

CALVARY CHAPEL OF PHILADELPHIA

**CHILDREN'S MINISTRY**  
**KINDERGARTEN**  
**TEACHER'S PACKET**

**SUNDAY MORNING**

Study 23

*The Twelve Spies*



# The Twelve Spies

The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verses support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

**Objective** The goal of this lesson is to show the importance of trusting God's promises and the dangers of not doing so.

## Key Verses

Numbers 13-14—Main Teaching Passage

Proverbs 3:5

Hebrews 3:7-19

1 John 1:9; Matthew 28:20; Philippians 4:19; Revelation 21-22

**Memory Verse** - Joshua 24:15b (February Memory Verse)

"But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

## Hook

On your cart will be a paper bag labeled, "bumble bees." Ask for a volunteer to reach into the bag. Tell them you *promise* (use the word promise) that the reward will be worth it. Inside the bag will be a piece of candy (make sure that there is one already inside before doing this activity).

In this exercise, the students had to trust your promise without knowing the result. In today's story, the Israelites had to trust God's promises. Ask them if they think Israel will trust God.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

# BOOK

God had promised the Israelites that He would lead them into their own land. In today's story, He commanded Moses to send twelve spies into the land ahead of the people to check it out. When the spies returned, they told the people that there was plenty of food and crops in the land. However, there were also giants and all sorts of dangerous people. Ten of the spies were afraid and told the Israelites that it was too dangerous to enter the land. The other two spies, Joshua and Caleb, trusted that God would defeat their enemies and bring them into the land.

Unfortunately, the people listened to the other ten spies and rebelled. They went so far as to try to find a different leader and return to Egypt. Just like last week, God was angry with the people and was going to destroy them, but Moses asked God to show the people mercy. Once again, God spared the people, but the punishment was severe: not one person over 20 years old would live long enough to enter the Promised Land except for Joshua and Caleb. The Israelites would spend the next 40 years wandering around in the wilderness. Some Israelites tried to fix the problem and went to attack the land, but it was too late. Because of their unbelief, Israel would spend the next 40 years in the desert.

The interpretation/exegesis of the passage. What does this passage mean? How does this passage apply to my life?

# LOOK

Ask the students if their parent or teachers have ever made them a promise. Then ask if they had a hard time trusting that the promise would be kept. There are several reasons why we might expect someone not to keep their promise. Maybe the promise seems too difficult to keep. Perhaps they have failed to keep a promise before. Or possibly the person making the promise is dishonest. All of those reasons might make it hard to trust that our promise could be kept. When God makes a promise, however, none of these reasons apply. He is all-powerful, so nothing is too hard for Him. As we learned last year, God is true and cannot lie. Finally, God has never broken a promise.

In today's story, the Israelites doubted that God would keep His promise. God told the Israelites that if they entered the land, He would defeat their enemies and give the land to them. However, when the Israelites heard the spies' report, they did not believe the promise. They did not trust that God could protect them against these giants. Only Joshua and Caleb trusted in God's promises. The Israelites, because they did not believe, faced severe consequences. But because Joshua and Caleb had faith, they were able to enter the Promised Land.

## LOOK (Continued)

In Hebrews 3:7-19, the writer uses the story of Israel's failure to demonstrate the importance of faith in receiving God's promises. In Christ, all of the promises of God belong to us. God has made many promises to us to. He has promised to forgive our sins (1 John 1:9), be with us always (Matthew 28:20), supply our needs (Philippians 4:19), and to spend eternity with us forever (Revelation 21-22). The only thing that will keep us from receiving those promises is unbelief.

So what should we do when we are afraid? Trust God. What should we do when we are tempted? Trust that God is greater and that He will help us overcome. It is not always easy to trust in God, but He always keeps His promises. If we do trust Him, it will always be worth it. When we doubt, the consequences are often severe. Discuss with the class situations in which they might need to trust in God. Encourage them to choose faith and not unbelief.

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

## TOOK

Review the lesson by asking the students why the Israelites were not able to enter the land. Ask about the consequences of their unbelief.

