

ISRAEL'S REBELLION AGAINST GOD

BIBLE TEXT : Numbers 14:1-45

LESSON 102 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Through God we shall do valiantly: for he It is that shall tread down our enemies" (Psalm 60:12).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Numbers 14:1-45 (KJV)

¹ And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night.

² And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!

³ And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt?

⁴ And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.

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

⁶ And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, *which were* of them that searched the land, rent their clothes:

⁷ And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, *is* an exceeding good land.

⁸ If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.

⁹ Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they *are* bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD *is* with us: fear them not.

¹⁰ But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the LORD appeared in the

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Eyes Off the Lord

The Children of Israel had come to the very borders of the Land of Canaan, and then had let discouragement keep them from enjoying its blessings. After traveling on foot with all their flocks and herds and their little ones for over a year, they could now have taken possession of that good land with its abundance of fruit and milk and honey. But they had taken their eyes off the Lord, and they could not see the blessings.

No matter how faithfully we may have served God for a while, if we take our eyes off Jesus, fail to pray and read His Word in order that we may know what He wants us to do, we will never get to Heaven. Jesus went to Heaven to prepare a place for the people who love Him; and the joy we will have when we get there is greater than we can imagine. But though we get almost to the door of Heaven, and then let sin creep into **our lives**, we will never go in to enjoy the blessings that are prepared for us.

Spreading Evil Report

The spies who had seen all the good things of the Land of Canaan were afraid of the people who lived there, and they spread fear throughout the camp of Israel. God was so displeased with those wicked spies that He sent a plague which killed them all. But the damage had already been done. The poison of their discontent and disobedience to God's command had already spread among the Israelites. The people wept because they were afraid of the giants. The strong men of Israel were such cowards that they cried! Think how serious the results were from the evil report of ten men. The great host of Israel became afraid.

And because of their fear, the Children of Israel were turned back into the wilderness to wander for 39 years more, and they never did enjoy Canaan. That good country that was practically in their grasp was lost to them forever. Their little children, who they had said would die in the wilderness, were the ones who finally inherited the land.

How careful we should be never to discourage any of God's children! Even a few words spoken thoughtlessly might weaken someone's faith; and would it not be terrible if we should cause him to miss Heaven?

Giants and Grasshoppers

Were the giants of Canaan really so terrifying? Should the Children of Israel have felt like grasshoppers in their sight? Caleb and Joshua did not think so. They had been spies, too, and had walked throughout the land and had seen all that the

tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel.

¹¹ And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?

¹² I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.

¹³ And Moses said unto the LORD, Then the Egyptians shall hear *it*, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;)

¹⁴ And they will tell *it* to the inhabitants of this land: *for* they have heard that thou LORD *art* among this people, that thou LORD art seen face to face, and *that* thy cloud standeth over them, and *that* thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night.

¹⁵ Now *if* thou shalt kill *all* this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying,

¹⁶ Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness.

¹⁷ And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying,

¹⁸ The LORD *is* longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation*.

¹⁹ Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.

²⁰ And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word:

²¹ But *as* truly *as* I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD.

²² Because all those men which have

other ten spies saw. But they had looked through different eyes. They had the eye of faith, and they knew that God would win their battles. They believed in God; and they said, "We are well able" to take the land. They said that the defence of the Canaanites was gone, and "they are bread for us."

Joshua's Wisdom

Joshua was the military leader of the Israelites, and, he was such a faithful and wise man that he was later chosen to lead the people over Jordan. If there had been real danger, do you not think he would have recognized it? We know that Joshua and Caleb knew where their strength lay, for they said: "Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; ... the LORD is with us." They knew that if the Lord was on their side they could win any battle. But the people would not listen to the spies who brought the good report. They were discouraged and could think only evil thoughts.

Mutiny

God had had long patience with this disobedient people because Moses prayed for them. God had given them food to eat; their clothes had not worn out; and their enemies had fallen back before them. They had every reason to believe that God would fight this battle, too. But, instead, they forgot the miracles that had brought them from Egypt and had kept them alive unto that day, and they cried out: "Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!" Can you imagine such ingratitude? And then they greatly dishonored God and Moses by saying, "Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt." They wanted another leader, one who would take them back to wicked Egypt.

Egypt, a Type of Sin

We learned that Egypt was a type of sin, and God had brought His people out of it. Now that discouragement had come, they wanted to go back. But what had they to go back to? They had been slaves of Pharaoh, and had worked hard under the lash of the taskmasters. In their bitterness they had cried unto the Lord, and He had delivered them. What would have been their fate if they had returned? The angry king would no doubt have punished them severely for running away, and he would certainly have made their burdens very heavy. But the Israelites never stopped to think about that.

