

Numbers 13-15 Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

As we come to our text tonight, the children of Israel are at a crucial turning point in the history of their nation.

They have been delivered from bondage in Egypt,

They have been delivered from the power of Egypt by their deliverance through the Red Sea,

They've experienced first hand the Lord's faithfulness in guiding them through the wilderness

And providing for them daily with manna and water.

They've had an entire year of the most intimate revelations of God at Mt. Sinai.

- They heard His voice speak the 10 Commandments.
- They've seen Him daily in the cloud and fire.
- God has given them a comprehensive set of both civil and religious laws to govern them as a nation.
- They have a center of worship in the highly detailed and magnificent tabernacle.

All of this occurred in a little more than a year, and now they've arrived at the border of the Negev, the Southern buffer zone between the wilderness of the Sinai peninsula and Canaan. [\[Map\]](#)

They were encamped on a vast plateau with mountains to the east.

The Negev, which lay to the north of them was a good land for pasturage and archaeology reveals it was well populated throughout this time.

The nearest town was Kadesh Barnea.

At the approach of Israel, the Amalekites, who were the inhabitants of the area, sent their army onto the plain to the west of the camp of Israel – waiting to see what they intended and where they were going to move next.

The Amalekites didn't care about Israel trekking through the Wilderness south of their border, but they weren't going to allow some 2 to 3 million people entering their land!

IV. AT THE BORDER OF CANAAN Chs. 13-14

A. Spies sent out Ch. 13

¹And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“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.”

³So 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.

The best commentary on the Bible *is* the Bible – and we see that here, for in Deut. 1 we discover this plan to send spies did *not* originate with the Lord.

Nearly 40 years later, Moses recounted to the next generation the story of their travels from Egypt to Canaan.

Here's how he described the origin of the idea to send spies.

¹⁹“So we departed from Horeb [Sinai], and went through all that great and terrible wilderness which you saw on the way to the mountains of the Amorites, as the LORD our God had commanded us. Then we came to

Kadesh Barnea. ²⁰And I said to you, ‘You have come to the mountains of the Amorites, which the LORD our God is giving us. ²¹Look, 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.’ ²²“And every one of you [note] came near to me and said, ‘Let us send men before us, and let them search out the land for us, and bring back word to us of the way by which we should go up, and of the cities into which we shall come.’ ²³“The plan pleased me well; so I took twelve of your men, one man from *each* tribe. ²⁴And they departed and went up into the mountains, and came to the Valley of Eshcol, and spied it out.

When they arrived at Kadesh Barnea, Moses encouraged them to go up and take the land.

They floated the proposal of sending some scouts in *first* to get the lay of the land and help develop a strategy for taking it.

Moses thought this was a good idea and brought it to the Lord.

He misread it as a sign the people were moving in faith; it was actually a *stall*.

God saw it for what it was but because the *whole nation* was of the same mind,

He consented to it.

It’s a sad day when we dig in our heels in steadfast resistance to God.

He will not force us against our will – but will honor our choice.

He did it again later when the people demanded Samuel give them a king.

Samuel tried to dissuade them and told them that was not the Lord’s will.

They didn’t care – they’d made up their mind and wanted a king.

So God told Samuel – “Go ahead and do what they say.”

That’s what’s happening here. This was a *stall tactic*.

The people were fearful of entering battle with the Canaanites and used this as a way to *delay* to confrontation.

But they pitched the request in such a way Moses thought it was a good idea and indicated their readiness to move forward.

In vs. 4-15 we get the names of the 12 spies. They were well-respected leaders of each of the tribes.

- **Shammua of Reuben**
- **Shaphat of Simeon**
- **Caleb of Judah**
- **Igal of Issachar**
- **Hoshea of Ephraim**
- **Palti of Benjamin**
- **Gaddiel of Zebulun**
- **Gaddi of Manasseh**
- **Ammiel of Dan,**
- **Sethur of Asher**
- **Nahbi of Naphtali**
- **Geuel of Gad**

¹⁶These are the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun, Joshua.

