

Last week we read Hebrews 3 in conjunction with Numbers 12.

Hebrews 4 picks up where the reading of Numbers 14 leaves off
(especially after singing Psalm 95 earlier):

read Hebrews 4:1-5

“The good news – the gospel – came to us just as to them,
but the message they heard did not benefit them,
because they were not united by faith with those who listened.” (Heb 4:2)

They were unable to enter the Land because of unbelief –
as the LORD said to Moses,
“How long will they not believe in me,
in spite of all the signs that I have done among them?” (Num 14:11)

At the heart of Israel’s rebellion
is unbelief.

It is perhaps ironic that early in the week, I was struggling with this myself!
In the week that I had to preach on Israel’s fundamental rebellion –
not idolatry – not moral failings – but simple *unbelief* –
that was precisely my struggle as well.

Whenever we sin, we are failing to believe God’s promises.
That’s why when someone asks my advice regarding how to deal with sin,
I often start by asking, “what lie are you believing?”
Israel plainly does not believe that God will give them the Land.
They believe that the nations are too strong –
and that God’s promises are insufficient as a foundation for action.

You and I – we need to believe God’s promises.
We need to believe that God *will do* what he has promised,
and so trust him to accomplish his Word.

And this is hard!
The modern world says that we are just wasting our time.
There is no God.
There is only matter and energy.
There is only chance and time.

Or, as H. L. Mencken said:
"To sum up:

1. The cosmos is gigantic fly-wheel making 10,000 revolutions a minute.
2. Man is a sick fly taking a dizzy ride on it.
3. Religion is the theory that the wheel was designed and set spinning to give him the ride." --Smart Set, Dec. 1920, p45.

This is essentially the same temptation as that faced by Israel in the wilderness.

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had called them out of Egypt –
and now he calls them to believe his promise *and act on that belief!*

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has called you out of darkness –
and now he calls you to believe his promise *and act on that belief!*

In the book of Numbers there are two journeys:

the journey from Sinai to Kadesh (chapters 11-12),
and the journey from Kadesh to the plains of Moab (chapters 20-21).

Chapters 1-10 talk about what happened at Sinai.

Chapters 11-12 relate the grumblings during the first journey from Sinai to Kadesh.
Now chapters 13-19 will talk about what happens in the 39 years at Kadesh-barnea –
at the southern edge of the Promised Land.

Chapters 20-21 will then relate the grumblings during the second journey
from Kadesh to the plains of Moab.

1. Why Spy? God's Call for Israel to Believe the Promise (Numbers 13)

a. The Selection of the Spies (13:1-16)

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² "Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the people of Israel. From each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, every one a chief among them." ³ 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 people of Israel. ⁴ And these were their names: From the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur; ⁵ from the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori; ⁶ from the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh; ⁷ from the tribe of Issachar, Igal the son of Joseph; ⁸ from the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Nun; ⁹ from the tribe of Benjamin, Palti the son of Raphu; ¹⁰ from the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel the son of Sodi; ¹¹ from the tribe of Joseph (that is, from the tribe of Manasseh), Gaddi the son of Susi; ¹² from the tribe of Dan, Ammiel the son of Gemalli; ¹³ from the tribe of Asher, Sethur the son of Michael; ¹⁴ from the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi the son of Vophsi; ¹⁵ from the tribe of Gad, Geuel the son of Machi. ¹⁶ These were the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun Joshua.

Verses 1-16 relate the calling of the spies.

Why did God tell Moses to do this?

After all, Israel is led by the cloud and fire – the Spirit of God!

If you are led by the Spirit, why do you need to scout out the land?

Why not just follow the Spirit!

