

# Adult Bible Class

For Adults Ages 18 and Up

In the beginning **GOD**  
*created* the heaven and the earth.  
Genesis 1:1

## Summer Quarter

June | July | August

2026

# Adult Bible Class

SUMMER QUARTER

June, July, August 2026

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# The Lord's Patience with His People

BY TOM GREENE

This quarter, we will study "The Lord's Patience with His People". Our first unit is on how God is "Slow to Anger". The first two lessons come from the life of Moses. In Numbers 14, Moses begged the Lord for mercy. The people said that it would have been better to die in Egypt or in the wilderness than to face the fierce giants in the Promised Land. They contemplated returning to Egypt, and even stoning Joshua and Caleb until the Lord intervened. The Lord told Moses that He would smite His unfaithful people, but He relented when Moses interceded for them.

In lesson 2, the Lord renewed His covenant with Israel after they had sinned and created a golden calf. Despite their wickedness, when Moses pleaded for mercy, the Lord revealed Himself to be merciful and gracious. He re-established the covenant, including the command to worship no other gods but Him alone.

In lesson 3, Joshua remembered the ways the Lord had blessed His people throughout history. It is likewise good for us to reflect on the ways God has blessed us in the past. Joshua called the people to Shechem, where Abraham had once built an altar, and recounted how God had called Abraham out of idolatry. The Lord blessed Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God used Moses and Aaron to miraculously deliver His people out of Egypt. He brought them into the Promised Land and delivered them from their enemies. Therefore, they were called to serve the Lord alone and not turn to other gods.

However, the unit ends ominously in lesson 4, as the people asked for a king *so they could be like all the other nations*. God called them to be different, but they sought to conform to the nations around them. Samuel warned the people what this would mean, but when they insisted, the Lord gave them what they wanted. Sometimes the punishment for sin is the Lord allowing us to slip deeper into sin and experience the consequences of our actions.

The second unit, "Faithful to His Promises", consists of lessons from the book of Jeremiah. In lesson 5, he urged backsliding Israel to return to the Lord. If they acknowledge their sins and return to the Lord, He will give them good rulers, bless them tremendously, and even gather all nations to Jerusalem. This was greater than simply a restoration to former times; it was a promise far beyond anything they had ever experienced.

In lesson 6, Jeremiah declared woe to the selfish shepherds of the nation who abused their power for personal gain. The Lord promised that He would gather His people and appoint good shepherds, including a righteous King. The Lord would bring them back from exile in the north and establish and bless them.

In lesson 7, Jeremiah solemnly laid out two options for the people: repent and be forgiven or persist in sinful rebellion, and the Lord would flatten Jerusalem and discipline His children. God clearly laid out His law, and the

prophets repeatedly warned God's people. They could not plead ignorance. Sadly, the people continued in sin, as the priests and false prophets (some of the bad shepherds from lesson 6) led them. Far from repenting, the priests and false prophets wanted to kill Jeremiah for what he said! Some of the people protected Jeremiah from the priests, but, in general, the nation persisted in its sins and was taken into exile just as Jeremiah had warned.

Nevertheless, in lesson 8, God sent good news to the exiles. Although Jeremiah had proclaimed doom and gloom up to this point, now that Jerusalem was about to fall, he made a surprisingly hopeful turn. Despite their persistent sins, God would bring them out of exile in seventy years. Jeremiah told the people not to listen to the lying prophets who claimed that the Lord would not discipline them for long. He said God would faithfully bless His people again when they sought Him with all their hearts. The unit ends in lesson 9 with God's promise to rescue and gather His scattered people once again.

In the final unit, "His Compassion Never Fails", we have lessons from four different prophets. Lesson 10, our final lesson from Jeremiah, reveals God's promise to Israel that He would rebuild her and fill her with joy. Lesson 11 is from Ezekiel, as God again declared woe to the wicked shepherds of His people and promised to be Israel's Good Shepherd. This echoed Jeremiah's pronouncements and added depth to Jesus' later declaration that He is the Good Shepherd (John 10:11-18). Jesus declared Himself to be the Good Shepherd, and the implications about His identity should have been obvious to Jesus' hearers.

