

September 28, 2025 Session 4
Rebellion and Judgment Numbers 14:11-24

It Starts with Complaint (Numbers 14:1-3) read in the Bible.

Not listening to God and listening to the majority, the Israelites became discouraged. They took their focus off of God, and chose to forget the miraculous deliverance from Egypt. They chose to forget the provision God made for them as they traveled in the barren desert. It is always easier to blame someone when the situation is difficult. It is always easier to yield to our sinful nature and sin than it is to obey God, ask for forgiveness, and repent. Would you want to go back to being unsaved?

We Need New Leadership (Numbers 14:4-9)

Changing leadership will not change the heart of the one who disobeys God. Moses and Aaron fell on their faces, Caleb and Joshua tore their clothes because the Israelites were so deaf and blinded by their disconnection with almighty God! Reflect upon the effects of politics today. I have dear family members and friends that I can't even engage in a civil conversation with them when all I would like to know is the source of their information. At the mention of Trump, they lose it and start name calling, using words they do not know the meaning of. Can you imagine what it was like for these four men who wanted to obey God? Joshua and Caleb pleaded with the Israelites to remember what God had done for them in the past, trust Him in the present, and follow Him into the promised land. They were asked to think, and not listen to the wrong voices, even though they were louder. Does that remind you of a few weeks ago when a godly man's voice was silenced?

Vs. 10 Truth can be offensive to people, and the congregation who heard the truth wanted to stone Joshua and Caleb. Praise God for His glory! Praise God for appearing in the tabernacle of meeting before all the children of Israel. I praise God that the physical voice that was silenced weeks ago is louder now than before, and that evil and violence are being exposed.

God's Judgment (Numbers 14:11-16) p. 39

God knew the answers to the questions He was asking Moses. God wants us to hear these questions too. How long will people despise God through their whining, complaining, disobeying, blaming, and ignoring God? I shouldn't be amazed at how applicable Scripture is today. We sometimes fail to acknowledge God's faithfulness and goodness. How long will the people not trust in God? Trusting God means to accept and adhere to

God's laws and teachings. God spoke of His demonstration of love and power. "All the signs I [God] have performed among them."

1. Plagues against the Egyptians
2. Deliverance from the pursuing Egyptian army by parting the Red Sea
3. Water from a rock in the desert
4. Provision of food in the form of manna and quail
5. Won the battle against the Amalekites.

What would your list look like? How has God rescued and sustained you over the years?

Vs. 12 God's proposal to Moses was simple: He would bring judgment on the nation and destroy them. This is the second time God wanted to start over with Moses. **Exodus 32:10** *"Now therefore, let Me [God] alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them [Israelites] and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation."* This was after the golden calf incident. This time God proposed to start over with Moses but it was not God abandoning His plan to bring blessing and salvation to the world. Instead, it would be the same plan but through the descendants of Abraham, through Moses and his sons. The disobedience of the people was serious. The people were trusting themselves more than they trusted God.

Vs. 13 Moses interceded again. God knew what Moses was going to say beforehand, God knows everything. But Moses needed to point out that destroying the children of Israel would tarnish the glory of the God of Israel. If God were to destroy His people, the Egyptians and others would think that God didn't have the power to bring them into the land He had promised them. Moses's concern was not what the Egyptians thought about the Israelites. His concern was what they thought about God. I can almost hear God say to Moses, "Tell Me something I do not already know." This is another example that proves to me that the Bible was and is written for us today as well as in Old Testament times.

Vs. 14 Moses listed some things about God's activity that were known by the nations in the region. A key aspect of God's relationship with the Israelites was the fact that the Lord was personally present among His people in the form of a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

Vs. 15 God should not destroy the Israelites because doing so would tarnish His fame among the nations. By God killing the Israelites, the nations would conclude that God was too weak to bring His people into the land He had promised to give them, and that since He lacked the power to fulfill His covenant promises to His people, He slaughtered them in the

wilderness. The conclusion would be that the gods of the Canaanites would have been seen as being stronger than the Lord God of Israel.

God's glory (Numbers 14:17-19) p. 41

Moses asked God to demonstrate His great power by forgiving the people for their rebellion. In doing so, God's power would be magnified as the Lord revealed His heart of mercy and forgiveness. Any lesser god could destroy people, but the Almighty God is powerful enough to forgive and restore. Sometimes the most powerful and courageous thing a person can do is to forgive someone. We saw that demonstrated recently as a courageous young widow forgave the man who shot and killed her beloved husband. Only God can give a person that kind of strength. Moses highlighted key features of God's character. He spoke of God's long-suffering nature, His faithfulness, and His loyal commitment to the covenant relationship He had made with Abraham and his descendants. God is also merciful and forgiving.

Vs. 18 "He [God] will not leave the guilty unpunished." Each person is responsible for their own sins. **Ezekiel 18:20** *"The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself."* God is perfect in His holiness and His love and mercy. Moses pointed out that God will not leave the guilty unpunished. Disobedience toward God will always have consequences. There needs to be a balance between the love of God and the justice of God. The word forgiving means to take, carry, or bear. It is the true picture of bearing the penalty of God's punishment. Jesus is the balance. Jesus took our punishment upon Himself on the cross. Only He lived a life of perfect obedience to God, and was able to atone for our sins. Through the cross God balanced His love and His justice. Jesus's death on the cross expresses God's faithful love and satisfies God's holy anger toward sin.

Vs. 19 For God to forgive them now was in keeping with the greatness of His faithful love. God had earlier said of Himself that He was slow to anger, and abounding in faithful love and truth. God forgives iniquity, rebellion, and sin. Because God had forgiven His people in the past, from Egypt until now, Moses was asking Him to do it again. God granted the Israelites forgiveness, but there were still consequences for the people's actions. Forgiveness doesn't mean that consequences will be avoided or canceled. The children of Israel and their descendants would continue to be God's people. But there would be immediate consequences for the Israelites' sinful actions.

Future Consequences (Numbers 14:20-24) p. 43

Scripture points to the unique, intimate relationship that Moses had with God. **Exodus 33:11** *“So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle.”* God told Moses the Israelites were pardoned. The pardon was based on God’s mercy (not giving us what we deserve, death and hell), and God’s grace (giving us what we do not deserve, forgiveness and eternal life). The pardon was also an expression of His covenant love toward His chosen people. However, God did not remove the repercussions for their disobedience and unbelief. God swore by Himself and His glory that none of the unbelieving generation of the Israelites would enter Canaan. God has nothing greater than Himself to swear by, so He took the oath in His name: “As I live.” God had had enough rebellion from His people. God told Moses what the punishment would be for the unfaithful. It is ironic that the generation that had seen firsthand the miraculous acts of God would not see the land promised to Abraham. They would not accept what they had seen or experienced. The consequences facing the children of Israel were severe. God proclaimed, “None of those who have despised me will see it [the promised land].” The Israelites had accused God of bringing them into the wilderness to die. God now would accommodate that belief. Only those under twenty years of age would enter the promised land along with Caleb and Joshua. The next generation would also suffer from the sins of their unbelieving parents as they were relegated to wandering in the wilderness for forty years—one year for each day the spies explored the land of Canaan.

Vs. 24 Caleb remained loyal amid a disobedient people. God responds to the prayers of the faithful. Because Caleb had brought back a favorable report and encouraged the people to proceed, he was promised he would enter Canaan. Caleb fully believed the promises of God that by His power, the Israelites could conquer Canaan. When the Israelites finally entered the promised land, God fulfilled His promise to give Caleb and his descendants an inheritance in the land. We as believers honor God by trusting Him, and can count on God to act according to His character. We must understand that sin has consequences.