**Pray:** Thank God for always keeping His promises. Ask Him for Help to trust in Him and have faith.

**Parent Question:** Why were the Israelites unable to enter the Promised Land?

# FURTHER STUDY

## Numbers 13-14 Commentary by David Guzik

### SPIES ARE SENT INTO CANAAN

#### A. Spies are chosen and commissioned.

##### 1. ([Numbers 13:1-3](#)) The sending of the spies.

**And 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 tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, every one a leader among them.” So Moses sent them from the Wilderness of Paran according to the command of the Lord, all of them men who were heads of the children of Israel.**

a. **Send men to spy out the land of Canaan:** These men were on a reconnaissance mission; to observe the land of Canaan and bring back a report to the nation. They would investigate the path to Canaan, see if the land was a good land to live in, and judge the military strength of the Canaanites.

b. **From each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, every one a leader among them:** These spies were chosen from among the people. According to [Deuteronomy 1:20-25](#), the plan to send spies did not directly come from Moses, but came from the people.

i. [Deuteronomy 1:21](#) records the words of Moses: *Look, the LORD your God has set the land before you; go up and possess it, as the LORD God of your fathers has spoken to you; do not fear or be discouraged.* Moses told them simply to go and take the land God had promised to them.

ii. In response, the people suggested this plan to Moses (*Everyone of you came near to me and said, [Deuteronomy 1:22](#)*). However, Moses agreed with the plan of the people saying, *the plan pleased me well ([Deuteronomy 1:23](#))*.

iii. This mission of the spies had a bad result. It could be said that Moses was wrong in agreeing to this suggestion of the people. Perhaps the accusations of Miriam and Aaron (petty, false, and self-interested as they were) had made Moses hesitant to take strong leadership.

iv. Since the people of Israel initiated this excursion, perhaps Moses only came to God asking *how* to send out the spies, not *if* he should send out the spies. **From each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, every one a leader among them** describes the *method* of sending the spies.

c. **According to the command of the Lord:** Nevertheless, this was in the plan of God. God used the report of the spies as a test of Israel's faith.

##### 3. ([Numbers 13:17-20](#)) Moses commissions the spies.

**Then Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, “Go up this way into the South, and go up to the mountains, 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; whether the cities they inhabit are like camps or strongholds; whether the land is rich or poor; and whether there are forests there or not. Be of good courage. And bring some of the fruit of the land.” Now the time was the season of the first ripe grapes.**

a. **See what the land is like:** Moses' direction to the spies was a subtle manifestation of unbelief. Did he really doubt that the land was good? Did he doubt that the land was rich? Did he doubt that there were useful forests? Did it matter if the people were strong or many, or if they lived in strongholds?

- i. This was an entirely *reasonable* pursuit for Moses, and representative of the *curiosity* of the whole nation. After all, they had never seen this land, nor had any Israelite for some 400 years.
  - ii. God already told them what the land was like. At Moses' calling at the burning bush, God told him the land of Canaan was *a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey* ([Exodus 3:8](#)), and Moses told the people of the goodness of the land ([Exodus 13:5](#)).
- b. **Whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak:** We wonder what the people of Israel thought they would do if a negative report came back. Would they resolve to return to Egypt?

## 2. ([Numbers 13:26-29](#)) The report of the land.

**Now they departed and came back to Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. Then they told him, and said: "We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this *is* its fruit. Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land *are* strong; the cities *are* fortified *and* very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the South; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the banks of the Jordan."**

