

The Book of Numbers

Punishment: Wandering in the Wilderness

Text: Numbers 14

- I. The Response of Israel (Numbers 14:1-4)
- A. After hearing the report of the spies, the Israelites chose to believe the words of the 10 who were dishonest.
 - B. Thus, their courage failed and they spent the night mourning and weeping.
 - C. Once again, because they did not trust God they began to murmur against Him.
 - 1. They complained against Moses and Aaron.
 - 2. They wished that they had died in Egypt.
 - 3. They wished that they had died in the wilderness.
 - 4. They questioned why God would treat them so badly.
 - 5. They questioned if it would not be better to return to Egypt.
 - D. Sadly, this murmuring turned into open rebellion as they began to talk about choosing a new leader and returning to Egypt. *{Remember what had just happened to Miriam and Aaron when they rebelled against the authority of Moses (Num. 12).}*
- II. The Reply of the Faithful (Numbers 14:5-10a)
- A. Caleb had already tried to still the anger and doubt of the people (13:30).
 - B. Moses had already tried to restore the faith and courage of the people (Duet. 1:29-33).
 - C. Now, as Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before the assembly, Joshua and Caleb rent their clothes and attempted to change the attitudes of the people.
 - D. They declared that the land was good and that God is faithful.
 - E. They begged the people not to rebel against Jehovah.
 - F. But, the people would not hear, and sought to kill these faithful men by stoning them.
- III. The Rebuke of Jehovah (Numbers 14:10b-39)
- A. As Israel planned to act on their seditious thoughts, the glory of Jehovah appeared in the Tabernacle.
 - B. God threatened three severe punishments upon the nation:
 - 1. Pestilence
 - 2. Disinheritance
 - 3. Destruction
 - C. Moses demonstrated both faith in and reverence for Jehovah by pleading for pardon on behalf of the sinful nation.
 - 1. He did not want the Egyptians or any other people to think that God had failed in bringing His people to Canaan.
 - 2. Thus, he begged God to show His power in patience, mercy, and forgiveness.
 - D. As a result of Moses' intercession, God pardoned the sin of the nation.
 - 1. Keep in mind that in His dealing with man under the Law of Moses, God is attempting to emphasize the importance of fellowship, holiness, and priesthood.
 - 2. God revealed His wrath in order to demonstrate man's need of an intercessor.
 - E. However, the sin of Israel would carry heavy consequences.

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- F. That generation would not be allowed to see the Promised Land; instead, they would wander in the wilderness until they all died – save Joshua and Caleb.
 - 1. They had said, “Would God we had died in the wilderness!”
 - 2. So, God gave them what they desired.
 - 3. The children that they worried would suffer in Canaan would instead suffer in the wilderness.
 - 4. Yet, it was those children who would be allowed to inherit the Promised Land.
- G. The spies who had brought a slanderous report against the land were killed with a plague upon the people.
- H. The rest of the nation were commanded to go back into the wilderness in the direction of the Red Sea – that is, head southwest away from Canaan.

IV. The Rebellion of Israel

(Numbers 14:40-45)

- A. In spite of God’s commands, the Israelites chose to rebel again.
- B. The next morning, they climbed the mountain that bordered the land of Canaan, admitted that they had sinned, and declared that they were ready to go and take the land.
- C. Moses warned them that by so doing they would be sinning further against the Lord who had issued the punishment against them.
- D. God would not be with them in this fight and they would be defeated.
- E. Refusing to listen, they soon were met in battle by the Amalekites and Canaanites.
- F. Israel was defeated soundly and forced to flee before their enemies (cf. Deut. 1:44).