

WEEK 4 – Numbers 13-14 Study

DAY 1

Read: Numbers 13:1-24

Reflect... An exploration of what is promised!

1. Why does the Lord want Moses to send out surveyors to the land of Canaan? Why involve a leader from each tribe?
2. The OT often has some significance behind names. Is there any significance to Moses changing the name of Hoshea, son of Nun to Joshua?
3. What is Moses' motif for such a detailed survey? What are the explorers to report back on? What might this reflect?
4. Apart from the grapes, pomegranates and figs, what are the 'fruits' of their exploration? What does the survey tell us about the land?
5. As a side question, Can you think of other parts of the Bible where land surveys are carried out? Why?

Think... God is giving the Israelites a sneak preview of the 'real estate' he has promised them.

1. So, at what part of their journey enroute the Promised Land are the Israelites at now? How does that relate to where we are at with God's fulfilling his promises to us in Christ? How have we been given a sneak preview?
2. Without reading ahead, if you were in the team of explorers, considering what is observed from vv. 21-24, how would you like to settle in a property in this bit of 'real estate?' What would your response be based on the survey?

Pray:

That we will take great comfort that God has made available *now* his grace to us in Christ and make it a priority to remain focussed as *we look forward* to his plans being worked out for his glory and in the best interest of his people.

DAY 2

Read: Numbers 13:25-33

Reflect... The Israelites report back

1. There are 2 different responses to what is observed from surveying the land? What are they?
2. Is your thinking from the previous question 2 in Section 1 more in line with what is reported by the Israelites in vv. 27-28 or with what Caleb reports in v. 30?
3. How and why does Caleb respond differently?
4. And again, what is the difference even between the reports of the Israelites themselves in vv. 27-29 and their report in vv. 32-33?

Think... if someone says they have 'good news and bad news...'

1. What do you prefer to hear first – bad news or good news? Why?
2. And what might you prefer to deliver first – bad news or good news? Why?
3. Discuss what it means to exaggerate. When might we exaggerate? Is there exaggeration happening in the text from vv. 32-33? Why? What are the dangers inflaming any issues we might face to others?

Pray:

For God to give us sensitivity to know when we might exaggerate. Subtle as it is, let's pray for those times that God might help us also realise and make contagious the joy that comes from the hope we look forward to in him.

DAY 3

Read: Numbers 14:1-10a

Reflect... on what kind of bad news causes distress.

1. Think about v. 3. How can you answer the questions asked in v. 3? What is causing this kind of questioning? Would it really be better for the Israelites to go back to Egypt?
2. Discuss the seriousness of what is being debated here (vv. 5-6, v. 9)? How does Moses respond?
3. What is Moses, Joshua and Caleb's argument from vv. 5-9?

Think... when we receive any news...

1. What kind of news distresses us? What is our response when we here distressing news?
2. How can we reason and make sense when we get distressed, like Moses, Joshua and Caleb do through vv. 5-9?

Pray:

In times of anxiety and distress, we may face our fears by turning our face to God. Pray that his Spirit will remind and encourage us the knowledge of our salvation and his exceeding goodness showed us in in Christ.

DAY 4

Read: Numbers 14:10b-25

Reflect... The Lord enters the scene!

1. How does Moses appease God? And so, what does it take to appease God?
2. We all have our strengths and weaknesses. God does not have any weaknesses and he certainly has strengths... where does God's strength lie?
3. Again, what is different about Caleb is specified here (v. 24). What sets Caleb apart from the others that complain, and how?

Think...

1. The people have complained that the Lord is careless; or that he doesn't care. What might make us think that?
2. Again, when the Lord shows up, how does that remedy the situation?
3. How are we to receive the good things God is so keen to bless us with?

Pray

That God grants us humility to receive all he has to give us!

DAY 5

Read: Numbers 14:26-45

Reflect... when God says to unbelievers... 'Thy will be done!'

1. The census stood for God's people that were counted in. That very census now represents the same people differently. How?
2. In v. 27, God calls this community 'wicked.' Almost offensive to consider but from God's perspective what makes someone wicked?
3. How do the different subsets of Israelites face the different repercussions?
4. Where can you see any hope in this section?
5. From vv. 40-45, are the Israelites showing genuine repentance or defiance?

Think...

1. This section of the text suggests that there is a little more than meets the eye in this question... how does God deal with people's wickedness?
2. What makes for defiance and genuine repentance? Make a list from vv. 40-45. And how might that list translate to us today as Christians?
3. How does what Moses do for the Israelites give a small preview of what Jesus does for Christians?

Pray...