Hoshea means ‘help’. Moses added God’s name ‘Yahweh’ to Hoshea’s name and it became ‘Yahshua’ – Yahweh is help.

In Num. 11:28, Joshua is called Moses’ assistant.

17 Then Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, “Go up this way into the South,

The word for South is ‘Negev’ and refers to a *region*, not a *direction*.

He was actually sending them north.

and go up to the mountains,

Moses sent them along the central highlands as opposed to the coastal plains which were much more densely populated with Canaanites.

The central highlands were populated by the Amorites and Hittites and other people who were more scattered and less cohesive in their unity.

It would be much easier for the spies to travel through this region undetected than on the coastal plain.

18 and see what the land is like: whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, few or many; 19 whether the land they dwell in is good or bad; whether the cities they inhabit are like camps or strongholds; 20 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.

Moses’ exhortation to be of good courage was a warning not to grow disheartened if they encountered adversity or saw things that seemed hard.

God had proven Himself more than capable of taking care of them and providing for them when the situation seemed impossible.

Canaan was the “PROMISED” land and what God had promised to give them, *they would possess* – they must not lose heart!

21 So they went up and spied out the land from the Wilderness of Zin as far as Rehob, near the entrance of Hamath.

Hamath was a city-state just north of Israel in what is modern day Lebanon.

“The Entrance of Hamath” was recognized as the northern border of Israel. ^[1]

22 And they went up through the South and came to Hebron; Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, the descendants of Anak, were there.

In v. 33, these *Anakim*, the descendants of Anak, are called *giants*.

The word is ‘nephilim’ and comes from a root meaning “Fallen.”

This is the word used to describe the giants and mighty men who helped corrupt the earth prior to the flood.

Their race seems to have been somehow revived in a very limited way.

Some Bible students suggest that one of Noah’s sons’ wives carried the gene that produced the giants and generations after the flood, it resurfaced in a man named Anak, who wired a clan of inordinately large people.

The Anakim became much sought after by rulers who wanted an advantage in battle and they became mercenaries who sold their services to the highest bidder.

The spies found them at Hebron, one of the Promised Land’s richest jewels.

The last half of v. 22 contains an interesting remark.

(Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.)

Zoan was the *secret resort* of the Pharaohs. The only people who knew of its existence were the royal family and the Pharaoh’s closest advisors.

This is a sign of Moses’ authorship of this passage.

For you see, only someone who’d been in the inner workings of the Egyptian court could make a remark like this.

Zoan was a secret to the ancient world until the archaeologist spade unearthed it in the modern era.

This ought to silence once and for all the critics and skeptics who deny the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.

23 Then they came to the Valley of Eshcol, and there cut down a branch with one cluster of grapes; they carried it between two of them on a pole. They also brought some of the pomegranates and figs.

One bunch of grapes took two men to carry it!

24 The place was called the Valley of Eshcol, because of the cluster which the men of Israel cut down there.

Eshcol = “cluster”

25 And they returned from spying out the land after forty days.

26 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. **27** 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.

They give a good report of the condition & produce of the land.

It’s just as the Lord said it would be!

But good news isn’t all they have to say . . .

28 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.

They say, “The land is good, but the people who live there are simply too much for us to defeat!”

“They’re strong, live behind impenetrable walls, and are bolstered by the presence of the Anakim!”

29 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.”

They report that there isn’t just 1 army they will have to fight, but 5!

5 cultures that all have a reputation as being *fierce fighters*.

The Canaanites were the strongest – that’s why they occupied the choicest lands along the coastal plains and river valley.

The Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites had been pushed by the Canaanites into the hills, and these had pushed the Amalekites into the less desirable region of the Negev.

If these spies, who were picked because of their *bravery*, were fearful, imagine the impact this would have on the rest of the people!

These guys were also picked because they were *leaders*, but they used that leadership ability and position to persuade the people to rebel against God’s command to go forward.

It’s a dangerous thing when a man or woman takes the gifts and talents God has given them and uses them in a harmful way that resists or rejects the Lord.

Think of all the inventors, artists, musicians, and athletes who have been wonderfully gifted by God but who used that prowess to blasphemous ends!

