

THE TWELVE SPIES AND THEIR REPORTS

BIBLE TEXT : Numbers 13:1-33; Deuteronomy 1:19-24

LESSON 101 **Senior Course**

MEMORY VERSE: "For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Galatians 6:8).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Numbers 13:1-33 (KJV)

¹ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

² Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them.

³ And Moses by the commandment of the LORD sent them from the wilderness of Paran: all those men *were* heads of the children of Israel.

⁴ And these *were* their names: of the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur.

⁵ Of the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori.

⁶ Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh.

⁷ Of the tribe of Issachar, Igal the son of Joseph.

⁸ Of the tribe of Ephraim, Oshea the son of Nun.

⁹ Of the tribe of Benjamin, Palti the son of Raphu.

¹⁰ Of the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel the son of Sodi.

¹¹ Of the tribe of Joseph, *namely*, of the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi the son of Susi.

¹² Of the tribe of Dan, Ammiel the son of Gemalli.

¹³ Of the tribe of Asher, Sethur the son of Michael.

¹⁴ Of the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi the son of Vophsi.

¹⁵ Of the tribe of Gad, Geuel the son of Machi.

¹⁶ These *are* the names of the men which Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Oshea the son of Nun Jehoshua.

¹⁷ And Moses sent them to spy out

BIBLE REFERENCES:

The Lord's Instructions to Search Out the Land of Canaan

1. He commanded Moses to send a ruler of each tribe to search the land, Numbers 13:1, 2
2. Moses chose the chief men of every tribe, twelve in all, to spy out the land, Numbers 13:3-15
3. Among them were Caleb of Judah, and Joshua (Jehoshua) of Ephraim, Numbers 13:6, 16

II A Search by Appointed Men Requested by the People

- 1 Israel went through a great and terrible wilderness upon leaving Horeb (Mount Sinai), Deuteronomy 1:19
- 2 They came to the mountain of the Amorites and were exhorted to possess it, Deuteronomy 1:20, 21
- 3 But the people asked Moses to send men before them to search the land, which Moses did, **Deuteronomy 1:22-24**

III Detailed Instructions Given the Twelve Spies

- 1 Moses instructed them to see whether the people were strong or weak, few or many, Numbers 13:17, 18
- 2 They were instructed to see whether the land was good or bad; the cities, tents, or strongholds, Numbers 13:19
- 3 He exhorted them to be of good courage and bring back the fruits of the land, Numbers 13:20

IV The Search Faithfully Carried Out by the Twelve

- 1 They searched the land from Zin in the south, to Hebron toward the north, Numbers 13:21, 22
- 2 They brought a cluster of grapes from Eshcol, borne by two men, and pomegranates and figs, Numbers 13:23, 24
- 3 They returned after forty days, from searching the land, Numbers 13:25

V The Report of the Twelve to the Children of Israel

- 1 They reported that surely the land "floweth with milk and honey," and showed the fruits thereof, Numbers 13:26, 27
- 2 They reported that the people were strong, dwelling in walled cities, Numbers 13:28, 29
- 3 Caleb, however, stilled the people, saying, "Let us go up at once, and possess it," Numbers **13:30**
- 4 But the ten gave an evil report, insisting that the land was peopled with great giants, Numbers 13:31-33

NOTES:

Israel at the Borders of Canaan

When the giving of the Law and the establishing of the tabernacle worship was completed, the Children of Israel departed from Mount Sinai and were led by the pillar of cloud directly to the borders of the Promised Land. As the people

the land of Canaan, and said unto them, Get you up this *way* southward, and go up into the mountain:

¹⁸ And see the land, what it *is*; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they *be* strong or weak, few or many;

¹⁹ And what the land *is* that they dwell in, whether it *be* good or bad; and what cities *they be* that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strong holds;

²⁰ And what the land *is*, whether it *be* fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land. Now the time *was* the time of the firstripe grapes.

²¹ So they went up, and searched the land from the wilderness of Zin unto Rehob, as men come to Hamath.

²² And they ascended by the south, and came unto Hebron; where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the children of Anak, *were*. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.)

²³ And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and *they brought* of the pomegranates, and of the figs.

²⁴ The place was called the brook Eshcol, because of the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel cut down from thence.

²⁵ And they returned from searching of the land after forty days.

²⁶ And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and shewed them the fruit of the land.

well knew, the LORD had promised this land to Abraham and his children. And God had described it to them as "a land flowing with milk and honey." He also had brought the Children of Israel out of Egypt, not only that He might deliver them from under the hand of their cruel taskmasters but that He might bring them into this fruitful land where they would have vineyards which they had not planted and cities which they had not built. When, therefore, they arrived at the mountain of the Amorites, to the south of Canaan, Moses said, "Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged" (Deuteronomy 1:21). And the Children of Israel had every incentive, it would seem, to proceed immediately to possess the land.

Israel's Plan to Send Spies

But the Children of Israel, in their journey from Mount Sinai, had just come through a "great and terrible wilderness," and that "mountain of the Amorites" looked to them very wild and the people very ferocious. Therefore, they said to Moses, "We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come" (Deuteronomy 1:22). Thus, the Children of Israel, you see, were not dependent upon the pillar of cloud to guide them into the Promised Land, although the LORD their God had promised to go before them and fight their battles (Deuteronomy 1:30). Then, too, they wanted to know definitely whether Canaan, after all, was the fruitful land it was reported to be, although God Himself had told them that it was "a land flowing with milk and honey."

