

# The Twelve Spies

Numbers 13 - 14



## The Story

After the children of Israel wandered around in the wilderness they came to the land of Canaan. The LORD told Moses to spy out the land He was giving to them. He told Moses to send 12 men to see what the land was like. So Moses chose 12 men to be spies as God had told him.

Moses told them to find out what the land and people were like. Moses said, "See if the people are strong or weak, few or many. See if the land is good or bad. See if the cities are strong or weak. Bring back some of the things that grow in the land."

The 12 men went into the land of Canaan and found the first grapes were just getting ripe. They cut a branch of grapes that was so heavy two men had to carry it between them on a pole. They also brought other fruits.

After 40 days the spies returned from the land of Canaan. They came back to Moses and Aaron and all the people. The spies said, "We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruits." They showed them the grapes and other fruit from the land.

Then the spies told them, "The people who live in the land are strong. Their cities are very large with walls built around them."

Caleb said, "Let us go at once. We will be able to take the land."

But some of the other spies said, "The people who live there are stronger than we are. The people are giants and we seemed like grasshoppers next to

them. We will not be able to capture the land."

That night the people cried and complained against Moses and Aaron. They said, "If only we had died in Egypt or in the wilderness. Why did the LORD bring us here to be killed? Let us choose a new leader and return to Egypt."

Then two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, spoke to the people and said, "The land is a very good land. If it is the LORD's will, He will bring us into this land and give it to us. Do not turn against the LORD. The LORD is with us. We need not fear the enemy."

The people were angry at Joshua and Caleb and wanted to kill them with stones. God was not happy with His people. He told Moses He would let the children of Israel die in the desert.

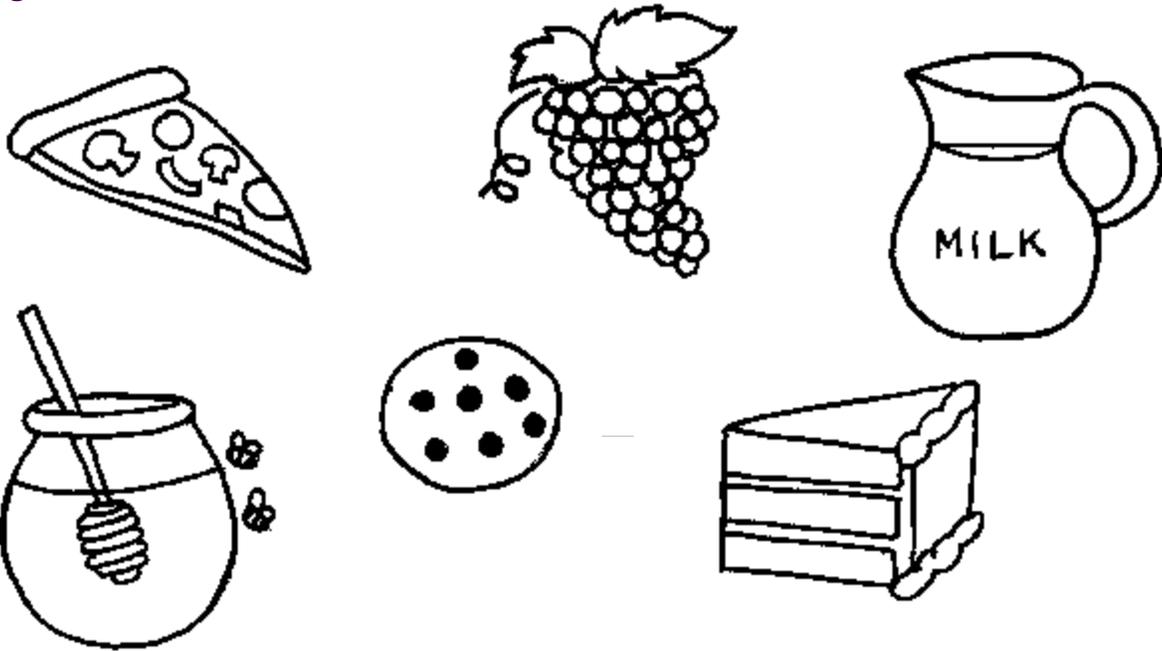
Moses prayed for God to forgive the people.