What judgment they will face for squandering & misusing their talents.

30 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.”

Caleb was one of the 12 spies, and when he heard the others giving their negative report, he was stunned!

He tried to quiet them before they did worse damage.

He encouraged the people to make an immediate move on the Land promised to them by God.

31 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.” **32** 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. **33** 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.”

The spies assessment was this: “Forget even thinking about entering Canaan!”

What they say in v. 32 appears contradictory – If the land devours its inhabitants, then why are they too fierce to conquer, and why do the giants live in the very center of it?

What the spies were saying was, the land is *so rich* and *sought after* that it’s like a magnet, pulling in anyone who wants to try their hand at invasion & conquest!

Consequently, the people who live there are battle hardened and live in unassailable fortresses!

The Anakim sit at the center like the proverbial kings of the hill, and as we all know, NO ONE is going to unseat *them*!

B. Israel Balks 14

1. They refuse to enter • vs. 1-10

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

Imagine the talks that took place in all those tents that evening as the people went to bed with the report of the spies ringing in their ears.

They had to have worked themselves into a thoroughly demoralized and angry place.

It all now seemed so pointless!

The deliverance from Egypt, the last year of living in the wilderness.

If they didn’t have a destination to go to, a home to arrive at, then why begin this whole thing?

2 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! **3** Why has the LORD brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?”

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

They knew Moses was determined to go up and take the land.

But that was now out of the question so they decided to select a *new* leader and make the trek *back to bondage*.

5 Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.

They *threw* themselves down to implore the people not to take this course of action!

They did so because they realized the implications of what was happening. If the people picked up and began the journey to Egypt, God would move in swift judgment on them and M&A knew it.

6But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, *who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes;* **7**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.* **8**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.’ **9**Only do not rebel against the LORD,

This is what M&A, Joshua & Caleb knew was the big mistake the people were making. They were rebelling against God by not going into the Land.

9Only 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.”

These are wonderful words of faith on Joshua & Caleb’s part but they don’t sway the people who are now bent on returning to Egypt.

They’ve had enough of Moses and his starry-eyed cronies!

10And all the congregation said to stone them with stones. Now the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of meeting before all the children of Israel.

Vs. 1-10 are my text for Sunday so I’ll leave further comment till then.

2. Moses intercession for them • vs. 11-25

11Then 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?”

Even God asks the question now – how much more proof do the people need before they will trust Him?

You see, that’s the crux of the issue. *The problem with unbelief* isn’t a lack of proof, there’s plenty of that.

The problem with unbelief is a *will* that is contrary to God.

Faith isn’t an issue of the *head* but of the *heart*!

Unbelief isn’t rooted in *facts* but in *desire*.

People today who say they *struggle* in their walk with the Lord because they’re not sure He exists are playing a dangerous game.

They **KNOW** He exists, but what they’re saying is they wished He *didn’t* so they could be free to pursue their sinful desires without feeling guilty or being held responsible.

God knows the children of Israel aren’t merely struggling with some mild doubts because they need more evidence of His love, power, and faithfulness.

Their problem is a settled attitude of unbelief **IN SPITE** of the evidence, and He’s had enough.

12I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they.”

God says, “I’m done with them as my covenant people. I will revoke the covenant which they agreed to enter and is premised on their obedience.”

“Then Moses, because you’ve been faithful, I will make your descendants into the nation of promise.”

13 And Moses said to the LORD: “Then the Egyptians will hear *it*, for by Your might You brought these people up from among them, **14** 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. **15** Now *if* You kill these people as one man, then the nations which have heard of Your fame will speak, saying, **16** ‘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.’ **17** And now, I pray, let the power of my Lord be great, just as You have spoken, saying, **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.’ **19** 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.”

Moses interceded on behalf of the nation, asking God not to judge but rather to forgive them.

Notice the basis of Moses’ prayer.

In vs. 13-16, he bases his request for mercy on God’s own glory.

If God judges the children of Israel, then the Egyptians and Canaanites will say it was because He was unable to bless His people!

God’s own name and glory will be defamed if He were to judge Israel.