- a. **We went to the land where *you* sent us:** They seemed to sense they were more on a mission from Israel than on a mission from God; we might already sense the report will be given according to a human perspective, not according to God's perspective.
- b. **It truly flows with milk and honey** — what God had promised about the land was indeed true.
- c. **Nevertheless:** The word **nevertheless** means "despite all of that." At that moment, Moses, and every man of faith in Israel should have cried out and said, "Nevertheless nothing! How can one say, 'We went to the land, found it good, and God's promise true,' and then say, 'Despite all this...?'"
- i. Despite God's faithful promise, **the people who dwell in the land are strong**.
- ii. Despite God's faithful promise, **the cities are fortified and very large**.
- iii. Despite God's faithful promise, **we saw the descendants of Anak** [a tribe of large men] **there**.
- iv. Despite God's faithful promise, **the Amalekites dwell... the Amorites dwell... the Canaanites dwell** — all the land is taken up, there are no vacancies!
- d. **Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there:** It is hard to imagine a report *more* unbelieving and unfaithful to God than this; a report that recognizes the faithfulness of God's promise, the truth of His word, and yet says, "Despite all that..."
- i. Whatever the exact nature of God's testing in the minds and hearts of the twelve spies during the forty days in Canaan, it is clear that they have, as a whole, failed the test!

## 3. ([Numbers 13:30](#)) Caleb's faithful objection.

**Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it."**

- a. **Then Caleb quieted the people:** Caleb — blessed forever! — commanded the people to immediately (**at once**) trust and obey God and to take the land, because God had made them able.
- b. **Let us go up at once and take possession:** It took great courage for this man to stand against the tide of unbelief, of doubt and "despite all that" attitude. Caleb had the spirit of [Romans 3:4](#): *Let God be true but every man a liar*.

## 4. ([Numbers 13:31-33](#)) The other spies respond to Caleb.



**But the men who had gone up with him 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, “The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it *are* men of *great* stature. There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.”**

- a. **But the men who had gone up with him said:** Their unbelieving response was a potent combination of truth, lies, and exaggeration.
  - i. It was true from a human perspective that **they are stronger than we** — but to say, “**we are not able to go up against the people**” was a lie.
  - ii. It was true that they had gone through the land — but to say, “**a land that devours its inhabitants**” was a lie.
  - iii. Each of the statements, “**All the men whom we saw in it are men of great stature**” or “**the giants**” and “**we were like grasshoppers**” were all terrible exaggerations, plain and simple lies.
- b. **The land through which we have gone as spies:** Unbelief often presents itself as being “factual” or “practical” or “down to earth.” Yet, the most factual, practical, and down to earth thing we can do is trust the word of the living God. Their unbelief was not according to the facts, but despite the facts.
  - i. Significantly, two men could see the exact same sights — the same grapes, the same men, the same land, the same cities — one can come away singing in faith, and the other is filled with a sense of certain doom. Ultimately, faith or unbelief does not spring from circumstances or environment, but from our hearts, which God must change.

## THE PEOPLE REJECT CANAAN

### A. The rebellion of Israel at Kadesh Barnea.

#### 1. ([Numbers 14:1](#)) Israel rebels by mourning at their dilemma between faith and unbelief.

**So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night.**

- a. **Then all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried:** The children of Israel were confronted with two reports regarding the Promised Land. Two of the twelve spies (Caleb and Joshua) say *Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it* ([Numbers 13:30](#); [Numbers 14:6](#)), but the other ten spies said, “what God promised about the land is true; nevertheless, the natives of the land are too mighty, and we cannot overcome them, despite what God has promised.”
  - i. We should not forget that the twelve spies were sent one from each tribe ([Numbers 13:2](#)); in this way, they truly represent the people of Israel, and the lack of faith of the majority of the spies is a lack of faith on behalf of the whole nation.
  - ii. We also must remember the details of how and why the spies were sent; the idea to send them did not originate with Moses or with God, but with the people ([Deuteronomy 1:19-25](#)); Moses unwisely agreed, and God merely told them how many spies to send and that they should represent the whole nation.
  - iii. But *why* were the spies sent? There was no military information needed; God had promised them victory over their enemies. Perhaps a reading of the terrain would have been helpful, but Moses told them to see if the land was good, and to see if the people and cities were weak or strong ([Numbers 13:17-20](#)) — and this information indirectly led to the bad report of the ten spies!
- b. **And the people wept that night:** The unbelief of the ten spies truly represented the unbelieving heart of the nation. Israel **wept that night** upon hearing that the enemies in Canaan were formidable. This mourning had a distinct character.

i. It was mourning because God would not make it all “easy.” We often somehow expect that of God, and resent adversity in our lives, forgetting the example of Jesus, who had it “harder” than any of us — and Whom we are not above.

