

Lesson 40 - BELIEF AND UNBELIEF *Numbers 13:25–14:25*

(Num. 13:25-33) - Israel encamped below Mt. Sinai for about a year where God gave them the law. They then moved across the desert with the cloud before them. Remember, this cloud by day (fire by night) is Christ's presence and power with them to protect and guide them on their way. Some claim this was a preincarnate visitation of Christ; others believe it was a type of Christ. Either way, we know it was the Lord Who brought them out of Egypt and to the Land of Promise. The significance of this to us spiritually is to show how the Lord has delivered us out of the bondage of sin and death by the blood of Jesus Christ and has brought us to the promised land of salvation with all its blessings and benefits. Our eternal salvation is all the work of God's sovereign power and grace in Christ (*Eph. 2:8-10*)!

Here, in our text, they came to Kadesh-Barnea (*Num. 13:26*), on the edge of the desert and on the border of the land God had promised them. The Lord ordered Moses to send twelve men to search out the land which he had given to them (*Num. 13:1-20*). Two of the men chosen by Moses were "*Caleb*" (*Num. 13:6*) and "*Oshea*" (*Num. 13:8*). "*Oshea*" is Joshua. Moses changed his name from "*Oshea*," which means "salvation," to "*Jehoshua*," which means "Jehovah saves" or "Jehovah is salvation" (*Num. 13:16*). This is the same as "Joshua," and which the New Testament equivalent is "Jesus." Joshua was later appointed by God to replace Moses and lead the nation into the Promised Land. In that capacity, Joshua was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ Who leads His people (spiritual Israel) into the promised land of salvation and eternal life. The name "*Caleb*" means "faithful dog."

The spies were in the land for forty days and returned, bringing fruits from the land and their report about the land and its inhabitants (*Num. 13: 23-27*). All of the spies except Joshua and Caleb discouraged the people from entering the land (*Num. 13:31-33*). By God's grace, Joshua and Caleb believed God. They urged the people to obey God and go into Canaan to possess the land that God had promised and had given to them (*Num. 13:30; 14:6-9*). They knew that taking possession of the land was not conditioned on their own strength. It was all of God. Joshua and Caleb represent all of God's true people, saved by grace and brought by God to believe in Christ and depend upon His grace and power in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. All whom God has brought to faith in Christ know that their whole salvation and their eternal security was (and is) conditioned on Christ Who fulfilled all conditions as their Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer.

The people of Israel would not listen to Joshua and Caleb but rather listened to the majority and would have stoned Joshua and Caleb (*Num. 14:10*). God turned them back to die in the wilderness. All who were over twenty years of age (except Joshua and Caleb) would never enter the land (*Num. 14:24, 28-33*). *Hebrews 3:7-19* shows us that the people could not enter into the promised land of safety and rest because of their unbelief. *Hebrews 4:1-2* warns us not to follow their bad example of unbelief concerning matters of eternal salvation and eternal rest as revealed in the Gospel of God's free and sovereign grace based on the righteousness of God in Christ. All who are justified by God (forgiven of all sins based on the blood of Christ and accepted with God based on Christ's righteousness imputed) live by God-given faith in Christ (*cf. Rom. 1:16-17*).

(Num. 14:1-4) - The people's unbelief brought them not only to reject God but to desire to go back to their bondage in Egypt. This is a testimony to man's natural blindness and unbelief. By nature, fallen, sinful, unregenerate people see security and safety in bondage and in unbelief.

(Num. 14:5-9) - Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb grieved and begged the people not to provoke the Lord. In the same way, when it concerns eternal salvation and eternal life, the

ministers of God's truth grieve over the unbelief of so many and beg sinners to be reconciled to God in the only way that God has freely and fully provided - the righteousness of Christ imputed by God to us and received by God-given faith (*2 Cor. 5:20-21*).

(Num. 14:10-12) - The people continued in their rebellion and wanted to stone Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb. God then pronounced His judgment of wrath against the people for their unbelief. This is the only just result for those who continue all of their lives in unbelief and rebellion against God (*John 3:18-20,36*).

(Num. 14:13-19) - Moses interceded for the people. These matters are difficult for us to understand. We look at this and, in our natural minds, conclude that Moses is trying to change God's mind or persuade God to do something against His will, and succeeded, but this is not the case. God is immutable and not only cannot change but has no need to change. All things are going according to God's sovereign, immutable plan, purpose, and will (*Eph. 1:11*). But God has determined for it to play out in history like this for His own glory. Moses intercedes not on the basis of any goodness or worthiness in the people; for they are sinners and deserve nothing but God's wrath. Moses appeals to God on the basis of God's glory in His promise to preserve this nation until Messiah would come. Christ intercedes for God's spiritual people (His elect) whom He knows by name and knows will be saved (*John 6:37-45*) for God's glory based on His the merits of His obedience unto death (*John 17:1-5*).

(Num. 14:20-25) - God did bring judgment upon them. He spared their lives, but this whole generation, except Joshua and Caleb, would not enter into the Promised Land. This shows us that no one will enter the blessings of salvation except those who are brought by God's grace and power to believe in Christ (***John 3:36***). These rebellious people had to wander in the wilderness for forty years. God also promised that every person twenty years old or older would die in the wilderness and would not see the land, again, with two exceptions, Joshua and Caleb. This is all by God's goodness, power, and mercy, but it is stated in *Numbers 14:24,30, and 38*, that it was "Because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it." This would apply to Joshua also. This promise came true. After the death of Moses forty years later, Joshua led the people across the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Caleb received an inheritance in the Promised Land in his old age (*Joshua 14*).

All of this shows us several things about belief (faith in God) and unbelief. (1) Man by nature is an unbeliever and will not believe the truth (*Rom. 3:10-12; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:1-4*), unless God does a work of grace and grants faith and repentance. (2) Unbelief is the ultimate insult to God, calling Him a liar. Faith glorifies God as it brings us to recognize, acknowledge, and submit to His revelation of Himself and His way of salvation (*Rom. 4*). (3) Faith (believing in Christ and the truth as it is revealed in Him) is the gift of God given to all whom God chose before the world began, all for whom Christ died and arose again, and all whom the Holy Spirit regenerates and converts (*John 1:12-13; Eph. 2:8-10*). (4) Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (*Rom. 1:16-17; 10:13-17*). God has chosen His people in Christ before the world began, and He has determined that each one of His elect will enter all the blessings and benefits of salvation when the Holy Spirit gives them spiritual life from Christ and brings them into God's kingdom by faith (*John 3:3-7; Heb. 4:1-11*).