

Message #14

Numbers 13:1-33

Many of you will remember a few years ago when we voted to build this new sanctuary. You will remember the night the congregation met to decide whether or not to do it. We were not getting direct revelatory data from God, but we did know some things. We knew that God had given us the land to do it. We knew that our building fund was growing and had reached a significant level. We knew that our church was growing and we could not seat all people at one service. The night we took the vote was exciting. No one tried to manipulate anything. I specifically did not even speak. We decided to let the Holy Spirit work through His people.

There was one guy who stood and really went on a diatribe as to why we should not do it. It was too big. It was too much money. It was not necessary. There was nothing encouraging about what God had done or what God was capable of doing. Frankly, his rambling was negative. When he finally shut up and had his say, we voted and he lost. He and his family stormed out of the church and never came back. Now look what he has missed in these past few years. He has missed out on some of the most wonderful blessings God has ever given to this church. You always miss out when you walk by sight and not by faith.

Any believer who chooses to walk by sight and not by faith will probably end up in serious trouble and will end up missing out on some great blessings of God. One of the most graphic examples of that even to this day is what happened to Israel right here in **Numbers 13**. It is this episode that will cause Israel to forfeit immediate entrance into the Promised Land. This is a tragic failure.

Clear back when God sent Moses to deliver Israel from the tyranny of the Egyptians, He told him that His objective was to take them to a wonderful land. He even told them that the land was presently inhabited by the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite (Ex. 3:8). This wasn't the first time God said who lived in the land. He not only told Moses, but He told Abraham (Gen. 15:18-21). God had promised to Abraham that He would give him and his physical descendants a land (Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 17:8; 28:13; 35:12), and now He told Moses that this is what He would do through him (Ex. 3:17; 6:4, 8; 13:5; 33:3).

So when Moses led Israel through the wilderness by direction of God, this must have been an exciting moment. God has promised to give them a land and they are right there near it. All they had to do to get the land was believe God and obey God, and it would be theirs.

But there was a problem. **Instead of people believing God and keeping their sights fixed on Him, they started looking at the obstacles.** Instead of walking by faith, they decided to walk by sight, and they lost.

GOD SENDS SPIES TO SEE THE PROMISED LAND HE WOULD GIVE ISRAEL, BUT THEY WERE SO INTIMIDATED AND COWARDLY BY WHAT THEY SAW THAT THEY LACKED FAITH GOD WOULD FULFILL HIS WORD AND THEY CAUSED AN ENTIRE NATION TO MISS THE GREAT BLESSINGS OF GOD.

According to **verses 1-2**, the Lord spoke to Moses and told him to send out some men to spy out the land of Canaan “**which I am going to give to the sons of Israel.**” We learn from Deuteronomy 1:22 that some of the leaders approached Moses and asked if they could send spies to check out the Land, so in **verse 2** God accommodated them in their request.

Frankly, they didn’t really need to do this, because God would have just given them the land, but they wanted to look it over first, which was part of their downfall.

Notice God says in **verse 2**, “I am going to give this land to the sons of Israel.” Not I might give or may give; I am going to give it. You can know with absolutely certainty that God will do exactly what He says He will do. He will give Israel this land.

So God says select a different man from each tribe to go see this land.

Verse 3 says Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran at the command of the Lord. So even though they wanted to send men to spy out the land, Moses would not do it until God authorized it.

There are four parts to this narrative:

PART #1 – The men are selected to go spy out the land. **13:4-16**

In **verses 4-16** we get a list of tribes and names of guys who went out to spy the land. These would have been strong, younger men capable of carrying out this assignment:

Tribe #1 - From the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur was sent. **13:4**

Tribe #2 - From the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori was sent. **13:5**

Tribe #3 - From the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh was sent. **13:6**

We first meet Caleb in this verse, but he will be mentioned some 31 more times in the Old Testament.

Tribe #4 - From the tribe of Issachar, Igal the son of Joseph was sent. **13:7**

Tribe #5 - From the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Nun was sent. **13:8**

Moses changed his name from “Hoshea” which means salvation to Joshua which means “Jehovah is salvation” (v. 16).

Tribe #6 - From the tribe of Benjamin, Palti the son of Raphu was sent. **13:9**

Tribe #7 - From the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel the son of Sodi was sent. **13:10**

Tribe #8 - From the tribe of Joseph from Manasseh, Gaddi the son of Susi was sent. **13:11**

Tribe #9 - From the tribe of Dan, Ammiel the son of Gemalli was sent. **13:12**

Tribe #10 - From the tribe of Asher, Sethur the son of Michael was sent. **13:13**

Tribe #11 - From the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi the son of Vophsi was sent. **13:14**

Tribe #12 - From the tribe of Gad, Geuel the son of Machi was sent. **13:15**

This section wraps up by saying Moses changed the name of Hoshea to Joshua (**13:16**). Initially, to be on this list was a great honor. These were leaders of the tribes, and to be selected to go on this mission was a great honor for the man and the tribe and his father and family. But this same list will turn out to be a list of losers, all except two.

