

I WANT TO KNOW MY BIBLE

Journey to Abundant Life

Shall We Go In?

Reading: Num. 6-28

Text: Num. 13 - 14

INTRODUCTION: Congratulations to all of you who are reading through the Bible chronologically with us. In four weeks we have covered three books and what it took Israel 14 months to accomplish. And this week, in Numbers 14 to be precise, we came to a very critical point in the story.

However, before we talk about that point and its tremendous significance for us, and because we have covered so much territory quickly, I think it is important for me to do a short review of the story of Israel to this point. I will try to be brief, although you already know that is really tough for me to do.

- **God promised Abraham to make a nation out of his family.**
- **One descendant of that nation would become a blessing to all the families of the earth.**
- **To preserve and grow that nation, which God named Israel, God sent them to dwell in Egypt for four centuries.**
- **While in Egypt, the Israelites grew to a nation of 2.5 million people, but they were enslaved by pharaoh.**
- **God delivered the people by the blood of the Passover Lamb, and sent them on a journey to go live in land He promised to Abraham.**
- **On the journey, God entered a covenant with them, the Covenant of the Law, and made Israel to become a priestly kingdom, a missionary nation, to tell all the people of the earth about the Lord.**
- **As a part of His law, God gave Israel the Day of Atonement, when once a year blood would be offered on the Mercy Seat in the Tabernacle to provide a temporary covering for their sin and begin to teach them how sin would be eternally forgiven through the blood of the Perfect Lamb of God, yet to come as the promised descendant of Abraham.**

- Now, in our reading this week, **God brought them to the border of the Promised Land.** Stretching before their encampment was the land in which Abraham sojourned, the land that the Creator of all the earth said He had given to them. The God who rolled back the waters of the sea said He would roll back the armies of the city states that would oppose their entrance. All they had to do was trust and obey.

The first thing we should see about this pivotal time for Israel is

I. THE CHOICE BEFORE THEM

Num. 13:1-2 ¹ And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² “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.”

A. The Spies were sent to see the goodness of the land God was giving them.

Num. 13:23, 27 ²³ 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. ²⁷ 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.

B. Ten of the twelve spies concentrated on the problems rather than the blessings of entering the land.

Num. 13:28-29, 31-33 ²⁸ 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. ²⁹ 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.” ³¹ 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.” ³² 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. ³³ 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.”

C. Joshua and Caleb called upon the people to trust God and take the land.

Num. 13:30 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.”

Num. 14: 6-9 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; 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.”

Are you understanding this?

- **God** by His grace has **chosen** the family of Abraham **to make them His people, His missionary nation.**
- **God has given them the** legal title to a vast, rich, and **beautiful land in which to dwell** and do the pleasant work God has for them.
- **To bring them to this land, God brought the mightiest nation on the earth** literally **to its knees.**
- **God piled up the waters of the sea** to form walls on the right hand and the left to let His people pass through.
- **God fed His people** for 14 months in the desert **and gave them water to drink.**
- **He appeared in person at the top of Mt. Sinai** and revealed His will and His way.
- By His mighty hand they stand at the border of the land, and **He says, “I have given it to you. Go in and take it by My power.”**

Nevertheless, they have a choice.

Trust and Obey

OR

Doubt and Disobey

People always have a choice!

So Israel has to decide. And they make ...

II. A FATEFUL DECISION

Num. 14:1-4 ¹ So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. 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! 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.”

When Caleb and Joshua pled with them, verse 10 says

Num. 14:10a **And all the congregation said to stone them with stones.**

Faced with the choice to trust and obey or doubt and disobey

A. Israel doubted the power and faithfulness of God.

B. Israel disobeyed the Word of the Lord to go in and possess the land.

I can just hear some of the people, “Don’t take it personally, God. I mean, we don’t intend any disrespect. It’s just that we’re not real confident about what will happen if we march into that land that has those other nations with soldiers and all. Yes we know you opened the Red Sea, but that was then, and this is now. How do we know

You are still going to do stuff like that? So, listen God, really. Don't take it personally."

But God did take it personally.

