

## NUMBERS 14:1-10 (A YEAR FOR EACH DAY, PART I)

Chapter 14 of Numbers will take us a few sermons to get through, but that's ok. It is filled with all kinds of wonderful treasures. Today's verses will take us through some marvelous parallels to some rather profound New Testament doctrine. That is always a plus because we actually won't get to the New Testament for at least a few more years. Things will speed up after Deuteronomy, and the final 34 books of the Old Testament (minus Ruth, Esther, and Jonah – which we have already done), will be finished in a jiffy. But tying things in with the New Testament now will keep you on your toes in anticipation until we get there.

Chapter 14 also sets out a marvelous pattern for the Hebrew people which will be repeated several more times in their history, as is recorded in the Bible, and which has continued on even to their modern reestablishment. That will be seen in next week's sermon. It leads to some rather remarkable occurrences which simply cannot have come about by random chance. Rather, the Lord is there, behind the scenes, watching over every step of their history, ensuring that what is done through them testifies to who He is.

But that then testifies to us that what He has done for us is also sure and reliable. If God has spent so much time taking such meticulous care of Israel to prove that He is trustworthy and reliable, then why would we assume that when He speaks to us through the hand of Paul that His word would be any less trustworthy?

That's the marvelous thing about studying the Old Testament. It is a confidence builder. Without it, we wouldn't have the basis for our faith that we otherwise can possess. I'm just not sure how theologians that dismiss Israel as a permanently rejected people can feel any more confident about their own surety in salvation. To me, that is a huge disconnect. That is known as the crazy doctrine of "replacement theology," and it only reveals an unfaithful God who doesn't keep His covenant promises.

**Text Verse:** “This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and *with* our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us, <sup>39</sup> whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt.” Acts 7:38, 39

Though these words were speaking specifically about the incident of the golden calf, they also can be applied to Numbers 14. In both, the people rejected the Lord and turned their hearts back to Egypt. Throughout the rest of the Old Testament, and into the New, the same faithless attitude is recorded about them. Even today, this is the state of almost the entire body of people we call Jews. The only service they pay to the Lord is lip service, and many of them don't even pay that. They just outright reject Him.

And yet, because of His covenant with them, He has remained completely faithful to them. They may not agree to this, claiming that the many persecutions, pogroms, and even the holocaust belie this, but those are self-inflicted wounds. What they have received is far less than what could have been. If the Lord had not been faithfully tending to them, the name Israel would have been utterly wiped from memory. The Lord has been faithful, to a T, to the promises He made to them – both for good and for bad.

In Chapter 14 of Numbers, we have an example of national rebellion against Him. The few that stood with Him could have lived out their lives under His care, and then He could have ended the great plan... except for the guarantee of His word. Because He has spoken, Israel would stand. And because of His promise, Israel will stand. When you feel like the Lord's promises to you have failed, or might be subject to failure, just look to Israel and the people who comprise that nation. We are dealing with a God of everlasting guarantees. When He speaks, it is done. Be confident of this. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

## **I. Let Us Return to Egypt (verses 1-5)**

**<sup>1</sup> So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried,**

The final words of Chapter 13, which we ended with last week, said –

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.” <sup>32</sup> 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. <sup>33</sup> 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.” Numbers 13:31-33

It is these words which are the basis for the congregation’s crying out. They have been given a bad report, they have accepted it as authoritative, and that bad report then spread throughout *kal ha’edah*, or “all the congregation.” One can see it. The story would pass from leader to leader down the various divisions. It would go from the tribal leader to the leader of thousands.

From there, a little embellishing of the situation would be passed on to the leaders of hundreds. From them, it would continue to the leaders of tens. And from there, the individual men would embellish a bit for their wives and children to consider. The moans would grow louder, and the entire camp would be set in a tizzy.