We’ve seen how the Lord’s name is defamed and His glory denigrated in our own day with the scandals that have been revealed among leaders in the Church.

If God were to wipe out Israel then the Egyptians and Canaanites would be left to wonder what kind of a God He was that He could perform such obvious miracles as the plagues of Egypt and the deliverance of Israel but then wiped them out simply because they wouldn’t; cross a border.

In vs. 17-19, Moses bases his intercession on God’s own Word.

In Exodus 34, when God made all His glory pass before Moses, He declared His full name and said that He was longsuffering and merciful, forgiving and righteous.

Moses draws on that revelation now and applies it to that specific moment and situation.

If the people ever needed God’s mercy, long-suffering, and forgiveness, it was right then, when His judgment was poised to strike.

As we look at our nation today and see how it has been so uniquely blessed by God, we realize that like ancient Israel, we have much to give account for. “To whom much is given, much is also required.” [Luke 12:48]

It is because the founding fathers sought to implement Biblical principles in the laws and institutions of our nation that we enjoy such material abundance, economic blessing, & political freedom.

But the blessing has led to pride and pride has stolen our hearts away from God, away from the true source of blessing.

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, saw this tendency in his own day.

In the 18th Century he wrote, . . .

Wherever riches have increased, the essence of religion has decreased in the same proportion. Therefore I do not see how it is possible in the nature of t

for any revival of religion to continue long. For religion must necessarily produce both industry and frugality, and these cannot but produce riches. But as riches increase, so will pride, anger, and love of the world in all its branches. How then is it possible that Methodism, a religion of the heart, though it flourishes now as a green bay tree, should continue in this state? For the Methodists in every country grow diligent and frugal; consequently, they increase in goods. Hence, they proportionately increase in pride, in anger, in the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life. So, although the form of religion remains, the substance is swiftly vanishing away. Is there no way to prevent this continual decay of religion?

It's easy for us who follow Christ to look at our nation's deplorable moral condition and to grow angry at her wholesale rejection of God and to think that judgment would be a *good* thing.

But if we were given a *vision* of judgment – if we had the sense that God's judgment were about to fall – as happened here with Moses, we'd no longer be thinking that judgment is desirable!

We'd be on our faces pleading with God for mercy and forgiveness.

Read the judgments God will visit on a Christ-rejecting Earth during the Tribulation, and realize THAT is the measure of wrath God will visit on the nations and if that doesn't move you to cry out for mercy, nothing will!

In what does God get more glory? What please Him more?

When people repent and return to Him, or in the visitation of His flaming judgment on sinners?

In Ezekiel 33:11 we read . . .

Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'

20 Then the LORD said: "I have pardoned, according to your word;

Did Moses' prayer change God's mind?

In vs. 11 & 12 God says He's going to wipe out Israel and start over with Moses.

Moses then intercedes and gains God's forgiveness.

Did God change His mind?

From the human perspective, it appears that way but not from God's perspective in eternity, for *He knew Moses would pray*.

From the beginning God knew what He was going to do so His plans never altered.

But His words to Moses presented him the opportunity to *apply* what he knew about the Lord, and so enter into an even deeper place of faith and fellowship with Him.

In other words, when God said that He was going to wipe out the Children of Israel, Moses said, "Wait a minute, that doesn't square with what You've shown me about Yourself!"

"You're a God who desires to restore favor over bestowing judgment."

"So please Lord, show mercy and forgiveness."

This is how we must pray for our nation and for the Church of Christ which in far too many places has strayed very far from her Lord.

Just as happened to Moses here, there will come times in your walk with the Lord when you come to what seems like a contradiction between what *is* and what *should be*.

Your experience will not line up with what God says is true and what is the expression of His will for you.

At that moment, you need to hold fast *to what you know to be true*, regardless of

what you are seeing, hearing, & feeling.

This was Job's trial. He knew God was all loving, all wise, and all powerful.

When his personal experience didn't see or feel the love or the power, he held on to the truth of God's *wisdom*, trusting that though he couldn't understand – God did and would come through.

God did come through – He always does because He *cannot* fail.

