

Sermon, January 23, 2011,
“Disobedience Has Consequences”, Numbers 14:1-12,
Pastor Thomas P. Bellhy

Short Review

In our study of the Bible we now come to the 4th book of the Pentateuch (remember the Pentateuch is the first 5 books of the Bible written by Moses)

- Genesis - Grace and mercy of God; God provides; God promises
- Exodus - God delivers, sets free, redeems; gives His law (10 Commands)
- Leviticus - Rules for a Holy People
- Numbers - Rules broken; obedience and disobedience
- In Exodus, Moses received the 10 Commandments. In Leviticus, he receives detailed instructions on holiness...how God requires His people to live.
- Leviticus is given to Moses at Mt. Sinai, shortly after the Exodus from Egypt.
- While Leviticus taught how the people are to live holy...Numbers shows unholy behavior, their failure to obey God in faith.

Numbers

- The book derives its name on account of the two census of chapters one and twenty six. The first generation is numbered in chapter 1 and the “wilderness-baby” generation in 26.
- The Hebrew title of the book means “in the desert”, which is a more appropriate description.
- It is the story of the Hebrews forty years in the wilderness.
- The book is a mixture of law, ritual and narrative, which “suggests the theological nature of Israel’s history and the historical nature of Israel’s law.”
- Law is intertwined with their history.
- The book has three major divisions, based on Israel’s geographical locations. Each of the three divisions has two parts, as the following breakdown demonstrates:
 - Israel at Sinai,
 - preparing to depart for the land of promise (1:1—10:10),
 - followed by the journey from Sinai to Kadesh (10:11—12:16);
 - Israel at Kadesh,
 - delayed as a result of rebellion (13:1—20:13),
 - followed by the journey from Kadesh to the plains of Moab (20:14—22:1);
 - Israel on the plains of Moab,
 - anticipating the conquest of the land of promise (22:2—32:42),
 - followed by appendixes dealing with various matters (33–36).

Numbers is marked by several familiar passages:

- **The Priestly Benediction: Numbers 6:23-26** ²³ *Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the Israelites: You shall say to them,* ²⁴ *The LORD bless you and keep you;* ²⁵ *the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;* ²⁶ *the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.*
- **Korah’s Rebellion** in chapter 16
- **The Budding of Aaron’s Staff** in chapter 17
- **Moses Sin in Striking the Rock for Water** in chapter 20
- **The Bronze Serpent** of chapter 21 which Jesus refers to in John chapter 3
- **God’s Use of the Pagan Prophet Balaam** in chapters 22-24
- **Joshua’s Ordination and Installation as the New Leader** in chapter 27

The book’s major theme: God’s faithfulness verses Israel’s unfaithfulness.

- As God was taking care of them in the desert, giving them food to eat (manna from heaven) and water to drink (from the rock) the people complained again and again.
- They complained in Numbers 11:1
- They complained again about only having manna to eat and wanted meat in 11:4-35
- Aaron and Miriam (Moses brother and sister) complain about the leadership of Moses in chapter 12
- Korah and the 250 leaders rebel against Moses
- In each case there was mercy and consequences, but the greatest was in chapters 13-14.

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There are Consequences for Disobedience

- The decisive passage of Scripture for the Israelites is in chapters 13 and 14.
- Twelve spies are sent into Canaan, Israel refuses to enter the Promised Land, God causes the faithless generation to wander in the wilderness the next 38 years.
- Our Scripture reading occurs after the twelve spies come back to give their report that the land is indeed “flowing with milk and honey” but the people are too strong and the cities are too fortified to defeat.
- **Numbers 14:1-4:** *Then all the congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night. ² And all the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron; the whole congregation said to them, “Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! ³ Why is the LORD bringing us into this land to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become booty; would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?” ⁴ So they said to one another, “Let us choose a captain, and go back to Egypt.”*
 - The people complain about their expectation of coming trouble.
 - We often get into trouble when we operate by our own devices and not by the will of God.
 - Instead of looking to God they come up with their own solution to the problem...go back to Egypt! Back to their old way of life worshipping worldly things instead of God Almighty.
- **Numbers 14:5-9:** *⁵ Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the Israelites. ⁶ And Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes ⁷ and said to all the congregation of the Israelites, “The land that we went through as spies is an exceedingly good land. ⁸ If the LORD is pleased with us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. ⁹ Only, do not rebel against the LORD; and do not fear the people of the land, for they are no more than bread for us; their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them.”*
 - Joshua and Caleb encourage the Israelites to be faithful, trust in God who has delivered them to this point and will deliver them again.
 - In the midst of trial and turmoil God will come through.
 - But the people would have none of it and God does intervene to judge their disobedience.
- **Numbers 14:10-12:** *¹⁰ But the whole congregation threatened to stone them. Then the glory of the LORD appeared at the tent of meeting to all the Israelites. ¹¹ And the LORD said to Moses, “How long will this people despise me? And how long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them? ¹² I will strike them with pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they.”*
 - The consequence of their behavior was to wander in the wilderness for 40 years, where they would die without ever seeing the Promised Land.
 - When your faith in God is waning your trust in yourself waxes. There are consequences for our disobedience.
 - Joshua and Caleb were faithful, Even though they wandered in the wilderness for the next 38 years along with the rest of the Israelites they were chosen by God to lead the upcoming generation into the Promised Land.
 - **Numbers 14:30** ³⁰ *“Surely you shall not come into the land in which I swore to settle you, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.*
 - God does love you and exercises His grace and mercy daily upon our lives daily, but there are always consequences for disobedience.
 - In disobedience you will never come to see and appreciate all that the Lord has in store for you.
 - Is your faith marked by the Israelites who want to return to their old way of life or by the faith of Joshua and Caleb who trust God and know that He will provide...once again?
 - The battle rages within you. Whom shall you trust? Where will your faith reside? In yourself or in God?