

September 21, 2025 Session 3
The Land Numbers 13:17-31

Intro: God prophesied to Abraham in a dream about his descendants.

Genesis 15:13 *“Then He [God] said to Abram: ‘Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.’”* Jacob moved his family to Egypt because of famine, and his son, Joseph was the second most powerful person in that country. Over time, Egyptians were concerned about the large Hebrew population.

Exodus 1:6-8 *“And Joseph died, all his brothers, and all that generation. But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them. Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. It was time for the children of Israel to leave Egypt. Like a cake in the oven, it needs to come out when it is done.”*

Mt. Sinai: God led the children through the wilderness to the promised land. The truth of the Bible continues to be proven today. **Galatians 4:25** *“...for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children—...”* Other interesting facts are that at the time of Moses, the Sinai Peninsula was considered part of Egypt, and the water on both sides of the peninsula was considered to be the Red Sea. The Red Sea that God parted for Moses was on the east side of the peninsula, after the children of Israel had traveled across northern Sinai.

The Task Outlined (Numbers 13:17-20) p. 30

A major theme of the book of Numbers is rebellion against God and God’s leader, Moses. Chapter 13 begins with the LORD’s command to Moses.

Numbers 13:1 *“And the LORD spoke to Moses saying, ‘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.’”* Verses 4-15 lists each tribe and the men that were selected.

Joshua was also called Hoshea from the tribe of Ephraim. The children of Israel were to take possession of the land promised to them. **Deuteronomy 1:21** *“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.”* God wants us to be prepared to face opposition.

The world and Satan are constantly trying to influence us, and we need to know our true enemy. God wanted the children of Israel to be prepared, and to know what they were up against. Moses selected a leader from each tribe to scout out the land. The scouts were to bring back information about the inhabitants of the area. Were the people in the area strong or weak, few or many? What was the land like; good or bad, fertile or unproductive? How about the cities? Were they spread out encampments or enclosed fortifications? What about trees—many or none? The scouts were charged with confirming that the land was as God had promised.

Exodus 3:8 *“So I [God] have come down to deliver them [children of Israel] out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites.”* Moses knew the land was preoccupied. God told him so. The Israelite scouts went on this reconnaissance mission, in late summer or early fall which “was the season for the first ripe grapes.”

The Land Assessed (Numbers 13:21-25) p. 31-32

Many centuries had passed since God had promised the land of Canaan to the Israelites’ ancestor Abraham. The designation “Canaan” describes the land that lay between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. The Wilderness of Zin was the southern boundary for Canaan and mostly uninhabitable. Receiving only two inches of rain annually, it was impossible to cultivate agriculturally. The northern area of Canaan reached southern Lebanon. The land of Canaan is likely more familiar to us by its New Testament identity that includes the areas of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee.

Vs. 22 The account of the travels of the twelve scouts singled out the major city of Hebron. Hebron was a leading city in the hill country of Canaan and was located approximately nineteen miles south of Jebus (later to become Jerusalem). Hebron was an important place to Abraham. He may have lived there for some time after separating from Lot and his household. Hebron was also the place where Abraham’s wife, Sarah, is buried. That same burial place would be used later on for Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Leah. Leaders of the clans of the descendants of Anak were living in the hill country of Hebron. The Hebrew term Anak means “long-necked” or “strong necked” and was both the name of a person and the name of the clans in his lineage. Anak most likely served as a reference to the height of his descendants who were known as the Anakim. These especially tall men, “men of great size,” were the giants that produced fear among the ten Israelite scouts.

The Anakim were also dwelling in the coastal plain in Gaze, Gath, and Ashdod. Joshua had started the process of driving out the Anakim people. **Joshua 11:21** *“And at that time Joshua came and cut off the Anakim from the mountains: from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel; Joshua utterly destroyed them with their cities.”* When Caleb later received the region as his inheritance from Joshua, he drove out three remaining clans of Anakim: Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi. **Joshua 14:13** *“And Joshua blessed him, and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as an inheritance.”*

Vs. 35 The scouts came back with fruit in hand or hanging on a pole. The land appeared to be abundantly productive. The scouts returned at the end of forty days. This length of time appears other times in the Bible. During the great flood, it rained on the earth forty days and forty nights. Moses was on Mount Sinai with God for the same length of time, and Jesus fasted for forty days and forty nights. The scouting mission covered about 500 miles, and the scouts would have covered around ten to twelve miles per day traveling by foot through the region.

