

Adult Bible Class
The Book of Numbers
Lesson #8, Chapters 13 & 14

The Time Has Come!

In Genesis 12 we read that the Lord promised the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants:

Genesis 12:4 (NLT) So Abram departed as the Lord had instructed...Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. **5** He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all his wealth...and headed for the land of Canaan. When they arrived in Canaan, **6** Abram traveled through the land as far as Shechem...At that time, the area was inhabited by Canaanites.
7 Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "I will give this land to your descendants."

God promised Abram, Isaac, and Jacob, that He would give their descendants the land of Canaan. God's promise was yet to be fulfilled when Joseph invited Jacob and his children and grandchildren down to Egypt to escape the great famine. There, they multiplied greatly and became a great people, but Pharaoh enslaved them.

God delivered them from Egypt to fulfill His promise:

Exodus 6:7 (NKJV) I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. **8** And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the Lord."

The initial promise to Abram took 430 years to fulfill (see Galatians 3:16-17).

Exodus 12:40 Now the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. **41** And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years—on that very same day—it came to pass that all the armies of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.

God delivered the Israelites from Egyptian slavery and brought them through the Red Sea, to Mt. Sinai to receive their law, and then to Kadesh-Barnea at the border of the land of Canaan. They were now ready to possess it.

Numbers Chapter 13

When we mention Kadesh (located at the southern border of Canaan), we immediately think of the Israelites encamped there, sending out the twelve spies (Numbers 13). Unfortunately, we also think of their unbelief and rebellion because of the evil report of ten of the spies (Numbers 14). To people who read the Bible, the name "Kadesh" brings to mind unbelief, disobedience, and failure. It is a sad story of God's people rejecting faith in their faithful God and embracing fear.

All of Genesis 12 to Numbers 13 is leading to this point - where Israel has the opportunity to enter the Promised Land and take it as their own. God had promised

it to them for generations, but when it came time, they stood on fear instead of faith and they failed. Let's read the story:

Twelve Scouts Explore Canaan

Numbers 13:1 (NLT) The Lord now said to Moses, **2** "Send out men to explore the land of Canaan, the land I am giving to the Israelites. Send one leader from each of the twelve ancestral tribes." **3** So Moses did as the Lord commanded him. He sent out twelve men, all tribal leaders of Israel, from their camp in the wilderness of Paran.

Let's read this same account from Deuteronomy to get the complete picture of what happened:

Deuteronomy 1:19 (NKJV) "So we departed from Horeb, and went through all that great and terrible wilderness... Then we came to Kadesh Barnea. **20** And I said to you... **21** Look, the Lord your God has set the land before you; go up and possess it, as the Lord God of your fathers has spoken to you; do not fear or be discouraged.'

22 "And every one of you came near to me and said, 'Let us send men before us, and let them search out the land for us, and bring back word to us of the way by which we should go up, and of the cities into which we shall come.'

23 "The plan pleased me well; so I took twelve of your men, one man from each tribe.

The initial plan was just to go up and possess the land, for God had already promised it to them. However, we read from Deuteronomy that the people wanted to send spies so they could figure out a strategy for taking the land (which is not a bad thing). Moses must have brought the idea to the Lord and the Lord must have told him to go ahead with it. Numbers said that *the Lord* told Moses to send out men to "spy out" the land. Understand that this idea came from the people first and then God gave them the go-ahead.

The names of the twelve spies are listed in Numbers:

Numbers 13:4 (NLT) These were the tribes and the names of their leaders:

Tribe	Leader
Reuben	Shammua son of Zaccur
5 Simeon	Shaphat son of Hori
6 Judah	Caleb son of Jephunneh
7 Issachar	Igal son of Joseph
8 Ephraim	Hoshea son of Nun
9 Benjamin	Palti son of Raphu
10 Zebulun	Gaddiel son of Sodi
11 Manasseh	son of Joseph Gaddi son of Susi
12 Dan	Ammiel son of Gemalli
13 Asher	Sethur son of Michael
14 Naphtali	Nahbi son of Vophsi
15 Gad	Geuel son of Maki

16 These are the names of the men Moses sent out to explore the land. (Moses called Hoshea son of Nun by the name Joshua.)

