

Numbers 13 - Thursday, August 26th, 2010

13:1 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel; from each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, every one a leader among them."

- At first glance, it seems sending men to spy out the land was according to God's plan, but upon further investigation we see that it's not.
- If we turn to Deuteronomy 1:19-25 we get a more detailed account of what really happened and why these spies were actually sent out.

Deuteronomy 1:19-25 19 Then, as the LORD our God commanded us, we set out from Horeb and went toward the hill country of the Amorites through all that vast and dreadful desert that you have seen, and so we reached Kadesh Barnea. 20 Then I said to you, "You have reached the hill country of the Amorites, which the LORD our God is giving us. 21 See, the LORD your God has given you the land. Go up and take possession of it as the LORD, the God of your fathers, told you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." 22 Then all of you came to me and said, "Let us send men ahead to spy out the land for us and bring back a report about the route we are to take and the towns we will come to." 23 The idea seemed good to me; so I selected twelve of you, one man from each tribe. 24 They left and went up into the hill country, and came to the Valley of Eshcol and explored it. 25 Taking with them some of the fruit of the land, they brought it down to us and reported, "It is a good land that the LORD our God is giving us." NIV

- In other words, the spies were sent out because the people came to Moses and persuaded him to do it, not because God said to do it.
- Again, at first glance, it would seem that this was what God wanted because it says that it was according to the command of the Lord.
- The thought is that the Lord is permitting it because the people were insisting on it, and that God won't force His will on His people.

"Because of the hardness of the people's hearts, the Lord permitted Moses to send spies."

Charles Spurgeon

- One commentator has suggested that this is God giving them over to what they wanted in the demanding of their own way and own will.
- Another has suggested that this was according to the command of the Lord because God would use this as a testing of Israel's faith.
- It's important that we know and understand the "why" behind "what" is happening here because of the lessons that can be learned here.

- The first lesson that we can learn from knowing what happened, and why it may have happened, is to resist the manipulation of man.
- It seems that, after the false accusations against him, Moses may have just acquiesced to the people, because of his reluctance.

"Whenever we need the compliments or reinforcement of men or their approval, we become dangerously subject to ...manipulation and bondage. ... If you attempt to move me to actions of your choice through guilt, I simply remember the words of Paul, ...there is now no condemnation (guilt) for those who are in Christ Jesus, (Rom. 8:1) Armed with that reinforcement, I resist gladly."

Gayle Erwin, "Handbook for Servants" pp 20 21

- The second lesson we can learn from knowing both what happened and why it happened, is to accept, by faith, the direction of God.
- The Lord already promised them the Promised-Land! It was their un-belief that caused them to send the spies out to first check it out.

"It had been far better for them to have believed the Word of the Lord, and to have followed the pillar of cloud. How foolish for them to have the land spied out which the Lord had long before spied out for them."

Charles Spurgeon

- Needless to say, but this proves to be a very costly mistake for everyone but two of the twelve, in that it costs them the Promised-Land.
- We'll see this play out in the next chapter when God strikes 10 of the 12 with a plague and leaving only Joshua and Caleb.

Numbers 14:36-38 36 So the men Moses had sent to explore the land, who returned and made the whole community grumble against him by spreading a bad report about it-- 37 these men responsible for spreading the bad report about the land were struck down and died of a plague before the LORD. 38 Of the men who went to explore the land, only Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh survived. NIV

3 So Moses sent them from the Wilderness of Paran according to the command of the LORD, all of them men who were heads of the children of Israel.4 Now these were their names: from the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur;5 from the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori;6 from the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh;7 from the tribe of Issachar, Igal the son of Joseph;8 from the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Nun;9 from the tribe of Benjamin, Palti the son of Raphu;10 from the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel the son of Sodi;11 from the tribe of Joseph, that is, from the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi the son of Susi;12 from the tribe of Dan, Ammiel the son of Gemalli;13 from the tribe of Asher, Sethur the son of Michael;14 from the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi the son of Vophsi;15 from the tribe of Gad, Geuel the son of Machi. 16 These are the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun, Joshua.

