

God Establishes His People

Date: 09.27.2026 | Moses Disobeys God
Scripture: Numbers 20

CENTRAL TRUTHS



PRESCHOOL:

God wants us to listen to Him and obey Him. Jesus forgives us when we do wrong and helps us follow God.

YOUNGER KIDS (K5-2ND GRADE):

God wants us to trust and obey Him. When we sin, Jesus forgives us and helps us follow God.

OLDER KIDS (3RD-5TH GRADE):

God is holy and wants us to trust and obey Him. Even when we sin like Moses and the Israelites did, Jesus took the punishment for our sin and made a way for us to be forgiven and live with God forever.

STUDENTS:

God is holy and deserves our complete trust and obedience. Like Moses and the Israelites, we all fall short because of sin, but Jesus perfectly obeyed God and made a way for us to be forgiven, restored to God, and receive the eternal promises He has prepared for His people.

ADULTS:

God's holiness requires trust and obedience, and all people are accountable for their sin. Even when we fail, God is faithful. Because of Jesus' obedience and sacrifice, our eternal inheritance is secured.

MEMORY VERSE

Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring to you today...The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still." Exodus 14:13-14



DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

What is sin? Sin is rejecting or ignoring God in the world he created, rebelling against him by living without reference to him, not being or doing what he requires in his law -- resulting in our death and the disintegration of all creation. NCC q.16

BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS



The Lord delivered His people from Egypt, entered into a covenant with them, dwelt in their midst through the tabernacle, and gave them instructions for maintaining His presence among them. Israel would prosper only if they remained pure and followed the Lord's commands. One of the major themes of Numbers is Israel's remarkable failure to believe God's promises and obey His Word.

After the spies were sent into Canaan and returned with an unbelieving report, God spared the Israelites from immediate destruction but pronounced judgment upon them. Except for Caleb and Joshua, that entire generation would die in the wilderness while their children inherited the Promised Land. What should have been an eleven-day journey became forty years of wandering because of Israel's persistent unbelief and rebellion against God.

God sought to address Israel's deepest problem: sin. In **Numbers 15:1-31**, He instructed Moses to teach the people again about the various offerings that provided atonement for sin and restored fellowship with Him. Yet Israel continued in a pattern of complaining and disobedience. A prominent Levite named Korah led a rebellion against Moses and Aaron's God-given leadership (**Numbers 16:1-3**). This rebellion ended when the earth opened and swallowed the complainers alive. At its core, Korah's rebellion was not merely against Moses but against the Lord Himself (**Numbers 16:11**). Even after witnessing God's judgment, the people refused to repent and instead blamed Moses and Aaron for the deaths of those who had perished. Once again, the glory of the Lord appeared, and His judgment threatened the nation (**Numbers 16:42-45**).

The people of Israel broke down in the wilderness because they failed to walk by faith. They took God's grace for granted, treated His commands as optional, and trusted their feelings rather than His promises. As the years passed and the wilderness generation slowly died, the consequences of sin became increasingly evident. The

deaths of Miriam and Aaron in **Numbers 20** remind us that God's judgment upon that generation was being fulfilled exactly as He had said.

When Israel arrived once again at Kadesh, Moses must have felt a sense of déjà vu. Thirty-seven years earlier, this was the place from which he had sent the twelve spies into Canaan. Decades later, Israel stood in the same location, having accomplished little more than years of faithless wandering. Sadly, the passage reveals that while time had passed, the people's hearts had not changed.

As in previous generations, the people began to complain when water became scarce. Rather than remembering God's faithfulness, they wished they had died in the wilderness and even romanticized their former lives in Egypt. Though they had repeatedly experienced God's provision, they continued to doubt His goodness and question His plans. Yet even in the face of their grumbling, God remained faithful. He instructed Moses to take his staff, gather the people, and speak to a rock before the congregation. God promised that water would flow from the rock so the people and their livestock could drink (**Numbers 20:7-8**).

Moses and Aaron assembled the people as commanded, but Moses responded differently than God had instructed. Frustrated by years of rebellion and complaints, he spoke harshly to the congregation: "Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?" (**Numbers 20:10**). Then, instead of speaking to the rock, Moses struck it twice with his staff. Water poured out abundantly, and God graciously provided for the people despite Moses' disobedience (**Numbers 20:11**).

