

DISSATISFACTION LEADS TO REBELLION Sunday School- August 9, 2009

Unifying Topic : PEOPLE REBEL

Lesson Text

I. The People of Israel Refuse to Enter the Promised Land (Numbers 14:1-4)

II. God's Faithful Servants Give Israel Godly Advice (Numbers 14:5-9)

III. God Pronounces Judgment on the Rebellious Israelites (Numbers 14:10-12)

The Main Thought: 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? (Numbers 14:3 KJV).

Unifying Principle: When dissatisfaction grows great, people may rebel against their leaders and benefactors. What leads people to rebel against leadership and authority? The deprivation of the Israelites and the threats of destruction at the hand of others led the Israelites to seek new leadership and a return to Egypt.

Lesson Aim: Students should be able to tell about the Israelites' rebellion against Moses and God in the wilderness, and understand that complaining can lead to rebellion.

Life aim: God desires for humanity to obey His call. Understand that failure to obey His call. Understand that failure to obey God's call, tests the limits of His patience.

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- 14:1 And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night.
- 14:2 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!
- 14:3 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?
- 14:4 And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.
- 14:5 Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.
- 14:6 And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes:
- 14:7 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.
- 14:8 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.
- 14:9 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.
- 14:10 But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel.
- 14:11 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?
- 14:12 I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.

HISTORY:

As we saw in **Numbers 11**, complaining didn't sit well with God, Moses interceded for the people by going to God, and God dealt with the people by sending a burning fire, and consumed some of them in the outskirts of the camp. He could have consumed all, but he didn't. Since Moses had interceded, God now puts a new instruction in place, seventy men of the Elders of Israel (leaders) that are true to stand with Moses, will have Moses' Spirit (God's Spirit, *The Holy Spirit*), to help bear the burden of the people, for he was not to bear it alone. What an awesome God! And He still sends provisions, meat (quail). However, He wasn't through with His people yet! They had to sanctify themselves before the Lord. The meat God was sending became a very great "Plaque". The Plaque was sent because the people despised the Lord when they said, "**Who** shall give us flesh to eat? for it **was well** with us in Egypt." And therefore, many died and was buried for they lusted. That place was called Kibroth-hattaavah, meaning graves of greediness.

Numbers 12, Moses' sister and brother (Miriam and Aaron) began to speak against Moses, their brother. Speaking against Moses because he had married an Ethiopian woman and saying, "Has the Lord spoken only by Moses? has He not spoken also by us?" And God heard them. The bible says, "Then the anger of the Lord grew **hot** against them, and He departed."(TLB) God calls all three of them to the Tabernacle, striking Miriam with leprosy, Aaron cries out for forgiveness to Moses (acknowledging Moses' superior position) saying, "we have done

foolishly”, and Moses intercedes for them to God to heal Miriam. God considered this a serious sin and compared this to a father spitting in her face, which was the ultimate insult. Miriam had attempted to embarrass Moses publicly; in turn God embarrassed her publicly with leprosy for seven days and putting her outside the camp. Once again God was lenient, it could have been more.

Numbers 13, Moses sent twelve spies to search the land of Canaan, “The Promised Land!” to see what the land was like, what the people were like, whether they were strong or weak, whether there be few or many, whether the land was good or bad, what the cities were like, if they dwelt in tents (villages) or in strongholds (fortified), whether the land is fat (rich) or lean (poor), whether there is wood (trees) or not and lastly bring back a sample of the crops. After spying out the land for forty days, they came back with one cluster of grapes which took two men to carry on a pole, pomegranates, and figs. The report was that, the land did flow with milk and honey, exactly what God had promised! However, here comes the “**But**”, the people living there is strong and powerful, the cities are fortified and very large, what’s more Anakim giants live there. At this time Caleb, one of the spies reassured the people that they were well able to possess the land. But the other spies told the people, we are not able, for they are stronger, and we felt like grasshoppers in their sight. Faith and trust went out the window as they spoke. And the words they spoke did not have God in it anywhere. It was all about what **they** could not do, and doubt, disbelief, and rebellion wreaked among the people at the Promised door and caused them to have what they spoke as did before.

