

**Series:** Questions

**Title:** How Long Err They Believe?

**Text:** Numbers 14: 11

**Date:** December 5, 2014

**Place:** SGBC, New Jersey

The LORD brought the children of Israel to the promised land. He allowed them to send spies in. But they came back with an evil report. Their report promoted unbelief throughout the whole camp: they began to murmur, they blamed everyone but themselves including God, they spoke of setting captains over them and returning to Egypt. So Joshua and Caleb tried to persuade them to believe the Lord: **Numbers 14: 10: But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel.**

And the LORD asked Moses some questions: **Numbers 14: 11: And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?**

**Divisions:** 1) We will observe a few things in these questions concerning how God regards unbelief. 2) We will spend the bulk of our time seeing Moses as a great type of Christ our Intercessor; 3) Then make a few personal applications.

## **I. FIRST, WE SEE HOW GOD REGARDS UNBELIEF.**

Unbelief provokes the LORD—**v11: How long will this people provoke me?** The word “provoke” signifies “they reject me, they reproach me, they despise Me.” That is what unbelief really is. There is no neutrality in unbelief. The Lord said, Matthew 12:30: He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

Then notice God reduces all their murmuring and excuses to exactly what it is—**v11: and how long will it be ere they believe me.** They used the excuse that there were giants living in the land, their cities are walled up to heaven, the land will eat us up and on and on. God said, “That is not the problem. They simply do not believe me.”

Application: The way to behold God’s glory is by believing God. The Lord Jesus told Martha, “if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?” (Jn 11: 40) The way to behold God work mighty works among us is to believe God. But we never see God’s mighty works by unbelief. We read of one place, “He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.”

Unbelief is worse the more God has done before us—**v11: and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?** Unbelief is worse when God has worked so many great works among you. This made their offense worse. Unbelievers here now have many more miracles of God than what they had.

- **You have THE SIGN!**—Isaiah 7:14: Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.
- **You have the death Christ accomplished**—we have proof that he put away the sin of his people—Romans 4:25: Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.
- **You have the miracle of God’s grace worked in the hearts of sinners**—standing before you is a miracle of God’s grace. If I believe God it should be all the proof anybody needs that Christ is able to save to the uttermost!
- **You have the gospel preached to you! So here is the question God asks about you,—v11: and how long will it be ere you believes me, for all the signs which I have shewed among you?**

So let's answer that question—**how long?** Until God takes out that heart of stone and gives you a new heart. Until the Holy Spirit convinces you of:

- Of sin—convincing you your greatest sin is that you believe not on the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the condemnation.
- Of righteousness—convincing you Christ has accomplished redemption by the proof that he has ascended to the Father and we see him no more after the flesh.
- Of judgment—convincing you the prince of this world is judged—Christ has put away the sin of his people and Satan has no more ammunition.

In other words, a man will go on in unbelief until God irresistibly works in effectual power to draw him to the feet of Christ! But that does not excuse you for not casting all your care upon him!

But what about us believer? Aren't we far too full of unbelief? How long will our unbelief be a problem to us? Till we put off this body of death, this body of flesh. Believer, never under any circumstances put any confidence in your flesh, my flesh, or any other persons flesh. "Cease ye from man."

## **II. SECONDLY, LET'S BEHOLD A TYPE OF CHRIST IN MOSES—IF GOD BLESS THIS TO OUR HEARTS THIS WILL BE STRENGTH TO OUR FAITH.**

First, notice how everything of grace and mercy is made to pass through Moses.—**v10:...And the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel. 11: And the LORD said unto Moses,**

Moses is a type of Christ the Mediator who everlives to make intercession for us. While unbelievers speak disgracefully of Christ—like they did Moses—it is Christ that stands between God and the sinner.

Application: The only way God will deal with you sinner is through the Mediator Christ Jesus—through that very one that you will not come to and believe on, that very one you despise and reject.

God told Moses what he would do to these unbelievers because of their rebellion--**Numbers 14: 12: I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.** God told Moses he would make a greater nation of Moses. But what did Moses do? Moses did what Christ does, he made intercession to God.

Application: Brethren, when we were enemies in our minds by wicked works, murmuring against God and against Christ, Christ interceded for us like Moses did for those who spoke against him. The only reason we were not consumed when we were in our rebellion is because we had an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, the propitiation for our sins. Even now, when we sin, he intercedes on our behalf. Brethren, let us thank our Savior by heeding his command,

Matthew 5:44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

We do not know who the elect are. Our enemy may be an elect child of God like us before grace.

How does Christ intercede for his people? First, by pleading God's honor—**v13: And Moses said unto the LORD, Then the Egyptians shall hear it, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;)** [This is what God has done for you and I who believe—he brought us up in his might from among this world.] **14: And they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land:** [Christ prays, "Father, give not the Egyptians cause to speak evil of you to the enemies surrounding my people.] **for they have heard that thou LORD art among this people,** [And brethren our God and Savior is among us.] **that thou LORD art seen face to face,** [We see him as in a mirror—through faith—in the face of Christ Jesus in his gospel in his word.] **and that thy cloud**

**standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night** [Christ has promised he will be with us always. He will never leave us nor forsake us. So Christ prays the glory of the Father in keeping us separated from the evil of this world, even by sparing those who are not his, who are reprobate men. Watch it.] **15: Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, [we will make a few comments on this at the end] then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, 16: Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness.** So he intercedes that “the name of God be blasphemed. If it is his enemies surrounding his people will come upon them.”

