

## Israel Faces the Consequences of Her Sin

### The People Continue to Dismiss God's Promise (14:1-4)

In the early verses of this chapter we find Israel continuing the complaints brought by ten of the twelve spies. Once again the familiar refrain is voiced, "If only we had died in Egypt . . . Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?" The moment things look difficult for them, they bring back this theme that they would rather be enslaved again. It is not a logical desire. They are simply angry at God. They even suggest that they should choose a new leader who would take them back to Egypt. (What would Pharaoh have thought of *that*!)

### Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb Plead With the People (14:5-10)

Yet again, these four try to convince the Israelites that the LORD is with them. The armies dwelling in Canaan don't have a chance because the LORD is on the side of Israel! They urged the people to go and take possession of the land as it had been promised to them. The assembly instead talks of stoning them.

! What a violent reaction to the *promises* of God! Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb weren't making up some fairy tale about how their armies would defeat the mighty Canaanites—they were basing their confidence on the LORD and what *He* had said. Do people today have violent reactions to the glorious promises of God?

### The LORD Responds (14:10-38)

As one might expect, the judgment and justice of God was kindled by this horrible outbreak of foolishness among the Israelites. The events that follow:

- 1) God tells Moses that He will destroy the Israelites and make Moses a great nation instead (vv10-12).
- 2) Moses asks the LORD not to do this because it could cause other nations to think less of the God of Israel (vv13-16).
- 3) Moses appeals to God's mercy. He suggests that the strength of God is really found in this mercy. He asks for God to forgive the people, but does not ask God to take away the earthly result (consequence) of the sin. He admits that God "does not leave the guilty unpunished" (vv17-19).
- 4) The LORD forgives the people their sin, but they will still have to bear some of the trouble that their sin created for them. Israel would not enter Canaan for

another 40 years –by which time the generation that had distrusted God would be dead. Only Caleb and Joshua from the current generation would be able to enter the Promised Land. ‘I will surely do these things to this whole wicked community, which has banded together against me. They will meet their end in this desert; here they will die’ (vv20-35). Notice that the LORD gives them exactly what they wished for in v2!

- 5) Lastly, the ten spies who had brought back the bad report about the Promised Land and had spread rumors among the people were struck with plague and died immediately.

! Consider your prayers on the basis of Moses’ prayer in vv13-19? Can you ever appeal to God in the same manner Moses did?

### **The People Repent (14:39-40)**

*Now* Israel repents. The people have once again seen the misery that can come from rejecting the clear word of God. Unfortunately, they foolishly reject His word of judgment too.

### **Israel Fights Without the LORD’s Help (14:40-45)**

As if this nation hadn’t brought enough trouble on itself already, they refuse to accept God’s judgment and take it upon themselves to reverse the sin they had committed. ‘We will go up to the place the LORD promised’ they said. They gathered their warriors and went against the Amalekites and Canaanites, but it was too late. God was not with them and were defeated easily and quickly. This ‘repentance’ of theirs was not true repentance. They went to war ‘heedlessly’ and ‘presumptuously’ the Bible says. This was not faith in the LORD, it was a last-ditch effort to save their own skins.

- ! Sometimes we must live with the consequences of our sins even though they are forgiven. For example: A murderer might in true repentance ask God for forgiveness –and indeed receive it freely for Jesus’ sake. Yet the murderer may still face execution. He may still have to face the trouble his sin brought upon him, even though the sin itself has been cleansed away in God’s sight.
- ! Although in judgment God set them to wandering for 40 years in the wilderness, His loving concern would still be evident. Over the next generation He would continue to feed the people, give them clothes and shoes that would not wear out –and yes, He would keep His promise to bring the *next* generation into the land.