ii. It was mourning filled with a resentful attitude towards God, blaming Him for their “problem” — denying that He is a loving Father who cares for His children.

iii. It was mourning that gave into the feeling of unbelief and fear; mourning that allowed feelings rule in one’s life instead of faith in the living God. Here, their clinging to the feelings of fear and mourning is plain sin and rebellion, and their feelings did not by any means justify their rebellion. Clinging to feelings can be sin.

iv. This was mourning over a loss. We usually mourn because something has died. Here, God was trying to cause something to die — the flesh, the sin-nature, the old man (as much as it could in an Old Covenant sense); and Israel mourned because they wanted the old man to live, not die.

c. **And the people wept that night:** So here, Israel stood barely a year out of Egypt, on the threshold of the Promised Land. Over the first ten chapters of Numbers they had been fully prepared to walk as Promised Land people — they had been ordered and organized; cleansed and purified; set apart and blessed; taught how to give and how to function as priests; had been made to remember judgment spared and deliverance brought; and had been given God’s presence as a guide and the tools needed to lead the people.

i. Now God invited them to take the land — and they rebelled through their mourning. Unbelief made them think of God’s good for them (the gift of the Promised Land) as something evil.

## 2. ([Numbers 14:2-3a](#)) Israel rebels by murmuring.

**And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, “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 to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims?”**

a. **And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron:** Their murmuring was directed first towards **Moses and Aaron**, but since these were the Lord’s leaders, they were murmuring against the Lord. The vision of Moses and Aaron (to lead these people into the Promised Land) is the Lord’s vision. Their complaint is against the Lord, even if they want to hide it by directing to Moses and Aaron.

i. Probably some falsely “spiritual” folks among the murmurers said, “Oh no, we trust the Lord. We love the Lord. We would never rebel against the Lord. It’s Moses and Aaron we don’t like.”

ii. But Joshua and Caleb knew: *Only do not rebel against the Lord* ([Numbers 14:9](#)), and the Lord Himself knew: *How long will these people reject Me?* ([Numbers 14:11](#))

b. **If only we had died:** The challenge of faith before the people seemed so great — and so grievous — that they would rather have died than go on with what the Lord has for them.

i. Tragically for this generation, God would give them what their rebellious, unbelieving hearts wanted.

c. **Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword:** Here, they directly accused the Almighty with sin and evil towards them. They were angry with God, accusing Him of plotting the murder of them and their **wives and children**.

i. This was a deep state of rebellion. God, who can do no evil, with Whom there is no shadow of turning, was called *evil* and a *murderer* by His own people.

ii. Some counsel it is a healthy thing to be angry with God, and to let it all out, so that God and you can be reconciled, as sort of a matter of counseling therapy. While it is true that one may be angry with God, and should take every such feeling to God, it is wrong to ever assume or imply that such feelings are justified. If we are angry at God, we are in sin, because God has never done anything that deserves us being angry. We should honestly bring such sin before God, but never for a moment feeling it to be justified.



d. **That our wives and children should become victims:** The unbelieving among Israel justified their unbelief on the basis of concern for their **wives and children**. Tragically, because of their unbelief they would die in the wilderness and their **children** — a new generation of faith — would inherit the promised land.

### 3. ([Numbers 14:3b-4](#)) They rebel by longing for the memory of Egypt.

**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."**

a. **Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt:** This was *not* better. In the first ten chapters of Numbers, God led Israel through a process intended to change them from a slave-minded people to be a "promised-land" people. Here, they completely revert back to their slave mentality, preferring slavery under cruel, murdering masters than the walk of faith God has for them.

i. Make no mistake; what Israel rejected here was a walk of faith. If God was going to lead them into a deeper trust than they had before, they wanted no part of it. If He made it all easy, that was fine with them — but they did not want a walk of *faith*.

b. **Let us select a leader and return to Egypt:** This was pure rebellion. They said that they did not want God's plan, they did not want God's leaders, and they did not want God's land. They believed that they knew better than God.

i. Notice how *man-centered* their rebellion was: **They said to one another** (the decision was made among themselves, believing their majority vote had more wisdom than God). **Let us select** (they didn't like God's selection, so they wanted a leader who would truly represent them — in all their rebellion against God).