Israel's Unbelief

How different were the Children of Israel from their father, Abraham! When God spoke he hearkened. When God commanded he obeyed. When God said, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee," immediately Abraham assembled his household "and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came" - a land which he knew not. Abraham is appropriately known as the "father of faith." He walked by faith, and not by sight; for it is written, "The just shall live by faith," and "Without faith it is impossible to please him." The Children of Israel were poor examples of their father's faith. They, no doubt, thought that the sending out of spies was a wise plan. It would help them in winning the victory over their enemies, they thought. But it was not the plan of the LORD God of their fathers. He had said, "Go up and possess it." **The plans of men in which God is ignored come to nought.**

The outstanding sin of the Children of Israel was unbelief. It was the sin which constantly got them into trouble in the wilderness. Their murmurings and complaints emanated from a heart of unbelief. It resulted in one failure after another, and in this case, we shall see that it resulted in the failure of the older generation to enter the Promised Land. And this evil did not end with the days of the Law and the prophets. The Epistle to the Hebrews is a warning to the Christian Hebrews of the failure of their fathers to enter into their rest. They became followers of the Lord Jesus Christ as their Messiah, and for a

²⁷ And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this *is* the fruit of it.

²⁸ Nevertheless the people *be* strong that dwell in the land, and the cities *are* walled, *and* very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there.

²⁹ The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan.

³⁰ And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.

³¹ But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they *are* stronger than we.

³² And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, *is* a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it *are* men of a great stature.

³³ And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, *which come* of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

Deuteronomy 1:19-24 (KJV)

¹⁹ And when we departed from Horeb, we went through all that great and terrible wilderness, which ye saw by the way of the mountain of the Amorites, as the LORD our God commanded us; and we came to Kadeshbarnea.

²⁰ And I said unto you, Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the LORD our God doth give unto us.

season they took the spoiling of their goods joyfully; but when persecution and tribulation continued, through discouragement and unbelief they were in danger of falling away from their hope in Christ Jesus. In the eleventh chapter of this epistle the author reminds them of those heroes among their fathers, every one of whom won victory through faith. And conditions have not become any different. In these last days the outstanding sin is still unbelief. And we can profit by remembering what befell the Children of Israel. Jesus said to His disciples, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

The Twelve Spies Appointed

However displeasing to God the plan of the Israelites to send men before them into the Promised Land must have been, He, nevertheless, since they had asked it, consented to their request and said to Moses, "Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel" (Numbers 13:2). So Moses chose, as he was commanded, a man of every tribe, "every one a ruler among them," including Joshua of the tribe of Ephraim, and Caleb of the tribe of Judah, and sent them forth to search the land of Canaan, saying unto them, "Get you up this way southward, and go up into the mountain: and see the land, what it is; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; and what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strong holds" (Numbers 13:17-19). Moses also commanded them to be "of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land."

And beginning at Kadesh-barnea in the south the twelve spies journeyed northward until they reached Hebron where formerly their father, Abraham, sojourned. It was here that Abraham, sitting under the oaks of Mamre in the heat of the day, entertained three men who appeared at his tent, and soon found out that he was entertaining angels. Perhaps these spies, as children in their homes, had heard this story about their godly father, and felt that they were treading on holy ground. All Canaan had indeed become the "Holy Land," for it was here that God had met with their fathers. And these sacred events ought to have inspired all Israel to reverence and obey the God who gave them this land.

A short distance north of Hebron the spies entered the valley of Eshcol, and found that great cluster of grapes which they cut down and brought back, borne by two men on a pole. They also took of the figs and pomegranates, that they might have proof that this was surely "a land flowing with milk and honey."

The Report of the Twelve Spies

These chosen men faithfully devoted forty days in searching the land, and returned with the fruits thereof, ready to give their report. And they said to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation of the Children of Israel at Kadesh, "We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it" (Numbers 13:27).

²¹ Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up *and possess it*, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged.

²² And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come.

²³ And the saying pleased me well: and I took twelve men of you, one of a tribe:

²⁴ And they turned and went up into the mountain, and came unto the valley of Eshcol, and searched it out.

QUESTIONS

1 What border of Canaan had Israel reached when the LORD commanded them to take the land?

2 What did the Children of Israel propose when Moses gave them the word of the LORD?

3 How many spies were chosen, and why was the group limited to this particular number?

4 In the land of what people did they begin their search of Canaan?

5 What point north did they reach? and what historic event took place here?

6 At what place did the spies find luxuriant fruits? and what did they take back with them?

7 How many days did the spies devote to searching the land of Canaan?

8 When they returned what was the nature of their report? What did they say, which was evil?

9 What was the word of one of the spies to withstand their evil report? What was his name?

10 What effect did the evil report have upon the Children of Israel?

It was just such a land as the LORD had said - "a land flowing with milk and honey." But they saw something more. "Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan" (Numbers 13:28, 29). And Caleb, one of the spies, stilled the people before Moses and said, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it" (Numbers 13:30). And Joshua stood with Caleb, but the other ten that went up with them said, "We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we" (Numbers 13:31). Thus, they brought up an evil report of the land, and discouraged the people in doing what the **LORD** commanded, "Go up and possess it."

Discord Among the Brethren

The people, no doubt, condoned their discouragement, thinking that they were justified in such an attitude, since the land was peopled with such powerful races. But we shall find in our studies of these Israelites that discouragement is by no means a minor offense. When discouragement comes in, faith goes out; and unbelief was the cause of Israel's downfall. Discouragement is an entering wedge which the devil uses to turn men from their faith in God. And he succeeded in making it work with the Children of Israel. Thus, the ten discouraged spies spread discord among the brethren, and God's pronouncement against discord is written in the Word.

"These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:

"A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

"An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,

"A false witness that speaketh lies, and HE THAT SOWETH DISCORD AMONG BRETHREN" (Proverbs 6:16-19).