Then the LORD told Moses that He heard his prayer and forgave the people. But everyone who was 20 years old or older would not come into the land of Canaan. They would die in the desert because they had complained against God. Only Joshua and Caleb would enter the land of Canaan.

So Moses told the people that the LORD said, "Your little ones I will bring into the land which you have despised."

Moses told them they were to go back to the desert where they would wander around for 40 years.

**Activity One** - Circle each item below that the 12 spies found in the land of Canaan.



*Many of God's people did not enter the Promised Land due to their lack of trust.*

**Activity Two** -

Look at the following people.  
Put an "X" on each person that would not be allowed to live in the land of Canaan.

Why didn't all the people get to go into the land?



*Our life is a time of grace and blessings to help unbelievers find Jesus, their Savior.*

**Passage** - This passage tells us that it is important to pray to God. Prayer is very powerful!  
What are some things that you pray about?

James 5:16 - Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another,  
that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man  
avails much.

**Hymn** - TLH #434 v. 1, 3, 4

O God of Jacob, by whose hand  
Thy people still are fed;  
Who thro' this weary pilgrimage  
Hast all our fathers led.

Thro' each perplexing path of life  
Our wand'ring footsteps guide;  
Give us each day our daily bread  
And raiment fit provide.

Oh, spread Thy covering wings around  
Till all our wanderings cease  
And at our Father's loved abode  
Our souls arrive in peace.

## Prayer

Dear God,

Thank You for letting me learn about You. Help my faith to grow strong,  
and keep me always trusting in You to guide me. Give me courage to share  
Your good news of salvation with other people. Amen.

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them. We will not be able to capture the land.

That night the people cried and complained about Moses and Aaron. They said, "If only we had died in Egypt or in the wilderness. Why did the LORD bring us here to be killed? Let us choose a new leader and return to Egypt."

Then two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, spoke to the people and said, "The land is a very good land. If it is the LORD's will, He will bring us into this land and give it to us. Do not turn against the LORD. The LORD is with us. We need not fear the enemy."

The people were angry with Joshua and Caleb and wanted to kill them with stones. God was not happy with His people. He told Moses He would let the Children of Israel die in the desert.

Moses prayed for God to forgive the people.

Then the LORD told Moses that He heard his prayer and forgave the people. But everyone who was 20 years old or older would not come into the land of Canaan. They would die in the desert because they had complained about God. Only Joshua and Caleb would enter the land of Canaan.