Lesson 12 contains Hosea's description of God's love for Israel. God called Hosea to marry a prostitute and forgive her when she was unfaithful; Hosea's story was to provide an anal-



ogy for the Lord's relationship with Israel. Israel had been unfaithful to the Lord, but He would forgive and love His people.

Lesson 13 wraps up the quarter with Micah, who prayed that the Lord would feed His flock and bless them as He had in the past. Micah concluded with confidence that the nations would see all that the Lord would do and tremble. He *would* bless His people again. He *would* be merciful to His people and restore their fortunes, as He had promised. He would cast the sins of His people into the depths of the sea. Even in dark circumstances (cf. Mic. 7:1-2) we can be confident that the Lord will keep all His promises.

Although God's people had rejected Him and sinned repeatedly, He would not abandon them. Because He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, we can be confident that this remains true. "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful" (2 Tim. 2:13). We can be confident that no matter how often we have failed and fallen into sin, He will always accept and forgive us when we turn to Him in repentance. His love never fails!

# SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

**NUM. 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?

**12 I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.**

13 And Moses said unto the LORD, Then the Egyptians shall hear *it*, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;)

**14 And they will tell *it* to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou LORD *art* among this people, that thou LORD *art* seen face to face, 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.**

15 Now *if* thou shalt kill *all* this people as one man, 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 swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness.**

17 And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying,

**18 The LORD *is* longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation*.**

19 Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.

**20 And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word:**

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 swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it:

**24 But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.**

# Moses Prays for Mercy

Lesson Text: Numbers 14:11-24

Related Scriptures: Exodus 32:7-14; Joshua 2:8-11;  
Ezekiel 36:16-23; Joel 2:12-17; Hebrews 3:7-19

TIME: about 1443 B.C.

PLACE: Kadesh

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**GOLDEN TEXT**—“Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now” (Numbers 14:19).

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## *Lesson Exposition*

### **GOD'S OFFER—Num. 14:11-12**

After miraculously delivering the people from slavery in Egypt through the ten plagues and miraculously providing for them with manna in the wilderness, it should have been obvious that God could miraculously drive out their enemies before them. Sadly, it was not.

The Lord asked Moses how long the people would despise Him and not believe in Him. While pleas of “how long” were often directed to the Lord by His weary people throughout the Bible (cf. Ps. 13:1; Hab. 1:2), here the Lord strikingly asked that of Moses. The implication is clear that the Lord had given His people far more than enough evidence to trust Him to deliver them.

Then the Lord made a very surprising offer. He told Moses that He would destroy the people with a plague and make Moses a nation mightier than them.

Was God genuinely offering to destroy His people, or was this merely a test of Moses? We must start by recognizing that God never lies and always keeps His promises (Num. 23:19; Titus 1:2). The threat would not have broken

God's promise to Abraham, for Moses was a descendant of Abraham. If God had destroyed Israel and created a new nation from Moses, Abraham's descendants technically would still have become a mighty nation. And so, God would not have violated His promise to Abraham. Therefore, though some take God's offer to Moses as merely a test, the text's emphasize was that God responded to Moses' fervent prayer.

### **MOSES' PLEA—Num. 14:13-19**

Moses responded with a twofold appeal to the Lord. First, Moses reasoned that the Lord's name would be dishonored if He struck down His people. Second, Moses appealed to promises that the Lord had made previously and asked Him to spare His people.

**God's Name would be dishonored (Num. 14:13-16).** Moses first appealed to God's character and to His reputation. He argued that the nations would hear of how the Israelites had died in the wilderness and question God's ability to bring His people into the land. If the Lord slew His people after repeatedly commanding Pharaoh to let His people go, what would the

Egyptians think? What would the nations that inhabited and surrounded the Promised Land think?

