

# Numbers 13-14

## October 23, 2011

**13:1-33** In **chapter 13** the children of Israel sent spies in to check out the land before they entered. Was this an act of faith or of unbelief to send in the spies?

- It might seem to be an act of unbelief. It might appear that they were unwilling to trust God (which, in the end, they were) so they went in to see for themselves. In this case, however, it was the Lord who told them to send in the spies (see verses 1 to 2).

**Why do you think that God wanted them to see the land and the people who were in it?**

- God wanted them to see the fruitfulness of the land, therefore He told them to bring back some of its fruit (1:20). He also wanted them to see that taking the land was not going to be easy (giants and walled cities).

**Why would God want them to know up front how difficult taking the land would be?**

- He wanted them to realize that they had to trust Him. When we have fear and doubt but trust God anyway, we see what He can do and know how real that He is.

**13:22,33** In **verses 22 and 33** we learn that the Anak (*AY-nak*) or Nephilim (*NEHF-ih-lihm*) dwelt in the land. The children of Israel were supposed to destroy these wicked people when they entered the land later (**Deuteronomy 20:16-18**) but they did not. Some of their descendants, Goliath (**1 Samuel 17:4**) and four other giants (**1 Chronicles 20:4-8**), fought later against Israel. What might we learn today from Israel's failure to kill those giants when they entered the land?

- There are "battles" in our lives that must be fought. If we avoid and postpone them, we just push them back to another day. Had Joshua and Israel killed the giants, David would not have had to face Goliath. David was young and could have killed all **five giants** when he killed Goliath; he had "**five**" stones (**1 Samuel 17:40**). Later, as an older man, he was unable to kill the giants; these other four, younger men had to help him. The "earlier" we conquer our "enemies" (selfishness, lust, envy, greed, pride, etc.) the easier it is to defeat them.

The Bible teaches that we pass our sins down to our children and grandchildren (**Exodus 20:5**). If we don't defeat our "sin-giants", then our children and grandchildren will likely struggle with those same sins. If we defeat our sin-giants, though, we might be delivering our children and their children from those battles.

**13:25-33** In **verses 25 to 33**, what all do we learn about the **10 spies** who gave the "majority" report?

- Those **ten men** focused more on the obstacles than they did the opportunities in the land ("It's a great land, but..."). They walked by "sight", not by faith (**2 Corinthians 5:7 – In Genesis 13:10** Lot "lifted up his eyes" and chose Sodom and Gomorrah). They, therefore, were driven by fear rather than trust. They measured their capability by what they thought they could do, not by what God could do. They did what small-minded, fearful people do: they exaggerated. Did the land actually *devour* the people who lived there? Were *all of the people men of great size*?

**13:33** What do we learn from the statement in **verse 33** about being *grasshoppers*?

- They were small *in their own sight*...SO...THEREFORE...others viewed them as grasshoppers.

We don't see the world as it is as much as we see the world as we are. **Proverbs 23:7** says *As a man thinks within himself, so he is*. Others will perceive us as we perceive ourselves; we determine how they see us. Caleb and Joshua saw everything that the ten saw, but they interpreted the information in a completely opposite way. Caleb and Joshua *did not* see themselves as grasshoppers. They were focused on the strength of God, not upon the size of the walls and giants or on the incapability of Israel. Faith is not denying reality, but trusting in a greater reality...God. **See Romans 4:17-21**. Abraham chose to believe God in the face of seemingly impossible circumstances; faith is a choice.

#### **14:1-4** What do we learn about the people in **chapter 14 verses 1 to 4**?

- Notice that “all the congregation” wept (**vs. 1**) and that the “whole congregation” begins to wish that they were dead (**vs. 2**). They assumed that they and their wives and children were all going to die. They wanted to pick a new leader and return to Egypt.

#### **What do you make of their idea of returning to Egypt?**

- Remember that God had destroyed Egypt with the plagues and that all of the firstborn people and animals had died. They would not have been welcomed back and the Egyptians would surely have killed them all. They assumed that they would all die trying to take the land; the truth is more likely that they would all die if they returned to Egypt. And you'll see that the **wives** and **children (19 and under)** *did* enter the land and that the “men” **20 and older** all died in the wilderness except for **Caleb** and **Joshua (14:29; 26:65; 32:11-12)**.

#### **Look at the first part of verse 3: what was their opinion of God?**

- They saw God as the “taker” not as the “giver”. **See John 10:10**. They assumed that God was not good so He brought them out of Egypt just to have them killed. Even after all of the miracles of provision and protection, they still did not trust God to take care of them.

#### **Do you think that more people see God as a giver or as a taker? Explain your answer.**

- We withhold our lives (our time, talents, and resources) from God because we assume that if we do what God says then we will somehow lose and not win.

**Have you thought about the fact that they were where they were because God had miraculously led them with a cloud by day and a fire by night? Yet they still assumed that they were in the “wrong” place.**

#### **14:5-10** What happens in **verses 5 to 10**?

- **Moses, Aaron, Caleb, and Joshua** realized that **God** would be angry with their rebellion and their unwillingness to trust Him. Caleb and Joshua tell the people that the Lord is with Israel and that the people of the land will be *their* prey.

#### **What did the people want to do to Caleb and Joshua and why?**

- They wanted to stone (kill) them. People love darkness more than light (**John 3:19**). Unrighteous people can easily “hate” those who follow God because the godly life convicts them of their sin (**John 15:18**). Many a prophet and preacher has been “crucified” (fired, silenced, discredited) by the people who have been rebuked by a godly life or message.

#### **14:11-19** What takes place in **verses 11 to 19**?

- God plans to destroy the people but Moses intercedes for them and asks Him to forgive their sin.

#### **What argument did Moses use to ask God not to destroy the people?**

- His argument was for **God’s glory**. “People who hear will believe that the God of Israel was not strong enough to bring them into the land.”

**14:20-38 What happens next in verses 20 to 38?**

- God tells them that the children will enter the land but the “men” 20 and older will all die in the wilderness. The children of Israel would wander in the wilderness **40 years** (a year for each day that the spies were in the land) because they would not trust God. The **ten unbelieving spies** all died from a plague.

**14:24 Caleb followed the Lord “fully”. What do you think that looks like today?**

- Someone who follows the Lord “fully” is not committed to Christ, he is *surrendered* to Christ. His life belongs to the Lord. He is obedient to God’s commands and uses his time, talents, and resources to serve God’s purpose.

**14:2,27 What do we learn about their grumbling (complaining) and ours in verses 2 and 27?**

- Our complaining is really against the Lord. Our complaining is blaming Him for us not having everything the way we want it to be (circumstances, jobs, homes, cars, stuff, mates, kids, ministries, money, etc.). It assumes that God “owes” us what we want and that it is His job to serve us. Rather than seeking to honor and bring glory to the Lord in our difficulties, we think that God exists for our comfort rather than us existing for His purpose and pleasure.

**14:33 In verse 33, we discover one of the most sobering truths in the Bible. What is it?**

- Our children can and do suffer for our sin. They reap not only what they sow: they reap what *we* sow. The good news is that we can sow “well” and follow the Lord and they can reap good from our lives.

**14:39-45 What happens in verses 39 to 45? And what might we learn from what took place?**

- The people decide to go on into the land. Moses tried to stop them, but again they would not listen to Him. They were bitterly defeated.

We cannot do what we want to do and then ask and expect God to “bless it”. God’s will had been for them to go into the land. They refused to trust Him and so His will NOW was for them to return to the wilderness. There are opportunities that God may give us in life. If we disobey Him, those opportunities may be lost. **The men 20 years older had “lost” the opportunity to enter into**