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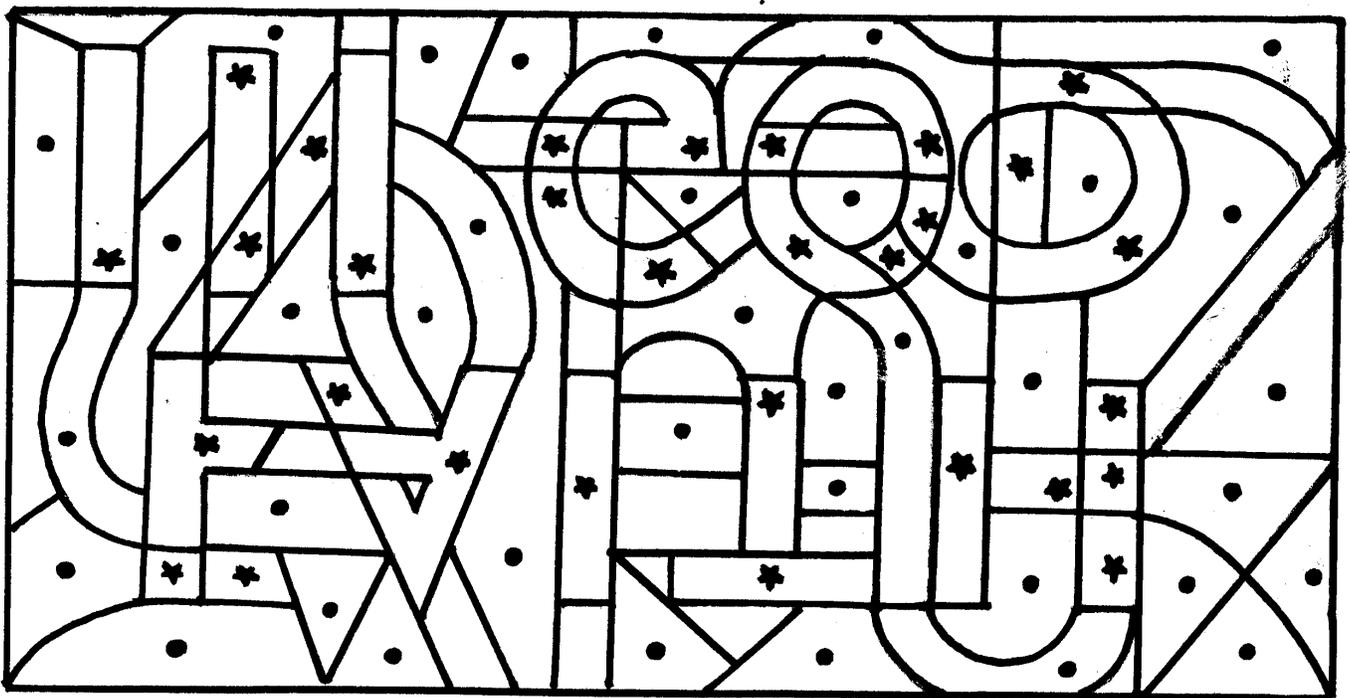
**Activity One** - Read the following statements. Circle T if the statement is true; circle F if the statement is false.

1. T F Joshua chose 12 men to look at the land of Canaan.
2. T F The explorers returned with amazing reports about the land.
3. T F The people complained about Moses and Aaron.
4. T F The people wanted to stone the 12 explorers.
5. T F Anyone older than 13 years old could not enter Canaan.

*Many of God's people did not enter the Promised Land due to their lack of trust.*

**Activity Two** - Color each shape below that contains a star. When you've completed the puzzle, you'll see the very important thing that Joshua and Caleb possessed!

*Our life is a time of grace and blessings to help unbelievers find Jesus, their Savior.*



**Activity Three** - Circle the letter of the correct answer in each of the following questions.

1. What did the 12 spies discover about the land of Canaan?
  - a. The weather was beautiful.
  - b. It was a rich and abundant land.
  - c. The people living there were kind and friendly.
  
2. What did the people of Israel want to do?
  - a. Trust in God and go into the land of Canaan.
  - b. Wander around the desert
  - c. Choose a new leader and go back to Egypt.
  
3. What did Joshua and Caleb say to the people?
  - a. The LORD is with us. We need not fear.
  - b. You're right. Let's return to Egypt.
  - c. We should send another group of explorers.

## Passages

James 5:16 - Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

This passage tells us that it is important to pray to God. Prayer is very powerful! What are some things that you pray about?

Numbers 14:18 - 'The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation.'

How did God show His mercy for the children of Israel when they complained and did not trust Him?

How did God punish the guilty for their sin of complaining and lack of faith in Him?

## Hymn - TLH #434 v. 1, 3, 4

O God of Jacob, by whose hand  
Thy people still are fed;  
Who thro' this weary pilgrimage  
Hast all our fathers led.

Thro' each perplexing path of life  
Our wand'ring footsteps guide;  
Give us each day our daily bread  
And raiment fit provide.