Folks listen, when we do not trust the Lord, ...

When we disobey the Word of the Lord,

It is personal with God.

Num. 14:10b-11 ... Now the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of meeting before all the children of Israel. 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?"

And God pronounced sentence upon His disbelieving and disobedient people.

Num. 14:27-38 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.'"

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.

- C. All adults (except Joshua and Caleb) were sentenced to wander in the wilderness and die.**
- D. All children and youth would bear the hardships of the wilderness with their parents for 40 years and then be given their own opportunity to enter.**
- E. All the spies who led Israel astray with their evil report were killed immediately by means of a plague.**
- F. Thus begins the wilderness wanderings of the people of Israel.**

Again, I am asking you, Are you understanding this?

- **God's plan for Israel was not that they should waste forty years in the wilderness.**
- **Did you notice that in that 40 years, their population decreased rather than increased?**
- **While their children would be given their own opportunity to enter and live in the Promised Land, half of their lives would be wasted having to wait on their disobedient parents to die off.**

Does this have a contemporary application?

Does this have any meaning for those of us who are in Christ?

Remember the Word of the Lord through Paul:

1 Corinthians 10:11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

Without taking the time to repeat all I have shared with you the past three weeks, remember that I have shown you from the Scripture that

- **Israel's journey to the Promised Land is an example of the Christian's journey to the abundant life.**

John 10:10b I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.

So what is ...

III. THE MEANING FOR US

- A. **Every person chooses whether to receive the gift of eternal life by trusting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.**
- B. **Every Christian chooses whether to enter and live in the Abundant Life that Jesus offers those who are saved.**
 1. **This is the life that is full of meaning and purpose.**
 2. **This is the life lived under the Lordship of Christ.**
 3. **It is the life lived under the control of the Holy Spirit.**
 4. **It is described as "walking in Christ," "walking in the light," or "walking in the Spirit."**
 5. **It is a life of obedience.**
 - a. **Not only to moral holiness and purity.**
 - b. **But to living for God's purpose and glory – being on mission.**

c. Living intentionally to fulfill the Great Commission.

Matthew 28:19–20 ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.”

d. Living adopting Acts 1:8 as the strategy for your life.

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

This does not mean that you become a vocational Christian worker or a resident missionary somewhere else on the planet, although if God calls you to that, it means saying yes.

This is really a decision that is even more basic than vocation.

It is a purpose in life decision that transcends vocation.

It is a decision that says,

**“No matter how God leads me to earn my living,
I am going to live my life making disciples for the Lord Jesus Christ.
I am going to spend my life making disciples in my own city and county,
and places a little farther away,
and places much farther away and different than places I am used to,
and even in places far, far away from me, where the whole culture and
language is strange.”**

Do you understand ...

- **Most Christians are not living this abundant life.**
- **Most Christians are living their lives to**
 - **Get all you can**
 - **Can all you get**
 - **And they are wandering in the wilderness.**
 - They are saved, but life is not rich, nor full, nor purposeful.
 - They try to get by, avoiding as many problems as possible.
 - They grab all the entertainment they can find.
 - They seek the greatest amusements and thrills.
 - And try to find “the good life.”
 - **But the good life is not to be found in the wilderness.**
 - **The good life is in the Promised Land.**
- **Most Christians are trying to help their kids**
 - **Get all you can**
 - **Can all you get**

- **But they are unintentionally condemning their children to wander in the wilderness.**
 - **They try to get them saved, but they do not lead them into a life that is rich, full, and purposeful.**
 - **They provide all the entertainment they can find.**
 - **They seek the greatest amusements and thrills for them.**
 - **And try to find “the good life” in sports, hobbies, and games.**
- **But the good life for our kids is not to be found in the wilderness.**
- **The good life is in the Promised Land.**

CONCLUSION:

And you have been wondering, “Why in the world did God have all this stuff about Israel in the desert preserved as a permanent part of His Word? Why do I need to read that?”

Well, now you know. Because we all have decisions to make, and Israel is an example of a group of folks who made the wrong one and paid a great price.

Jesus said,

John 10:10b I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.

But you have to choose to live there.