Joshua is mentioned in the Scripture above. The name *Joshua* means "God is salvation." This is the Hebrew pronunciation for the same name given in Greek in

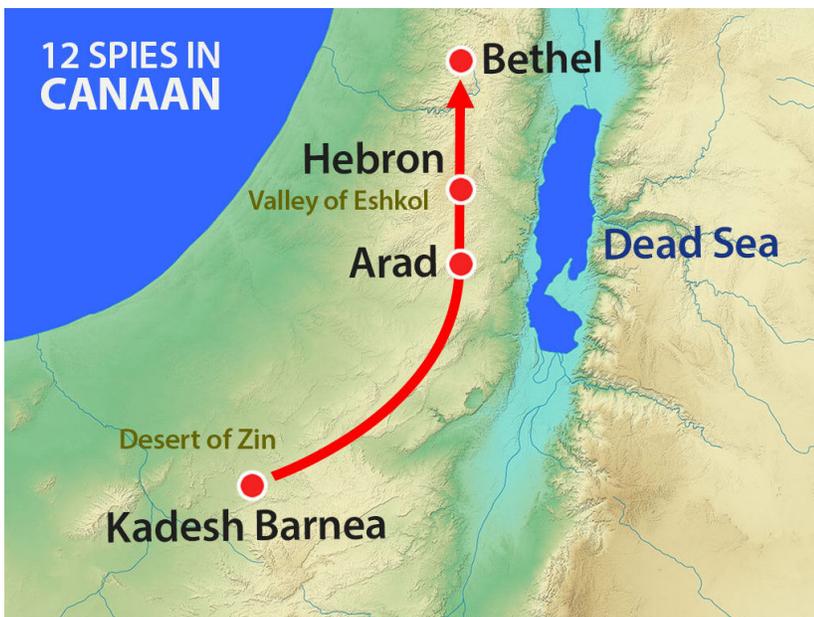
the New Testament - *Jesus* - “God is salvation.” Joshua in Scripture is a type of Jesus Christ, the conquerer and the one who leads us to the Promised Land.

Numbers 13:17 Moses gave the men these instructions as he sent them out to explore the land: “Go north through the Negev into the hill country. **18** See what the land is like, and find out whether the people living there are strong or weak, few or many. **19** See what kind of land they live in. Is it good or bad? Do their towns have walls, or are they unprotected like open camps? **20** Is the soil fertile or poor? Are there many trees? Do your best to bring back samples of the crops you see.” (It happened to be the season for harvesting the first ripe grapes.)

21 So they went up and explored the land from the wilderness of Zin as far as Rehob, near Lebohamath. **22** Going north, they passed through the Negev and arrived at Hebron, where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi—all descendants of Anak—lived. (The ancient town of Hebron was founded seven years before the Egyptian city of Zoan.)

The descendants of Anak (the Anakim) were a giant, warlike people who lived in southern Canaan near Hebron (Deut. 9:2). Anak, son of Arba, was regarded as “the greatest man among the Anakim” (Joshua 15:13, 21:11). Though Joshua and Caleb conquered the giant Anakim, a small remnant lived in the land of the Philistines. It is assumed that Goliath of Gath was a descendant of the Anakim.

23 When they came to the valley of Eshkol, they cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes so large that it took two of them to carry it on a pole between them! They also brought back samples of the pomegranates and figs. **24** That place was called the valley of Eshkol (which means “cluster”), because of the cluster of grapes the Israelite men cut there.



The Scouting Report

25 After exploring the land for forty days, the men returned **26** to Moses, Aaron, and the whole community of Israel at Kadesh in the wilderness of Paran. They reported to the whole community what they had seen and showed them the fruit they had taken from the land. **27** This was their report to Moses: “We entered the land you sent us to explore, and it is indeed a bountiful country—a land flowing with milk and honey. Here is the kind of fruit it produces. **28** But the people living there are powerful, and their towns are large and fortified. We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak! **29** The Amalekites live in the Negev, and the Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites live

along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and along the Jordan Valley.”

The Israelites had already fought against the Amalekites at Rephidim (Exodus 17:8-16). They were a semi-nomadic people who attacked Israel during their travels for no reason. God pronounced judgment upon them because of it (Deut. 25:17-19).

The Amorites lived in Canaan also. Two Amorite kings - Sihon and Og - were defeated later under Moses' leadership and then under Joshua. Og was a giant - his bed was over thirteen feet long (Deut. 3:11).

30 But Caleb tried to quiet the people as they stood before Moses. "Let's go at once to take the land," he said. "We can certainly conquer it!"