Oh, spread Thy covering wings around  
Till all our wanderings cease  
And at our Father's loved abode  
Our souls arrive in peace.

## Prayer

Dear Father,  
We learned today how the children of Israel cut themselves off from the blessed land of Canaan by choosing not to trust in You for guidance. Help us always to remember to look to You with faith and to firmly believe Your words, so that we do not miss out on any of the blessings You have in store for us. Teach us to live our lives that others may learn about You, and also take part in all the blessings You offer, especially the blessing of a Savior from sin. Amen.

# The Twelve Spies

Numbers 13 - 14

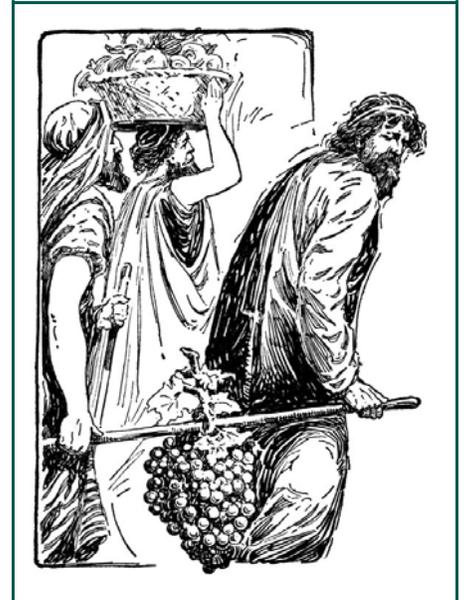
"A land flowing with milk and honey." What does that mean? Does it sound like bad land?

The LORD had promised this land to Abraham and his descendants. Moses had led the children of Israel to the border into the land.

Why won't the children of Israel live in this wonderful land for 40 more years? Why would those 20 years old and older never see this "land flowing with milk and honey?" Let's look at today's lesson for the answers.

## Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, Please send Your Holy Spirit into my heart through Your Word which we are about to study. Help me to learn not to make the same mistake Israel did and distrust You, but give me a faith like Caleb and Joshua who said, "The LORD is with us." In Jesus' name. Amen.



## The Twelve Spies - Numbers 13 - 14

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel. From each of the 12 tribes you shall send one of their leaders."

So Moses sent them saying, "Go and see what the land is like: whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, few or many; whether the land they dwell in is good or bad. Be of good courage and bring some of the fruit of the land."

So they went up and spied out the land and they returned after forty days.

They brought back word to them and showed them the fruit of the land and said, "We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey.

Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large."

Then Caleb, one of the leaders who had gone in to spy on the land quieted the people and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it."

But the other spies said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we."

And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "All the people whom we saw in it are giants of men and we look small to them."

So all the congregation wept that

night and complained against Moses and Aaron. They said, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt or if only we had died in this wilderness! Why has the LORD brought us to this land? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?"

So they said to one another, "Let us select a leader and return to Egypt."

Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel. But Joshua and Caleb, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: "The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. Only do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people of the land, for the LORD is with us. Do not fear them."

All the congregation said to stone Caleb and Joshua with stones. Now the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of meeting before all the children of Israel. Then the LORD said to Moses: "How long will these people reject Me? And how long will they not believe Me, with all the signs which I have performed among them? I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they." Moses said to the LORD, "Now if You kill these people, then the nations which have heard of Your fame will speak, saying, 'Because the LORD

was not able to bring this people to the land which He swore to give them, therefore He killed them in the wilderness.' Now, I pray, let the power of my LORD be great. Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "I have pardoned, according to your word, but those who are twenty years and older who have rejected Me certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers. They shall wander in the wilderness forty years - one year for every day the spies were gone. They shall die in the wilderness and their children shall know the land which they have despised. But Joshua and Caleb, because they followed Me fully, shall see the land."

The 10 spies who made a bad report died of a plague before the LORD. Joshua and Caleb survived.