The Decision at Hand (Numbers 13:23-31) p. 33

The scouts reported back to Moses about the land and its fruitfulness. They also recounted that the cities were well fortified with strong people living in them. Still, Caleb declared that they should go and take possession of the land at that time, certain of their ability to conquer it. The other scouts disagreed, saying they should not attack due to the strength of the current inhabitants. Excavations of some Canaanite cities uncovered that the cities were fortified and virtually impregnable, having fifteen-foot-thick walls that stood thirty to fifty feet high. Wow! Even so, these walls are no match for almighty God. At this time the Israelite camp was at Kadesh, which was one of the few oases in this region that had abundant water. The scouts confirmed Canaan was a land flowing with milk and honey, as God had promised.

Vs. 28 “...However”, ten of the scouts saw major problems that outweigh the benefits and bounty of the land. From the ten scouts’ perspective, the cities were full of strong people and had walls of fortification that would have made capturing the cities impossible in their eyes. The beauty and productivity of the land paled in comparison to the dangers that awaited them and the seemingly insurmountable task at hand. God had told Moses way back in Exodus that the promised land was occupied. The ten scouts confirmed these tribes of people were in Canaan.

The Amalekites were descendants of Esau, and lived a nomadic life in the wilderness of the northwest section of the Sinai Peninsula and the southern part of Canaan. The Israelites had engaged the Amalekites in battle at Rephidim in the early part of the exodus before they reached Mount Sinai.

Exodus 17:8,11,13 *“Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.”* Later on it would be the

Amalekites in partnership with the Canaanites who would repulse the Israelites’ belated attempt to enter the promised land after God had passed judgment on their initial refusal to enter Canaan. Just like it is too late to accept Jesus as Savior and Lord once a person dies. Now is the time, more than ever, to accept and proclaim Jesus. Not much is mentioned about the Hethites. They appear to have descended from Heth, second son of Canaan, who was the son of Ham, one of the three sons of Noah (Ham, Shem, Japheth). It is interesting that Abraham bought his burial plot for Sarah from the Hethites. The Jebusites were the original inhabitants of Jerusalem or, as it was originally called, Jebus. The Israelites waged war against the Jebusites throughout the years but never fully drove them out. King David conquered the city of Jebus (Jerusalem), fortified it and made it his capital. David also bought the future site of Solomon’s temple from Araunah the Jebusite. The Amorites were perhaps the most formidable opponents for Israel as they sought to conquer the promised land.

Originally from Syria, these nomadic tribes migrated into Mesopotamia and Canaan. In their journey to Canaan, the Israelites first encountered the Amorites on the east side of the Jordan Valley as they approached the promised land. In the battles that followed, the Israelites defeated the two Amorite kings, Sihon and Og. The last group mentioned was the Canaanites, specifically identifying the people group located on the coastal plains and along the Jordan River. The terms Canaanites and Amorites were often used synonymously in referring to the peoples in Canaan.

Vs. 30 Do you hear it? Can you hear Caleb passionately telling the people “Let’s go up now and take possession of the land because we can certainly conquer it!” Can we as passionately claim **Philippians 4:13** *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!”* and mean it, and live it? Can we take part against the evil that is choking our land? Can we proclaim the God of peace, who is the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior? Caleb emerged as the spokesman for the two scouts who trusted God, and urged the people to be obedient to God and depend on God’s power. Speaking for Joshua as well, Caleb refuted the negative report of the ten other scouts who spoke

against entering the promised land. He reminded the people that God promised to give them the land, and God could be trusted to deliver on His promise. Because of his vocal faith in God, Caleb along with Joshua, were the only two among the scouts that were allowed to enter the promised land. A testimony concerning Caleb is given in **Joshua 14:14** *“Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day, because he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel.”* I asked myself the question, Can it be said about me that I wholly follow the LORD God? Caleb’s confidence was not in himself but in the LORD. He was very aware that it would only be through God’s power that they would conquer the various people groups in Canaan. Caleb and Joshua stood on the Word of God and the promise He gave. The other ten scouts were motivated by fear, not faith. They had forgotten, as did the Israelites, or chose to ignore how God had miraculously provided for and protected them throughout their journey from Egypt so far. Their refusal to move forward in faith and enter Canaan was ultimately a rebellion against God. They allowed their fears to override their faith in God, and there would be consequences for their choice. God made us in His image, but He gave us a free will to choose Him. He gave us a mind to sift through the information that is thrown at us and hold it up to the Word of God. God gives us guidance, protects our souls, and leads us in the green pastures of His righteousness. God is for us, not against us and He is our Salvation.