31 But the other men who had explored the land with him disagreed. "We can't go up against them! They are stronger than we are!" **32** So they spread this bad report about the land among the Israelites: "The land we traveled through and explored will devour anyone who goes to live there. All the people we saw were huge. 33 We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak. Next to them we felt like grasshoppers, and that's what they thought, too!"

While they were to explore the land to plan their strategy for taking it, the Israelites were not supposed to use this spy mission to refute the promise of God, saying that it was impossible to take the land. They would have been better off not sending the spies than to allow this human effort to shake their faith. God would never have promised them a land that He was unable or unwilling to help them conquer.

Numbers Chapter 14

Numbers 14:1 (NLT) Then the whole community began weeping aloud, and they cried all night. **2** Their voices rose in a great chorus of protest against Moses and Aaron. "If only we had died in Egypt, or even here in the wilderness!" they complained. **3** "Why is the Lord taking us to this country only to have us die in battle? Our wives and our little ones will be carried off as plunder! Wouldn't it be better for us to return to Egypt?" **4** Then they plotted among themselves, "Let's choose a new leader and go back to Egypt!"

When the spies came back with their report, they said, "*All the people we saw were huge*" (Numbers 13:32). Though giant people are recorded, *not all* of them were giants. Canaan was a mix of different nations, most of whom did not have giants among them at all. The spies greatly exaggerated what they saw. This is a condition of a fearful, unbelieving heart.

Israel had experienced the deliverance of the Passover. They had walked through the Red Sea. They were led about by the pillar of cloud and fire. But now they set their affections on the past. Their memories of life "back in Egypt" are distorted - *Wouldn't it be better for us to return to Egypt?* Often "the good 'ol days" are in reality not as good as our memories would claim them to be. Israel had said before that Egypt was good and their current situation was bad. Now, they said it again after the report from the spies came back to them

5 Then Moses and Aaron fell face down on the ground before the whole community of Israel. **6** Two of the men who had explored the land, Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, tore their clothing. **7** They said to all the people of Israel, "The land we traveled through and explored is a wonderful land! **8** And if the Lord is pleased with us, he will bring us safely into that land and give it to us. It is a rich land flowing with milk and honey. **9** Do not rebel against the Lord, and don't be afraid of the people of the land. They are only helpless prey to us! They have no protection, but the Lord is with us! Don't be afraid of them!"

10 But the whole community began to talk about stoning Joshua and Caleb...

Israel's Great Sin - Unbelief

We know that Israel feared the unknown (although God had told them their future). They feared failure. They doubted and discarded the promises of God. They distorted their memories of what life was like back in Egypt. They disobeyed God and His servant, Moses. They reacted to their fears, and they did not stand of the promises of God.

Israel's behavior at Kadesh was based on unbelief. They were selfish - it was all about them and not about the great God that had delivered them and kept them thus far. God's people must have faith in Him:

Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV) But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Israel's failure at Kadesh was so complete that God told Moses:

Numbers 14:10b ...Then the glorious presence of the Lord appeared to all the Israelites at the Tabernacle. 11 And the Lord said to Moses, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? Will they never believe me, even after all the miraculous signs I have done among them? 12 I will disown them and destroy them with a plague. Then I will make you into a nation greater and mightier than they are!"

Things were at a low point. God threatened to destroy all of them but Moses (something He had done previously at the incident of the golden calf in Exodus 32:10).

After their great rebellion we see Moses, once again, as intercessor before God:

Numbers 14:13 (NLT) But Moses objected. "What will the Egyptians think when they hear about it?" he asked the Lord. "They know full well the power you displayed in rescuing your people from Egypt. **14** Now if you destroy them, the Egyptians will send a report to the inhabitants of this land, who have already heard that you live among your people. They know, Lord, that you have appeared to your people face to face and that your pillar of cloud hovers over them. They know that you go before them in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. **15** Now if you slaughter all these people with a single blow, the nations that have heard of your fame will say, **16** 'The Lord was not able to bring them into the land he swore to give them, so he killed them in the wilderness.'

17 "Please, Lord, prove that your power is as great as you have claimed. For you said, **18** 'The Lord is slow to anger and filled with unfailing love, forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion. But he does not excuse the guilty. He lays the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations.' **19** In keeping with your magnificent, unfailing love, please pardon the sins of this people, just as you have forgiven them ever since they left Egypt."

Moses interceded for Israel in the greatest way possible. He pleaded with God based on God's honor and reputation. Our God is altogether righteous - there is no sin in Him at all. Everything about Him is righteous, just, and holy. When He corrects His children it is for their good. Everything He does is for the best. However, God's actions are sometimes perceived by men to be unrighteous.