That God will sustain us on the path of repentance. That we may never get so presumptuous to 'know it all' and 'have it all' in Christ so as to neglect regularly being instructed from his word.

Numbers 13-14 Study

The section in 5 parts...

Part 1: Numbers 13:1-24

God is giving the Israelites a sneak preview of the 'real estate' he has promised them.

1. So, at what part of their journey enroute the Promised Land are the Israelites at now?
2. Without reading ahead, if you were in the team of explorers, considering what is observed from vv. 21-24, how would you like to find a property in this bit of 'real estate'?

Part 2: Numbers 13:25-33

The Israelites report back

1. There are 2 different responses to what is observed from surveying the land? What are they?
2. Is your response from the previous question 2 in Section 1 more in line with what is reported in vv. 27-28 or with what Caleb says in v. 30?
3. Why does Caleb respond differently?
4. And again, what is the difference between the reports of vv. 27-29 and the report from vv. 32-33?

Think application at this point...

1. What do you prefer to hear first – bad news or good news? Why?
2. What do you prefer to deliver first – bad news or good news? Why?
3. Discuss what it means to exaggerate something. Is this happening in the text from vv. 32-33? Why are they exaggerating the challenges?

Part 3: Numbers 14:1-10a

The bad news causes distress.

1. Think about v. 3. How can you answer the questions asked in v. 3? What is causing this kind of questioning? Would it be better for the Israelites to go back to Egypt?
2. Discuss the seriousness of what is being debated here (vv. 5-6, v. 9)? How does Moses respond?
3. What is Caleb's argument from v. 9?

Part 4: Numbers 14:10b-25

The Lord enters the scene!

1. What does it take to appease God?
2. Again, what is different about Caleb is specified here (v. 24). What is different about Caleb's spirit?

Part 5: Numbers 14:26-45

'Thy will be done!'

1. The census stood for those that were counted in. That very census now represents the same people differently. How?
2. How do the different subsets of Israelites face the different repercussions?
3. Where can you see any hope in this section?
4. Is it the nature of human beings to persistently take for granted perhaps even defy those that act in our best interest? How can you see this attitude in the Israelites?
5. How does what Moses does for the Israelites give a small preview of what Jesus does for Christians?

WEEK 5 – Numbers 15-19

DAY 1. READ NUMBERS 15. SIN

1. Reflect on the different sacrifices and remembrances listed in this chapter? What's the point of each? What do they tell you about God and our relationship with him and each other?
2. Why do you think there's a focus here on *unintentional* sins? How is it sin when it's unintentional? What might that tell us about human nature? What might be the impact of unintentional sins?
3. What do v32-36 tell us about the consequences of sin and rejecting God?

Pray that we'll take our sin seriously, repent and change to be more like Christ?

DAY 2. READ NUMBERS 16. REBELLION

1. Why do Korah, Dathan and Abiram confront Moses? What have they got wrong about God and how he has set up Israel? What might be at the heart of their rebellion?
2. What do you think of Moses' response throughout the chapter? What can you learn from his humility, his leadership, his requests to God?
3. What do you learn about God from the way he responds to rebellion, especially his provision of atonement through Aaron? How do we understand atonement now through Christ?

Pray that we'll be thankful that God has provided an atoning sacrifice in Christ for us!

DAY 3. READ NUMBERS 17. LEADERSHIP

1. What do you learn about leadership here? The reason for it? Why it's significant that God chooses it? What happens when there's a vacuum of/ no leadership? Where most complaints come from re leadership?
2. How do you think Aaron would be feeling after finding his stick had budded? Relieved? Excited? Anxious? Worried? A bit of each? What does that tell us about the serious, critical nature of leadership?
3. How would you expect this chapter to end after v1-11? What do you think of the response in v12-13?!! What does this tell you about where Israel are at as a nation? In their attitudes to God and to His chosen leadership?

Pray for our leaders, and that when we step into that role that we'll take it seriously and reverently?

DAY 4. READ NUMBERS 18. FEAR

1. What part does a 'fear of the Lord' play in this chapter? How seriously do we take this in our lives? In our own gatherings at church? How do we take it too lightly? How might we take it too far?
2. What do we learn about faithful service from the role of the priests here? What does this chapter have to say about our own service, how we go about it, what it looks like?
3. How do you understand tithing? How does this chapter help us to work out how much to give, why we give, what underpins it?

Pray that we'll have a right focus on fearing the Lord, appreciating all He's done for us in Christ and giving our all for Him!

