

Kadesh Barnea

From Sinai, via the Wilderness of Seir to Kadesh Barnea on the Southern border of Canaan was an 11 day journey.

Deut 1:19-21 GNB Moses gave the order .

Cautious, doubting hesitant representatives came to Moses suggesting a reconnaissance mission – Normal strategy.

The idea seemed good to Moses, but first he checked with God, who let it go ahead, with instructions *Numbers 13:2* that a leader from each of the 12 tribes be represented in the party.

The Commission

Num 13:17-20

A through job. A 500 mile trip with no cars in 40 days. Find

- i) Agricultural possibilities – good or bad, fertile or poor soil, woodland, desert.
- ii) Calibre and number of people living there. Strong or weak, many or few.
- iii) Towns – unwalled or fortified

The Report

All agreed to the report **Num 13:26-29**

- i) “A land of milk and honey” as promised in Exodus 3:8. Fertile & fruitful. It took two men to carry a single cluster of grapes, some pomegranates and some figs on a pole. Clusters of 12-20 pounds are still grown there and carried on poles to avoid bruising. Agriculturally the land was excellent.
- ii) The people live in large fortified cities. The descendants of Anak, the Nephilim, giants like Goliath were there – making the average Israelite feel as small and weak as a

grasshopper. They are so much stronger and bigger than we are.

All agreed that God had brought them to a very good land.
All agreed there were going to be difficulties in taking possession of the Promised Land.

The Response

Considerable alarm. People looked at situation rationally and logically and concluded with the ten, “the task is impossible.” Num. 13:31 maybe only one or two had been discouraged at first but as the 12 travelled discouragement had prevailed like a contagious disease.

From an accurate report came exaggeration.

It was true that there were giants among the people (v 28) but fear led 10 spies to exaggerate and conclude “**All** the people we saw there are of great size” (v 32) – previously only apparent giants among the Canaanites.

Faith failed on a large scale.

Faith in a God who had led them out of Egypt after so many terrible and miraculous plagues.

Faith in a God who had taken them across the Red Sea and drowned the military forces of Pharaoh their oppressor

Faith in a God, who had provided manna, quail and water from a rock.

Faith in a God, who had enabled them to defeat the greatest military might of their day – the Amalekites. (History tells us that Egypt even under Moses couldn't do that)

Joshua and Caleb saw opportunity. We can do it. “God is with us “
Num 14:6-9 They were confident that God was on their side.

God + grasshoppers > giants

They could see things from God's point of view, which is not always logical, natural, rational and in line with common sense.

Isaiah 55:8-9 (my thoughts, ways)

God and his faithful people did not deny the facts they only differed in perspective.

Six shoe company executives were sent to scout out prospects for expansion in a new country just emerging from a primitive state. They looked around, conferred – and disagreed about the potential. Four cabled their majority report to the home office; “No market here. Everyone goes barefoot.”

The minority of two, however, saw the situation differently; “Everyone here needs shoes. Recommend opening a branch factory and office immediately.”

All the executives noted that the people were barefoot. It was how they interpreted the situation and applied it to themselves that counted.

Moses sends the people home to sleep on it. The people seemed to have forgotten all the demonstrations of God’s power in the past. Did they really expect a welcoming party from the Canaanite tourism and resettlement board and offers of grants to set up chariot factories in their towns.

In the morning

Num 14:1-4

They lost sight of God. The 4 giant killers became grumblers (again), the giant killers fell to defeatist fears without a shot being fired. The advice of the 10 unbelieving spies was accepted by the majority, it would seem by all but Joshua, Caleb and Moses. The giant killers became grumblers and fell defeated to nothing more than their fear.

How often do we hear “But everyone’s doing it” – everyone can be and are often wrong. Beware the rights and traditions of democracy. It can help protect people from evil tyrannical dictators, but it is not what God intends.

What God wants is Theocracy, where God is in control, which is a lot more than lip service. Where is the prophet who speaks the mind of

God to his people. As individuals or as a church are we hearing God's word or only that of a man.

The failure to exercise faith and obey God's word condemned an entire generation (with the exception of Caleb and Joshua) to die in the wilderness over the next 40 years.

Num 14:11; 21-23

What will it take ask God to bring these people to believe and trust in me. (The same question could be asked of modern day Israel.) Ten times says God they have tested me – tested means failing to believe.

Like the time after Marah, Elim and the provision of daily manna they were up the creek without any water, and cried out "Is the Lord among us or not" Exodus 17:7. God provided water when Moses obediently struck the rock.

Ten (a number symbolic of completeness, enough is enough, like the 10 commandments – but maybe literal) testings of God.

- 1 Exodus 14:11 Trapped by the Red Sea
- 2 Exodus 15:22-6 Bitter water after 3 days "the people grumbled" the branch thrown in to make sweet
- 3 Exodus 16:2-3 "the whole community grumbled" If only we had Provision of daily & Sabbath manna (+ quail for a time)
- 4 Exodus 16:20 Wanting to store more than their daily bread – maggots
- 5 Exodus 16:27-8 Looking for manna on Sabbath
- 6 Exodus 17:1-7 No water, grumbled, water from rock
- 7 Exodus 32 Golden calf!
- 8 Numbers 11:1-3 Complained about hardships, brought fire from God.
- 9 Numbers 11:4ff Complaints at only manna, 2nd delivery of quail.
- 10 Numbers 14 Rejecting Canaan

Maybe these ten, maybe others not even recorded for us. Time and again they doubted God. They would not believe and trust Him.

They trusted in a majority decision, believing in man not God. Unbelief then, as now, keeps God's people from the blessings he has for them.

The unmarked graves of those who died over the next 40 years (one for each day the spies were in Canaan) show the possible consequences of wilful disobedience, unbelief, and unwillingness to repent. "The Lord disciplines him whom he loves" Hebrews 12:6 The alternative was to enter the land of milk and honey with God's guarantee of eventual success.

Of a later generation Jesus said, "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead" Luke 16:31

It needs more than a mental assent. It needs action. "Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action is dead." James 2:17

Last weekend they showed the film "A night to remember" and most of us have probably seen what is still the most profitable film ever "Titanic". In both films was quoted the cruise line employee who said what most at the time believed, "Not even God Himself could sink this ship."

God's people were, after a little more than a year from leaving Egypt on the verge of Canaan, their "dream ship" – a homeland, freedom and almost unlimited resources. Their dreams sank when emotions and fear were allowed to conquer their faith.

Remember "the one who IS in you IS greater than the one who is in the world." 1 John 4:4

Jesus said “I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, Move from here to there and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”

Jeremiah 32:17 “Ah Sovereign Lord, you made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.”

Do you feel too old, poor, weak, sick, few in number?

Philippians 1:13 “I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.”

None of these promises of almighty God have small print, ifs, buts or maybes.

Conclusion

In decision-making consider the facts. Joshua and Caleb did. But don't let feelings of inadequacy, doubt or fear of obstacles, problems or practical difficulties rob you of what God wants you to have and achieve. Whatever giants you are facing remember God is bigger.

Too many Christians have had the Exodus experience of being set free from sin only to spend the rest of their lives wandering in a spiritual wilderness.

And don't get bitter or overwhelmed if majority decisions are wrong. You are in good company, with God.

Remember it was a long wait, but faithful Caleb and Joshua eventually made it into the Promised Land.

So let us resolve to take God at his word, as well as being aware of the possible consequences of disobedience or of a lack of faith.