<sup>1 (con’t)</sup> **and the people wept that night.**

Remembering that in biblical reckoning a day goes from evening to evening, it is of note that this is recorded. Instead of being grateful for a new day and a new hope, the people mourn over the new day they have been given. Instead of a night of sound sleep, they moan and weep in anxiety and distrust. Their outlook is of despair, not confidence, and it is one which shows both a great ingratitude to the Lord, as well as one which lacks any confidence in Him at all.

**<sup>2</sup> And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron,**

It was noted in the sermon of Numbers 9:15-23 that a challenge to Moses was implicitly a challenge to the Lord Himself. Moses is the one through whom the Lord spoke to the people. Here, the people complain against Moses, and so their complaint is an implicit complaint against the Lord. However, they also add in Aaron, the high priest and mediator, to complain against. This then adds fuel to an already burning fire. As Aaron is the designated intercessor, their complaining against him brings about another major problem for the people. This problem is one noted by the high priest Eli who rebuked his sons in 1 Samuel 2 –

“If one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against the Lord, who will intercede for him?” 1 Samuel 2:25

To complain against Aaron is to cut off the only intercessor for their sins. Aaron stands as the Lord’s representative for this, and as such, they again implicitly complain against the Lord. Of this, Matthew Henry rightly says, “They wish rather to die criminals under God’s justice, than to live conquerors in his favour.”

**<sup>2 (con’t)</sup> and the whole congregation said to them, “If only we had died in the land of Egypt!**

The sentiment has been stated by the people before. First in Exodus 14, just before having the waters of the Red Sea parted, and again in Exodus 16, at the time of the giving of the manna, the people had turned their hearts to Egypt. However, those were both before the giving of the law, a law which they had agreed to. Now, their words are of open rebellion against the Lord, but they are under the law which stands as authority over them as well.

Despite that fact, their words are a remarkable statement of acrimony towards the Lord. They had cried out in their bondage, and He delivered them from it. Now, they imply that their plight here is worse than their state there. It is as if He is to blame for having answered their cries in Egypt in the first place. Ignoring all of the marvelous things He had done for them, and ignoring the fact that they will be getting up and gathering manna in just a few hours which will sustain them, they mourn for the bondage that they had been delivered from. Either that...

<sup>2</sup> (con't) **Or if only we had died in this wilderness!**

Like the previous words, what they say now is a rather stupid statement to make. If they had died in the wilderness, meaning at Taberah where the Lord's anger burned, they wouldn't be alive to even complain about their plight. Further, they are in the wilderness. If they didn't want to go up to Canaan, and if death in the wilderness was preferable, they could simply have a suicide party and be done with it. But their words are mentally confused and without any cohesion to reality. As Solomon says –

“But for him who is joined to all the living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion.” Ecclesiastes 9:4

However, and looking ahead to the response of the Lord, the very words they now state become their sentence. They are no longer in Egypt, and they will not be returned there by the Lord. His act of redemption has been completed. However, His act of judgment, based on the covenant made

between them, is forthcoming. The sentence itself will be based on the words they now speak. Though getting ahead in the narrative, this was referred to by the author of Hebrews about fifteen hundred years later –

“Now with whom was He angry forty years? *Was it* not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness?” Hebrews 3:17

And again, Jude, speaking in more general terms about all of the incidents which occurred during these forty years, said –

“But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.” Jude -5

What we have recorded here is a total lack of belief in the Lord – meaning in His word, in the integrity of that word, and also in His ability to perform in fulfillment of that word when required.

### **<sup>3</sup> Why has the Lord brought us to this land**

Like the KJV, the translation here is incorrect. The words are speaking of Canaan, not where they are. It should say in the future tense, “Why is the Lord bringing us into this land.”

**<sup>3 (con't)</sup> to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims?**

Two thoughts are stated here. First, there is death for the men who would face the enemies in Canaan, and secondly, there is a sad fate of becoming plunder for the wives and children. The word is a new noun, *baz*, meaning

spoil or booty. The fate for them might be considered worse than for those lost in battle. In this, they use the word *taph*, meaning little ones. That comes from *taphaph* which signifies to trip, or to take little steps, and thus a small child. Their words imply that the Lord is lacking compassion on those who are the most helpless. It is the type of false moaning accusation one constantly hears from the liberal left today as they continuously accuse others of wanting to harm the children.