DAY 5. READ NUMBERS 19. CLEANSING

1. As you read through what was required to make these sacrifices and cleansings, how does it make you feel? What do the detailed requirements, the dealing with blood, the washing and cleansing involved, tell you about the significance of these?
2. What does the word 'perpetual' add to the nature of the sacrifice? What does it tell you about our constant need for cleansing, for reminding, for God's presence to be with us? Why do you think we need this cleansing?
3. How have these things, this cleansing, this need for forgiveness, been fulfilled in Christ? How does that impact your life reflecting on what was required before, and what is required now for cleansing and salvation?

Thank God for his amazing provision of forgiveness of sins and cleansing through His Son Jesus!

BIBLE STUDY NOTES. NUMBERS 16

Numbers 16:1-4. Rebellion and leadership

1. Israel here rebel against Moses and Aaron. What's their main concern? Can you empathise at all? What do they get right in their complaint (if anything)? What have they misunderstood about God? What do you think is at the heart of their rebellion?

What does Moses initial response in v4 tell you about him as a leader? What can we learn from him ourselves in his humility?

Numbers 16:5-19. Responses and disunity

2. Moses further response involves a mix of leaving the response up to God, and also giving his own 2c on their predicament. What do we learn about Israel's motivations and unfaithfulness here?

This section shows the ugly side of rebellion and unfaithfulness, of Israelites rallying against each other. Why is this disunity so harmful? Where have you seen the damaging impacts of disunity (without mentioning names or places)? Where have you seen unity and it's strength and impact in ministry and mission (feel free to mention names and places here!!)?

Numbers 16:20-35. Judgment and grace

3. What do you learn from both God's, and Moses' response here? How do you see God's judgment and the seriousness of it? How do you see God's grace here?

Think about the tension between judgment and grace today? How do you see them working in your own life?

Numbers 16:36-40. Reminders and signs

4. What's the significance of signs and reminders here in this passage?

What role do these play in your life? What things do you do/ have that remind you of God's faithfulness to you in Christ? That your sins are forgiven through him? Why do you think people need reminders?

Numbers 16:41-50. Sin and atonement

5. How does this passage help us understand atonement in Numbers, and how that points to what Christ did for us in His atonement for our sins?

What could you do as a Bible Study group to remind each other of the seriousness of our sins, of the significance of Christ's atonement, of how we can view our own leaders and authorities?

WEEK 6 – Numbers 20-21

Day 1

Read: Numbers 20:1-13

Think

In the face of the people's quarrelling yet again, are you surprised that there is no judgment/punishment upon the people (in the similar episode in Exodus 17:1-7 it is said that in what they said they 'tested the Lord', and questioned whether he was among them or not)?

Pray

That knowing God's bountiful grace, regardless of our circumstances, we will not presume upon his grace by testing Him with grumbling and unbelief.

Day 2

Read: Numbers 20:14-21

Think

At first glance this little section may not seem to add much to the narrative. But consider: (a) what are the messengers confident that other nations around Israel will know? Yet how does Edom respond? (b) Israel must now take a detour they had not anticipated (away from their destination) – how does this help us understand their behaviour in the next chapter (21:4-6)?

Pray

That when circumstances are beyond our control, and don't go as we have anticipated or hoped for, we will continue to move forward in patient obedience and faith.

Day 3

Read: Numbers 20:22-29

Think

We are reminded again of the rebellion of Moses and Aaron; even as we see the outworking of God's judgment of Aaron, how do we see at the same time God's continuing grace to his people?

Pray

For a deeper understanding and appreciation of God's grace to us in the provision of Christ, our perfect, great and once-for-all High Priest.

Day 4

Read: Numbers 21:1-9

Think

Unlike in 14:41-45, the people here express full dependence on God to deliver them the victory in this battle against the Canaanite king, Arad. But then what happens? How can such a display of trust turn so quickly into the rebellious ingratitude of v4-6?

Pray

That God will continue to remind you of his goodness and faithfulness, and guard your heart when it is vulnerable to being tempted by ingratitude and complaining.

Day5

Read: Numbers 21:10-35

Think

As Israel's wanderings come to an end, they engage in battle again, and have resounding victories over the Canaanite kings, Sihon and Og. And 22:1 sees them finally camped in the plains of Moab, on the banks of the Jordan. Why are these battles, and the way they are won, so significant at this point in their history?

Pray

For assurance of God's faithfulness to his promises, and that Christ alone has won for us the victory over death. "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Discussion Questions

Consider Moses' and Aaron's response to the grace the Lord extends to his people at Meribah (chapter 20). Exodus 17:1-7 gives us some insight into Moses' action, but in that instance he only followed the Lord's instructions. Why do you think that here they go beyond what the Lord commands? Why might we be tempted to respond poorly to God's grace towards others? What can cloud our judgement, and how can we guard against this?