20Then the LORD said: “I have pardoned, according to your word; **21**but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD —**22**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,

There were ten separate occasions when the people of Israel failed to act in faith and instead *dared* God to keep His word.

23they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it. **24**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.

God's pardon extended to the nation. He will not wipe them out.

But there are definite consequences to the sins we commit and the people were still of the same mind as before.

They *hadn't repented* of their rebellion and rejection of God, so they must bear the results of such heinous sin.

They will die in the wilderness – all 600,000 of them who were 20 and above who had united in their opposition to God.

It's their children, the ones they said in v. 3 would be victims of the Canaanites who will in fact be *victors over* them!

The only ones of the adult generation that will be allowed to enter in will be the ones who had wanted to go in in the first place – Caleb, named here, and Joshua, who's mentioned later.

25Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwell in the valley; tomorrow turn and move out into the wilderness by the Way of the Red Sea.”

The Amalekites and Canaanites had made an alliance to resist the invasion of Israel and now that the way to the Promised land has been barred to Israel, God tells them to turn back toward the south and the Wilderness of the Sinai peninsula, lest the Canaanites attack them.

3. God's judgment • vs. 26-38

26And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, **27**“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. **28**Say to them, ‘As I live,’ says the LORD, ‘just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you: **29**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.

In v. 2 they had said, “It would be better to die of old age in this wilderness than by the sword of battle in Canaan!”

So God said – “Okay if that's what you want, so be it!”

That was not what *He* had planned for them – He was going to give them awesome

victories over the Canaanites if they would simply move forward by faith.
But if they would not move by faith, then they would have what they wanted – death in the desert.

30 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.

31 But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised. 32 But as for you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness. 33 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.

Critics have used the lack of burial grounds in the Wilderness as a proof of the Exodus being fiction.

Some 600,000 dying out here ought to leave many graves.

Where are they?

Well, they are no where as the text here says.

The continual travels of Israel meant they didn't have the facility to do deep burials.

Bodies were left in shallow graves where the harsh environment & elements reduced the bones to powder in just a few years.

V. 33 says it well – their carcasses were consumed in the wilderness.

34 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.

They had finally rejected God, He reciprocated.

Friends, God is longsuffering and patient; He is merciful and forgiving.

But He is also just and must judge sin.

There comes a point in a person's life when their rejection of God is final and He no longer strives with or convicts them.

While God sees that point, we don't! So we ought to pray for the conviction and salvation of the lost as long as we see them drawing breath.

35 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.”

This is God's judgment – there is no gainsaying and changing this!

36 Now the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation complain against him by bringing a bad report of the land, 37 those very men who brought the evil report about the land, died by the plague before the LORD. 38 But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive, of the men who went to spy out the land.

The evil report of the nay-saying spies was given the just punishment it deserved.

4. Israel's abortive invasion • vs. 39-45

39 Then Moses told these words to all the children of Israel, and the people mourned greatly.

What were they mourning? They weren't sorry for their rebellion but for its consequences.

They didn't *repent* to God, they merely *regretted* His judgment.

When they saw what had happened to the 10 spies, they realized that God's judgment

would come on them in time too.

This scared the *be-jeebers* out of them.

40 And they rose early in the morning and went up to the top of the mountain, saying, "Here we are, and we will go up to the place which the LORD has promised, for we have sinned!"

Yes-yes you have – but you are not doing right now!

For you are not coming humbly before the Lord and asking His direction.

You are deciding what to do and pursuing your own way still.

41 And Moses said, "Now why do you transgress the command of the LORD? For this will not succeed. **42** Do not go up, lest you be defeated by your enemies, for the LORD is not among you.

That is the key – the Lord was not among them. He had withdrawn His protection and presence from them.

Moses makes it clear – they must not follow this course they have devised.

43 For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and you shall fall by the sword; because you have turned away from the LORD, the LORD will not be with you." **44** But they presumed to go up to the mountaintop. Nevertheless, neither the ark of the covenant of the LORD nor Moses departed from the camp. **45** Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that mountain came down and attacked them, and drove them back as far as Hormah.