### <sup>3</sup> (con't) **Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?"**

The words are obvious, and they are said in both stubborn rebellion and in faithless condemnation of the Lord's power to save and keep on saving; to provide and to keep on providing. As Adam Clarke says about this notion of returning to Egypt –

“Great evils, when once some time past, affect the mind less than present ills, though much inferior. They had partly forgot their Egyptian bondage, and now smart under a little discouragement, having totally lost sight of their high calling, and of the power and goodness of God.” Adam Clarke

Surely we know this, and we can see it, but let's stop here and remember what Egypt pictures. It consistently has pictured one's previous life before coming to Christ and being redeemed by Him. We were in bondage to sin, and the devil was our master. In understanding this, do the words here not fit you, or someone you are dealing with?

Who is the faithless Christian who has been redeemed, and who constantly moans that the Lord isn't taking care of them, meeting their needs, and understanding their wants, hopes, and desires? This is the very person who is seen in faithless Israel – and the church is filled with them. It is anyone of us at any given time as well. When we call out to God in an accusatory manner that He just cannot fill our needs, hopes, wants, and desires, or when we question His ability to carry us through our ordeals, we are what

faithless Israel pictured. Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt? Is that what you want? Were you happier in your addiction? Were you happier in your misery? Has the divorce that you had before with one wife now turned into another divorce you are again contemplating? For some, the answer is, "Yes." I would rather wallow in the land I came from...

**<sup>4</sup> So they said to one another, "Let us select a leader and return to Egypt."**

This is actually as great of a sin, if not greater, than everything they have yet said. The Lord is their Head. Moses is their designated leader, the covenant has been made by the Lord and through him. It is thus a double rejection. It is a rejection of their designated leadership, and it is a rejection of the agreement they made with and between that leadership. In appointing another leader, they would be outside of the Lord's favor, and they would be outside of His grace. Of these words, Matthew Henry logically states –

"Could they expect that God's cloud would lead them, or his manna attend them? Suppose the difficulties of conquering Canaan were as they imagined, those of returning to Egypt were much greater." Matthew Henry

The one to guide them would have the same large burdens and difficulties that Moses has already faced, but there would be the added burden of no food or water. The manna would cease, and the water which came at the Lord's direction would not flow forth. But even more, the Lord would become their enemy on the path. And in a return to Egypt, their bondage would be increased far beyond what they had faced before.

Their willful departure, and the innumerable deaths which had occurred in Egypt because of it, would be an obvious reason for the Egyptians to come forth, not in open arms, but in total suppression and bondage towards them, or even in total destruction. So brazen is this act of rebellion that it was remembered by Nehemiah after his own time of captivity –



“You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger,  
And brought them water out of the rock for their thirst,  
And told them to go in to possess the land  
Which You had sworn to give them.

<sup>16</sup> “But they and our fathers acted proudly,  
Hardened their necks,  
And did not heed Your commandments.

<sup>17</sup> 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.

But You *are* God,

Ready to pardon,

Gracious and merciful,

Slow to anger,

Abundant in kindness,

And did not forsake them.” Nehemiah 9:15-17

In this, Nehemiah was correct. They did appoint a leader. Though the text says nothing of that here in Numbers, it is understood. In rejecting the Lord, they appointed a new lord. Even if no human was decided upon, the ruler of this world became their hope once again. They had appointed the same leader on this day that Adam had appointed over himself 2515 years earlier.

But, in their rebellion, which resulted in punishment, Nehemiah says that the Lord did not forsake them. His corrective measures are intended to lead people back to Him, not utterly destroy them. Understanding this, another point of theology must be brought up. Who is it that redeemed us today? Jesus. What did He redeem us from? Yes, He redeemed us from the bondage of sin. But the answer is more involved than that. What did He redeem us from? The answer is “From sin and from the curse of the law” (Galatians 3:13).