The children of Israel were selfish and unbelieving. But Moses reminded God that His reputation was at stake. God's honor needed to be protected. The Egyptians and other outlying nations knew that the Hebrew God had delivered the Israelites by His mighty hand. These idolatrous nations thought of their own gods as imperfect and even immoral. Moses pleaded with God that, although His people deserved to be "disowned and destroyed with a plague," yet this would not be the best for God's honor and reputation. If God did this, it would provide an opportunity for the pagan nations to say, "See there, I told you so! Their God brought them out of Egypt, but He wasn't powerful enough to give them Canaan!" For God's sake and reputation, God needed to spare them.

The greatest thing that we can do to honor God is to believe Him! It has been said, "With God on our side, we are a majority." This statement is true because God plus one believing, obedient person makes a majority over the entire human population. This is because God, as our Creator and our Savior, is by His nature all-powerful. Therefore, any person aligned with Him is in the majority over any foe. Belief and faith in His promised Word will win the victory - which brings honor to God. By ourselves we do not have the strength or power to be victorious, but with God any amount of strength we have will be enough because it is really God that brings the victory. It is not our strength, but it is our faith in God that brings victory.

Moses was able, through His intercession, to save the Israelites *from immediate destruction*. However,

Numbers 14:20 Then the Lord said, "I will pardon them as you have requested. **21** But as surely as I live, and as surely as the earth is filled with the Lord's glory, **22** not one of these people will ever enter that land. They have all seen my glorious presence and the miraculous signs I performed both in Egypt and in the wilderness, but again and again they have tested me by refusing to listen to my voice. **23** They will never even see the land I swore to give their ancestors. None of those who have treated me with contempt will ever see it. **24** But my servant Caleb has a different attitude than the others have. He has remained loyal to me, so I will bring him into the land he explored. His descendants will possess their full share of that land. **25** Now turn around, and don't go on toward the land where the Amalekites and Canaanites live. Tomorrow you must set out for the wilderness in the direction of the Red Sea."

The Lord Punishes the Israelites

26 Then the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, **27** "How long must I put up with this wicked community and its complaints about me? Yes, I have heard the complaints the Israelites are making against me. **28** Now tell them this: 'As surely as I live, declares the Lord, I will do to you the very things I heard you say. **29** You will all drop dead in this wilderness! Because you complained against me, every one of you who is twenty years old or older and was included in the registration will die. **30** You will not enter and occupy the land I swore to give you. The only exceptions will be Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.

The rebellion of the Israelites was not just a little wobbling of faith, but it was an all-out rejection of God, His Word, and his servant Moses and a desire to go back to Egypt. These rebels threatened to stone Joshua and Caleb, the only ones with a good and faithful report.

Sinners are more likely to believe lies and distrust true witnesses. Sound arguments from God's Word are rejected in favor of exaggerated testimonies of

weak, unspiritual men. Good people - people who are faithful and chosen by God - are rejected, and rebels are treated like they are the depository of godly wisdom.

Our words are important - they must be words of faith and confidence in God's Word. We must speak highly of God, His people, His leaders, His institution of the church, and His work among men. Being a naysayer because of unbelief is a serious matter.

Moses' intercession was able to save Israel from immediate destruction. But there were limits to what his intercessory prayer could do. Moses was not able to save the older generation, but He was able to save the younger generation.

Numbers 14:30 You will not enter and occupy the land I swore to give you. The only exceptions will be Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.

31 "You said your children would be carried off as plunder. Well, I will bring them safely into the land, and they will enjoy what you have despised. **32** But as for you, you will drop dead in this wilderness. **33** And your children will be like shepherds, wandering in the wilderness for forty years. In this way, they will pay for your faithlessness, until the last of you lies dead in the wilderness.

34 "Because your men explored the land for forty days, you must wander in the wilderness for forty years—a year for each day, suffering the consequences of your sins. Then you will discover what it is like to have me for an enemy.' **35** I, the Lord, have spoken! I will certainly do these things to every member of the community who has conspired against me. They will be destroyed here in this wilderness, and here they will die!"

36 The ten men Moses had sent to explore the land—the ones who incited rebellion against the Lord with their bad report— **37** were struck dead with a plague before the Lord. **38** Of the twelve who had explored the land, only Joshua and Caleb remained alive.

