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# “Open Church – Open Bible

Min. Marossa Davis



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# Sunday Church School

# OCTOBER 31, 2021

“Rebellion of the People”  
Numbers 14: 1-12



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“ Rebellion of the People”  
Numbers 14: 1-12 (KJV)

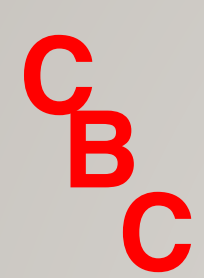
**v. 1. “And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night.**

v. 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!

**v. 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?**

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

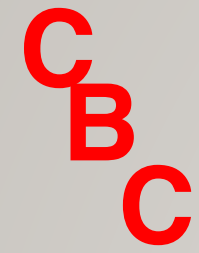
**v. 5. Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.**



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



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**v. 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.**

v. 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?

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

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**In our final unit of lessons for this quarter**, we will learn how important it is to take God seriously. Today, we will be studying Numbers 14:1-12, a narrative that graphically depicts the people’s rebellion against the Lord and their fear of the inhabitants of the land of Canaan. As the people of Israel journeyed farther through the wilderness toward the Promised Land, they faced temptations related to the food and the leadership God had given them. Now Israel was tempted to doubt the Lord because of the presence of the inhabitants of the land. Although Israel’s temptations varied, one thing remained constant, and that was the holy character of their God. Israel needed to learn to take their God seriously if they were going to succeed in living out His good will for them.

**Have you ever had to make an important decision** and sought advice from multiple sources, only to get very conflicting viewpoints?

**In last week’s lesson** , we left off with two conflicting reports brought



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back by a group of men who went out on a scouting mission together. They all saw the same things and had the same experiences, yet some came to one conclusion and others to a very different one.

**These two opinions came from very different sources.** The negative report was based on unbelief and fear, while the positive was based on faith in the Lord’s promise. The people of Israel had a choice to make as to which report they were going to adopt. Their decision would determine the course of their future. Would they follow the Lord in faith, or turn away from His promise in fear and unbelief?



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### TODAY’S AIM

**FACTS:** to realize the negative tendency of believers to doubt God’s power and plan.

**PRINCIPLE:** to counter doubt and disbelief by reading God’s Word and recalling His faithfulness.

**APPLICATION:** to prepare ourselves to pass the tests of faith that inevitably come throughout our lives by allowing God’s Word to develop our faith and character.

### LESSON OUTLINE

- |      |                       |                   |
|------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| I.   | THE VOICE OF FEAR     | NUMBERS 14: 1-4   |
| II.  | THE VOICE OF FAITH    | NUMBERS 14: 5-10  |
| III. | THE VOICE OF JUDGMENT | NUMBERS 14: 11-12 |



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## I. THE VOICE OF FEAR

## NUMBERS 14: 1-4

**The negative report of the majority of the spies** gave the people no hope of ever securing the land God had promised them ( 13:27-29, 31-33 ). This report reverberated throughout the community as the people wailed and wept throughout the night. What should have been a time of celebration and realization that God had brought Israel to the land He had promised them instead became a time of mourning because they saw only a frightening enemy instead of their omnipotent God.

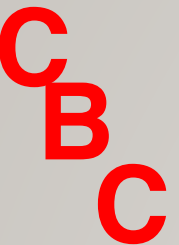
**Listening to the wrong voices** will surely have a disastrous effect on even the most devout believers. Jesus said His sheep hear His voice and follow Him ( cf. John 10:27 ). The children of Israel, however, were listening to the wrong voices, who were using scare tactics to prevent them from receiving what God had in store for them in the Promised Land.

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**God never promised us** that the life of victory He has for us is free from hardships. In fact, Paul’s understanding was quite the opposite. “ We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” ( Acts 14:22 ). The Lord knew the enemy was present throughout Canaan. The negative report did not catch Him off guard. Yet He promised the Israelites He would be with them. He led them out of Egypt and would also lead them into Canaan. The problem the Israelites had was that they did not believe God.

