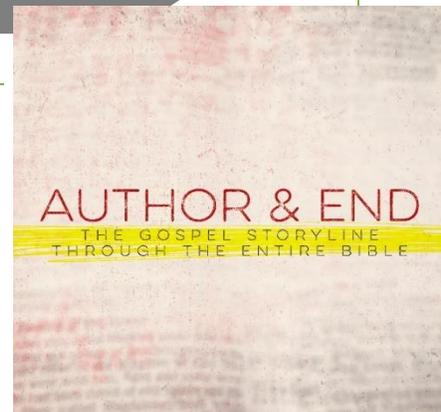


# NUMBERS 13-21

## Lesson 11 - People Rebel Against God

The Lord made it clear how His people were to worship and honor Him and relate to other people as fellow image-bearers of God. The clarity of God's law also revealed that because we are corrupted by sin, we can never keep it perfectly. The law, then, shows our desperate need for an answer outside of ourselves to our sin problem. We need Someone to live righteously on our behalf.

The law not only reveals our sin, it also reveals the perfect character of God. God requires righteousness for human beings to come into His presence because of His own holiness. But just as God's holiness runs through every part of His being, so also has sin tainted every part of the human experience.



### THE CONTEXT OF ISRAEL'S REBELLION

The second half of the Book of Exodus shows the delivered people of God receiving instructions for how to live rightly with God and others. In Leviticus and Numbers, we see God expand on His law, reinforcing the fact that the people must come to God not on their terms but on His, for He is holy.

But for all of God's provision, presence, and instruction, the complaints of the people that had begun so quickly after crossing the Red Sea began to grow louder, even coming from Aaron and Miriam, two pillars of the Israelite community and Moses' brother and sister. But the people were not merely grumbling against Moses; they were ultimately shaking their fists at God, the One who had appointed Moses. None of these grumblings escaped the Lord's notice or discipline.

*Consider: How is sin not simply a physical act but an accusation against God's character?* \_\_\_\_\_

*Israel responded with disgust and ungratefulness even toward God's showing of grace in the judgment in the wilderness. What are some similar responses that we may see today when people here of the grace offered from a God who judges sin?* \_\_\_\_\_

### REBELLION BEGAN BY IGNORING GOD'S PROVISION AND PROMISES

#### Numbers 13:1-2, 30-33

1. Centuries before, **God had promised that Israel would be a great nation** with many descendants dwelling **in a land that He would give them.**
2. His people continually chose to **focus on the obstacles in their path** instead of the promises of God.
3. When the spies returned with news of the land, the people's hearts were shaken by the negative report. They became **hyper-focused on their own weaknesses in light of their opposition's strength.**

*Consider: How is sin often related to our lack of faith?* \_\_\_\_\_

*Have you been in a similar situation, when it was difficult to live by faith because of what your physical senses told you? \_\_\_\_\_ Explain: \_\_\_\_\_*

*What are some promises of God we can remember when it is difficult to trust?* \_\_\_\_\_

### REBELLION HAD CONSEQUENCES AND AFFECTED MANY OTHER PEOPLE.

**Numbers 14:1-4, 30-35** - How did the people respond once their faith began faltering? They didn't reflect on what God had done in the past, neither did they look forward to God's future promise. **They were overcome by the moment and paralyzed by their fear of death and despair.**

1. The lack of faith was contagious. It spread from ten spies ultimately to a majority of the Israelites.
2. Their **lack of faith and rebellion led to a detachment from reality and a lack of good sense.** They said they would be better off dead.

3. We see that the consequences of the people's sin extended well beyond themselves to their children. This is the true way of sin. **It has far reaching affects.**

In isolation, an individual person may choose to be involved in sin, greed, anger, hatred, immorality, lying, jealousy, gossip, drunkenness, or pride, but others will always feel the effects of those choices.

Consider: *What lies did the people believe about God in this portion of the passage?* \_\_\_\_\_

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*When are your feelings most likely to overwhelm your faith?* \_\_\_\_\_

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*Can you see the effects of others' sin in your own life or family? How?* \_\_\_\_\_

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*Can you see the effects of your sin on others or your family? How?* \_\_\_\_\_

## REBELLION MUST BE PUNISHED, BUT GOD PROVIDES ESCAPE.

**Numbers 21:4-9** - God sent judgment not simply for their sinful actions, but for their sinful attitude.

1. The people's rebellion in this instance shows up in a very simple word: impatience. The group of people who had been miraculously delivered, fed, and clothed by God now turned on Him.
2. Their rebellion grew in their hearts. The people went far beyond doubt. They accused God and Moses of treachery.
3. Because God is committed to redeeming and restoring all things, sin must be punished and wiped out. Events like this remind us of the costly nature of sin. **The Israelites had to learn once again that sin leads to death.**
4. Once God heard the people's penitent cry, **He provided a way of restoration through faith.**
5. God chose a symbol of death as the instrument of His mercy to Israel, and **He chose the death of His only Son to extend mercy to all men.**

*Consider: Take some time to explain how God extended salvation to you through His judgment poured out on His Son. How bad is your sin against God? What did you deserve because of this sin? What was God's plan for judgment and mercy? How do you claim this mercy? How does it affect your daily life and view of eternity?*