For Israel in the wilderness – just as for us today –
being led by the Spirit does not *replace* wise and thoughtful action.
We have already seen how Moses values the experience of his brother-in-law,
saying that they need men who know the terrain
to guide them through the wilderness.
Even so, Israel needs the spies to prepare them for what is coming.

b. The Mission of the Spies (13:17-24)

¹⁷ Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan and said to them, “Go up into the Negeb and go up into the hill country, ¹⁸ and see what the land is, and whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, whether they are few or many, ¹⁹ and whether the land that they dwell in is good or bad, and whether the cities that they dwell in are camps or strongholds, ²⁰ and whether the land is rich or poor, and whether there are trees in it 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.

And that’s what we see in the mission of the spies in verses 17-24.

I call it the “mission” of the spies for a reason.
Their mission and ours are similar in *purpose* –
even if different in means.

The spies are going throughout the land in order to understand how to conquer it.
And even so, today as we look at evangelism and church planting,
we are to explore the land –
“whether the cities that they dwell in are camps or strongholds.”

Bringing the gospel to the nations requires strategic planning.

If we say that we will just “follow the Spirit,”
then we are just being lazy!

The leading of the Spirit does not render our effort pointless.
Rather, the leading of the Spirit should prompt us to act!

God promised Israel that he would give them the land,
and so Moses sent spies to figure out the ways and means of taking the land.
Jesus has promised us that the gates of hell will not prevail against the church,
and so we should seek to figure out the ways and means of assaulting the gates of hell.

(After all, as many have pointed out, “gates” are defensive features –
and so the image is that the church will be storming the gates of hell,
and the gates of hell will not prevail!)

So in the same way that Israel was to invade the Promised Land,
the church is supposed to invade hell!

Friday afternoons I've been engaged in espionage.

While Robert works on his robotics class at the Stoltzfuses,
I go to the Wings, Etc., around the corner and work on sermons.
It's a rather different clientele from Fiddler's.

These are the blue collar guys who hang out for an hour or two after work,
before going home to their wives/girlfriends.
One time, the wife showed up to chew out her husband for ignoring her –
that didn't go so well.

But we need to be engaged in cultural espionage!

How are we going to bring the gospel of Christ to Michiana?
South Bend, Mishawaka, Granger, Niles, Osceola – and beyond!
If we believe Jesus' promise,
that the gates of hell will not prevail against us,
then we need to go out with confidence –
acting upon our confidence!

We should not wait for the world to come to us,
we need to *go* to them!

²¹ *So they went up and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob, near Lebohamath.* ²² *They went up into the Negeb and came to Hebron. Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the descendants of Anak, were there. (Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.)*

In verses 21-24, we hear the fruit of their mission.

They go through the whole land (Lebo-Hamath is far in the north near Damascus).
They explore the land and find the three sons of Anak in Hebron:
Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmai.

We'll hear about these three sons of Anak again in the books of Joshua and Judges.
Caleb, the faithful spy, will destroy Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmai 40 years later.
So Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmai may be tribal divisions rather than individuals!

But whoever they are, the descendents of Anak are powerful foes.
They appear in Egyptian records among the leading enemies of Egypt in Canaan.
And now Israel is going to have to go up against the sons of Anak –
because if you go into the land via the southern route,
then Hebron is your first stop!

But the main point of this narrative is the fruit of their trip.

²³ *And they came to the Valley of Eshcol and cut down from there a branch with a single cluster of grapes, and they carried it on a pole between two of them; they also brought some pomegranates and figs.* ²⁴ *That place was called the Valley of Eshcol,^[a] because of the cluster*

that the people of Israel cut down from there.

A single cluster of grapes required two men to carry!

That's a remarkable cluster of grapes!

And so they call the place where they found it, "the Valley of Clusters" (Eshcol).

Grapes, pomegranates and figs – these were the fruit of the land that God had promised.

Israel had complained that all they had was manna and water.

Now God shows them a land of wine, celebration and feasting!

All they have to do is believe his promise – and *act* on that belief!

(Throughout Israel's history this episode will keep repeating:

Isaiah will speak of Israel as a vineyard that produced "stinkfruit"
instead of grapes – Isaiah 5)

Or, as Micah 7:1 says,

"Woe is me! For I have become as when the summer fruit has been gathered,
as when the grapes have been gleaned;

there is no cluster to eat,

no first-ripe fig that my soul desires.