**The Israelites pattern of grumbling against Moses and Aaron** whenever trouble arose continued as the people looked for someone to blame for the terrible predicament they believed they were in. This is somewhat surprising because whenever someone grumbled against Moses, punishment and judgment soon followed. That did not seem to serve as a deterrent , though, as the people kept complaining against God’s appointed leaders.



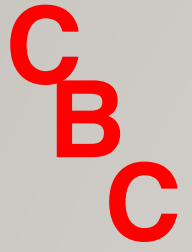
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**By this time**, the people were so exasperated they thought they would have been better off to have died in Egypt or in the wilderness. Anything would have been better than to have been brought to the very brink of freedom and prosperity only to have the rug pulled completely out from under them.

**As the Israelites bemoaned their circumstances**, they shifted the blame and their anger to God. They asked each other why the Lord brought them out of Egypt to let them die in Canaan by the sword. Their wives and children would be viciously attacked by the powerful enemies throughout Canaan and they would be powerless to defend them.

**Any thinking that is rooted in unbelief** will lead to bad choices every time unless it is squelched quickly. Sadly , apart from Caleb ( 13:30 ) , no one in the Israelite camp had stood up to be the voice of reason when the spies



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reports were initially given. Without any consideration, the people categorically rejected Caleb’s exhortation and instead chose to give in to the hopeless attitude of the ten unbelieving spies.

**After lamenting their current situation,** the people decided that going back to Egypt was the only thing to do. They knew Moses would never lead them back to Egypt, so they decided to overthrow him and choose a new leader who would help them return to where they came from. The foolishness of unbelief is staggering and will never lead to good sound decisions.

**In deciding to return to Egypt,** the people were rejecting God’s plan, which included His provision and protection. It is therefore appropriate to consider what prospects they had in Egypt. Slavery, cruelty, and an angry pharaoh awaited them there. God brought them to a place of liberty, yet they were demanding to return to a place of enslavement and hostility.



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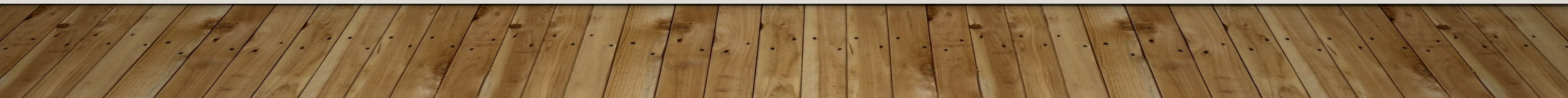
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## II. THE VOICE OF FAITH

## NUMBERS 14: 5-10

**The nations desire to support a new leader** and return to Egypt was devastating to Moses and Aaron, but it was not because they felt a blow to their egos. They fell on their faces before the people because they were witnessing full blown unbelief. They also knew how God always responded when His people rebelled against His Word.

**When we witness unbelief**, it should drive us to our knees in prayer. Unbelief prevents us from receiving the blessings of God and pits us against the Lord. Moses and Aaron were not begging the people to keep them as their leaders; the people had not appointed them in the first place - God had. They were grieved by the unbelief of the people and knew that returning to Egypt was a horrible, God - dishonoring plan.



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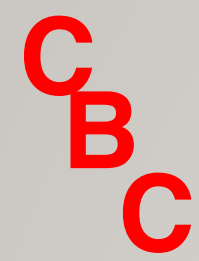
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**Amid all the commotion**, Joshua and Caleb also stepped forward to stand in opposition to the people. These two men were the only dissenters among the twelve spies. They saw the ‘giants’ in the land. They saw the fortified cities. They saw established civilizations throughout Canaan. They did not deny any of the details given by their comrades. What they did reject was the notion that the Israelites had no hope of taking possession of the land God had given to them. So now they tore their clothes, a public display of grief, showing that they were appalled at the impulse to return to Egypt.

