

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 6

THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

CHAPTER 13

INTRODUCTION

The children of Israel had come to a crucial moment of their history since they left Egypt. They had departed from Sinai, travelled north-east, and encamped at Kadesh-barnea, which was at the southern tip of the land of Canaan. They were at the threshold of the Promised Land. The moment of opportunity had finally arrived for them to claim their inheritance that was given by the LORD their God. Israel had come to a very important crossroad of their history. The tragic thing was that they failed to rise to the occasion. Instead of trusting and obeying God and entering the land, they were cowards and they procrastinated. They actually forfeited the blessings God had intended for them. They had made a big mistake. It cost them dearly.

We often meet crossroads in our daily life. A decision has to be made. A specific course of action has to be taken. Sometimes we make mistakes that are not so serious. But there are some mistakes that we can ill afford to make. It is at such crossroads in life that we need to know how we can evaluate the situation and make the right decision so that any serious

setback can be averted. Delay in making the right decision would have resulted in much loss to us. The diligent child of God will benefit from Numbers 13 and 14 by not repeating the mistakes of others.

OUTLINE

A. The Appointment of the Twelve Spies (13:1-16).

1. The LORD instructed Moses to send men to scout the land (vv. 1-2).
2. Moses obeyed and sent the twelve leaders in accordance to the word of the LORD (v. 3).
3. The names of the twelve leaders (v.4-16).

B. The Mission of the Twelve Spies (13:17-20).

1. Moses sent the twelve off to scout the land (v.17).
2. Moses specified the objectives of the mission and to make thorough report of the following (vv.18-20).
 - a. The land.
 - b. The people.
 - c. The cities.
 - d. And to bring some of the produce back.

C. The Journey of the Twelve (13:21-25).

1. They departed by way of the wilderness of Zin and went up to the northernmost part of the land (v.21).
2. On their return they came to Hebron and to the brook of Eshcol (vv. 22-23a).

3. They collected a cluster of grapes, and pomegranates, and figs (v.23b-24).
4. They returned to the camp after forty days (v.25).

D. The Twelve Reported to Moses (13:26-33).

1. They returned to Moses and Aaron at Kadesh (v. 26).
2. The true report (vv.27-29).
 - a. The land was good, flowing with milk and honey.
 - b. The people were strong.
 - c. The cities were walled and fortified.
 - d. There were Anakites.
 - e. The Amalekites, Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, and the Canaanites lived in various parts of the land.
3. Caleb calmed the people and challenged them to claim their inheritance (v.30).
4. The bad report (vv.31-33).
 - a. The people in the land were stronger than they (v.31).
 - b. The land was too harsh to the people (v.32a).
 - c. All the people of the land were bigger than they (v.32b).
 - d. The Anakites were giants (v.33a).
 - e. They looked upon themselves as grasshoppers (v.33b)

COMMENTARY

The Command to Scout the Land

The LORD spoke to Moses to select a leader from each tribe to spy

the land of Canaan, which the LORD promised to the forefathers of the children of Israel, namely, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In Deuteronomy 1:21-23, the account of this incident was that it was the people who proposed sending a reconnaissance group into the land. There seems to be an apparent difference in the account of this incident. In Numbers 13, it recorded that the LORD told Moses to send a reconnaissance group, whereas in the Deuteronomy account, it is stated that it was the people who called on Moses to send the group. There is actually no contradiction if we perceive the two accounts as giving a fuller description of the incident. The LORD would not have first instructed Moses to send people to spy the land. There was no reason for that.

The LORD knew the land and had described the land to Moses (Exodus 3:8) and to the children of Israel (Exodus 13:5) that it is a good and large land flowing with milk and honey.¹ The Deuteronomy account states that it was the people who proposed to Moses that he sent people to scout the land. The people asked Moses to send men to search out the land. Moses must have

¹ Exodus 3:8 And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

Exodus 13:5 And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he swore unto thy fathers to give thee, a land flowing with milk and honey, that thou shalt keep this service in this month.

consulted the LORD and the LORD told him in the Numbers account to send the men.

The Twelve Leaders

A comparison of the names of these tribal leaders with those in chapter 1 shows that they are different. It has been suggested that these men who were selected for the expedition to scout the land were younger and stronger. This is reasonable and sensible. The expedition was not easy. It would be tough and a group consisting of younger and stronger men would be more appropriate.