The godly has perished from the earth..."

Even so, Jesus came to Jerusalem, looking for fruit,

but what did he find?

He found a barren fig tree (Mt 21).

This is why we are called to bear fruit –

we are called to – the fruit of the Spirit –

that we are to be fruitful in the service of Christ.

And that's where Israel fell short,

because:

c. 40 Days: The Report of the Spies (13:25-33)

i. The Factual Report (v25-29)

²⁵ *At the end of forty days*

40 days

Moses had been on the mountain 40 days –

so 40 days can be a good thing –

but do you remember what happened when Moses had been on the mountain 40 days?

At Sinai, when Moses had been on the mountain 40 days, Israel rebelled.

The rebellion at Sinai after 40 days,

and the rebellion at Kadesh after 40 days,
are the fundamental rebellions of Israel.

Throughout Israel's history, these two rebellions will keep echoing:
at Sinai, it was idolatry – worshipping the golden calf,
at Kadesh, it was unbelief – refusing to believe what God said.

And all of this set us up for seeing Jesus in the wilderness after 40 days.
Israel had failed after 40 days at Sinai.
Israel had failed after 40 days at Kadesh.
But after 40 days in the wilderness, Jesus remembers God's promises,
believes God's promises, and acts according to God's promises.

But that's not what the spies do.

they returned from spying out the land. ²⁶ And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the people 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 And they told him, "We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. ²⁸ However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. ²⁹ The Amalekites dwell in the land of the Negeb. The Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the hill country. And the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and along the Jordan."

They come back, acknowledging that the land is everything that God said –
"It flows with milk and honey."
It is a glorious land – a bountiful land – all that God had said it was!

But the people are strong – and the cities are fortified.
And what is more, "we saw the descendants of Anak there."

The Anakim had been deadly foes of the Egyptians –
and perhaps Israel had heard rumor of their mighty deeds.
But this report is essentially factual.
At this point they are simply describing who lives where.

It's like saying that the west side of South Bend is a multiethnic community –
if you ignore the black and Hispanic communities on the west and south sides,
then you don't understand the community we live in.

But it's not just the "west side" – over "there."
When we moved into our neighborhood,
only one of the 18 families on our block was black.
Now there are at least four black families on our block.

To assume that “our” world is “white” is to misunderstand the world we live in!

So, the first part of spying out the land
is to understand what we’re dealing with –
to understand what are the “facts on the ground.”

The second part of spying out the land
is to understand what to do about it!

ii. The Minority Report: Caleb’s Argument (v30)

³⁰ *But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, “Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it.”*

Caleb seems to think that the report regarding the inhabitants is beginning to scare the people.
Some have suggested that Caleb starts off on the wrong foot:

“we are well able to overcome it” –
may sound like he is trusting in man.

But we know from the rest of the narrative that Caleb’s confidence is in the LORD!

“We are well able to overcome it”
means that because of what God has promised,
we shouldn’t worry about whether we are ‘big enough’
or ‘strong enough’!

If God has promised – that should be enough for us!

If Jesus said that the gates of hell will not prevail against his church,
that should be enough for us!

What more do we need than the promises of God?

iii. The Majority Report: They Are Stronger Than We (v31-33)

³¹ *Then 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 are.”* ³² *So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, “The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height.”* ³³ *And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim), and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.”*

Well, the other ten spies aren’t convinced.

“We are *not* able to up against the people,
for they are stronger than we are.” (v31)

At this point, the report of the majority turns to embellishment and distortion.

First, it’s a “bad report” – or an “evil report” –
so we should beware of trusting what they say!

But they say that the land “*devours* its inhabitants” – a curious phrase!

In a couple chapters the earth will open its mouth
and “devour” Korah and his followers.
In other words, the spies believe that this land will destroy them.
And they also say that they saw the *Nephilim* – the sons of Anak.
In Genesis 6, the Nephilim were the heroes and warriors
who exemplified the evil of the days of Noah.