Then Moses told these words to all the children of Israel, and the people mourned greatly. But they tried to enter Canaan through the mountains.

Moses said, "Do not go up, lest you be defeated by your enemies, for the LORD will not be with you."

But the people went up to the mountaintop anyway. Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites drove them back so they could not enter Canaan.

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**Outer Aim - Many of God's people did not enter the Promised Land due to their lack of trust.**

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**What the Story Tells Us** - Number the following sentences in order 1-7 as they happened in the lesson.

- \_\_\_\_\_ They returned and 10 of the spies said they should not go into the land because the people were too strong. Caleb and Joshua said, "The LORD is with us. Let us go at once and take over the land. "
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12 leaders, 1 from each tribe, were sent out and told to bring back fruits of the land and a report.
- \_\_\_\_\_ God told Moses to send out spies into Canaan.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The people tried to go into the land anyway, but were kept back by the Amalekites and Canaanites.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The children of Israel listened to the bad report and wanted to stone Caleb and Joshua and go back to Egypt.
- \_\_\_\_\_ God would not let Israel go into Canaan for 40 years. Only those under age 20 would ever see the Promised Land. (Except for Caleb and Joshua)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Moses pleaded with God for the people.

**What God's Word Tells Us** - Discuss the following Bible Passage and then fill in the blanks using the words from the passage.

Romans 15:4 - For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

1. This passage tell us to use the \_\_\_\_\_.
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**Inner Aim** - Our life is a time of grace and blessings to help unbelievers find Jesus, their Savior.

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## Passages - Fill in the blanks. Look up the passages in the Bible. (NKJV)

Numbers 14:18 - The \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_ and abundant in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ iniquity and transgression.

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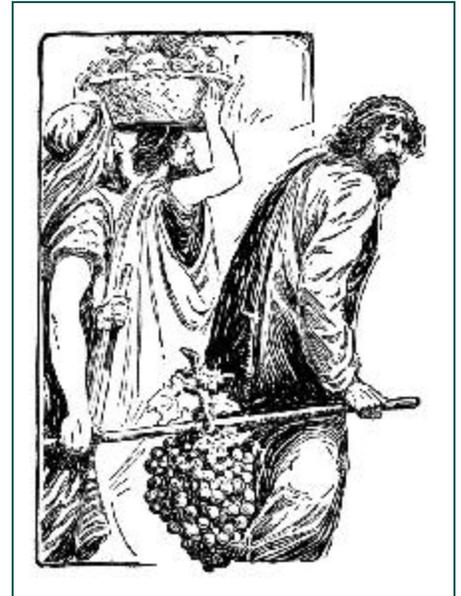
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**Outer Aim - Many of God's people did not enter the Promised Land due to their lack of trust.**

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**What the Story Tells Us** - Number the following sentences in order 1-7 how they happened in the lesson.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Moses pleaded with God for the people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The people tried to go into the land anyway, but were kept back by the Amalekites and Canaanites.
- \_\_\_\_\_ They returned and 10 of the spies said they should not go into the land because the people were too strong. Caleb and Joshua said, "The LORD is with us. Let us go at once and take over the land. "
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12 leaders, 1 from each tribe, were sent out and told to bring back fruits of the land and a report.
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**STORY**

The Twelve Spies - Numbers 13 and 14 (refer also to Deut. ch. 1 for a rehearsal account)

**TEACHER PRAYER**

Dear Father, whom I claim in Jesus' name, infuse my heart with Your love and mercy so that I can work as Your servant in this classroom. Also get my brain working at best capacity so that I use your Word correctly; then give me the most effective language skills, the most effective psychological techniques, and the most effective "presence" to be what You want me to be for these Your children. Thank you. Amen.

**VOCABULARY**

*Numbers* - actually means numbers; Moses made a head count of men fit for military service. Ch.1 reports them as numbering 603,550; in Ch. 3 the Levites were counted--numbering 22,000 for their service career as clergy.