Caleb is mentioned for the first time here. His name means “a dog”. That is a very strange name for an Israelite. But an excellent characteristic of a dog is his faithfulness to its master. In that respect, Caleb lived up to his name. We will see the display of his faithfulness to his Master, Yahweh. He was from the prominent tribe of Judah, and the son of Jephunneh who was called the Kenizzite (Numbers 32:12).²

Another person, who is noteworthy, is Joshua (13:16). We first met him in Exodus 17.³ He was a military general. The record here states that Moses changed his name from Oshea, which means “salvation” to Jehoshua (Joshua), which means “the LORD saves”. He was the one whom the LORD chose to succeed Moses to

lead the people into the Promised Land.⁴ He was from the tribe of Ephraim, one of the sons of Joseph, another well-known tribe. The fact that Moses could change his name strongly implies that their relationship was close and intimate, like father and son! We will learn later that Joshua and Caleb were the only two spies who were faithful to the LORD.

The Mission’s Objectives

Moses’ instructions to them to spy the land were comprehensive. Moses told them to survey the land from its southern tip to the most northern region. They should make a thorough report of the peoples, the towns they lived, and the produce of the land and to bring some of it when they returned (vv.17-20).

The scouts took their leave, and surely they would be excited, confident and hopeful. From their camp they travelled north into the Negev (means “south”), which is the southern part of Canaan to Beersheba. Then moving northwards, they would pass through the coastal plains and hill country of the north, as far as to the foot of Mount Hermon. Making a loop they returned through Galilee, and made their way to Hebron. There at the brook of Eschol, they gathered a cluster of grapes, pomegranates and figs.⁵ The cluster of grapes must have been very large for it was borne by two men on a staff (v.23). Those grapes must be juicy and sweet! The whole journey took

² Numbers 32:12 Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, and Joshua the son of Nun: for they have wholly followed the LORD.

³ Exodus 17:10 So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

⁴ Numbers 27:18 And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him.

⁵ The first early grapes could have been harvested by late July. Hence, the journey of the spies was in the summer months.

them forty days. The distance they covered each way was about 400 kilometres (250 miles).

The Report

The report of the spies can be divided into two parts: their evaluation of the land, the peoples, and the cities; and their reaction to what they reported. They accurately described the land, using the proverbial phrase that it “surely floweth with milk and honey” and presented the fruits they brought back (v.27). The peoples were strong and they lived in walled cities that were fortified. There were also the Anakites who were giants (v.28, 33a). The Amalekites were a bedouin-like people who lived in the southern borders of Canaan and in the Sinai peninsula. The Hittites lived in the Hebron region; the Jebusites in Jerusalem; the Amorites in the hills, and the Canaanites proper lived in the low-lying coastal strip of the Mediterranean Sea and in the valleys.⁶

Their reaction to the facts they had gathered was tragic. They displayed a frightened spirit and a lack of trust and faith in God. The adverb “nevertheless” (v.28) betrayed their true feelings of fear and cowardice. They must have exaggerated their report in order to support the opinion that they would not be able to go up against the inhabitants of the land, for the peoples were stronger than they (v.31).

Moreover, certain remarks made by them, showed their lack of faith and inability to see beyond themselves. When they reported to Moses they

referred to the land as “the land whither thou sentest us” (v.27a). They did not refer to it as the land that God had promised and given to them. Hebron was known to them as a very significant place. Abraham bought a piece of real estate there as a burial site for Sarah. He also was buried there, and so were Isaac and Jacob. They did not mention this at all. If the peoples were strong, the cities great and fortified, and the Anakites tall as giants, they failed to realize that God is much stronger, greater, taller and more powerful! They looked to themselves only and not to God who was with them. They assumed that the inhabitants of the land looked upon them as grasshoppers. They actually looked down upon themselves as such. They were not excited and thrilled. They returned a changed group of people who were distressed and downcast.

This evil report was discouraging to the children of Israel. Caleb’s attempt to still the people strongly implied that the people were not happy and disturbed. The majority of them gave a bad report and suggested that it would be fatal for them to enter the land. They would surely die fighting against the peoples of the land. Caleb and Joshua (14:6) thought otherwise. Caleb urged the people to act immediately and claim their inheritance by faith in the God who delights in them, believing He will enable them to overcome the inhabitants of the land (v.8).

⁶ Gordon J. Wenham, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*, 119..

