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July 26, 2015

# NUMBERS 13:1-30

## Numbers Series

[PRAYER] Lord, we recognize that you are our rock, a solid foundation that allows us to rest, to enjoy who you are. And sometimes, Lord, our hearts get in such turmoil that it's hard to get into that place where we can just enjoy you and find confidence in you and the challenges within the midst of the challenges we're experiencing. So Lord, in our worship we come before you and release those things to you. We trust you in our hearts to be that anchor, that rock, that secure foundation in our lives. We even ask that in this next week as things may get rather challenging that you'd remind us that you are the rest that we need. We'll continue on and do what we need to do in life, but that we can do it understanding who you are in very practical ways. And now, Lord, we're going to open your word and as we do we ask that you would speak to us as you do, each one of us in different ways. Convict us, encourage us, comfort us, and teach us this morning. In Jesus' name, amen.

Please open your Bibles to Numbers 13:1. It reads this way: *The Lord said to Moses, "Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites."*

So here we have an experience as we finally get to Numbers 13 now where the Israelites are ready to go in and explore the land to see if they're ready to go in. We know the end of the story, of course. We know that they're not going to come in. They're going to reject God's Promised Land and they are going to wander around the wilderness for forty years.

But that's where we are in the story, so let's evaluate this. Because I think we're going to find some interesting things in the story that will apply to our lives as we always do. So we're looking for practical applications through God's word as we wander around (not in the wilderness, but wander around through God's word). We're looking for truths that apply to our lives today.

There are some old hymns written about the Jordan River and crossing over the Jordan into the Promised Land as if the Jordan River is death and you cross over into heaven. I think that is a poor analogy of what we're seeing because when you get into the Promised Land we're going to see a number of battles. In fact one author I read this week said there's forty-eight battles that Joshua leads with the people as they go in. That's not really a picture of heaven.

So I was thinking about the analogy of Canaan. It says that Moses sent these guys into Canaan. What is Canaan? If we were going to have a biblical analogy I think it would be more like this: Egypt, the old life, is more that place where we have bondage to sin, that place where we're controlled by the world. That's Egypt. And then God saves us out of there (as He did in the exodus) when we accept Jesus Christ, who's the blood on the doorposts and the lintels. So He

rescues us and we're able to leave there. He gives them then this commission at Mount Sinai that here's how you are to live. Here's who you are as my people.

God does that with us too. He gives us this commission to live our lives in ways that are pleasing to Him. We come to the Promised Land and we make a choice. I think the Promised Land isn't a picture of heaven; it's a picture of God's promises. So if we choose to go into the Promised Land, what we're saying is, "I'm going to obey God, I'm going to go into His Promised Land, trust Him, and I'm going to have that rest. I'm going to have that promises that He's given and I'm going to enjoy them."

Or there are some people that get saved, they come to the Promised Land, and they say, "I can't do it. It's too hard." So what does God do? Lovingly what He does is He allows them to wander around for a period of time in the wilderness as a training experience. That's what's happening. I don't think the wilderness wandering is a punishment as much as it is a training experience so they can learn how to trust God more.

As they're learning what faith is, God is going to care for them with food and water, He's going to help them fight battles. He's training them to trust Him. They're going to have to follow every day the cloud or the pillar of fire at night. They're going to learn how to follow the Lord and as they do they're starting to build trust inside that God is the God who rescues me. As they do, they're going to build that faith and they're going to come to that River Jordan under Joshua's leadership, and they're going to be ready to go in.

Which reminds me in my own life I make choices. Am I going to trust the Lord now to enter into that land of rest and promise that God has for me? Or do I have to wander around in the wilderness for a little bit? I want to choose to go into the promises of God.

Let me just leave this passage for a moment and go into Deuteronomy for a minute, which is the next book of the Bible after Numbers. I want you to see how God describes this a bit and compares the land of Egypt to the land of Palestine or to Canaan.

He starts in Deuteronomy 11:8-15 – *Observe therefore (or obey) all the commands I am giving you today.* At this point in the history Moses is giving instructions to the people before they go into the Promised Land. This is right before Joshua leads them in. So Moses is giving this sermon now and he says, *Observe therefore all the commands I am giving you today, so that you may have the strength to go in and take over the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess.*

Which comes first, the obedience or the strength? See this is really different for some people because some people say, "I don't have the strength to obey" and the answer is "obey first and God will give you the strength." That's what's being taught in that part.

Let's go on here. He says – *and so that you may live long in the land the Lord swore to your ancestors to give to them and their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey.* That's how they describe the Promised Land is this *land flowing with milk and honey.*

*The land you are entering to take over is not like the land of Egypt (so we're going to compare the land flowing with milk and honey, Canaan, to Egypt), from which you have come, where you planted your seed and irrigated it by foot as in a vegetable garden.*

So you got blessings, there were blessings in Egypt, but you had to work for everything you got. You had to do it yourself. If you were going to have vegetables, you'd have to go by foot and get the water, and you had to bring it over in order to grow that. There were blessings, but you had to work for them all the time.