Paul tells us in Romans that “by the law *is* the knowledge of sin” (3:20). Without law, sin cannot be imputed (5:13). But when law is made, sin results from a violation of the law. If there is no law that says, “You cannot carry a gun into a bar,” then you can carry a gun into a bar without being charged as an offender. But once the law is made, you will be held accountable for breaking that law.

So what is our point of theology in this regard? It is that of returning to the Law of Moses which is comparable to Israel now selecting a leader and desiring to return to Egypt. If Christ Jesus redeemed us from the curse of the law, as Galatians clearly says He did, and if sin is imputed where law exists, as Romans clearly says, then a return to the law, which Christ Jesus redeemed us from, is exactly what is being pictured here.

Paul calls the law “a yoke of bondage” (Galatians 5:1). Jesus said to the people that He offered a different yoke in Matthew 11 –

“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.” Matthew 11:29, 30

Though spoken to Israel, while under the law, His words are saying that what He would do for them would free them. This is why Paul calls the law a yoke of bondage, and why he said to not again be entangled with it. To return to works under the law, as countless teachers and denominations teach to do in one degree or another, is first to reject Christ as Lord, and it is to call for another leader, Satan. Secondly, it is to return to where you had been redeemed from, meaning bondage to sin and the curse of the law. This is why Paul says, using circumcision as a benchmark of pursuing the law –

“Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.” Galatians 5:2

Everything that the Lord had done for Israel was washed away in their desire to return to Egypt. Everything that Christ died for is washed away in a return to the Law of Moses. When you are told to tithe, to worship on a Saturday, to not eat pork, or to follow any other precept of the Mosaic Law, you are directed by your bearded pastor, under the authority of the Word of God, to refuse to comply.

In Egypt, there is death. In Egypt, there is a harsh taskmaster. In Egypt, there is suffering and loss. In Egypt, there are the sad and inevitable consequences for sin.

You are not to return to Egypt, but you are to follow Christ wherever He leads, even if it seems that the giants of Canaan will swallow you up in the process. Such shall never be. There is freedom in Christ, there is safety in Christ, and there is no imputation of sin for those who are in Christ. Stand firm in the truth which is found only in the grace of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Having said that, for the redeemed of the Lord, there may be an actual return to Egypt, but positionally you are still redeemed. If you have come to Christ, the penalties of sin in this life will come upon you, but your redemption is not in question. Israel, in the verses ahead, will suffer the penalties for their rebellion, but they will remain Israel and under the Lord's care. That is why Nehemiah said that despite their conduct, the Lord did not forsake them.

The same truth holds for those in Christ. Paul reveals it several times and in several ways, but for the sake of absolute clarity, he says of one who had gone back to his own Egypt to, "deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." Such is the faithfulness of the Lord. Let us not test Him despite that faithfulness. The destruction of the flesh is not a happy place to be as we walk in this unforgiving world with its harsh and unforgiving ruler.

**<sup>5</sup> Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.**

This is an act of great humility. The people have just determined to select another leader and return to Egypt. In falling on their faces, they are making an emotional appeal to the people. This is surely not, as most scholars say, a petition to the Lord on behalf of the people. Rather, it is an appeal directly to them concerning their unclear choice. It is probable that this act is tied into the words of Deuteronomy 1. While there, prostrated before the people in humility, Moses speaks words of resolute surety for them to consider –

“Then I said to you, ‘Do not be terrified, or afraid of them. <sup>30</sup> The Lord your God, who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, <sup>31</sup> and in the wilderness where you saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a man carries his son, in all the way that you went until you came to this place.’ Deuteronomy 1:29-31

After the people’s pity party, Moses humbly tried to reason with them. It shows the character of the man that he would so abase himself in this way. He intended the best for them, and he knew that following the Lord in obedient trust was that best. And it should be the same earnest attitude that any decent pastor has for a church which is considering compromising their doctrine in order to increase numbers. It should be the same heartfelt attitude that any Christian parent has towards a child who is considering a bad life decision. And it should be the same display of concern that any Christian has when seeing a friend heading down a bad path.