The Nephilim all died in the Flood!
But the spies remember the stories of the mighty men of old,
and as they look at the Anakim in Hebron,
they are afraid –
and so they compare the Anakim with the Nephilim –
the legendary heroes from before the Flood,
and they say that the Anakim are too strong – too big –

“we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.” (v33)

Now, before you despise the ten spies,
remember that they were just like us.
They look at the Anakim the way we would.
They are bigger than us.
They are stronger than us.
Therefore, if we try to fight them, they will win!

The forces of agnosticism and secularism *are* bigger than us and stronger than us!
It’s not a fair fight.
Left to our own devices, the powers of this age will win – the gates of hell will win!

It’s important for us to remember that the *ten spies* were right.
We’ve talked before about the question of whether Moses exaggerates the numbers.
Were there really 600,000 warriors in Israel?
(Because if so, they could have squashed the Egyptian army –
not to mention the Canaanites!)
But however many people there were,
the text is clear that Israel was *outmanned* and *outgunned* by the Canaanites!

Yes, it is a land that flows with milk and honey,
but it is also a land that devours its inhabitants.

Notice the way the debate goes:

2. The Rebellion at Kadesh: Israel’s Failure to Believe God’s Promise (Numbers 14:1-38)

a. The Grumbling of the People: Let's Go Back to Egypt (14:1-4)

14 Then all the congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night.² And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron.

Notice that they start by weeping all night.

They raise a loud cry and wail all night.

This is often a good thing in the OT.

Weeping and mourning can be a good thing –

when you are calling out to the LORD and pleading with him to hear!

But that's not what they're doing!

The whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness!"³ Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?"⁴ And they said to one another, "Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt."

The people start by grumbling and complaining that Moses has led them here to die.

And so they say, "Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt."

Maybe Pharaoh will have mercy on us, and let us return to slavery!

b. The Response of the Faithful: Let's Fear the LORD (14:5-10)

⁵ Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the people of Israel.⁶ And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes

Moses and Aaron say nothing.

They simply fall on their faces before all the assembly.

Joshua and Caleb now take the lead in seeking to dissuade the people from their unbelief:

⁷ and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, "The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land [indeed, Joshua uses a rare double superlative "it is an exceedingly exceedingly good land!].⁸ If the LORD delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey.⁹ Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them."

For Joshua and Caleb, the LORD's promise is all they need.

God has said that he will bless his people and give them the land.

If God is for us, who can be against us?

¹⁰ Then all the congregation said to stone them with stones. But the glory of the LORD appeared at the tent of meeting to all the people of Israel.

Dennis Cole comments on this that often

“in a state of rebellion against God, one loses the benefit of spiritual mooring,”
and therefore “wisdom and discernment become elusive
and proper decision making is made extremely difficult.”

If you are thinking straight, then it’s an easy and obvious decision.
Our problem is that too often *we’re not thinking straight!*

And so now the people of Israel start to gather stones
in order to put to death the righteous remnant –
Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb.

But then the glory of the LORD appears.
God waits until Israel makes their final decision.
And then he answers them.

c. The Verdict of the LORD (14:11-38)

i. The LORD’s Threat: I Will Destroy Them (v11-12)

¹¹ *And the LORD said to Moses, “How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them? ¹² I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they.”*

I had another one of those moments this week.
I thought I was past this by now –
but I began to doubt – I began to wonder –
is all this true?
It’s a terrible spot for a pastor to be!

I wound up back in that old spot of wishing that only God would show me a sign!
Yeah, right. If I show you signs, you’ll believe. I’ve heard that before!
In fact, it’s in the passage you have to preach on this week!

But it would be nice if you would be just a bit more obvious!
I raised my Son from the dead. How much more obvious do you want?
How long will you not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among you?

Our problem, simply put, is that *we don’t believe* what God says!