*Spies* - It made sense to scout the territory they were going to invade--to evaluate the strengths of the native population as the enemy; so this was a covert military expedition.

Locate map places such as *Wilderness of Zin*--the rift valley stretching from Dead Sea to Gulf of Akaba; *Hebron*--20 miles south of Jerusalem; *Rehob*--in the north, later known as Dan. *Kadesh* - at bottom border of Canaan.

**OUTER AIM**

The record of Israel shows how they cut themselves off from the blessings available to them.

**INNER AIM**

Our life is a time of grace for our blessing and a time to help the unbeliever find God as Savior.

**BACKGROUND**

(*Rupprecht Bible History References, Vol. 1, pp. 210-214*)

Since our last story-episode in God's Bible History, the children of Israel had their first census (Numbers chs.1-3) for military duty, for clergy responsibilities, and for other preparations needed to "move on out" from Sinai. When complaints came against the food (God's manna), or the leadership (God's man Moses), God dealt out some tough love. By the time our story-episode opens in chapter 13, they had progressed close to the southern border of Palestine (Canaan).

vs. 1-16

In this first tour across the desert (still ahead many years of being nomads), they got close enough to send out an expeditionary force to do some scouting of the territory. The LORD directed Moses how to select the men for the job--one from each tribe would create fair representation. They were going out as a survey team, not to engage in combat.

vs. 17-26

Their job was to scout out military forces, survey the ecology and economy of the country, its crops and population factors. They took forty days to get a good survey of their new homeland.

vs. 27-29

When they returned, they used visual aids to support their claim that the place was fertile and productive and reported that its citizens were strong enough to defend their territory.



vs. 30

This report evidently scared the Jews, who needed quieting down so Caleb could bring his recommendation: “*Let us go up at once (without further delay) and take possession, for we are able to overcome it.*”

vs. 31-33

Caleb’s encouragement was undercut by the faithless cowardice of the other ten scouts.

Ch.14: 1-4

Their pessimism infected others. The whole nation lodged complaint against the LORD and was about to depose Moses for any substitute who could lead them in retreat back to Egypt.

vs.5-9

Moses and Aaron, Joshua and Caleb were still confident that the LORD was on their side: *Only do not rebel...Do not fear them...* are the anguished words of a pastor in fear for the souls and earthly safety of his congregation.

vs. 10

The plea did not work. Satan brought the nation to a new low in rejecting their God-revering leaders. So the LORD stepped in to set things back on course for His purposes.

vs.11-12

God was disappointed and pained enough to discard the whole group of unbelievers.

vs.13-19

Moses could see that God’s position and reputation were at stake; so he pleaded with the LORD to maintain His program of mercy (rather than anger) and to do the merciful thing of forgiving this sin, just as He had been doing time and again. The power of faith, holding God to His word and appealing to His heart of love WORKS!

vs. 20-22

The LORD *pardoned* just as Moses asked. However, the whole group of complainers, unbelievers, rebels--from oldest to youngest--would learn the ultimate lesson of how bad it was that they had robbed themselves of any future in the country God had prepared for them.

vs. 23

There’s an earthly penalty that comes from opposing God; Satan has no intention of blessing anyone who leaves God’s care.

vs. 24

Caleb’s *different spirit* (like Joshua’s) spared him from the fate (see vv. 36-38) of the other ten who had badmouthed the LORD.

vs. 25-27

So it was going to be a retreat from the border of the Promised Land. God was very precise about the consequences that disobedience (which comes from not believing or trusting in God) produces. Here’s the bad news: a) you will get what you asked for, (and more) b) you will not enter Canaan, (but die in the wilderness) c) your generation will be stuck in the wilderness for forty years d) you will all die off, one-by-one (or in groups) e) while the babies born will grow up and receive what you rejected.

vs. 39-40

Contrariness was still in their hearts; they next wanted what God said they could not have.

vs. 41-45

So they had to be told they were headed for another dead-end if they disobeyed; which is what they did, anyway, and received what they deserved--because they had deserted their LORD God.