Someone has to at least try to bring reason back to the mind of those who are erring in their attitude about the Lord, or who are backsliding in their devotion to the faith they previously professed.

*The Land of Promise lies just ahead  
It is within our grasp if we will just pay heed  
We can set our sights on it, or instead  
We can turn back to Egypt like the faithless breed*

*The Lord has promised and our home is assured  
Nothing can hinder us from entering into glory  
It was for this that the cross He endured  
And it is the final step for us in the gospel story*

*Will we by faith call out and receive?  
Will we trust the Lord and His promise of the gospel story?  
All He asks is that we by faith believe  
And in that simple act, He guarantees our entrance into glory*

*Thank You, O God, for this marvelous promise to us  
Thank You, O God, for the surety which is found in Jesus!*

## **II. Only Do Not Rebel Against the Lord (verses 6-10)**

**<sup>6</sup> 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;**

What is implied in this is that the petition of Moses was ineffective. To tear one's clothes is a sign of great distress. When Reuben found that Joseph was no longer in the pit he had been thrown in, he tore his clothes. When Jacob heard that his son Joseph was dead, he did likewise. And when Benjamin

was accused of stealing Joseph's cup, and was destined to a life of servitude, his brothers tore their clothes.

This same level of great distress is now seen again in Joshua and Caleb. The people have rejected Moses and, in turn, they have rejected the Lord. Nothing more inconceivable could have happened than the small spark of discontent turning into a raging fire of rebellion. But that is what has happened. The only remedy is to stand in the breach and attempt to repair it before it can no longer be fixed.

What is seen here is that Joshua and Caleb are found faithful, and it is what is explicitly stated about them in Numbers 32 –

“Surely none of the men who came up from Egypt, from twenty years old and above, shall see the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because they have not wholly followed Me, <sup>12</sup> except Caleb the son of Jephunneh, the Kenizzite, and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have wholly followed the Lord.” Numbers 32:11, 12

As we have seen, Caleb is noted as a Kenizzite, a Gentile people, and yet he is reckoned as the representative within Judah who spied out the land of Canaan. We have also seen that Caleb means “dog,” a term associated with Gentiles. And so we have here a picture of those faithful Jews (seen in Joshua) and also faithful Gentiles (as seen in Caleb) who trust in the Lord regardless of the obstacles that otherwise would seem insurmountable. I am not saying Caleb is a Gentile, but in picture, this is what is clearly conveyed.

Joshua and Caleb are faithful toward His word, and they are concerned about His honor which is now being blasphemed by the people. As witnesses of what they had seen, and for the sake of the Lord's name and the safety and honor of Moses and Aaron, they now present their own words concerning what they saw...

**<sup>7</sup> 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.**

They begin their words with the land itself, saying, *tovah ha'arets meod meod* – good the land, very, very. Their words express the Hebrew way of stating a superlative. The land isn't just great. Rather, it is exceedingly so. They had left Egypt, and that could not be considered an exceedingly great land.

Other than the area where the Nile flowed through, or where it flooded the plains, it was a barren desert. The land where they stood now was empty wilderness. None of them had ever experienced land such as was now ahead of them. It is the strongest of enticements to have them stand and listen to the rest of their argument.

And this is the same way that one should be inclined to speak about the promises of the Lord in Christ. We don't just have a better land ahead, but one which is *tov meod meod* – “good very very.” There is, in fact, nothing that can be compared to it. The word has been spoken, the land has been described, and it is waiting for the redeemed to come in and enjoy.

Again, why would we turn back to Egypt, or why would we put our hopes in the place we now are – in a wilderness between Egypt and glory? We can't stay here, and so we can only strive forward or turn back. Every day is a new day with the same decision to make. Let us stand on the promises of the Lord, and let us set our feet toward that heavenly home to which we are sure to come to when our days here are done. For those who are willing to trust the Lord, the Lord will delight in them. And to them, the reward awaits...