And so God says that he will disinherit Israel
and make Moses in a greater and mightier nation than they.

What do you think Moses?

Shall we get rid of the Abrahamic Covenant –
and make a new covenant – the Mosaic Covenant!
And, after all, since Moses is descended from Abraham,
all of God’s promises would still come true!

You’d be rid of this rebellious rabble –
and if we start with Moses, the faithful servant of the LORD,
then surely his children would do better than Israel, right?!

But Moses wants nothing to do with this!

He’s not interested.

After all, Moses *was* the most humble man who ever lived.

He did not want to be the father of many nations.

That was *not* what God had called him to be!

God had called him to lead Israel out of Egypt into the Promised Land.

Moses is more concerned with *God’s* reputation, than with his own!

ii. Moses’ Intercession: Be Who You Say You Are (v13-19)

¹³ *But Moses said to the LORD, “Then the Egyptians will hear of it, for you brought up this people in your might from among them, ¹⁴ and they will tell the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that you, O LORD, are in the midst of this people. For you, O LORD, are seen face to face, and your cloud stands over 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 this people as one man, then the nations who have heard your fame will say, ¹⁶ ‘It is because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land that he swore to give to them that he has killed them in the wilderness.’*

And so Moses says, if you kill them, then *your name* will suffer.

Now, how come Moses gets to talk back to God?

Moses has been invited into the divine council.

In the creation, God had told Adam and Eve to have dominion over the creatures.

Humanity is *supposed* to share in God’s authority over creation.

And throughout history, God’s purpose is to restore humanity to that place

(Jesus, after all, will be seated at the right hand of the Father).

Abraham, Moses, David – and a handful of others –

will be invited to participate in the divine council, foreshadowing the Christ.

And so Moses says, do not disinherit your people.

But even more, Moses appeals to *who God is* –

as the LORD had revealed himself at Sinai:

¹⁷ *And now, please let the power of the Lord be great as you have promised, saying, ¹⁸ ‘The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third*

and the fourth generation.'

LORD, you told me this at Sinai!

When you revealed yourself to me – this is what you said about yourself!

Are you going to go back on your word?

¹⁹ Please pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt until now."

Please, O God,

pardon your people – according to your steadfast love – according to your *hesed* –
just as you have done over and over again!

Moses had said the same thing at Sinai, when Israel worshiped the golden calf.

And now, Moses asks God to do it again.

There are two things that we learn from this:

1) God is incredibly merciful!

He does forgive – over and over again!

But 2) Sin still has consequences.

The entire generation of those who came out of Egypt will die in the wilderness.

iii. The LORD's Conclusion: This Generation Will Fall in the Wilderness (v20-35)

²⁰ Then the LORD said, "I have pardoned, according to your word. ²¹ But truly, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD, ²² none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the test these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, ²³ shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers. And none of those who despised me shall see it.

God showed them ten signs in Egypt – the ten plagues by which he brought Israel out of Egypt.

But now Israel has rebelled ten times.

Let's think about this for a moment.

God pardons Israel's rebellion.

Psalm 95 reminds us of this episode by saying,

"they will never enter my rest" –

which Hebrews 3-4 uses to say that we should beware

lest we fall short of entering God's rest.

So, did God forgive them or not?

Yes, God forgave them –

in the sense of not holding their sin against them;

in the sense of not treating them as their sin deserved.

But we need to be careful not to overstate what God is doing here.
God is not “forgiving all their sins”
(in the sense of what he does in our justification) –
rather, he is setting aside this particular sin.

(Think of what Jesus says on the cross,
“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”
Jesus is not saying that everyone involved in his crucifixion
will be eternally forgiven.
Rather, he is asking God to pardon *this sin*.
After all, if God does not pardon this sin,
the crucifixion of his Son,
then all humanity would be destroyed!)

In the same way, Moses is here asking God to forgive *this sin* –
because otherwise (as God has made it clear) Israel must be destroyed!