It was a common belief in the ancient Near East that when one nation defeated another, their gods (or God) displayed mastery over the other nations' gods. During the exodus, the Lord Himself said that He was judging the gods of Egypt (Ex. 12:12). His ability to deliver His people out of Egypt and His systematic demonstration of power via the ten plagues demonstrated that He was more powerful than the Egyptian gods. Historically, in fact, scholars have thought that each of the ten plagues demonstrated power over the Egyptian deities.

Moses speculated that the nations would assume the Lord was not strong enough to lead His people into the Promised Land and, thus, gave up on them and killed them in the wilderness. Moses, therefore, first presented an argument against killing the people of Israel, saying that the Lord would be disrespected.

**God promised to go with them (Num. 14:17-19).** Next, Moses referred to what God had told him previously on the mountaintop after the golden calf incident (Ex. 33). This was not the first time Moses appealed to God on behalf of Israel. In both Exodus 32:9-10 and 33:3, the Lord made declarations against Israel, but after Moses pleaded with the Lord, He relented both times.

Though Moses' appeal to God's promise to bring them into the land was implicit, his appeal to God's promise regarding His character was not. He appealed to the Lord to be who He had revealed Himself to be. How could the Lord strike down all His people and start over after He had declared Himself to be slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and forgiving? Moses was not impertinent in the way that

he questioned the Lord. He did not question God's character. Rather, he humbly asked God to keep His promises and be who He said He was. We too can pray boldly without praying in a disrespectful way.

### **THE LORD'S RESPONSE— Num. 14:20-24**

As Moses requested, the Lord pardoned the people and did not destroy them with a plague. But there was a substantial catch. None of the people who had seen the glory of the Lord and all the powerful plagues poured out on Egypt and yet repeatedly rebelled would see the Promised Land. They would not die of a plague, but they would not experience the full blessing that awaited God's people. Those twenty years old and older would die in the wilderness (vs. 29).

The people had seen God's power displayed but remained obstinate in unbelief. They had said it would have been better to die in Egypt or in the wilderness, and so die in the wilderness they would (vss. 2, 28-30). The ten spies who gave an unfavorable report of the land did die of the plague seemingly quickly (vss. 36-38).

God's pardon does not always mean freedom from consequences. As Christians, we are forgiven of our sins, and we are free from God's final judgment. Sometimes when we sin, however, there are natural consequences. We may experience damaged relationships if we lie or gossip. Our bodies may suffer if we indulge in gluttony, abuse alcohol, or sexual sins. We may lose our jobs or be arrested if we break the law. God may forgive our sins without delivering us from the consequences of our actions.

The case of the Israelites seems a bit more complicated, for the Israelites dying in the wilderness may not seem to be a natural consequence. Couldn't the Lord have led them into the Prom-

ised Land? Why confine them to die in the wilderness? We feel tension between the declaration of pardon and the punishment here.

If we look at the preceding verses, we may find some explanation. In verse 2, the people said it would have been better to die in Egypt or in the wilderness, and the Lord obliged them. They did not enter because of their unbelief (Heb. 3:19).

For some people, this story raises a theological question: does God change His mind? The Bible insists that the Lord does not change (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8). Yet here, He seemed to be influenced by Moses' prayer. How are we to understand this? First Samuel 15 says both that the Lord has regret and that He is not like a man, inferring that He actually does not have regrets (vss. 11, 29). When a single chapter says things that initially appear to be contradictions, it often conveys something nuanced.

The Lord never changes His mind due to new information or a change in His character. In 1 Samuel 8, the Lord foretold the fact that Saul would be a bad king, which must inform our understanding of His regret in chapter 15. He did not have regret because He made a mistake or due to new information. Rather, God is grieved when we act wickedly (Gen. 6:5-6).