## **STUDENT PRAYER**

Dear God, I'm thankful that I'm learning to know You better in Sunday School; but I need a lot of help to live as You want me to. So train my heart and soul to love You and desire to serve You. Bless me, please, in Jesus' name. Amen.

## **PRESENTATION**

Abbreviate the sequence of events; but read verbatim the verses that have special such importance, as the orders to the scouting expeditionary force (ch.13:17-20). A *land flowing with milk and honey* means that the countryside was good for dairy animals as well as for wild species. It was rich in resources, with an agreeable climate, having wild game aplenty in woods and lakes. It had good grazing and pasture land, suitable for orchards and crops. (It was more productive and rich than Wisconsin. When settlers arrived here they found wild game aplenty and native Americans doing some subsistence agriculture. Yet it was a different situation in that God did not give settlers in Wisconsin permission to shove out the Chippewa nation already living here. Nor does He authorize us to invade Cuba or Canada or Mexico. The Jews were special, and so was the land He had promised to Abraham.)

Since the history of God's people is so important as example, God has given us two additional reminders: 1) Psalm 106 gives a poetic review of the whole sequence of events from Passover to Takeover of Canaan. 2) I Cor. 10:5-12.

## **APPLICATIONS**

Most beneficial is 1 Cor. 10:5-12, which should be read with the students as introduction and again as closure, for it presents three distinct phases of involvement: 1) what happened back then came first, 2) then writing it in the Bible came second, and finally, 3) learning from their bad example is God's main point and purpose for us.

Emphasize the words like *our example...to the intent we should not lust...nor let us tempt Christ...written for our admonition*. It is basically a very sad story, and the only good thing to come of it is whatever we can learn from it for our own lives.

So since God always wants to bless us, let's be careful not to shove the blessings aside in fear of fighting the good fight of faith. He's not asking too much of us that we resist the temptations of worldliness (represented by Egypt); He's not asking too much of us that we should squelch the inner voice that complains, "I don't want to go to the trouble of being faithful to my Savior." Our warfare is against the evil kingdom; the battlefield is inside our hearts and souls. Let's do a better job of preparing ourselves than did the Jews.

Life on the frontier was not easy for settlers, but it toughened them so they survived (with many gravestones along the way) to become our great grandparents. (Illustrate with any old photo album or National Geography with pictures of settlers or Indian scouts or native Americans.)

When we have easy living, we are tempted to not want to do as God tells us; we think we cannot handle His new challenge or go in His new direction to a new life that will be even better. That was the challenge your parents and/or grandparents had in leaving the churches they were raised in, when they started a new synod in the sixties. It was always a temptation to go back to what was familiar and comfortable rather than follow His Word forward into the unknown.

We also need to learn the difference between punishment and chastisement. Punishment is what God sends upon the **unrepentant** child of Satan; chastisement is what God administers to His **repentant** child. Thus the forty years of marking time outside Canaan was a punishment for the rebel, but the same forty years was a chastening for the person who accepted it as a time of preparation for the Promised Land. In real time, life is a time of grace for the unbeliever to find the Savior; for the believer, it's time to help the unbeliever find the Savior.

## **PASSAGES**

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

### Lower

Numbers 14:18 - *The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression.*  
James 5:16 - *Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*

### Middle any of the above and...

Romans 15:4 - *For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.*

Hebrews 3:12-13 - *Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

### Upper any of the above and...

Hebrews 12: 5-6 - *My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.*

I Cor. 10: 6 - *Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.*

I Cor. 10: 11-12 - *Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they are written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*

## **HYMN CHOICES**

"Lord, As Thou Wilt, Deal Thou With Me" (TLH #406 1-2)

"O God Of Jacob, By Whose Hand" (TLH #434 1-5)

"Jesus, Lead Thou On" (TLH #410 1-4)