The children of Israel reasoned – "Yesterday we should have gone up and taken the land."

"We didn't and now are to be judged. So let's go do *today* what we should have done *yesterday* and the judgment will be lifted."

They were using simple *reason* rather than *revelation*, and God calls it *presumption!*

They were trying to live according to their own wisdom & counsel rather than looking to the Lord.

They were just as much in rebellion on this day as the day before.

Moses had told them the problem was that they had rejected God so God had rejected them.

They had no care whatsoever about that!

They just wanted to experience good while avoiding bad.

They still didn't get it that the presence, protection, and power of God were everything to them.

There are some in the Church today who are making a similar mistake.

They want the good life and think it's to be had in *religious morality*.

So they walk the line and do what seems right because they see it as an investment that will pay off big in dividends.

But they have no time for the *relationship* side of Christianity!

All the talk of *fellowship with Jesus* is lost on them; it's too abstract, too spiritual and out there.

They seek to be good moral people *because of the pay-off*, not because it's motivated by a love of Christ or a concern for the holiness of God.

Christianity isn't a moral code.

It's message isn't a call to adopt a religion.

Christianity is Christ – an invitation to have an eternal love affair with the Creator & Sustainer of the Universe – nothing more, nothing less.

V. MORE LAWS Ch. 15

The next 37 or so years are covered in summary fashion in the next 11 chapters.

The focus now is on the new generation which is rising up to take the place of the generation that came out of bondage.

Where as the previous generation didn't ever really get the idea that being the covenant people of God meant having an intimate relationship with Him, the Lord moved to make sure the younger generation would grow up with this understanding.

¹And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you have come into the land you are to inhabit, which I am giving to you, ³and you make an offering by fire to the LORD, a burnt offering or a sacrifice, to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering or in your appointed feasts, to make a sweet aroma to the LORD, from the herd or the flock,

Vs. 4-13 go on to describe how the offerings were to be made.

These sacrifices weren't to stonify for sin.

They were the offerings people made to show their dedication to the Lord and their desire to be in close communion with Him.

¹⁴And if a stranger dwells with you, or whoever *is* among you throughout your generations, and would present an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD, just as you do, so shall he do. ¹⁵One ordinance *shall be* for you of the assembly and for the stranger who dwells *with you*, an ordinance forever throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the stranger be before the LORD. ¹⁶One law and one custom shall be for you and for the stranger who dwells with you.”

The same law applied to non-Jews that applied to Jews.

God wanted them to know just how ready He was to have fellowship with *anyone* who wanted to come to Him.

God's word here about there being one way for all reminds us that the same is still true. There's a growing movement in the Church to say that God accepts Gentiles through faith in Jesus Christ, but that the OT way of approach to God is still valid for the Jews.

This idea arose some years ago in discussions between leaders of the Church and the Jewish community.

Christians, ashamed of the anti-Semitism that has marked some periods of Church history were willing to compromise with the leaders of Judaism and say that God accepts observant Jews, not on faith in Christ but on their adherence to rabbinic Judaism!

All we have to do is look to the Apostles to see this doesn't fly.

They were all Jews and they made it clear that since Christ, He is the only means of salvation.

Acts 4:5-12

⁵And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, ⁶as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. ⁷And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, “By what power or by what name have you done this?”

⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: ⁹If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, ¹⁰let it be known to

you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. **11**This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' **12**Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Ephesians 2:11-18

11Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—**12**that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. **13**But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. **14**For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, **15**having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, **16**and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. **17**And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. **18**For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

Jesus Himself couldn't have made it any clearer when He said that He was the way, the truth, and the life and that NO ONE could come to the Father except through Him.

To Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews and a well-known teacher of the law, Jesus said, "Unless you are born-again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God."

There aren't two ways to God – there is only one way.

What's distressing is to see how now, in an attempt to mollify radical Islam, some Christian leaders are extending to Muslims the same line they previous gave to Jews – that there is a valid way of salvation in Islam – as long as Muslims are faithful to the tenets of Mohammed & the Qu'ran, they say, God will accept them.