*But (verse 11) the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven. It is a land the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end.*

There's a difference between Canaan and Egypt and that is in Canaan that's God's land. He cares for it, He has His eyes on it, that's where His promises are. That's where I want to be. I want to be in the Promised Land, enjoying the care of God. Oh yeah, there are some benefits. There's some fruit that grows up and some vegetables you can grow in your gardens in Egypt, but you've got to be watering them all. But in the Promised Land God is providing the rain that's coming on the hills and the valley. It's a beautiful thing that He's saying here.

Let's just finish this passage because it's very interesting. Verse 13: *So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today—to love the Lord your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul—then I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and olive oil. I will provide grass in the fields for your cattle, and you will eat and (what?) be satisfied.*

There's a sense of rest that's about being satisfied that we enjoy because we're believers. When you accept Jesus Christ into your heart then that's the first step. Then comes the obedience, the willingness to trust God with your life. As you do, you experience the Promised Land, as it were, and enjoy the promises of God, the blessings, the rain, and experience this rest, or in this passage it says *be satisfied*. It's a beautiful picture.

I spent some time meditating on that myself this week about the Promised Land, what it is, as we now talk about getting into Canaan as he's sending the spies in. What is this place that they're going in to possess? They've been hearing about it, talking about it, they've been looking forward to it. God has said, "I'm taking you out of Egypt. I've got a land prepared for you." What is this land and how does that apply to us? Fascinating.

Let's go on in the passage. Now we're back in Numbers 13 again. In verse 2 it continues – *From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders*. A leader is someone who takes initiative. A leader is one who solves problems. A leader is someone who people are following. These are leaders. They're influential people. *So at the Lord's command Moses sent them out from the Desert of Paran. All of them were leaders of the Israelites.*

*These are their names: from the tribe of Reuben, Shammua son of Zakkur; from the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat son of Hori; from the tribe of Judah, Caleb son of Jephunneh.*

Caleb. He's going to be one of the heroes. There's twelve tribes, twelve leaders, twelve spies. Two are going to say yes, ten are going to say no. Caleb is one of our heroes. Okay, that's who he is here. He is mentioned. *Caleb son of Jephunneh*. We'll talk more about him in a bit.

*From the tribe of Issachar, Igal son of Joseph; from the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea son of Nun.* That's our second hero. Hoshea. Hoshea is the name Joshua, which we're going to see in a moment. That's our second guy. Caleb and Joshua.

When our first son was born, Carrie and I named him Joshua Caleb after this story. So this is a very meaningful story to me. Joshua Caleb.

Next – *From the tribe of Benjamin, Palti son of Raphu; from the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel son of Sodi; from the tribe of Manasseh (a tribe of Joseph), Gaddi son of Susi; from the tribe of Dan, Ammiel son of Gemalli; from the tribe of Asher, Sethur son of Michael; from the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi son of Vophsi; from the tribe of Gad, Geuel son of Maki. These are the names of the men Moses sent to explore the land.*

Do you see the next little parenthesis there? In the New International Version it's in a parenthesis. It might not be in your Bible, but there's a parenthesis there next. And by the way, it's written here, *(Moses gave Hoshea son of Nun the name Joshua)*. That intrigued me. Why did he change his name?

We see names changed in the Bible often. Why do names get changed? They're always around a story of some kind.

Abram, his name, which means 'my father,' was changed to Abraham, which means 'father of a multitude.' So the emphasis there in the changing of Abraham's name was that he's going to have a whole bunch of people that he's the father of and the numbers are very important. So they changed his name to Abraham.

Sarai, which means 'my princess' or like a small princess in this one area, is changed to Sarah, which means 'a princess,' bigger. In other words, she's going to be the mother of all these nations. Abraham and Sarah.

Jacob, which means 'trickery' or 'tricky,' is changed to Israel. So Israel means 'God works.' So instead of being tricky, deceiver, Jacob, now he's God works. So now we're relying on God.

In the New Testament we have Simon changed to Peter. Peter means 'rock.'

You see, in every one of those cases there's some meaning to the name. So when we come to the name Hoshea, which means 'I need help,' that's what it means. I need help. Hoshea. Joshua means 'God is salvation.'

Wow. I think we all come to that place in our lives where we need to say, “My name used to be ‘I need help,’ but now I have ‘God is my salvation’ and I have trusted in Him.” So that was a marked point here for Joshua. His name was changed.

Now we have the names of the twelve spies. These twelve spies are going to be the guys who are going to go in and they’re going to do reconnaissance on the land. The goal is not to decide go in and decide can we do it or not. That shouldn’t be their decision. The decision is to go in and see is it true what God has promised? Bring back word.