But the pardoning of *this sin* does not mean that the people are holy.
Indeed, God continues to speak of “this wicked congregation.”
Israel has become wicked and faithless –
and so therefore the same God who forgives his people
also does not leave the guilty unpunished!

But unlike Israel,

²⁴ *But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit and has followed me fully, I will bring into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it.*

Last time I accidentally said that Abraham, Moses, and Caleb were the only individuals called
“my servant” in the OT (I should have said in the *Pentateuch* –
since obviously Joshua, David, Job, and others are called “my servant” elsewhere)
But Caleb is here identified as God’s servant –
and as one having a different spirit from the wicked and rebellious congregation.
This is especially interesting, because from other passages
we discover that Caleb is not an Israelite by birth.
Maybe his mother was from the tribe of Judah –
but his father is a Kenizzite.
This reminds us that the promise to Abraham
was that all nations would be blessed in him!

But for the rest of Israel, since they want to go back to Egypt,
the LORD obliges them:

²⁵ Now, since the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwell in the valleys, turn tomorrow and set out for the wilderness by the way to the Red Sea.”

They will not go all the way back to Egypt –
but they will return part way (back to the northeastern corner of the Red Sea).

²⁶ And the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, ²⁷ “How long shall this wicked congregation grumble against me? I have heard the grumbings of the people of Israel, which they grumble against me. ²⁸ Say to them, ‘As I live, declares the LORD, what you have said in my hearing I will do to you: ²⁹ your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness, and of all your number, listed in the census from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against me, ³⁰ not one shall come into the land where I swore that I would make you dwell, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun. ³¹ But your little ones, who you said would become a prey, I will bring in, and they shall know the land that you have rejected. ³² But as for you, your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness. ³³ And your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years and shall suffer for your faithlessness, until the last of your dead bodies lies in the wilderness. ³⁴ According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, a year for each day, you shall bear your iniquity forty years, and you shall know my displeasure.’ ³⁵ I, the LORD, have spoken. Surely this will I do to all this wicked congregation who are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall come to a full end, and there they shall die.”

And so God says that the generation that came out of Egypt will die in the wilderness –
and their children – the ones who the faithless generation thought would become a prey –
they would be the ones who would go in and take possession of the land.

iv. The Death of the Ten Spies by Plague (v36-38)

³⁶ And the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation grumble against him by bringing up a bad report about the land— ³⁷ the men who brought up a bad report of the land—died by plague before the LORD. ³⁸ Of those men who went to spy out the land, only Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive.

And as a sign and a witness of this testimony,
God sent a plague to kill the ten spies who had given a bad report.

3. The Defeat at Hormah: the Difference between Repentance and Stubbornness (v39-45)

³⁹ When Moses told these words to all the people of Israel, the people mourned greatly. ⁴⁰ And they rose early in the morning and went up to the heights of the hill country, saying, “Here we are. We will go up to the place that the LORD has promised, for we have sinned.” ⁴¹ But Moses said, “Why now are you transgressing the command of the LORD, when that will not succeed? ⁴² Do not go up, for the Lord is not among you, lest you be struck down before your enemies. ⁴³ For there the Amalekites and the Canaanites are facing you, and you shall fall by the sword. Because you have turned back from following the LORD, the LORD will not be with you.” ⁴⁴ But

they presumed to go up to the heights of the hill country, although neither the ark of the covenant of the LORD nor Moses departed out of the camp. ⁴⁵ Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down and defeated them and pursued them, even to Hormah.

You might think that Israel would respond by paying more careful attention.

But they don't.

After all, unbelief does not result in repentance!

But Israel now says, Wow, we sinned –

let's fix things by doing now what we failed to do before.

This is not repentance – this is stubbornness!

You will not impress God by acting contrary to his Word.

And that's why as we spy out Michiana –

as we look for the ways and means of conquering the land by the gospel of Christ,
we need to listen *first and foremost* to what Jesus is saying.

Not by might – not by power – but by my Spirit, says the Lord.