

**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)