Such is the fate of the man who forsakes the Christian walk and returns into sin. Satan is a hard taskmaster, and he will heap great burdens upon the sinner. And besides that, eternal punishment awaits the backslider if he does not again repent. In the hour of discouragement one may become weak and feel he cannot hold fast the faith; but in that time he must lean hard upon the Lord for strength, and realize that a worse fate awaits him if he gives up the Christian fight.

God would have destroyed the Israelites for this rebellion had not Moses and Aaron prayed hard for them again. They told God that all the nations round about were watching the march of the Israelites, and they knew that these were God's children. If He would now destroy them the heathen would say that the

seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice;

²³ Surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it:

²⁴ But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.

²⁵ (Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwelt in the valley.) To morrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea.

²⁶ And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,

²⁷ How long *shall I bear with this evil congregation*, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me.

²⁸ Say unto them, *As truly as I live*, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you:

²⁹ Your carcases shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me,

³⁰ Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, *concerning* which I swore to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.

³¹ But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised.

³² But *as for* you, your carcases, they shall fall in this wilderness.

³³ And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcases be wasted in the wilderness.

³⁴ After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, *even* forty days, each day for a year, shall

true God was no greater than the gods they worshiped; that He had not been able to bring them to the land He had promised. God listened to the pleading of Moses and Aaron, and promised that the judgment He would send would be mixed with mercy. He was true to His word that they could not enter Canaan, but He would give them forty years to repent.

Through those many years that the Children of Israel wandered in the wilderness they had many occasions to be sorry that they had disbelieved God. When they suffered great hardships they had only themselves to blame. Their sin had brought all this trouble upon them. They were enduring all those sufferings because they had not believed the Word of God. They did not believe the Lord when He said He would go before them and fight their battles.

The Apostle Paul tells us in Hebrews 3 that it was because of unbelief that they did not inherit the Promised Land. People today do not consider it a sin to disbelieve the Word of God. Even some Christians do not think it very serious if they do not believe some of the promises of God. But it is serious to doubt God. If the Children of Israel failed to enter Canaan because of unbelief, we can also miss Heaven on account of no greater sin than that we doubt part of the Word of God.

If people really believed that eternal punishment in a burning hell awaited them if they disobeyed God, do you think there would be very many sinners? Many people who are not Christians do not believe the Bible at all; but some who claim to believe it doubt that hell is really what the Bible says it is. They hope that after they die there may be some way out, or perhaps hell is not as bad as it is pictured. Satan's business is to turn men's thoughts from judgment until it is too late to repent. There is coming such a time for everyone when there will be no mercy for them, no matter how hard they try to escape punishment.

Israelites' Change of Mind

After Moses told the Israelites what God's judgment for them was, they were so horrified at the thought of having to wander in that wilderness for 39 more years that they decided they would rather take their chance at fighting the Canaanites. But their fate had been settled. God's judgment had been passed and His presence had departed from them. It was useless now for them to try to conquer the foes in their own strength. What a fate! God had departed from them!

Moses pled with the Children of Israel not to be so foolish as to try to fight in their own strength, but there was no stopping their rash move. They went up to war against the Amalekites - and what a defeat! These same Amalekites that they had conquered so easily once before with God's help, now completely routed them, and sent them running back to Moses, who had stayed at the Tabernacle in the camp.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Which spies did the Israelites believe?
- 2 What effect did their report have on them?
- 3 What did they want to do?
- 4 What judgment did God send upon them?

ye bear your iniquities, *even* forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.

³⁵ I the LORD have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.

³⁶ And the men, which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land,

³⁷ Even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the LORD.

³⁸ But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, *which were* of the men that went to search the land, lived *still*.

³⁹ And Moses told these sayings unto all the children of Israel: and the people mourned greatly.

⁴⁰ And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we *be here*, and will go up unto the place which the LORD hath promised: for we have sinned.

⁴¹ And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the LORD? but it shall not prosper.

⁴² Go not up, for the LORD *is* not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies.

⁴³ For the Amalekites and the Canaanites *are* there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the LORD, therefore the LORD will not be with you.

⁴⁴ But they presumed to go up unto the hill top: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and Moses, departed not out of the camp.

⁴⁵ Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, *even* unto Hormah.

- 5 What did the Israelites want to do after they heard the verdict?
- 6 Did Moses go with them?
- 7 What happened when the Israelites fought with the Amalekites?