At first glance, God's response may seem severe. After all, Moses had spent forty years preparing in Egypt, forty years in Midian, and forty years leading Israel through the wilderness. He had faithfully served God in many difficult circumstances and endured decades of complaints from the people. However, Moses was not above God's law. As the mediator of God's covenant and leader of His people, Moses was called to display God's holiness before the nation. By acting in anger, disobeying God's instructions, and drawing attention to himself rather than the Lord, Moses failed to honor God as holy before the people (**Numbers 20:12**).

This event highlights one of the central truths of Numbers: no one can trifle with the holiness of God. Neither Moses nor Aaron would

be permitted to enter the Promised Land because they failed to trust and honor the Lord. There are no special privileges when it comes to obedience. Leaders and followers alike are accountable to God's Word.

Yet even in this sobering account, we see the gospel. Israel's constant complaints, Moses' anger, and Aaron's failure all point to humanity's deeper problem—sin. The wilderness generation repeatedly demonstrated that sinful hearts cannot save themselves through effort, experience, or religious activity. They needed a greater mediator than Moses. Throughout Scripture, the rock often symbolizes God's provision for His people, and ultimately Christ Himself is the true and better Rock who provides living water for all who trust in Him (*1 Corinthians 10:4*). Where Moses failed to obey perfectly, Jesus obeyed completely. Where Moses was barred from entering the inheritance because of sin, Jesus secured an eternal inheritance for His people through His perfect life, sacrificial death, and victorious resurrection. *Numbers 20* reminds us that God is both holy and gracious—holy enough to judge sin and gracious enough to provide a Savior.

TELL THE STORY

Numbers 20:2-13



God had done so much for the Israelites. He had rescued them from slavery in Egypt, made a covenant with them, given them His laws, and lived among them through the tabernacle. But even after seeing God's power again and again, the Israelites often struggled to trust and obey Him.

Many years earlier, God had promised to bring His people into the Promised Land. However, when the twelve spies returned from exploring Canaan, most of them did not trust God's promise. Because of their unbelief, God said that generation would not enter the Promised Land. Instead, they would wander in the wilderness for forty years until a new generation was ready to trust Him. Only Caleb and Joshua would enter the land God had promised.

During those years in the wilderness, the Israelites continued to complain. They grumbled about food, water, and their circumstances. Some people even rebelled against Moses and Aaron's leadership.

A man named Korah led a rebellion against God's chosen leaders (*Numbers 16:1-3*). Still, God judged the rebellion because it was really a rejection of His authority (*Numbers 16:11*). Even after seeing God's judgment, many people still refused to trust Him.

By the time we reach *Numbers 20*, nearly forty years had passed. The Israelites arrived again at a place called Kadesh. This was the same place where the spies had been sent out years before. Moses must have remembered everything that had happened there. Sadly, even after all those years, the people's hearts had not changed.

Soon the people realized there was not enough water. Instead of asking God for help, they began complaining once again. They even wished they had died in the wilderness and talked as if Egypt had been a better place to live. They forgot how God had rescued them and cared for them so many times before.

Moses and Aaron went before the Lord, and God graciously provided a solution. God told Moses to take his staff, gather the people together, and speak to a rock. God promised that water would come out of the rock so the people and their animals could drink (*Numbers 20:7-8*).

Moses gathered the people as God commanded, but then something unexpected happened. Moses became angry with the Israelites because of their constant complaining. He said, "Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?" (*Numbers 20:10*). Instead of speaking to the rock as God had instructed, Moses struck the rock twice with his staff.

Even though Moses disobeyed, God still showed grace to His people. Water flowed out of the rock, and everyone had enough to drink (*Numbers 20:11*). God faithfully provided for His people once again.

But Moses' disobedience still mattered. God told Moses and Aaron that because they had not trusted Him enough to honor Him as holy before the people, they would not lead Israel into the Promised Land (*Numbers 20:12*). This may seem like a harsh consequence, especially since Moses had faithfully served God for many years. Yet God wanted His people to understand that His holiness must always be honored. No one—not even Moses—is above obeying God.

This story reminds us that sin has consequences. The Israelites sinned by complaining and refusing to trust God. Moses sinned by

allowing his anger to lead him into disobedience. Every person in this story needed God's forgiveness.