After the rebellion, God told them to turn around and head back toward the wilderness, but this temporarily spared group of people did a crazy thing:

39 When Moses reported the Lord's words to all the Israelites, the people were filled with grief. **40** Then they got up early the next morning and went to the top of the range of hills. "Let's go," they said. "We realize that we have sinned, but now we are ready to enter the land the Lord has promised us."

41 But Moses said, "Why are you now disobeying the Lord's orders to return to the wilderness? It won't work. **42** Do not go up into the land now. You will only be crushed by your enemies because the Lord is not with you. **43** When you face the Amalekites and Canaanites in battle, you will be slaughtered. The Lord will abandon you because you have abandoned the Lord."

44 But the people defiantly pushed ahead toward the hill country, even though neither Moses nor the Ark of the Lord's Covenant left the camp. **45** Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in those hills came down and attacked them and chased them back as far as Hormah.

The people were formerly afraid of entering and taking the Promised Land. Now they are afraid of the words of God through Moses - they are filled with grief, but not with repentance. They seem incapable of obeying the Lord.

The next day they react when they should have repented. What they thought was impossible yesterday is now, in their minds, an achievable thing today! However, the opposite is true! What they were well able to do yesterday is off-limits to them today!

The Israelites go without prayer, without God, without Moses, without the cloud leading them, without the Ark of the Covenant going before them. It is too late. The offer to that generation is lost. They had their moment in time but they lost it because of unbelief. What they should have done yesterday they attempt today, but the result is absolute defeat, and they are humbled by their enemies. They make God look bad.

The Israelites walked in unbelief instead of faith. Their grief was the result of a guilty conscience, it was because they had suffered loss. All they wanted was for the suffering to be taken away and the hurt to be gone. There was no repentance or shame. Self-will still prevailed as they went in their own strength to “enter the land the Lord has promised us.” A false report from the spies resulted in selfishness which resulted in disbelieving God which resulted in their utter failure.

Why do people walk in unbelief? Fear generates unbelief - fear that the enemy is too strong, fear in our weaknesses, fear of that “in-between time” before victory comes.

Christians today should be like Caleb, telling our brothers and sisters that they can be victorious in Jesus Christ. There are many promises to claim, much land to conquer. We can do it in Jesus’ name.

In Conclusion

Faith must be based on the Word of God. The Israelites had God’s promise that He was going to give them the land. They did not act upon God’s promise to them, replacing God’s promise with their own vain ideas. They lost out with God, their carcasses falling in the wilderness.

Romans 10:17 (NKJV) So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

If faith is based upon the Word of God, then it makes sense that we study His Word to know what God expects of us and to know what promises are ours. One of the greatest gifts that God gives us is a man of God who can lead us in our study and knowledge of His Word and His ways.

The New Testament tells of their unbelief:

Hebrews 3:15 Remember what it says:

“Today when you hear his voice,
don’t harden your hearts
as Israel did when they rebelled.”

16 And who was it who rebelled against God, even though they heard his voice? Wasn’t it the people Moses led out of Egypt? **17** And who made God angry for forty years? Wasn’t it the people who sinned, whose corpses lay in the wilderness? **18** And to whom was God speaking when he took an oath that they would never enter his rest? Wasn’t it the people who disobeyed him? **19** So we see that because of their unbelief they were not able to enter his rest.

Our initial salvation is for a purpose - *God’s* purpose. God wants us to live in victory, destroying those things that would, if left to live, destroy us. For the

Israelites it was nations of people that had lived in the land but had sinned greatly. God eventually used the Israelites to judge them and destroy them.

But for Christians, our battles are not physical battles against flesh and blood.

Ephesians 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

The battles in Old Testament days are a picture to us of spiritual battles that we must fight and win in prayer with faith. Nations and governments fight physical battles today, but the Christian fights the battle against the flesh, the battle against evil influences, the battle against spiritual apathy, etc.

Having lived in the wilderness for some time where one has to survive on manna from the hand of God, the Israelites tasted of the Promised Land (the grapes) and knew what it held. That manna is likened to the Word of God that feeds us and leads us into victorious Christian living. But in the Promised Land are the fruits of victorious living in Christ. There in Canaan is victory over the enemy.

What did the Israelites not like about Canaan? What made them reject it? It was the fact that there were enemies there, and they were going to have to fight them. These enemies practiced false doctrine (they worshiped idols) and they practiced immorality and wickedness. This Christian life is a life of fighting against spiritual enemies. It's them or us. However, through Christ, we are well able to win the victory over them. Jesus has empowered us to be victorious, and He expects us to fight and win.

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.