**<sup>8</sup> If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us,**

The words here are meant to bolster the confidence of the people. The Lord has already delighted in them by choosing them first in Abraham, and then in the successive generations since him. He has delighted in them by bringing them out of Egypt. He has delighted in them by giving them manna. He has delighted in them in giving them His law. On and on, there is no reason to assume that past performance of delighting in them will suddenly cease two steps outside of their promised inheritance. In fact, the past is the highest indication that the future is set, and that they will, in fact, be brought into the land to occupy it, and it is...

<sup>8</sup> (con't) **'a land which flows with milk and honey.'**

The one point of agreement between their words and the words of the other ten spies are these now. In verse 13:27, this is the same term used by them to describe the land. And so now, there is a uniting of the claims concerning Canaan to prove that what they are saying is true. It is now the seventh of twenty times that the term will be used, and it is always, but once, used in connection with the land of Israel. The land is rich and abundant in all that the term implies.

<sup>9</sup> **Only do not rebel against the Lord,**

*akh ba'Yehoval al timrodu* - "Only against Yehovah not do rebel. The people have already rebelled against the Lord, but they are imploring them to cease and desist from it, and to instead align themselves with Him once again. Such rebellion is considered a vile sin to the Lord, as Samuel explained to King Saul when he had been rebellious towards the word of the Lord –

"Has the Lord *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,  
As in obeying the voice of the Lord?  
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,  
*And* to heed than the fat of rams.



<sup>23</sup> For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft,  
And stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry.  
Because you have rejected the word of the Lord,  
He also has rejected you from *being* king.” 1 Samuel 15:22, 23

The Lord had proven Himself faithful toward Israel, and so the only ruin that can come upon them is because they have brought it on themselves. It is their rebellion, not His inability to save, that will bring destruction. What they should fear is being out of favor with the Lord. They are being implored to not rebel in this way...

<sup>9 (con't)</sup> **nor fear the people of the land,**

The Lord has already named all of the inhabitants of Canaan many times. Twice, it was in connection with the term, “a land flowing with milk and honey.” And several times He has stated that He would cut the people off and drive them out. With the assurances given, the only element needed to make this come about is faith. There is, literally, nothing between them and possessing the land, but their own lack of faith. As for the people of the land, Joshua and Caleb now explain their state, even now, because of the Lord’s guarantee...

<sup>9 (con't)</sup> **for they *are* our bread;**

It is an idiom that first means they will be swallowed up as easily as if eating a meal. David uses the same term in the 14<sup>th</sup> Psalm –

“Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge,  
Who eat up my people *as* they eat bread,  
And do not call on the Lord?” Psalm 14:4

A second, underlying, meaning of the words is that the people would be as a provision of bread to them by supplying them with all they needed. There were cities already built, there were fields already available for cultivation, there were vineyards on the hills and cisterns dug in the ground. The people would be swallowed up as bread, and they would provide the necessities of life as does bread.

<sup>9 (con't)</sup> **their protection has departed from them,**

*sar tsilam m'alehem* – “has departed their shadow from them.” The *tsel*, or shadow, is a metaphor for protection. In the Mideast, the sun is hot, and the east winds blow with scorching heat. Thus, to have a covering shadow is a protection from this. This was seen in the book of Jonah when the prophet sat in the shade of the plant prepared by God.

At other times, the Lord is said to be a shadow of protection for His people. For the inhabitants of Canaan, their protection is gone because the Lord has turned against them. Their iniquity is full, and the time of His judgment upon them has come. Israel is chosen to be the instrument of that destruction. However, in their rebellion, there will be a delay. But it is only that, a delay. In Joshua 2, Rahab the harlot will tell the spies that the hearts of the people have melted in fear of Israel's coming. Their shade will have departed and the heat of God's judgment will come upon them.

<sup>9 (con't)</sup> **and the Lord *is* with us.**

Not only is the Lord against them, having withdrawn any protection they might have had, but the Lord is actively with Israel. He will be the devouring fire against their foes, while being the defending protection for them. The battle is already won, if only Israel will heed. The words of courage have been spoken, and so with one final thought, they cease their discourse...