I have often wondered in heaven if God will say so you are the guy who didn't think a new church should be built in My honor for Texas Corners Bible Church? So you are the guy who didn't think I could do it. It will be sad, for that person at one time was on the list of being a member. That same list will come back to prove him to be a loser.

PART #2 – Moses instructs the men exactly what to do in spying out the land. **13:17-20**

Moses gave ten very specific assignments to what the men were supposed to do:

(Assignment #1) - He told them to spy out the land of Canaan. **13:17a**

This trip would not be easy. It has been estimated that these guys will travel some 500 miles during the next 40 days of their spying.

(Assignment #2) - He told them the specific route to take to spy out the land. **13:17b**

He said go up into the Negev, which is the southern desert part of the land, and from there head up into the hill country. Now God was directing this route.

(Assignment #3) - He told them to see what the land is like. **13:18a**

(Assignment #4) - He told them to see if the people are strong or weak. **13:18b**

(Assignment #5) - He told them to see if the people are few or many. **13:18c**

(Assignment #6) - He told them to take a look at the land if it is good or bad. **13:19a**

(Assignment #7) - He told them to look at the cities whether they are open or fortified. **13:19b**

(Assignment #8) - He told them to see if the land is fat or lean with crops. **13:20a**

(Assignment #9) - He told them to see if there are trees in the land or not. **13:20b**

(Assignment #10) - He told them to try to bring back some of the fruit. **13:20c**

The time this was happening was the time of the first ripe grapes.

PART #3 – The spies go spy out the land. **13:21-25**

Verse 21 informs us that they went up and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin as far as Rehob at Lebo-hamath. The wilderness of Zin was located north in the land and ran parallel to the wilderness of Paran and was a good place to sneak into the Promised Land.

Verse 22 says while they were in the Negev region, they scouted out Hebron where the Anakim lived. It is located about 19 miles south of Jerusalem. Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai lived there. Anak had lived there, but he lived there pre-Israelite days. These were a war-like people who were very tall and strong.

According to **verse 23**, they scouted out the Valley of Eshcol which was located north of Hebron, which to this day is known for its grapes. It still produces “delicious grapes.” They also took some pomegranates with figs. According to **verse 24**, the name Eschol means cluster, which the sons of Israel cut and took back.

PART #4 – The spies report back to Moses and Aaron. **13:25-33**

According to **verse 25**, after 40 days of spying, they reported back to Moses. In fact, according to **verse 26**, they reported to Moses, Aaron, and all the congregation of Israel in the wilderness. They showed everyone the fruit they brought back from the land.

Now they came back with a report of ten facts:

(Fact #1) - The land is very beautiful and very fruitful. **13:27**

(Fact #2) - The people who live in the land are strong. **13:28a**

(Fact #3) - The cities in the land are fortified. **13:28b**

(Fact #4) - The cities in the land are large. **13:28c**

(Fact #5) - The descendants of Anak the giant live there. **13:28d**

(Fact #6) - Amalek is living in the land of the Negev. **13:29a**

(Fact #7) - The Hittites are living in the hill country. **13:29b**

(Fact #8) - The Jebusites are living in the hill country. **13:29c**

(Fact #9) - The Amorites are living in the hill country. **13:29d**

(Fact #10) - The Canaanites are living by the sea and by the Jordan River. **13:29e**

Now, to this point, it is a very factual and accurate report of what is in the land.

Caleb must have sensed that the people were beginning to feel uneasy about this, so he spoke up and somewhat butted into the report.

According to **verse 30**, Caleb quieted down the people and said we need to go up and take this land because we will surely overcome it. Caleb knew God had promised that land to Israel.

Success was not dependent on them, it was guaranteed by God.

But the other spies who had gone with Caleb said in **verse 31** we can't go up against them, they are too strong for us. They immediately opposed the will of God.

Someone has wisely said, "a committee is a group of people who individually can do nothing and collectively decide nothing can be done."

According to **verse 32**, those other spies started spreading a bad report saying we don't have a chance. We will never do it. We will be eaten alive. We will never be able to accomplish this. In fact, **verse 33** says we saw other giants in the land that make us look like grasshoppers.

It is a shame that some people spend their entire life afraid to, by faith, step out and do something for God. They have to play it safe. What they don't realize is you are a loser. Your name is known as a loser.