This is blasphemous! But we can expect to hear more of it in the months to come as the Church drifts ever further from Biblical Christianity.

17 Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **18**"Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land to which I bring you, **19**then it will be, when you eat of the bread of the land, that you shall offer up a heave offering to the LORD. **20**You shall offer up a cake of the first of your ground meal as a heave offering; as a heave offering of the threshing floor, so shall you offer it up. **21**Of the first of your ground meal you shall give to the LORD a heave offering throughout your generations.

God wanted to fix the vision and hearts of the new generation on the hope of the Promised land, so He directs their thoughts to the future when they are enjoying the bounty of their fields there.

They are to bring the first of their produce to the Lord and lift it before Him as a wave offering.

Keeping our eye fixed firmly on our goal is an important part of prevailing faith.

22'If you [meaning the whole nation] sin unintentionally, and do not observe all these commandments which the LORD has spoken to Moses —**23**all that the LORD has commanded you by the hand of Moses, from the

day the LORD gave commandment and onward throughout your generations—²⁴then it will be, if it is unintentionally committed, without the knowledge of the congregation, that the whole congregation shall offer one young bull as a burnt offering, as a sweet aroma to the LORD, with its grain offering and its drink offering, according to the ordinance, and one kid of the goats as a sin offering. ²⁵So the priest shall make atonement for the whole congregation of the children of Israel, and it shall be forgiven them, for it was unintentional; they shall bring their offering, an offering made by fire to the LORD, and their sin offering before the LORD, for their unintended sin. ²⁶It shall be forgiven the whole congregation of the children of Israel and the stranger who dwells among them, because all the people *did it unintentionally*.

With the long passage of the years to come, it could happen that the people would break the law of God nationally but without pre-meditation or awareness.

What if after a few hundred years they lost track of which was the Year of Jubilee which occurred only once every 50 years?

Here was a way the nation could make atonement for these kinds of national faux pas.

In vs. 27-29 we have the offering to be made when an individual commits an unintentional sin and then becomes aware of it.

³⁰‘But the person who does *anything* presumptuously, *whether he is native-born or a stranger, that one brings reproach on the LORD, and he shall be cut off from among his people. ³¹Because he has despised the word of the LORD, and has broken His commandment, that person shall be completely cut off; his guilt *shall be upon him.*’”*

This doesn't refer to the person who experiences temptation with the normal kind of run of the mill daily sins with which the people of God struggle.

This refers to blatant rebellion that issues in a blasphemous lifestyle that defies authority and mocks God.

This is high-minded sin that publicly dares anyone to pass judgment on it.

Such a person is a moral cancer and a spiritual pathogen that if not eradicated will pollute and corrupt civilization and lead to the destruction of many lives.

Next we have a story that illustrates this . . .

³²Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. ³³And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation.

³⁴They put him under guard, because it had not been explained what should be done to him. ³⁵Then the LORD said to Moses, “The man must surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp.” ³⁶So, as the LORD commanded Moses, all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him with stones, and he died.

This might seem like a minor infraction to us because we don't put too much stock in the Sabbath day.

Because it seems like such a little thing, the punishment seems unduly harsh.

What we need to do is see it in its historical context.

God had only recently installed the observance of the Sabbath as THE MARKER of

their covenant with God.
It was their wedding ring, if you will.
Everyone held it as a holy thing – so to defy it like this was equivalent to committing spiritual adultery!
This guy, with full awareness of what he was doing, went out to do that which was forbidden.
He knew the consequences if caught, but didn't care.
It was precisely this kind of presumption and defiant rebellion against God that vs. 30-31 were referring to.

37 Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **38**“Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners. **39**And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the LORD and do them, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined, **40**and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God. **41**I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the LORD your God.”

God instructed them to put tassels on the hems of their garments as reminders that they were in covenant with Him.

Blue is the color of heaven – the blue thread was a reminder that while they lived on earth, they were in covenant with the God of heaven and were more citizens of His realm than citizens of an earthly kingdom.

I'll be using this as my text for the sermon in 2 weeks so will leave further comment till then.

[1] Holman Bible Dictionary “Hamath”