A crucial passage for correctly understanding how God relents is Jeremiah 18:5-11. God promised that if at any time He declares a coming judgment and a nation repents, He will relent. Likewise, if a nation turns away from Him to evil, He will no longer bless that nation. If we abandon Him and turn to evil, or if we repent and turn to Him, His actions toward us will change. But that is not because *His* character has changed.

Numbers 14:21 contains a comment that could be easily skipped over. The Lord affirmed that these things would

take place as surely as He lives and as surely as all the earth will be filled with His glory. Given that this statement is being used to affirm the certainty of something else, it is apparent that the Lord considers this an absolute certainty. The whole earth will be filled with His glory!

Because he had an attitude of obedience to God, Caleb would be allowed to enter the land. Joshua, the other spy who agreed with Caleb, would also be allowed to enter the land, as the Lord promised a few verses later (Num. 14:30). We should follow the Lord, no matter the consequences. It is better to stand against an entire nation than it is to stand against the Lord.

—Tom Greene

## QUESTIONS

1. What did the Lord ask Moses, and how was this unusual?
2. What did the Lord offer Moses?
3. If God fulfilled His offer to Moses, would He have broken His promise to Abraham?
4. What two arguments did Moses make to the Lord?
5. What did many Ancient Near East people think happened when one nation defeated another?
6. When had Moses previously interceded for Israel?
7. How did Moses appeal to God's previous revelation?
8. How did the Lord respond to Moses' request?
9. How could the Lord both pardon *and* punish His people?
10. What certain thing did the Lord use to affirm that what He said would come true?

—Tom Greene

## PRACTICAL POINTS

1. Many people who do not believe have more than enough information needed to believe (Num. 14:11; cf. Rom. 1:18-19).
2. We should not give up on prayer when things seem hopeless (Num. 14:12; cf. Luke 18:1-8).
3. We can appeal to God's glory as we pray (Num. 14:13-16).
4. We should appeal to the promises of God as we pray (vss. 17-20).
5. The whole earth will be filled with the Lord's glory (vs. 21)!
6. There are often consequences for unbelief and disobedience (vss. 22-23).
7. The Lord rewards obedience (Num. 14:24; cf. Heb. 11:6).

—Tom Greene

## RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. Can you think of a time in your life when it was hard to trust the Lord?
2. What should we do when God's Word is clear, but it is hard to trust Him?
3. Did Moses convince God to change His mind in this lesson's passage? Why does that matter?
4. If the Lord pardoned the people of Israel, why did He still say they would die in the wilderness?
5. Have you ever seen God answer seemingly hopeless prayers?
6. Are there any situations or people you have given up on praying for because it seemed hopeless?
7. What current obstacles in your life make it hard to trust God? What can you do to strengthen your faith in these areas and follow Him?
8. How can we stir one another up to follow the Lord?

—Tom Greene

## Golden Text Illuminated

**“Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now” (Numbers 14:19).**

The unfaithfulness of the Israelites in the wilderness stands as a reminder of the human propensity to rebel against God, even in the face of His provision and miraculous interventions. We find the people of Israel on the verge of entering the Promised Land, yet their fear and unbelief lead them to despise God's gift and long for a return to Egypt (vss. 1-4). This rebellion provokes God's anger, as He declares to 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?” (vs. 11).

Faced with the prospect of divine judgment, Moses intercedes on behalf of the people, appealing to God's *chesed*, His steadfast love and mercy. The Hebrew word *chesed* is a rich, multifaceted term that encompasses God's lovingkindness, faithfulness, and compassion. It is this very attribute that Moses invokes in his prayer, as recorded in the golden text, unto the greatness of God's mercy.

Moses' prayer is a great reminder of the depths of God's mercy. Moses acknowledges the Lord's reputation among the nations, recognizing that God's actions toward His people have a profound impact on how others perceive Him (13-16). By anchoring his plea in God's self-revelation as “merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth” (Ex. 34:6), Moses demonstrates his faith in the unchanging nature of God.

—Gene Kissinger