### 4. ([Numbers 14:5-9](#)) The reaction of the godly against the rebellion of the people.

**Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel. But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, 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. If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, 'a land which flows with milk and honey.' Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them."**

a. **Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces:** Moses and Aaron were older and wiser and therefore knew how bad the situation was. They simply prostrated themselves in prayer and said not a word to the people (knowing it would do no good), but they knew that they must cry out to God for a miracle if Israel is to be spared.

b. **But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh:** Joshua and Caleb, the two faithful spies, are younger and more optimistic, so they attempt to persuade the people.

i. They **tore their clothes**, showing utter grief and mourning; acting as if someone had died — or was about to die.

ii. **The land... is an exceedingly good land;** they reminded the people of the faithfulness of God's promise. He promised the land would be good, and it was — they saw it with their own eyes. If God promised we could take possession of it, they could trust that promise also.

iii. **Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people... the Lord is with us:** Their fear and unbelief were willful rebellion. Therefore, Joshua and Caleb appealed to their will of the people, asking them to decide to give up their rebellion and return to the Lord. The people of Israel didn't have to give in to their feelings of fear, of anger to the Lord, of unbelief. By God's grace they could choose to submit to Him and trust Him.

### 5. ([Numbers 14:10](#)) Two responses to the appeal of Joshua and Caleb.

**And all the congregation said to stone them with stones. Now the glory of the Lord appeared in the tab-**

## **ernacle of meeting before all the children of Israel.**

a. **All the congregation said to stone them with stones:** This was the response of the people. Rebellious, carnal man cannot endure the men of faith, who came with the challenge of faith. They would *kill* Joshua and Caleb for calling them to forsake their unbelief and to trust God.

i. Nothing can be more vexing, more aggravating to the child of God in rebellion than another child of God who is full of faith and submission to God — and who has godly counsel.

b. **The glory of the Lord appeared:** This was the response of the Lord. We are not yet told what the glory of the Lord would do, but it isn't hard to figure out. Their actions and feelings were not consistent with the glory of the Lord.

- Was it consistent with the glory of the Lord to be unbelieving?
- Was it consistent with the glory of the Lord to mourn because the walk of faith was hard?
- Was it consistent with the glory of the Lord to long for death?
- Was it consistent with the glory of the Lord to accuse God of plotting murder?
- Was it consistent with the glory of the Lord to go back to the slavery of Egypt?
- Was it consistent with the glory of the Lord to reject God's leaders and go with "the people's choice"?

**Was it consistent with the glory of the Lord to threaten to kill those who call you to a deeper life of trust in God?**

## **B. Moses' spectacular intercession for the children of Israel.**

### **1. ([Numbers 14:11-12](#)) God's charge against Israel and offer to Moses.**

**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."**

a. **The Lord said to Moses:** God does not even speak with the nation; He knows they are past hearing Him. He will speak with Moses, and Moses alone.

i. Many a child of God in rebellion wonders why they do not hear the voice of God anymore; why should they? They are rejecting what God has already said, do they think they can be open to what more He might say?

b. **How long will these people reject Me:** God had been only good to Israel and had demonstrated His loving strength towards them countless times. Israel's rejection of God makes no sense.

c. **I will strike them... and disinherit them... I will make of you a nation greater and mightier:** This is a dramatic offer to Moses; God says He will give rebellious Israel what they deserve — judgment (indeed, what they said they wanted — to die in the wilderness! [[Numbers 14:2](#)]), and He will fulfill His promises of a land, nation, and blessing to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob through Moses instead!

i. This was heady stuff for Moses; he is offered the position of "patriarch" — to become a father for Israel in the same way Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were. Moses knew of their greatness and fame — he was used of God to compile their stories in the book of Genesis!

ii. We must regard this as a real "offer" from God; the Lord does not speak make-believe words. If Moses were to do nothing, this plan of God would go into effect — the nation would perish, and somehow, God would start all over again with Moses — and the new nation would be better (**greater and mightier**) than the present one!

iii. Moses had a similar "offer" from God back in [Exodus 32:7-14](#); will Moses react in the same way now as then?

