

## Numbers Chapter 14:13-19

The children of Israel had been delivered from Egyptian bondage, they had been given the law, they had seen evidence of the presence and power of God, they had come to western edge of the land of Canaan and the spies had returned from checking out the land.

What is going here?

- ! Fulfillment of promises
- ! Preparation of a nation
- ! Revelation of God's plan of salvation
- ! Disenfranchisement of a group of iniquitous people

For 400 years God had been preparing a nation to occupy the land that He promised to Abraham. He brought these people up to the edge and they became petrified with fear and refused to go in to claim the promise. That had to be disappointing! It was perhaps more than disappointing, it was maddening. This stirred up God's wrath. This was so serious that presence of the Lord manifested itself in the tabernacle. The glory that appeared may have been the cloud that had been out in the distance that lead them up to this point. God's interpretation of their action and attitude was that they were provoking Him. The main complaint was that they did not believe what God said was true. It was not that they didn't BELIEVE IN God, they did acknowledge that God is, but they just didn't BELIEVE Him. Consider Abraham: the most significant thing that the New Testament reports about Abraham was that he *believed* God and that (fact) was accounted to him as righteousness. But that could not be said for these descendants of Abraham--in spite of all the signs and miracles that they had as evidence of God's power and integrity, they still did not believe.

In the account that is given in Psalms 95, we are told that the people "turned back and tempted God and limited the Holy One of Israel." It is amazing that we (in our unbelief) can limit what God will do for us. Even Jesus ran into this type unbelief in His day. When He came back to His home town, we are told that He could do no great work there because of their unbelief.

The sin of unbelief is so serious that God was ready to start over with Moses and build another nation. This new nation would still be of the seed of Abraham since Moses was a descendant of Abraham. This was the second time that God made the offer to Moses to be the source of a great nation. I don't know if this possibility appealed to Moses or not; however, regardless of its appeal, Moses argued against it. Before we get into the reasons Moses presented to God for not immediately killing them and starting over, let's see what was going on with the

people.

We could argue that they had come out of Egypt but that Egypt had not come out of them.

Would it have been possible for that generation with their “mind set” of being “slaves” to have taken the land from the occupants and to have governed it? They saw themselves as slaves that had been delivered – but they were still slaves. (What is a characteristic of a slave - complacent - you tell me what to do and I go and do it. What would be the characteristic of a person who is a member of a kingdom of priest unto God? [Ex 19:20] They would be initiators!)

What is the parallel for us today to having a mind set of being a freed slave?

Where is the passage that says we are “just sinners, saved by grace?” What is the reference for that passage? (I was not able to find it.) But I did find these words:

2Co 5:21 For he hath made Him (Christ Jesus) to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

What difference would it make in the church if all the members saw themselves as being the “righteousness of God in Christ” rather than still being “just sinners – but delivered from bondage.” We are new creations in Christ - we have a new nature - the old nature is dead. We still miss the mark but it is not because of **who we are** but because of **what we do**. Before we came to God through Christ we were sinners by nature.

Why did they decide to not go in?

**Fear:** of what? Of dying – they were going to die anyway. (What are we NOT doing that we should be doing because of fear?) Fear has its origin in lack of confidence in that on which we are depending. They had their focus on themselves. You’ve probably seen these little signs on bulletin boards or in the cubicles or offices where people work that say, “If it is to be, then it is up to me.” These Israelites were probably thinking “if it is to be then, it is up to me” and they “knew” they could not do the job of defeating the inhabitants of Canaan. When we are focused on the inadequate and the imperfect, then we find ourselves in a crisis of faith.

**Lack of Faith:** Did they have any reason to doubt God’s power? (What had they seen in their experience over the preceding two years?) (What evidence are we ignoring when we fail to trust God?)

God told Moses that He would start over and make a new nation of Moses’ descendants. (In humility, Moses declined.) If everything in the Old Testament foreshadows the spiritual reality that is revealed in the New Testament, then to what does “making a new nation of Moses” relate in the New Testament? Moses is a “type” of Christ. In Christ, God has created, not just a new nation, but an entire

new race - born not of the flesh, but born of the Spirit.

Let's look at the response of Moses to the plan to kill the unbelievers and make a new nation. The suggested plan was to "strike them with a plague." Put yourself in Moses' position. What are some possible responses to the proposal to "kill them all right now and start over?"

1. He could have said, "You know what is best, just do it." What is the equivalent of what we would say today? We see a situation developing and the outcome is somewhat predictable and we are concerned and would like to see a different outcome. Do we just give up and not intercede on behalf of the people involved? Sometimes we may use "let your will be done" as a "cop out" to earnestly praying for a different outcome. (Jesus prayed for an alternative - "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, let not as I will, but as You will.")
2. Moses could have said, "If you do that, then count me out, I don't want any part of this." What is the equivalent today? "If the church votes to do that, then I'll just leave and go to another church."
3. Moses could have said, "I understand what You want to accomplish, but can we do it such a way as to not create bad publicity?" What is the equivalent today? Do we do enough of this or do we not care what the unsaved world thinks.