The good news is that God had a greater plan. The Israelites needed a better leader than Moses and a better solution to sin than sacrifices. The Bible tells us that Christ is the true Rock who provides for His people (*1 Corinthians 10:4*). Unlike Moses, Jesus always obeyed God perfectly. Jesus took the punishment for our sin on the cross and rose again so that everyone who trusts in Him can be forgiven and receive eternal life. God is holy and must judge sin, but He is also gracious and provided Jesus to save sinners.

REBUILD THE STORY



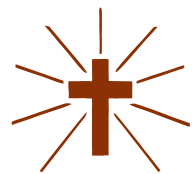
1. Why were the Israelites still wandering in the wilderness instead of living in the Promised Land? (*Numbers 14:26-35*)
2. What problem caused the Israelites to complain when they arrived at Kadesh? (*Numbers 20:2-5*)
3. How did the Israelites respond when they faced this problem? (*Numbers 20:3-5*)
4. What did Moses and Aaron do when the people complained? (*Numbers 20:6*)
5. What instructions did God give Moses to provide water for the people? (*Numbers 20:7-8*)
6. What did Moses do instead of obeying God exactly? (*Numbers 20:10-11*)
7. What happened after Moses struck the rock? (*Numbers 20:11*)

8. What consequence did Moses and Aaron face because they did not honor God as holy before the people? (*Numbers 20:12*)
9. The Israelites had seen God provide for them many times, yet they still complained when they faced a problem. Why do you think it can be difficult to trust God during hard situations, even when He has been faithful in the past? (*Numbers 20:2-5*)
10. Moses had faithfully served God for many years, but one moment of disobedience had serious consequences. What does this teach us about the importance of obeying God completely rather than only when it is convenient or easy?
(*Numbers 20:7-12*)
11. God still provided water for the Israelites even though both the people and Moses were acting sinfully. What does this teach us about God's character and His grace toward undeserving people? (*Numbers 20:10-11; Psalm 145:8-9*)
12. Moses failed to honor God perfectly, but Jesus always obeyed the Father perfectly. How does comparing Moses and Jesus help us better understand why we need a Savior?
(*Numbers 20:12; 1 Corinthians 10:4; Romans 5:19*)

GOSPEL EMPHASIS

Sin separates us from God and always has consequences. Throughout this unit, we have seen this truth again and again. The Israelites grumbled against God, doubted His promises, worshiped false gods, and rebelled against His leadership. Even Moses, one of the greatest leaders in Israel's history, failed to trust and obey God completely. Because of his sin at Kadesh, Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land. Sin always damages our relationship with God and keeps us from experiencing the fullness of His blessings.

From the Passover in Egypt to the sacrifices at Mount Sinai, God repeatedly showed His people that sin requires atonement and that forgiveness comes through a substitute. The blood of the Passover lamb protected Israel from judgment. The sacrifices offered at the



tabernacle reminded the people that a holy God cannot ignore sin. Yet those sacrifices had to be offered over and over again because they could never fully remove sin. They pointed forward to a greater sacrifice still to come.

The rock in the wilderness also points us to Christ. God graciously provided life-giving water for His people even when they were undeserving. In the same way, Jesus provides living water to all who trust in Him. The Bible tells us that Christ is the true Rock who was with His people (*1 Corinthians 10:4*). Unlike Moses, Jesus perfectly obeyed the Father in every way. Where Israel failed, Jesus was faithful. Where Moses sinned, Jesus remained sinless. Through His death on the cross, Jesus became the final and perfect sacrifice for sin, taking the punishment we deserve and making a way for us to be reconciled to God. Because of Christ, all who repent and believe can be forgiven, welcomed into God's family, and receive the eternal inheritance that no sin can take away.

WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE TEACH US ABOUT GOD?

Use the attributes of God list and determine the characteristics of God that we see in today's story. How can knowing these characteristics of God to be true change the way we live in Christ?

PRAYER PROMPTS

God, help us to give our full attention to honoring and obeying You! Help us to guard ourselves from our emotions and walk in Your truth and wisdom. Help us to live in Your holiness as we reflect Your spirit. Help us to finish well!



THIS WEEK'S BIBLE READING

Numbers 21-26