**When the spies first reported** on all they had seen in the land of Canaan, Caleb alone spoke in favor of taking the land and rejecting the negative recommendation to retreat. Now Caleb was joined by Joshua ( who surely had given silent approval to the earlier speech) as they made one last plea to the people to go forward in faith.

**The land they had seen** was a good land, filled with lush fruits and vegetables and rife with opportunity. They had no fear of the inhabitants of the



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of the land because they knew that God was with them. God had brought them to this place not to kill them but to bless them far beyond what they could have ever imagined. The God who had parted the Red Sea and provided food and water for them in the desert was the same God who would protect them on their journey. Joshua and Caleb knew God would do as He had promised and give them this good land.

**The commonly used reference to Canaan** as a “ land which floweth with milk and honey” ( v.8 ) points to the blessing of the land itself. God was not bringing His people to a desert wasteland. He was giving them a land that was productive; it would provide them with bountiful harvests of a variety of fruits and vegetables as well as pastureland for their livestock.

**Joshua and Caleb also understood** that the only way for them to succeed was for God to delight in them. Israel needed the favor of the Lord if they were going to reach their desired destination. They were not going to be able to take the land in their own strength and intellect, and they were certainly not going to



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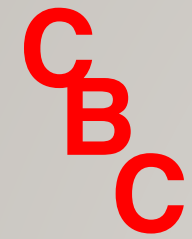
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enjoy God’s favor and be successful if they continued in unbelief.

**Israel’s unbelief was revealed** by their rebelliousness. The rebellion of which Joshua and Caleb warned their fellow Israelites points back to their insistence on returning to Egypt and rejecting God’s Word concerning the taking of the Promised Land. These actions were rebellious in nature, and the two faithful spies knew the rebellion must stop if the people were going to continue in God’s blessings. To reject God’s Word is to invite God’s wrath.

**The rationale for Joshua and Caleb’s faith** was that the Lord was with them and had been all along. These two men trusted that God would do everything He had promised without exception. To rebel against Him was to show more faith in the wickedness of the enemy than in the goodness of God. The people had more confidence that the Canaanites would do them harm than confidence in God to protect and provide for them.

**That is the problem with fear.** In a sense, fear is a form of faith, but it is



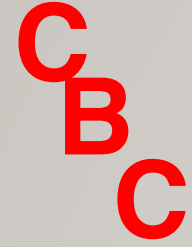
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a perverted or distorted faith. Fear is believing that our enemy is going to prevail and do us harm, while faith is believing that God is going to accomplish that which is good for us as we follow Him. Fear has no place in the life of a follower of Jesus Christ ( cf. II Tim. 1:7 ). We must walk by faith, not by sight ( II Cor. 5:7 ); the children of Israel walked by sight and not by faith. Their vision was distorted by fear, and it prevented them from seeing through the eyes of faith.

**As far as Caleb and Joshua were concerned**, the various inhabitants of Canaan posed no threat to the Israelites, and they saw the Canaanites as being like bread, or easy prey, for the Israelites. The Canaanites had no divine protection, for the deities they prayed to were nothing but empty idols. Israel, on the other hand, had God’s presence with them, and He assured them of victory regardless of how powerful the enemy seemed.

The people were so consumed with fear and unbelief that they could no longer think clearly or even humanely. They were calling for the deaths of



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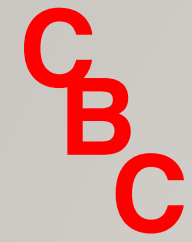
two leaders from their number because they gave a dissenting report that was actually based on what God had already promised. Caleb and Joshua dared to believe in the midst of a multitude of unbelievers. In addition, the desire to stone them probably also extended to Moses and Aaron, whom the rebels already wanted to replace.

**Not surprisingly, the Lord was not silent** when He heard this band of unbelievers rising against the leaders of Israel who spoke His Word to the people. The glory of the Lord appeared at the tent of meeting to everyone , leaving no doubt that He had witnessed everything that had gone on and heard everything that had been said.

