

A Spiritual Crossroad

Numbers 13:26-14:11

February 1, 2009

Intro

In the book of Numbers chapter 13 Israel has actually come to a place called Kadesh Barnea in the wilderness of Zin. At this point they are at the very doorstep of entering into the Promised Land. God instructed Moses to send 12 spies into the land, one from each tribe. They were to see what the land was like, and whether the people who lived in it were strong or weak, whether they were few or many. And they were also to bring some samples of the fruit of the land.

The lessons that we will gain from our study come from when the twelve spies return. Ten of them bring back an evil report of what the land and the people who live in it are like. Two of them, Caleb and Joshua, bring back a favorable report and challenge the people to enter in and possess it for God will surely give it to them.

It's ten versus two. The people of Israel are at a spiritual crossroad. They must decide if they will believe God and enter into the land of promise, or if they will give in to their fear and continue wandering in the wilderness.

The scripture tells us that Israel was an example for us that we should not follow after them in their disbelief because many of them were destroyed in the wilderness.

I. Don't Stay in the Wilderness

- 1 God did not want Israel to stay in the wilderness. The point of bringing them out of Egypt was to also bring them into the land of promise. In spite of their whining and complaining, God wanted them to enter into the promises He gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

A. The wilderness is important

- 1 As we have seen from scripture, there is a comparison between God delivering Israel from the slavery of Egypt and God delivering us from the world.
- 2 There are then many important lessons that God wants for us to learn from our time in the wilderness as well. In other words, there are many who have come to faith in Jesus Christ but have not yet learned to walk victoriously.
- 3 There were many legitimate lessons that Israel needed to learn from their time in the wilderness.
- 4 They came to:

- 1 **Marah, bitter waters**, where they learned that God can take bitterness and make its sweet;
 - 2 **Elam, 70 palm trees and 12 springs**, where they learned that God would give them a place of rest,
 - 3 **Rephidim, water from a rock**, where they learned that God would quench their thirst,
 - 4 **Amalekites, whom God defeated**, where they learned that God would defeat their enemies.
- 5 God also provided manna for them to eat while they were in the wilderness, but he had even more in mind for them in the land flowing with milk and honey.

Hebrews 5:11-14 Solid food is for the mature

B. Fear will falter faith

- 6 The reason Israel did not enter into the land of promise was because they were afraid.
- 7 They did see that it was a land flowing with milk and honey, but in verse 28 there is a powerful word - -nevertheless. It means, in spite of all of this...
- 8 In other words, in spite of the fact that it is everything that God said it would be, there are giants in the land; the sons of Anak are there.
- 9 So they are keeping their problems and difficulties before their eyes and not seeing that God Himself is in the midst and that He had already done so much to prove His power and His love for them.

App – This is the process of discipleship in the life of the believer. There are many who come to faith in Jesus Christ but do not obtain the promises that God has for them and therefore they do not experience “life to the full” that Jesus promised them.

- 10 We need to grow in our faith so that the cares, concerns, trials and difficulties of our lives do not prevent us from experiencing the promises of victory that God has already given us.

2 Timothy 1:7, For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

Hebrews 4:1-2, Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.

Illus – We need to conquer the giant of fear, “what if?”

What if I lose my job, what if I can't pay my bills, what if my marriage fails, what if the roof leaks, what if I get sick, what if.... But this I know, no matter happens, God will see me through it.

- 11 God did not promise to keep us from every trouble. But he did promise that he would walk with us *through* every trouble, through every fire.

Isaiah 43:2, When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you.

C. Don't be pardoned, but powerless

- 12 This is a state where we have been pardoned because of the blood of Jesus Christ, but just keep wandering in the wilderness, never experiencing the life of victory and the power that God intended for us.
- 13 This is what happened to the sons of Israel when they refused to obey God and would not enter into his promises.

Numbers 14:20-24 pardoned, but not possessing

- 14 When Israel rejected God, they then spent forty years wandering in circles and never experiencing the victory and the promises.
- 15 What they need is to come to a place in their lives where they truly trust God's Word and are no longer walking in independence and rebellion toward His direction.
- 16 What would happen if, after God said that they will stay in the desert for forty years, they then say, "Okay, fine, we'll go up!"
- 17 Answer, it won't go well. It's still because of hardness and rebellion that they are saying this.

Numbers 14:39-42

Illus – It's like a teen that takes on an attitude and then says, "Okay, fine, I'll do what you're asking me to do." But you know his/her heart is not in it.

Do we direct God or does God direct us?

II. Enter into His Promises

- 1 If Israel would have entered in at that moment, they would have saved forty years of wandering in the desert, yes, but they also would have then begun to experience the promises that God had for them.

A. Some promises are obtained by faith

- 1 It's important to recognize that there are various types of faith, or degrees of faith.
- 2 Israel trusted God to get them out of Egypt, but lacked the faith to obtain the promises of the land of Palestine.
- 3 Immature faith is marked by these things:
 - 1 Unpleasantness – Israel certainly wasn't experiencing fullness of joy.
 - 2 Discontent and complaining – this was clear throughout their wanderings.
 - 3 Inconsistency- led by emotions, feelings, mood.
 - 4 Mind set on themselves – they could only see their inadequacy and couldn't see God's power or strength.
- 5 Some people seem to always live in Romans chapter 7 and never to get to live in chapter 8.
- 5 But a strong faith was something Jesus wanted in the disciples.

Matthew 6:30, "But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith!"

Matthew 8:26, He said to them, "Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm.

Matthew 14:31, Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"

Matthew 16:8, But Jesus, aware of this, said, "You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread?"

Luke 12:28, But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you? You men of little faith!

B. Live the victorious life

- 6 This is what pleases God. I love the words of that worship song, "It's time to live a life of love that pleases you."
- 7 What does the victorious life look like?

- 1 Remembering what God has done.

Illus – When a Jew wanted to stir up other’s faith, they would remember what God had done.

Do you also have your own history of remembering what God has done? I remember many things that God has done that were absolutely amazing.

Illus – one trip to the airport...

- 2 Not dominated by giants. They have their flesh, but they are not dominated by it.
- 3 Not dominated by fear. They have fear, but they are not dominated by it.
- 4 Consistent. They are not led by how they feel, but by the Word of Truth.
- 5 Their mind is set. Set on things of the Spirit, on things above.

Romans 8:6, For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,

- 1 They live life to the full. This is the way God intended it to be lived, in the fullness that comes from the Holy Spirit.
- 2 They know that all men are grasshoppers.
 - 1 In verse 33, the spies said that they were but grasshoppers in their own sight, and so we were in their sight.
 - 2 But faith knows that all men are grasshoppers and God is over all.

Isaiah 40:22, It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.