Let's look at Number 14:13-16

13 Moses said to the LORD, "Then the Egyptians will hear about it! By your power you brought these people up from among them. 14 And they will tell the inhabitants of this land about it. They have already heard that you, O LORD, are with these people and that you, O LORD, have been seen face to face, that your cloud stays over them, and that you go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. 15 If you put these people to death all at one time, the nations who have heard this report about you will say, 16 'The LORD was not able to bring these people into the land he promised them on oath; so he slaughtered them in the desert.'

What is Moses' concern? God's reputation! Why is it important that God's reputation be protected? (Record responses on chalk board.)

In essence Moses' argument was that God would get a bad reputation if He struck down all these people and started a new nation with Moses. After all, the Egyptian knew that it was God that led the people out of Egypt and had been leading them in the wilderness and the Egyptians would tell everyone that God did not have the ability to do what He had promised to do so He just killed them all in the desert. That would be a misinterpretation of what God would be trying to accomplish. God knew that the willingness to believe and trust in Him would be essential to any nation that was going to go into a completely new area and displace the inhabitant and take it over. Such an undertaking could not be accomplished with fearful and tentative people.

What are some examples of misinterpretations that are applied to what is happening today in the Kingdom of God?

Taking a stand against abortion: The misinterpretation is that the church

wants to deny people their right to choose. The state already denies people the right to arbitrarily take a life - why should an unborn child not have the same rights as everyone?

Taking a stand against pornography: The misinterpretation is that the church wants to censure what people read. We already have laws that prevent publishing information that would advocate the overthrow of the government. We would like to prevent publishing information that advocates the overthrow of the basis unit of a stable society – the family.

Have you ever experienced being misinterpreted? You meant something positive or even neutral and it was misinterpreted as something negative.

**NUMBERS 14:17-19** Moses continued his intercession for the people. Notice that he used a very effective means of petition with God: He recited the very description that God used concerning Himself. Moses reminded God that He is long-suffering (slow to anger), has great mercy, forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet God does not let the guilty escape unpunished. Does this seem inconsistent to you? Listen to it again: God is a forgiving God, yet the guilty do not go unpunished. Let's use an example of something that we might better understand. For example, if a child is told that he must not do a particular thing or he will lose a privilege and he then proceeds to do the forbidden act, you may do several things:

- 1) just ignore that he disobeyed and give him his privilege,
- 2) refuse to have anything to do with the child or constantly remind him that he disobeyed and treat him shabbily,
- 3) make sure that he doesn't get the promised privilege but show him the same kind of love and concern as if he had been obedient.

Avoiding the issue is the way most people would like to handle the problem – I call this "sloppy agape". The second suggestion of refusing to have anything to do with the child is clearly unforgiveness in action. The third method is forgiveness with discipline and this is what is meant by God being “forgiving yet not letting the guilty go unpunished.”

Moses' appeal to God was for God to keep on doing what he had been doing since they left Egypt: pardoning and forgiving. God's response was that He had pardoned according to Moses request. What about not letting the guilty go unpunished? God declared that none that were adults and witnessed His miracles and mighty power would have the privilege of going into the Promised Land. Sin (unbelief) can cause us to forfeit God's blessing even when we experience His forgiveness.

This account is one of the most significant happening recorded in the Bible. This entire series of events, beginning with God’s call of Abraham, is filled with truths that are applicable to our lives today. It is helpful to take such a story and view it from different perspectives and even in a different light. One way to do that is to compare it or contrast it with something else. For example, consider the story of *Jack and the Beanstalk*. How does this Biblical account relate to *Jack and the Beanstalk*?

Jack and the Beanstalk	Factor	History of Hebrews
Cow	Security	Abraham - Ur Israelites - Egypt/slavery Us - fill in the blank
Bean	Promise - Hope	God’s covenant
Bean	Seed	Promise of Messiah
Beanstalk	Path or way to goal	Israelites - Wilderness Christians - Christ is the way: process is sanctification
Land of Giant	Place of plenty	Israelites -Canaan Christians- Spiritual Realm
Goose or hen - golden egg	Source of Provision	Israelites - Fertile Land Christians-God/heaven
Golden egg	Provision	Isr-Produce of Land Chr-Grace of God, etc.
Giant	Obstacles/fears	Isr - giants, Canaanites Chr - world system, carnality, spiritual opposition

What does all this - the account of Hebrews and the account of Jack - have to do with New Years? New Years is a time of resolutions. Resolutions are related to improvements that we would like to make. The improvements are the promised land and the giants are those things that keep us from possessing what we should have. What are the consequences of not killing the giants and taking a step of faith?