- There's something that can be easily missed in this list of names. Notice that it is the leaders of each of their tribes that are sent out.
- Perhaps the lesson to be learned is that even leaders are prone to un-belief in their unwillingness to, by faith, simply trust in the Lord.
- Conspicuously absent from the narrative is anyone of these leaders taking a stand and saying that to do this is a terrible mistake.

17 Then Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, "Go up this way into the South, and go up to the mountains, 18 and see what the land is like: whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, few or many; 19 whether the land they dwell in is good or bad; whether the cities they inhabit are like camps or strongholds; 20 whether the land is rich or poor; and whether there are forests there or not. Be of good courage. And bring some of the fruit of the land." Now the time was the season of the first ripe grapes.

- Here, Moses gives them the green light to spy out the land to see what it's like, and what the people are like, whether good or bad.
- Clearly, they want to see the unseen, and this would stand to reason given that they've abandoned the journey of faith walking by sight.
- We've all heard the saying; "seeing is believing," but "seeing" is the antithesis of faith, and without faith it's impossible to please God.

- Be that as it may, one commentator brought up a very good point in asking what Moses would have done if the land was not good.
- In other words, "if the land wasn't flowing with milk and honey, and there were no grapes, would they have gone back to Egypt?"
- Sadly, this is the case with many who become disenchanted with the Lord in their walk with Jesus Christ. They backslide into the world.

21 So they went up and spied out the land from the Wilderness of Zin as far as Rehob, near the entrance of Hamath. 22 And they went up through the South and came to Hebron; Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, the descendants of Anak, were there. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) 23 Then they came to the Valley of Eshcol, and there cut down a branch with one cluster of grapes; they carried it between two of them on a pole. They also brought some of the pomegranates and figs. 24 The place was called the Valley of Eshcol, because of the cluster which the men of Israel cut down there.

- It's interesting that they find exactly what God said they would find in Exodus 3 verse 8, a "good and large land," with very large grapes.
- The grapes are so large that it took two men and a pole to carry just one cluster. I don't care who you are, there are some big grapes!
- Would to God that we would simply believe that when God says it; that settles it. This is what God said about the Promised Land.

25 And they returned from spying out the land after forty days. 26 Now they departed and came back to Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land.

- Notice that we are given this detail of it taking forty days to spy out the land. At the end of the forty days, they return to the Israelites.
- In the scriptures, "40" is the number of trials and testings, and this is exactly what God is doing; He is testing them, but they will fail.
- For each day that they spied out the land, they would spend one year bearing their iniquities wandering for forty years in the wilderness.

"Every day of spying cast Israel a year of wondering. Walking by sight is expensive work."

Charles Spurgeon

"There are eight great periods of testing's revealed in the Word of God."

1. Moses was in the mountain of Sinai forty days and nights receiving the law. (Exodus 24:18)
2. Israel fell under this forty days of testing that led to the making of the golden calf. (Exodus 32.2-7)
3. The Israelites were tried forty years in the wilderness. (Numbers 14:34)
4. Forty days Elijah spent in Horeb after his experience on Mt. Carmel. (1 Kings 19:8)
5. Forty days Jonah preached judgment would come to the city of Ninevah. (Jonah 3:4)
6. Forty days Ezekiel laid on his right side to symbolize the forty years of Judah's transgression. (Ezekiel 4:6)
7. Our Savior was tempted forty days and nights by the Devil. (Luke 4:1-2)
8. Forty days Jesus was seen of His disciples speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. (Acts 1:3)

Biblical Mathematics "Ed Vallowe" p.p. 174, 175

- I don't think it's a coincidence that there are eight testing's of period's of 40" in the Bible because "8" is the number of new beginnings.
- It's as if God is saying; if we fail He's the God of endless chances, fresh start's, new beginnings, and the scriptures bring this to bear.

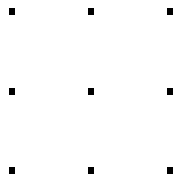
27 Then they told him, and said: "We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. 28 Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there. 29 The Amalekites dwell in the land of the South; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the banks of the Jordan."