2. ([Numbers 14:13-16](#)) Moses intercedes for Israel, appealing to God's glory.

**And Moses said to the Lord: "Then the Egyptians will hear *it*, for by Your might You brought these people up from among them, and they will tell *it* to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, Lord, *are* among these people; that You, Lord, are seen face to face and Your cloud stands above them, and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. Now *if* You kill these people as one man, 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."**

a. **And Moses said to the Lord:** Moses did not entertain God's offer for a moment. Instead, he pled for the nation and loved them despite their rebellion, and he was zealous for the glory of God.

b. **Then the Egyptians will hear it, for by Your might You brought these people up from among them:** Moses' zeal for God's glory was evident. He knew that if God wiped out the present nation and started again with Moses, it would be a black mark on His reputation before the nations — especially Egypt.

i. Perhaps then the nations could claim that **the Lord was not able to bring this people to the land**. It could be said that the sin and rebellion of man was greater than the power and goodness of God.

c. **Which He swore to give them:** Moses brought God's promise before Him. He begged God to not give the nations any opportunity to think God has not been true to His word.

3. ([Numbers 14:17-19](#)) Moses intercedes for Israel, appealing to God's power and promise.

**"And now, I pray, let the power of my Lord be great, just as You have spoken, saying, 'The Lord is long-suffering 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.' Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now."**

a. **Let the power of my Lord be great:** Moses glories in the power of God but asks that God would use His power by showing mercy and longsuffering to a rebellious Israel.

b. **Just as You have spoken:** The list of [Numbers 14:18-19](#) is almost a quote from the words of self-revelation God spoke to Moses in the dramatic encounter Moses had with God in [Exodus 34:6-8](#).

i. **Long-suffering... abundant... forgiving iniquity and transgression... by no means clears the guilty... mercy:** Each of these are mentioned first in [Exodus 34:6-8](#).

ii. Moses basically said: "Lord, you have revealed Yourself to me by Your word. Your word declares who You are. Now Lord, please act towards Israel according to who You have declared Yourself to be in Your word.

c. **Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy:** Moses knew God's power and appealed to it; Moses knew God's promise and appealed to it, and Moses knew God's glory and appealed to it. This was a spectacular example of intercession.

i. What made this intercession spectacular was not primarily Moses' method (appealing to God's glory, power, and promise); but Moses' heart. Here, Moses is totally others-centered, not concerned for his own glory, but only for Israel. He displays he shares the heart of God towards His people, and that is what made Moses' intercession spectacular.

ii. This, of course, was God's intention all along: To develop and draw out of Moses just this kind of heart, transforming Moses into the image of His Son ([Romans 8:29](#)), long before the time of Jesus.

C. The fate of Israel after the rebellion at Kadesh Barnea.

1. ([Numbers 14:20](#)) God's promise of pardon in response to Moses' intercession.

**Then the Lord said: "I have pardoned, according to your word;**

a. **I have pardoned:** The heart of Moses and his method of intercession were successful. These are sweet words for any sinner to hear.

b. **According to your word:** This means that Moses' prayer *mattered*. Some may wonder if prayer is some elaborate game, where God threatens to do something He will never do anyway, and we pray, pretending to believe God will do what He has threatened, and when God hears us pray, He forgets His idle threat and does what He was going to do anyway. Prayer definitely does not work that way.

i. We don't understand the relationship between the eternal, sovereign plan of God and our prayers; but we know it is no game. God never wanted Moses to think of it as a game and wanted Moses to at least think that his prayers had directly affected the outcome: **I have pardoned, according to your word!** We should pray as if life and death, heaven and hell, would be decided by our prayers!

