

# The Book of Numbers

## The Spies Sent Into Canaan

Text: Numbers 13

### I. The Promise of God

- A. In order to understand fully the events of this chapter, one must remember the promise of God and the previous experiences of the Israelites.
- B. **Genesis 12:1-3** – Over 400 years earlier, God had promised to give the land of Canaan to the descendants of Abraham.
- C. **Exodus 3:8** – From the burning bush, God promised Moses to give the land of Canaan to the children of Israel.
  - 1. Deliver them from Egypt
  - 2. Bring them to the land of Canaan
  - 3. Described the abundance of the land
  - 4. Detailed the inhabitants of the land.
- D. **Exodus 13:1-16** – After the 10<sup>th</sup> Plague in Egypt, God reminded the Israelites of His promise to give them the land of Canaan.
- E. **Exodus 33:1-3** – Even after their sin in making a golden calf, God promised to give them the land of Canaan and to drive out their enemies from the land.
- F. **Leviticus 20:22-24** – God emphasized that the removal of the inhabitants of the land of Canaan was a judgment upon them for their sins.
- G. There should have been no doubt in the minds of the Israelites when it came to taking the land of Canaan.

### II. The Fear of Israel

(Deuteronomy 1:6-33)

- A. Moses reminded the new generation of Israelites of the promise of God (vs. 6-8).
- B. He also reminded them of the fear and doubt of their fathers (vs. 19-33).
  - 1. It is important to note that it was the idea of the people to send spies into the land.
  - 2. It pleased Moses because they claimed that they only wanted to find the best way to go into the land.
  - 3. God allowed it though it was not His command or will.
    - a. He responded the same way when Israel asked for a King.
    - b. God allowed their desire, but did not approve of it (Hosea 13:11).
  - 4. In truth, the Israelites were walking by sight, not by faith.
  - 5. They were convinced of their defeat because they did not believe in God!
- C. Keep in mind the things that had hindered their journey...
  - 1. The golden calf (Exodus 32) – *fear of a lack of leadership, desire for sinful things*
  - 2. Complaining over food (Numbers 11) – *read Psalm 78:17-33*
  - 3. Rebellion of Miriam and Aaron (Numbers 12)
- D. The ten spies who gave an evil report of the land were telling the people exactly what they wanted to hear.
- E. Therefore, God caused that generation to waste their lives in wandering the wilderness.
- F. When man walks by sight, his life is wasted in pursuits that do not bring glory to God and cannot save his soul.

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- III. The Selection of the Spies (Numbers 13:1-16)
- IV. The Instructions of Moses (Numbers 13:17-20)
- A. The word ‘southward’ indicates that they were to enter into the southern part of the land of Canaan.
  - B. The time of ‘first-ripe grapes’ indicates that these events took place in late July – about 2 months after they departed from Mount Sinai.
- V. The Work of the Spies (Numbers 13:21-25)
- A. The spies did as they were told, investigating the entire land of Canaan.
    - 1. The wilderness of Zin lay on the southern border of Canaan.
    - 2. Rehob was located in the north, above what would become the city of Dan (cf. Judges 18:28; 2 Samuel 8:3).
    - 3. This was a distance of about 250 miles, clearly requiring 40 days.
  - B. The name (Eschol meaning, “Cluster”) was given by the spies due to the grapes that were found there.
- VI. The Report of the Spies (Numbers 13:26-33)
- A. First, the spies reported that the land was just as God had described it – flowing with milk and honey.
  - B. Then, their report took on a darker and defeatist tone.
  - C. They claimed that the people of the land were strong.
    - 1. Moses had told them to seek this out using a Hebrew word that means “mighty or stout” (cf. vs. 18).
    - 2. In their report, they used a different Hebrew word meaning, “Fierce, harsh, powerful, or vehement.”
  - D. They claimed the cities were walled – meaning, “Fortified and inaccessible.”
  - E. And, as if to make things worse, they reported last that they had seen the children of Anak.
  - F. Faithful Caleb tried to encourage the people, but they would not be persuaded.
  - G. They determined that the people of the land were not just strong, but stronger than the Israelites (and, therefore, God).
  - H. They changed their report of the land to claim dishonestly that it would swallow them up – “consume or devour.”
  - I. Finally, they claimed that everyone they saw in the land was a man of great stature.
  - J. These three claims were all deliberately dishonest – thus, it is called an “evil report.”
  - K. The root cause of their evil report was an incorrect view of themselves (“as grasshoppers”) and of God.
  - L. This amounted to a lack of faith (cf. Heb. 3:19; Psa. 106:24).