- This is absolutely astonishing! Listen to what they are saying; "Moses, the land was exactly as God had promised it would be, but!"
- In other words, even though seeing is believing, they're still not believing even though they're seeing, because their faith is too small.
- I would suggest that their faith is too small, because their God is too small, and no matter what God says or does will never be enough.

- When they say; "the people who live there are powerful," what they're really saying is; "God is not powerful and our numbers too small!"
- When they say; "the cities are fortified and very large," they're actually saying; "our God is not very large and our strength is too small!"
- When they say; "We saw descendants of Anak," what they're saying is; "their men were big and our God and our people are too small!"
- When they say; "The Amalekites, Hittites, Jebusites Amorites and Canaanites live there," they're saying the Promised-Land is too small!

- Suffice it to say that this report puts their big God in a small box, and in so doing will never experience what God is capable of doing.
- Perhaps you'll indulge me for just a moment as I demonstrate this with an experiment that can be performed with a pencil and paper.

- Draw nine dots arranged in rows of three in the shape of a box as they are in this illustration that is pictured here.
- Now connect all nine dots in this box using only four straight lines without lifting your pencil from the paper.



- It's only when we go outside the "proverbial box," with "bigger" lines that we're able to accomplish it and connect all nine of the dots.
- So too is it true when we go outside the "proverbial finite box" of what we see, and trust in an infinitely bigger God Whom we can't see.
- I would suggest that only those who believe in a big God, to do big things, will be the ones who "according to their faith will it be done."
- There's a fascinating account of Jesus healing two blind men because they had the faith to believe God and it was done accordingly.

Matthew 9:27-31 27 As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" 28 When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" "Yes, Lord," they replied. 29 Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith will it be done to you"; 30 and their sight was restored. Jesus warned them sternly, "See that no one knows about this." 31 But they went out and spread the news about him all over that region. NIV

- I think it would be incumbent on me to take it a step further; not only do some make God small, but they make others make God small.
- As we'll see in the next chapter, it's this report from these 10 spies that will so discourage the Israelites, that they murmur against God.

"Thus the report of sight was altogether discouraging. How much better would it have been for Israel had they walked by faith! Every circumstance which would discourage the heart these spies took careful note of, but they omitted, or misinterpreted many helpful tokens. If we will leave the line of faith, we are sure to be sorely put to it."

Charles Spurgeon

30 Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it." 31 But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." 32 And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. 33 There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

- For Caleb to quiet them and speak up is absolutely remarkable, and would have taken an enormous amount of strength and boldness.
- However, even that's not enough, and we see how the other spies with exaggerated claims continue to give the Israelites a bad report.
- It's unfortunate that the translators chose to end with a chapter break at this point, because chapters 13 and 14 should really be one.

- I would like to close this study of this chapter by attempting to answer a question: "why did ten have a bad report; and two a good one?"
- If you really think about it, they all saw the same thing, carried the same big grapes, and yet they had a completely different account.
- I believe the difference is that Joshua and Caleb responded because of their faith, while the other ten reacted because of their feelings.

"...feelings fickle as they are, become terrible tyrants when they are the rulers of our lives rather than mere providers of information. For this reason, we must somehow rule them in order to establish their role in a healthy way." ... "I believe that feelings are the results of many things, but truth may or may not have anything to do with them. ... Facts are merely supposedly accurate bits of information about the world. Feelings are our emotional responses to information, truth, and experiences. With those definitions, let us propose some situations. What if my friends are planning a surprise birthday party for me, and, as I notice what seems to be strange behavior, I become angry and think they are doing something bad. Regardless of my observations, the truth of the matter is different from the reactions of my emotions. Consequently, I must call my feelings liars. ... Does this mean that feelings are not real? No. Feelings, though real, are neutral (neither good nor bad) but they are not always accurate. When they do not reflect what we know to be true, ... then we must be brave enough to call our feelings liars and act out of what we know to be the truth rather than our feelings."

Gayle Erwin "Handbook for Servants" pp 135 136