## **III. THE VOICE OF JUDGMENT**

**NUMBERS 14: 11-12**

**Although God appeared to all the people,** He spoke directly with Moses. His anger against the people was not hidden at all, as He asked Moses how long the people would despise Him. How long would they continue to live so firmly entrenched in unbelief in spite of all they had seen



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God do?

**The Lord did not pose these questions to Moses** because He needed someone to talk to or because He was seeking information unknown to Him. God was angry, and He was ready to pour out His wrath on these unruly people who had rejected Him and threatened His chosen servants.

**The anger of God** comes into full focus in verse 12, where He states that He would strike the people with a pestilence and destroy them. After that He would start a new nation with Moses, one that would be greater than Israel ever could become.

**God is a gracious and merciful God** who is slow to anger and quick to forgive, as Moses himself would acknowledge ( v. 18 ). However, at some point people will be held to account for continued rejection and unbelief. God said at a much earlier time that His Spirit would not always strive with man ( Gen. 6:3 ) , so it is a grave mistake to presume on His grace and live in unbelief. It is ironic that the Israelites were bent on destroying and replacing



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Moses, while God seemed intent on destroying and replacing the Israelites . We must always avoid foolish talk that rejects the will and Word of God.

**It is quite stunning how quickly** the tide had turned against Israel. They acted as if they were now in control of their own destiny and they could go wherever they chose, even if it was back to Egypt. God , however, unmistakably made everyone understand that nothing we say or do is hidden from His sight ( Prov. 5:21) .

**How could God disown the people** He had called to be His own? Would He destroy an entire nation and start over with one man as the leader? These questions will be answered in next week’s lesson, as we see that God never overlooks unbelief but is rich in mercy nonetheless. As we have learned this quarter, God’s holiness cannot be compromised, but His love endures forever ( cf. Ps. 52:1; Jer. 33:11 )

**In conclusion**, discouragement is a powerful thing. There are generally two reactions to discouraging situations: you can either reevaluate an move

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forward or sink into despair. From a Christian perspective, the latter response is not a legitimate option.

**God is compassionate**, and our belief in His sovereign, all powerful, loving and faithful nature ultimately rejects the idea of despair. Since He is always in control, we can trust that He is faithful to bring about His good plans for us. Our suffering is often part of this plan because trials are a huge part of our sanctification. In these times, it is important that we take God seriously, realizing that anything He puts us through is worth it for the sake of His glory. Just because our sins are covered by the blood of Jesus does not mean we do not have to take God seriously ( Rom. 6: 1-2 ).

**Let us begin to see the Gospel for what it truly is**, the *good news* that the world needs. Let us never be numbered with the ten faithless spies who turned a generation away from the Promised Land. Let us stand with Caleb and Joshua and lead others to the blessed saving inheritance that God wants for them in Jesus Christ.

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## Practical Points

1. Do not suffer by being rebellious against the Lord ( Num. 14: 1-2; I Pet. 3:17 ).
2. Even when circumstances seem to be against us, the Lord’s plan are always best ( Num. 14: 3-4 ).
3. It is right to grieve over sin, but we must also do our part to correct it ( vs. 5-6 ).
4. We should never stand down when it comes to the truth, even if nobody will listen ( vs. 7-9 ).
5. We will encounter persecution for standing up for truth, but we must persevere for Christ’s glory ( v. 10 ).
6. Do not test the Lord’s patience, for He has the power both to bless and to punish ( vs. 11-12 ).

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## “ Rebellion of the People” Questions For Reflection

1. Have you ever cried out to God about something that you wanted but later realized that it was a sinful desire? How can we avoid this type of behavior?
2. Have you ever suffered persecution for doing the right thing? How do you know that you would be prepared to stand for Christ if you were faced with intense persecution.
3. Did God always deal immediately with sin in the Old Testament? Does He do so today?
4. Do we complain a lot? What does this say about the strength of our faith in God?

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