After years of leading God's people, Moses and Aaron are judged harshly for their 'rebellion' (v25). Like the rest of their generation they will not enter the promised land. What is the specific nature of their rebellion - in their words and actions (v10-11) how do they in fact presume to take the place of God? How might we fall into the same error?

In v12 God sums up Moses' and Aaron's rebellion as a lack of trust in Him to honour Him as holy in the sight of the Israelites (and in v8 He instructs them to speak to the rock 'before their eyes'). (a) What does this reveal about God's larger purpose in bringing the water from the rock? How conscious ought we to be of this in our own lives? (b) Do you think all rebellion against God (all sin) is in some way a lack of trust/faith in Him and/or His way of doing things?

21:1-9: God is quick to judge this rebellion; what do the people then recognize and confess about their behaviour? And how does God answer their request to "take the snakes away from" them (v7)? What must they do to avail themselves of God's mercy on this occasion? Read John 3:14-18. How does this account in Numbers 21 point us to Christ? How does it lead us to understand more deeply our own situation, and the nature and extent of God's mercy to us in Christ?

WEEK 8 – Numbers 27-32

DAY 1. READ NUMBERS 27. INHERITANCE

1. How important were inheritances back in the day? Why is this ruling so significant for the daughters of Zelophehad? In what ways do you see God's grace here?
2. This is a significant moment. Moses will not enter the Promised Land and receive the inherited land due to his sin. What was his mistake? How does he take God's ruling?
3. Joshua is to take Israel into the Promised Land. Why was he chosen? What's significant about the process/ ceremony/ commissioning of Joshua as a leader?

Thank God that in Christ, we receive His inheritance of eternal life with Him!

DAY 2. READ NUMBERS 28-29. OFFERINGS

1. What does each offering teach you about God?
2. What does each offering teach you about Israel, and the nature of humanity?
3. How are we now to see our offerings to God in light of Christ's sacrifice for us?

Pray that we can offer up our lives as an offering to God, serving Him through all we do.

DAY 3. READ NUMBERS 30. VOWS

1. Why are vows so important? What happens when you break one? What happens when you keep one faithfully? How might both impact relationships?
2. How do you see the relationship between God and Israel illustrated in these verses? What are some signs of God's grace here?
3. How have you experienced the Lord's faithfulness in your own life?

Thanks God for his faithfulness in Scripture and in your own life!

DAY 4. READ NUMBERS 31. WAR

1. War is often a difficult thing to hear about and work through in Scripture. How do you understand it? What's the point of it here?
2. And what about the comprehensive nature of this war? Those who are killed and those who are spared? The possessions gathered? Why is it so thorough and complete? What might that tell you?
3. OT wars involved huge armies going out to destroy nations. How did Jesus, as one man, go to war for us? What did that win for us?

Pray that we'll always remember Christ's victory for us on the cross, promising us an eternal future in the Promised Land (heaven).

DAY 5. READ NUMBERS 32. THE PROMISED LAND

1. How do you read the request of the Reubenites and Gadites here? Does it make sense? Are they being unfaithful in not taking the Promised Land as their possession? Why?
2. What effect does recounting Israel's history have here? What's the purpose of it? What part should warnings like this play in our lives?
3. How do the Reubenites and Gadites show their faith here? What does 'faith in action' look like in your own life?

Pray that we'll put our faith into action every day, as we live for and witness for Christ.

BIBLE STUDY NOTES. NUMBERS 28:1-15, 29:1-11

Numbers 28:1-15, 29:1-11. Constant reminders

1. Here we have **offerings** and sacrifices done daily, weekly (on the Sabbath), monthly and annually. What do you learn from each offering/ sacrifice listed here? What makes the first a pleasing odour? Why without blemish? Why so specific? Why so many offerings? Etc.
2. What offerings do we make today **personally**? How do they compare to these regarding their motivation? Their effectiveness? What does that look like as you live it out?

What passages would you go to in the NT that talk about our life as an offering or sacrifice to God? How might they relate to these readings?

3. These offerings were made communally, for **fellowship**, to be shared with God and His people. What does this tell you about God's nature, about how he's made humans, about how we're to relate with God and others? What's significant about these offerings, and the terms of them, being instigated by God?

And what about the fact that they are **feasts**, celebrations? How might this human need for fellowship and community, feasting, impact how we evangelise and witness to our neighbours, family, friends etc.?