LESSON:

Numbers 14:1-4: The People of Israel Refuse to Enter The Promised Land

The Israelite people began to grumble out loud. They cried and complained at the spies report. They moaned at Moses and Aaron asking them, “Why did you take us out of Egypt? Why couldn't we just die in the desert? You have brought us out of Egypt to go and fight a people stronger than we are. Why did GOD bring us to this land to die by the sword? Our wives and our children will be taken as the plunder of war. We would be better off back in Egypt.”

Then they said amongst themselves, 'We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.' (From Nehemiah 9:17, it appears that they actually did choose a leader).

POINT:

The Israelites are at the door of opportunity but won't go through! The spies have seen the land but won't possess it! Bottom line, they did not trust God, they trusted in self.

One key portion of this generation's judgment came from their own lips. They fretted over the fact that their wives and children would fall prey to their enemies and God had brought them to the edge of Canaan only to let them die. They accepted the ten spies' negative opinion as truth.

Numbers 14:5-9: God's Faithful Servants Give Israel Godly Advice

Hearing the bitter ingratitude towards God, Moses and Aaron fell face down in front of the Israelite assembly. Joshua and Caleb were so upset with the complaints of the Israelites that they tore their clothes.

Caleb and Joshua spoke to the people with faith in God and said, "The land we explored is good land, flowing with milk and honey. If God is pleased with us He will lead us and give us that land. Do not rebel against the Lord. Do not be afraid of the inhabitants of the Promised Land because the Lord, God has promised we will swallow them up in war. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them."

NOTE:

Moses and Aaron falling face down to the ground was not to make intercession for them this time, but mostly for the severity of the sin, and what they knew would follow. The tearing of the clothes was meant to serve as a symbol to the people of the extremity of the situation, hoping to turn the people around.

Numbers 14:10-12: God Pronounces Judgment on the Rebellious Israelites

But the Israelite community did not believe Joshua and Caleb. Their fear and unbelief caused them to discuss stoning Joshua and Caleb. Then the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle in front of all of the Israelites. The Lord said to Moses, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? Why won't they believe in me? I have shown them so many miraculous signs and still they don't believe. I will strike all the Israelites down with a plague and they will all die. I will disinherit and destroy them all. But Moses, I will make you a great nation, greater and stronger than they could ever be."

NOTE:

Only two men spoke up against a crowd of unbelievers! Only two men heard what God had said and believed! Rejecting the men or women of God is the same as rejecting God! Being tested in a battle, should always call for God's direction!

SUMMARY:

How quickly the people of Israel had forgotten God's hand of mercy time and time again. How quickly they had forgotten crying out to God to come and rescue them from the Egyptian bondage. Although the wilderness lack many things, it was never without the Lord's presence.

In an effort to escape personal responsibility, they hid behind their families, using them as an excuse for their own unbelief. And the ultimate in their sin and rebellion was to want another leader from the one God had chosen. Unbelief was at the base of Israel's fear of entering the land God had promised. Not only would Israel not go into the Promised Land, but they would murder anyone who dared to go in. A similar situation is seen in John 11:47-53; 12:10-11.

There were two positive reactions following Israel's revolt: Moses and Aaron humbled themselves before the Lord, and Joshua and Caleb gave earnest advice to the people about the Lord's plan of provision and protection to hopefully turn the around.

Instead of trusting God to deliver them, they turned on Joshua and Caleb. Stoning was the customary punishment for some crimes under the Levitical Law (Lev.24:16) and was also practiced in Egypt (Ex. 8:26). Like a bolt of lightning visible to all, God's glory appeared in the tabernacle to confront their unbelief. A time will come not unlike this scene, when God's glory will fill the holy New Jerusalem, but the unbelievers will have no inheritance there (Rev.21:1-11). Do not allow your dissatisfaction in your circumstances limit your focus of trust in God. It will always lead to rebellion towards God, the only one to deliver you out of obviously impossible circumstances.