

Lesson 12 – Numbers 13-14

Text: Numbers 13-14

Main Characters: God, Moses, Joshua, Caleb, Israelites

Key Passages:

- Numbers 13:31-14:4 – The Israelites hear the bad report and reject the Lord and Moses.
- Deuteronomy 1:26-27 – The Israelites saw the challenges and concluded that God hated them.

Main Storyline:

Having arrived in the Wilderness of Paran, specifically Kadesh Barnea, God instructed Moses to send 12 men, one from each tribe (excluding Levi), to spy out the land of Canaan. Among these 12 men were Caleb, of the tribe of Judah, and Joshua, of the tribe of Ephraim. Moses gave them specific instructions to determine the type and number of the people in the land, the quality of the land in Canaan, and the type of cities that are set up there. He also told them to bring back some of its fruit.

The 12 men went and spied out a large part of the land of Canaan for 40 days. In a particular place, they cut down a single cluster of grapes, which was so large that it required two men to carry it on a pole between them, as well as some other fruits. They noted that the descendants of Anak (or the Anakim) were there also, who were known to be giants and very powerful.

When the spies returned, they described all that they had seen and showed the Israelites the fruit that they had brought back. They said that the land was “flowing with milk and honey,” which meant that it was extremely fertile, good land. However, they told the people that there were many strong people and powerful cities there, as well. The people began to get upset when they heard about the challenges ahead, but Caleb quieted them and reassured them that they could go and take the land. However, the other spies, except Joshua, rebutted him and told the people that they would not be able to conquer the people there, as compared to the giants of the land, the Israelites were as grasshoppers.

The people listened to the bad report from the 10 spies instead of trusting in God as Joshua and Caleb did. They began to cry and complain against God, wishing that they had died in Egypt or in the wilderness, claiming that God hated them, and talking about choosing another leader to bring them back to Egypt. Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb were all extremely upset about what the people were saying. Joshua reassured Israel that the Lord would protect them. The people, however, rejected his words and were about to stone him until the Lord appeared in the tabernacle and began to speak.

God, again, wanted to destroy all of the people, but Moses intervened for them once more. God listened to Moses and decided not to destroy them. However, He decided that all of the people over the age of 20 would die in the wilderness, except for Joshua and Caleb, the faithful spies. He was tired of their constant complaining and unfaithfulness to Him, despite all He had done for them. God said the Israelites should leave the area and wander in the wilderness for a total of 40 years, one year for each day that the spies were in Canaan. God also killed the 10 unfaithful spies with a plague.

The people mourned over what the Lord had said, and they realized that had sinned. However, instead of obeying the Lord and leaving like He commanded, they decided to attack Canaan instead. Moses warned that they were disobeying and that their attack would fail, but they did not listen. When they attacked the Canaanites, they were easily beaten and driven away from the land.

Lessons/Applications:

- 1.) We must trust and rely on the Lord, not on ourselves (Proverbs 3:5).
- 2.) Complaining is contagious; it can grow and poison the hearts of people (Deuteronomy 1:27).
- 3.) Sorrow alone for sin is not enough; it must lead to change in our lives (2 Corinthians 7:9-10).