4. Why are they **constant**, cyclical, continual, permanent reminders? What do reminders do for you? What are important things you remember in life generally? And what about in your faith? What do they do for the rhythms of your life? How you approach it? Etc. How do you order/ implement daily, weekly, monthly, annual reminders of God's faithfulness to you?
5. There is a great **cost** to communion with God here, culminating in the 'Day of Atonement' sacrifice. Death was needed to pay for the cost of sin. How does this passage help you appreciate Jesus' death for us even more, making atonement between us and God? How might we get the right balance between seeing the cost and celebration involved in these offerings, and in Jesus' death and resurrection for us?

WEEK 9 – Numbers 33-36

Day One – Numbers 33:1-49

How long can you last living out of a suitcase (as we say)? Why?

What is the effect of reading so many legs in their journey? (When there are so many, why would you record them all?)

How would you expect them to feel towards the end of this period of so much travelling?

What temptations must they have faced during this time?

Day Two – Numbers 33:50-34:15

How would you describe the start – 33:50-56 – of Moses' rallying speech to the people on the plains of Moab? Obviously, there is still some more to come,.. But how might you explain the note on which he starts? And the tone that it sets?

What is the point, the purpose and the effect of detailing so carefully the boundaries of the land? What would this communicate to the Israelites, do you think?

(Is there any relation between this and Acts 17:26? And whether there is or whether there isn't, what do you think Acts 17:26-27 means?)

Day Three – Numbers 34:16-29

Again, what is the significance of having all of these appointed leaders named and listed and recorded?

What does 'delegation' relieve? What would you hope it might serve to avoid?

What does 'representation' provide? What can it facilitate?

What are the alternatives to ordered appointments?

The Bible contains all manner of different styles and structures of leadership and models of succession (Moses → Judges → Kings). What does this flexibility tell you? All the same, are there any overarching principles or themes?

Day Four – Numbers 35:1-34

What principle drives the establishment of these 'towns' for the Levites?

And what principle drives the establishment of these 'cities' of refuge?

How many principles of 'jurisprudence' can you find in vv.29-32?

What principle underpins it all in verse 34?

We hear a great deal about our own indigenous peoples' relationship with this land. How would you describe Israel's relationship to her land?

Day Five – Numbers 36:1-13

We return here to an issue that had been raised and addressed back in chapter 27 (27:1-11). But the solution in turn created another issue. What is that issue?

Regardless of how well you understand the system – or how much you may or may not agree with the system 😊 – what is the concern of the system? And of the solution?

How much do you think about your 'inheritance'? The one you stand to receive? And the one you stand to leave? Spiritually?!

Study – Numbers 35:1-34

Introduction – When setting up a new group / community, what things do you need to establish as primary and foundational for that group to work well? (Whether family / household, office / team, social or sporting club), what things need to be clear for it to function?

Read Numbers 35

From 35:1-5

- 1) What do the provisions made for the Levites reveal? Why did they need towns, and space? What did this secure for them? Provide for them?
And what might have been the alternatives to such a set-up? What are the cost / benefits of providing land/space, as opposed to say providing a living?
- 2) How is this instructive for society / communal living?

From 35:6-15

- 3) What does the provision of ‘cities of refuge’ reveal? In what kind of case, would they need such a city and space? What might have happened without them?
- 4) How is this instructive for healthy relations and communal living?

From 35:16-25

- 5) What fundamental distinction is enshrined in this case law? (Sure it can be abused. How many children would have been heard to claim “It was an accident” as their excuse. But it’s a pretty horrendous thing to have an accident treated as a deliberate and malicious act!)
- 6) Where do you think the category of ‘accident’ stands in today’s world? Is it easy to put something down as accidental? Or hard? Why? Whichever way you go on this, what are the implications?

From 35:26-34

- 7) What guidelines for establishing and upholding justice can you find here?

Verse 29	Permanence	What effect does it have if laws are constantly changing? And varied from one place to the next?
Verse 30	Witnesses	You need them, and you need more than one! Otherwise,...?
Verses 31-32	Ransoms / bribery	Money (fines, etc) work for certain crimes, but not for other ones, why?... what makes the difference?
Verse 33	Bloodshed / sanctity of life	Taking anyone’s life (murder, manslaughter, capital punishment,..) is a serious thing – treat it lightly and indiscriminately, and...

- 8) Finally, what does the (perception of) reality and presence of God do to any justice system (verse 34)? What effect(s) should it have?

In general and from Jesus

- 9) If the law failed to take into account categories such as motive, and accident, what would happen to the world in which we live? If there were no such things as cities of refuge, and avenues of grace, what would happen to the world in which we live?
- 10) And yet if there were no law, and no consequences for transgression, what would happen to the world in which we live?
- 11) What does Jesus (& his death, in particular) teach us about bloodshed, justice and mercy?