## 2. ([Numbers 14:21-25](#)) The fate of the rebels and the fate of the faithful.

**"But truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord; because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it. But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it. Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwell in the valley; tomorrow turn and move out into the wilderness by the Way of the Red Sea."**

a. **But truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord:** God's response to Israel would be full of and reflective of His glory. He would show mercy and pardon, but in a way consistent with His glory.

b. **They certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it:** Therefore, those who put God to the test and rebelled against His promise, would not see the Promised Land. But the faithful like Caleb would inherit the land.

i. Look at the high praise heaped upon Caleb: **My servant Caleb... he has a different spirit in him... [he] has followed Me fully... I will bring into the land.** Caleb's stand of faith seemed futile when Israel rejected him; but it was richly rewarded by God.

c. **Tomorrow turn and move out into the wilderness:** God had brought them to the threshold of the Promised Land, but they rebelled against Him, and did not enter — so God will send them back to the wilderness.

i. Israel has demonstrated they are still slave-minded; they do not think like Promised Land people. It will take more wilderness training until they are a people ready to live in the Promised Land!

## 3. ([Numbers 14:26-35](#)) The death sentence upon the rebels.

**And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who complain against Me? I have heard the complaints which the children of Israel make against Me. Say to them, 'As I live,' says the Lord, 'just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you: The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above. Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in. But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised. But as for you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness. And your sons shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years, and bear the brunt of your infidelity, until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness. According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, namely forty years, and you shall know My rejection. I the Lord have spoken this; I will surely do so to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.'"**

- a. **All of you who were numbered... from twenty years old and above:** God gave the message to the nation — this generation must die in the wilderness and would never see the Promised Land. It was as if God said to them, “You didn’t want it when it was offered to you, so now you will never have it.”
- i. They said, *If only we had died in this wilderness!* ([Numbers 14:2](#)). God will now give them their desire. If they preferred death to a walk of faith, God would make that their destiny.
- b. **Except for Caleb... and Joshua:** These men of faith were the glorious exceptions. They would enter into the land of promise because they have the hearts and minds of new men.
- i. Not even Moses and Aaron were excepted. They would also not enter the Promised Land, each for their own reasons. But we remember that Moses was not guiltless in this whole tragedy, having agreed to the request of the people to send out spies instead of just boldly taking the land by faith.
- c. **But your little ones:** When excusing their unbelief, Israel had claimed concern for their children ([Numbers 14:3](#)), accusing God of wanting to murder them. Now, ironically, their children would inherit the land, while they perished in the wilderness.
- d. **The land which you despised:** We may imagine many in Israel objected saying, “We did not despise the land. We wanted it. We were just afraid.” But they did despise it, because as much as anything, it was a land of faith for people of faith, and the unbelieving and rebellious do despise the land.
- e. **Forty days... forty years:** The spies, representing the nation, failed in the test of 40 days. Now the nation would be tested 40 years — and they would come forth purified, ready to inherit the Promised Land, but only after the man of unbelief and rebellion has perished in the wilderness.
- i. The old man, the man still slave-minded to sin, can *never* enter into God’s promises; the old man must die — and God will do whatever it takes to make that happen.
- ii. This turning point in Israel’s history is an essential lesson for every believer and is trumpeted to us in [Psalm 95:7b-11](#): *Today, if you will hear His voice: Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, when your fathers tested Me; they tried Me, though they saw My work. For forty years I was grieved with that generation, and said, ‘It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.’ So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest.’*
- iii. *Then they despised the pleasant land; they did not believe His word, but complained in their tents, and did not heed the voice of the Lord. Therefore He raised up His hand in an oath against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness, to overthrow their descendants among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands.* ([Psalms 106:24-27](#))
- iv. *But they and our fathers acted proudly, hardened their necks, and did not heed Your commandments. They refused to obey, and they were not mindful of Your wonders that You did among them. But they hardened their necks, and in their rebellion they appointed a leader to return to their bondage.* ([Nehemiah 9:16-17](#))
- v. [Hebrews 3:7-4:16](#) makes it clear: God has a place of rest and promise for every believer to enter in to, and it can only be entered by faith. The man of unbelief, self-reliance, and self-focus can never enter into God’s rest and abundance.