SUMMARY

The issue is clearly spiritual. It is chronicled for our learning and admonition so that we might have confidence and hope.⁷ The issue is not whether the Canaanite cities were great cities, which had high walls, and the inhabitants tall giants, but whether they trusted Yahweh and was prepared to obey Him. The majority of them were not prepared to take God at His word and to act in faith. The opinion of the majority does not mean that it is right. This is the greatest setback in democracy. When it comes to faith and truth, these things cannot be voted upon. Truth and Faith will always be true in themselves from God's standpoint. Therefore God's servants have no right or basis to compromise even when the majority is against them.

The chapter is also about faith and acting on it. Canaan is a picture of heaven in that this was the Promised Land. Heaven is our "Promised Land". In another sense, Canaan is NOT a picture of heaven in that there are no battles to be fought in heaven. Canaan then will be seen as a picture of the inheritance God has intended for each one of His children here on earth. He has work for us to do. He has places

He wants us to live and serve Him. He has blessings for His children. This then will be the "vineyard" that we may testify for Him.

The true nature of unbelief is to put God out of the picture. We cannot claim God to be with us unless we walk daily in the reality of the living and true God, trusting and obeying Him. Many know God academically and intellectually, but few truly know Him experientially. Our knowledge of God that we learn through the Scriptures should not be placed in the shelves of our minds but hidden in our hearts and lived out in our lives. This is the only way to know that God is good and great and is true to all His promises to His people.

Without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). AMEN

⁷ Romans 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

1 Corinthians 10:11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS**

Daily Readings

**Monday: Numbers 13:1-16;
Deuteronomy 1:19-27.**

**Tuesday: Numbers 13:17-20;
Genesis 13:14-18.**

**Wednesday: Numbers 13:21-25;
Joshua 21:45; Hebrews 6:13-18.**

**Thursday: Numbers 13:26-30; 1
Samuel 17:24-37.**

**Friday: Numbers 13:31-33; Esther
4:15-16; Nehemiah 4:21-23.**

**3. Do you think that Christians can
be “spies” today?**

**4. How important are “heads” or
leaders of a nation and in our
church?**

Discussion Questions

**1. Whose idea was it to send spies
into the land of Canaan?**

**2. What do you think of their
proposal to send spies to scout the
land?**

**5. What is in a name? Is it biblical
for a Christian to change his name
and give himself a Christian name
at the time of baptism?**

6. List the specific instructions of Moses to the twelve spies.

7. Why is the Promised Land called the land of milk and honey?

8. What possible reasons could you give for the unbelief of the ten spies?

9. What was the history of Hebron that the people of Israel ought to know?

10. Would you dare to stand for righteousness and Christ even when you are all alone?

11. What three reasons did the people give for not claiming the Promised Land?

12. What do you think was Moses' role during all the debate?

13. What is, in your opinion, the greatest enemy of faith?

14. What valuable lesson(s) have you learned from this chapter?

LIFE APPLICATION

A. We, as Christians, must beware of our complaining, murmuring and a dissatisfied spirit in life.

1. The LORD has revealed that He is displeased when His children complain, murmur and are discontented with what they have.
2. We learn that “godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Timothy 6:6).
3. This attitude of contentment does not mean that we do not improve ourselves.
4. It is rather the spirit of knowing our weaknesses and doing something positive about it instead of complaining and murmuring.

B. Trust and Obey the LORD.

1. The LORD is true to His promises and Word.
2. The Israelites scouted the land and found that the LORD’S promises and Word were ALL true.
3. Instead of putting their faith in the LORD and acting on the commandments of the LORD, they looked to themselves and were discouraged and did not perform what the LORD told them to do.
4. Don’t adopt a “defeatist attitude.”
5. Illustrate with life examples.
6. Mention some of the things we should do that please God.

C. We have to beware that there are some mistakes we cannot afford to make, because the consequence is very costly and we might live to regret them.

1. The example of the Israelites not to enter the land was a terrible mistake, which they could not afford to make.
2. Are there mistakes in our lives that we have made and we now live to regret them each time we are reminded of them because of the consequences we now suffer?
3. However, like Moses, we confess them to the LORD and ask for His grace and mercy that He will work all things for good for His sake.
4. Be careful of our ‘NEVERTHELESS’ in Numbers 13:28.

D. When our ways please the LORD because we fear, trust and obey Him, He will teach us the way that we should go. and we will be at ease and inherit the earth.

Psalm 25:12 What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose. 13 His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth.