened that they become angry and literally want to stone them to death.
- Notice that God has had enough now! His glory appears in the tabernacle before all of them, and you know that this can't be good!

"The case had been well put, but stones were the reward of faithfulness. God appeared for the defense of His servants. He who touches them, touches the apple of His eye."

Charles Spurgeon

11 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?"

- The Lord asks Moses two rhetorical questions both of which are related to the Israelites not believing in and thus rejecting the Lord.
- At the core of both their unbelief and rejection, you will find that they are in effect calling God a liar, which is why they don't believe Him.
- In other words, they don't truly believe God which is why they reject God, because they actually believe that it's all a lie and God's a liar.

Romans 3:4b Let God be true, and every man a liar. NIV

12 I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they."

- So, because of their unbelief and rejection, the Lord tells Moses that He will strike them with pestilence and disinherit them as well.
- He even takes it a step further and says that He will put Moses in His will and give him the inheritance of a great nation instead.
- What's interesting about this is, God had proposed this to Moses once before back at Mt. Sinai and we see the record of it in Exodus.

Exodus 32:7-14 7 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. 8 They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.' 9 "I have seen these people," the LORD said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people. 10 Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation." 11 But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God. "O LORD," he said, "why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? 12 Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people. 13 Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.'" 14 Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened. NIV

13 And Moses said to the LORD: "Then the Egyptians will hear it, for by Your might You brought these people up from among them, 14 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. 15 Now if You kill these people as one man, then the nations which have heard of Your fame will speak, saying, 16 '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.'

- What Moses does here is nothing shy of remarkable, and I would suggest to you that God knew how he would respond to His offer.
- Perhaps I can take it a step further and say; it was for this reason God said this to Moses for the second time, He knew ahead of time.
- In other words, God knew that Moses would decline His offer which is why He made the offer in the first place. He could trust Moses.

"This was a great offer, but how lovingly Moses declined it, thinking more of Israel's good and of God's glory than of his own honor."

Charles Spurgeon

17 And now, I pray, let the power of my Lord be great, just as You have spoken, saying, 18 '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.' 19 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."

- Here Moses begs God to be merciful to them on the basis of Who God and how good God is, and not because of how bad they are.
- This dovetails with what Moses says when pleading with God in the previous verses when he says in effect 'this is not Who You are!'
- Moses begs God to not strike them or disinherit them because word of it would spread to the other nations about what God had done.

"One commentator said it best when he wrote; "Is the sin and rebellion of man greater than the power and goodness of God?"

- It's important to understand that when Moses pleads with God, he is actually reciting to God what had been revealed to him by God.

Exodus 34:6-7 6 And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, 7 keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation." NKJV

20 Then the LORD said: "I have pardoned, according to your word; 21 but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD -- 22 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, 23 they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it.

- There's something here that can be easily missed at first glance, and I would like for us to take note of it as it relates to God being fair.
- God isn't allowing them entrance into the Promised-Land only because of their unbelief; it's also because they wouldn't have survived it.
- Entering the Promised-Land was not going to be a cake walk, and their unbelief would be to their own peril if they had entered the land.

24 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.

- Notice that Caleb had a different spirit in him because his heart was fully devoted to God and thus he fully followed God because of it.
- It would be for this reason that he would be allowed into the Promised-Land. He along with his descendants would inherit the land.

25 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."

- He tells them to turn around and move back into the wilderness because the Amalekites and Canaanites will continue dwelling the land.

26 And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 27 "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. 28 Say to them, 'As I live,' says the LORD, 'just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you: 29 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. 30 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. 31 But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised. 32 But as for you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness. 33 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. 34 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. 35 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."

- It's almost as if God is saying to them that because they complained and wished they would just die in the wilderness; "ok, so be it."
- Also, it's interesting that God says only Joshua and Caleb enter in but He doesn't mention that Moses will enter into the Promised-Land.
- The reason for this is because in God's foreknowledge He knows that Moses will become disqualified when he strikes the rock twice.

36 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, 37 those very men who brought the evil report about the land, died by the plague before the LORD. 38 But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive, of the men who went to spy out the land.

- Here the judgment of God is meted out against the ten spies for the bad report and making all the congregation complain against him.

39 Then Moses told these words to all the children of Israel, and the people mourned greatly. 40 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!" 41 And Moses said, "Now why do you transgress the command of the LORD? For this will not succeed. 42 Do not go up, lest you be defeated by your enemies, for the LORD is not among you. 43 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." 44 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. 45 Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that mountain came down and attacked them, and drove them back as far as Hormah.

- I suppose you could say that this was a day late and a dollar short so to speak, and it couldn't succeed because it's disobedience again.
- In other words, two wrongs don't make it right. They think they are right but they are presuming upon the Lord, and God can't bless it.

THE "10" COMMANDMENTS OF NUMBERS 14

- 1. THOU SHALT NOT GRUMBLE AGAINST THE LEADERSHIP** - Numbers 14:2 *All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, "If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert!"*
- 2. THOU SHALT NOT GOSSIP TO OTHERS ABOUT THE LEADERSHIP** - Numbers 14:4 *And they said to each other, "We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt."*
- 3. THOU SHALT NOT REBEL AGAINST THE LORD** - Numbers 14:9 *Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them."*
- 4. THOU SHALT NOT ATTACK OF THE LEADERSHIP** - Numbers 14:10 *But the whole assembly talked about stoning them. Then the glory of the LORD appeared at the Tent of Meeting to all the Israelites.*
- 5. THOU SHALT NOT COMPLAIN AGAINST THE LORD** - Numbers 14:26-27 *26 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron: 27 "How long will this wicked community grumble against me? I have heard the complaints of these grumbling Israelites.*
- 6. THOU SHALT NOT BAND TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD** - Numbers 14:35 *I, the LORD, have spoken, and I will surely do these things to this whole wicked community, which has banded together against me. They will meet their end in this desert; here they will die."*
- 7. THOU SHALT NOT MAKE OTHERS GRUMBLE AGAINST THE LEADERSHIP** - Numbers 14:36 *So the men Moses had sent to explore the land, who returned and made the whole community grumble against him ...*
- 8. THOU SHALT NOT SPREAD A BAD REPORT** - Numbers 14:37 *these men responsible for spreading the bad report about the land were struck down and died of a plague before the LORD.*
- 9. THOU SHALT NOT DISOBEY THE LORD** - Numbers 14:41 *But Moses said, "Why are you disobeying the LORD's command? This will not succeed!"*
- 10. THOU SHALT NOT PRESUME UPON THE LORD** - Numbers 14:44 *Nevertheless, in their presumption they went up toward the high hill country, though neither Moses nor the ark of the LORD's covenant moved from the camp.*