Then notice, Christ also pleads the power of God’s glory—**v17: And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great.** The **glory** of God is the **great power** of the Lord. This is that glory God showed Moses from the cleft of the rock. This is the glory of God that can only be seen in Christ our Rock. This great power of his glory **IS** Christ the Power of God.

Notice the power he speaks of is the power of God’s glory—**v18: The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression,** [He also pleads] **v18: and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.**

**Be sure to get this:** When our great Substitute pleads this for God’s elect, Christ does so by his very presence with the Father—by the nail prints in his hands, by the wound in his side, by his finished work at Calvary.

Because it is only in Christ can God be longsuffering, of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression—while at the same time--by no means clearing the guilty. Only in Christ that these two meet and kiss in perfect harmony.

It is because Christ bore the sin of his people in our room and stead. God poured out justice on Christ till it was satisfied—by no means clearing the guilty—so justice is satisfied, so God is just. Now, Christ can point to his wounds and plead—**v19: Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy.** And because justice is satisfied, because wrath cannot be poured out a second time, justice says, “Come mercy, pardon this people, I require it.” And mercy says, “Come along with me justice. For you prove this mercy is every whit just.” For in Christ...

Ps 85:10 Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other

This is why,

1 John 1: 9: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness...2: 1: if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 2: And he is the propitiation for our sins:

Also, there is something here I almost missed. Christ also pleads God’s word.—**V17: And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken.** When Moses beheld God’s glory from the rock it was God who spoke and declared his glory to Moses. So Moses pleads the very word of God himself.

Likewise, when God speaks into our hearts and commands the light to shine out of darkness—“to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”—it is the word of his gospel that speaks into our hearts. God speaks peace saying

Romans 8: 33: Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. 34: Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Therefore, for the honor of the Word, for the honor of God's truth—our Advocate with the Father intercedes for you and I believer, saying—pardon—**according as thou hast spoken.**

Application: Brethren, see that everything we once held in contempt, now works for our good because of Christ our Intercessor: the honor of God, the power of God's glory, and the word of God. It is all upheld in Christ Jesus.

Lastly, Christ pleads—past mercies—**v19:...and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.**

**Illustration:** Now, if this was our courts this plea would work against a man. It would reveal that the man was a repeat offender.

But God's thoughts are our not our thoughts. His ways are higher than our ways.

Micah 7:18: Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

Malachi 3:6 For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

Fathers have you ever said to your child, "If you are honest with me the chastening will be less severe." God says,

1 John 1: 9: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10: If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Where there is no grace in the heart—because God delays judgment, it does nothing in a sinner. Men will continue on like the rebels in Israel in hardness of heart. But where grace is really at work in the heart---repeated forgiveness does not make a sinner desire to continue in sin.

Psalm 130: 4: But there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared.

Continual forgiveness makes his people hate our sin and desire to mortify the deeds of our flesh.

**III. ONE LAST BRIEF POINT—I POINTED OUT THAT MOSES PLEA WAS NOT FOR GOD NOT TO DESTROY THIS PEOPLE—GOD HAD ALREADY DECLARED HE WOULD DO THAT—MOSES MERELY PLEADED THAT HE NOT KILL THEM ALL AT ONCE—V15: if thou shalt kill all this people as one man,**

You see Moses intercession was not that this people should be delivered into the promised land—but merely be spared from being wiped out all at once. It was so that the enemies would not come upon the believers among them. In that, Moses was really praying for the good of God's true people among them—Joshua and Caleb.

Now understand what I am saying, we do not know who the Lord's people are so we ought to pray for our enemies. But following Moses as a type of the Lord Jesus, the Lord Jesus does know them that are his. He said,

John 17:9: I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

So when you see good appear to happen for wicked rebels in this world or when God spares an entire nation of rebels, it is because God is providing for his people in their midst. That is what God did here for Joshua and Caleb by sparing the rebels.

**Numbers 14: 20: And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word: [it was but a temporary pardon] 21: But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD. 22: Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have**

**tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; 23 Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it: 24 But my servant Caleb, [Joshua was included] because he had another spirit with him, [the Spirit of God] and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.**

Sinner, God may be passing over your sin for now, without pouring out immediate judgment on you, do not imagine that is the grace of God. Seek Christ for mercy while he may be found. Believer, here is a word to sinners like us as well as to you who do not believe.

Hebrews 3: 6 But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. 7: Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, 8: Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: 9: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. 10: Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in *their* heart; and they have not known my ways. 11: So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) 12: Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. 13: But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 14: For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; 15: While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. 16: For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. 17 But with whom was he grieved forty years? *was it* not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? 18: And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? 19: So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. 4: 1: Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. 2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. 3: For we which have believed do enter into rest,...10: For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. 11: Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

**Amen!**