<sup>9</sup> (con't) **Do not fear them."**

It is their fear of the enemy, and only this, which stands between them and victory. In fearing the enemy, they will not have faith in the Lord. In their lack of faith in the Lord, they stand in rebellion against Him. There can be only one acceptable path to follow. Joshua and Caleb have demonstrated faith and they will receive their reward for it. But what will Israel choose? As is normally the case throughout their history, they choose the wrong path...

<sup>10</sup> **And all the congregation said to stone them with stones.**

What is seen here is that all who heard the words were excited to a state of complete agitation. They already disbelieved, and now their lack of faith is turned into animosity towards those who kept their faith. Nothing has changed in the world – either religious or political – since. Those who are faithful and confident are often the object of hate by those who lack faith. Today, the divide is just as obvious both within the church, and within the political spectrum, as it could be. Those who stand against the Lord will inevitably come against the people of the Lord. This was also the case with David many years later –

"Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God." 1 Samuel 30:6

David strengthened himself in the Lord, and was saved from the disaster threatened against him. The same Lord also interceded for Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb many centuries earlier...

**\*<sup>10</sup> (fin) Now the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of meeting before all the children of Israel.**

The wording is not precise. The Hebrew says, *u-kevod Yehovah nirah b'ohel moed* - "and glory Yehovah appeared in *the* tent of meeting." The Lord's presence was above the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant. That is kept in the tabernacle, and the tabernacle is covered by the tent of meeting. What we get here is the sense that the radiance of the Lord actually streamed out of the tabernacle, filling the tent, and radiated out of the tent itself.

The picture here is that of Christ when His deity shone forth, as in the transfiguration. It has only occurred a few times, and now it does so again. The glory of the Lord is calling for attention upon Himself for the people to realize that He alone is their Hope.

There is little doubt that this glorious sight stopped the hands of those about to stone His faithful, and it probably filled the entire congregation with abject fear. There could be no doubt to them that the anger of the Lord was aroused. And its effect will be seen in the weeks ahead. It is a marvelous spot to end the verses today, leaving us in anticipation of what is yet to come. And yet, it also leaves us with the surety that the Lord is listening, He is carefully watching, and He is attentive to what occurs in regards to His faithful. This is something we should find the greatest of comfort in. When we are persecuted for our faithfulness, when a missionary is killed for his efforts, when we see evil running amok and the faithless only growing in their animosity and enmity towards the Lord's people, He is there. He is faithfully and carefully tending to things so that they will come out as they should. Let us be assured of this, and let us be confident in the fact that our faith – though thoroughly tested, will be rewarded by the Lord. Let us be confident in this.

**Closing Verse:** "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, <sup>7</sup> that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, <sup>8</sup> whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see

*Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,<sup>9</sup> receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of *your* souls.” 1 Peter 1:6-9*

**Next Week:** Numbers 14:11-25 Their penalty is well deserved, it is true... (A Year for Each Day, Part II) (26<sup>th</sup> Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

### **A Year for Each Day**

So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried  
And the people wept that night, the Lord's power they denied  
And all the children of Israel complained  
Against Moses and Aaron, as if they had been jipped  
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!  
But now our lives are just one big mess  
Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword  
That should become victims, our wives and children?  
Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?”  
Let's turn back to there once again

So they said to one another, having fully flipped  
“Let us select a leader and return to Egypt  
Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces  
Before all the assembly  
Of the congregation of the children of Israel  
As if begging them to hear their plea  
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  
This belligerent attitude they could not understand

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; hear the words we are to you relaying  
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  
Just stop tempting Him and making such a fuss

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; their downfall is at hand  
And the Lord is with us  
Do not fear them; do not make such a fuss

And all the congregation said to stone them with stones  
Now the glory of the Lord appeared as the account does tell  
In the tabernacle of meeting  
Before all the children of Israel  
Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness  
And we are wanting to be led by You  
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess  
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land  
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy  
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand  
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone  
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise  
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown  
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...