So in verse 17 it says, *When Moses sent them to explore Canaan, he said* (now there’s going to be six questions and a request mentioned here), *“Go up through the Negev and on into the hill country. See what the land is like and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many. What kind of land do they live in? Is it good or bad? What kind of towns do they live in? Are they unwalled or fortified? How is the soil? Is it fertile or poor? Are there trees in it or not? Do your best to bring back some of the fruit of the land.”* (It was the season for the first ripe grapes.)

*So they went up and explored the land from the Desert of Zin as far as Rehob, toward Lebo Hamath.* There’s a bunch of names in there and I just want you to understand what some of those are.

The first one, the Negev, is an arid part, a semi-arid desert kind of area, a very beautiful area that exists in Israel. Israel has arid areas and it has hill country that is very beautiful as well. So there are a lot of different parts to the land of Israel. They’re coming now when the twelve spies are sent in, they’re sent in from the south. They’re sent in from down below.

This is a map of the country. Usually when we describe Israel in the Bible it’s described as all of the land between Dan (at the top) and Beersheba (down at the bottom). From Dan to Beersheba, that’s Israel. You can see how Israel’s laid out there with a number of its cities.

Let me show you another picture. This is a picture from verse 21. It says, *So they went up and explored the land from the Desert of Zin as far as Rehob, toward Lebo Hamath.*

When they went in you can see down at the bottom the wilderness of Zin, the wilderness of Paran (that’s down at the bottom where they were camped out). They go up. Kadesh Barnea is the place where they started. They go up through and they go to Hebron. Now Hebron is going to be an important city we’ll talk about in a moment. They go up through the mountain, a mountain ridge that goes up there, and if you go down to the east you’ll hit the River Jordan which goes between the Sea of Galilee up top to the Dead Sea. All the way up there’s Lebo Hamath at the top, and then they’re going to come down at the side by the coast where they’re going to cut their grapes and bring them back to Kadesh Barnea on their way back.

I’m going to read the verses now following in verse 22, but I’ll leave that map up there so you can see it as I continue to talk. When *they went up* (verse 22) *through the Negev* (remember the Negev is the semi-arid desert area as they’re going up through there) *and came to Hebron* (Hebron is marked there), *where Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmai, the descendants of Anak, lived.*

Those are going to be important guys because they're the giants. They were abnormally large people. Scary looking, apparently, people.

It continues by saying, (*Hebron had been built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.*) So that's the place, Hebron, where they're going to see the giants in the land.

Verse 23: *When they reached the Valley of Eshkol...* Now that means it doesn't tell a lot here, but it goes all the way up to Hebron. It says they went up to Lebo Hamath, then they're going to go on the side by coast to Eshkol and they're going to cut the grapes. *When they reached the Valley of Eshkol, they cut off a branch bearing a single cluster of grapes.*

It's hard to carry grapes without them getting mushy, so what they did – *Two of them carried it on a pole between them, along with some pomegranates and figs.* Illustrating some of the produce of the land. That it is lush, it has a lot of produce that they could bring back.

Verse 4: *That place was called the Valley of Eshkol because of the cluster of grapes the Israelites cut off there. At the end of forty days they returned from exploring the land.*

It took them forty days to go all through there. The number forty is going to be important because they're going to reject God, they're going to have to be out one year in the wilderness for every one of the days that they explored the land.

Verse 26 says, *They came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the Desert of Paran. There they reported to them and to the whole assembly and showed them the fruit of the land.*

The congregation of people is waiting. Moses is waiting. What's going to happen when these people come back to report? What are they going to say?

It's really important what leaders do. It's really important how leaders respond. Leaders are influential people. I don't think leaders should just say everything that they're thinking. If leaders are prone to complain then they're in danger because they're influencing other people.

These leaders are going to come back; they're going to make some mistakes. The main problem is that they are not following the Lord. Every good leader needs to know how to follow. If you're a leader, you want to be first following the Lord so that you know how to lead those other people that are coming along. These guys made a significant mistake.

Verse 27: *They gave Moses this account.* Here's what they said: *"We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit."* So they gave the fruit to them and they looked at all of that.

But notice what's at the beginning of verse 28. Do you see the word there? In the New International Version, the word is *but*. Some of you have other translations. What's another word that's there? *Nevertheless*. What else? *However*. Okay. Those are the other two that I found. *Nevertheless* and *however* are other words that are there. You've got to be careful with that word.

Sometimes husbands and wives will say “I’m sorry, but...” You’ve got to be careful about that. As soon as you say “but” everything you said before it is erased. You don’t want to say, “I’m sorry, but...” or “thank you, but...” You don’t want to at work say, “You’re a nice guy, but...” because you just lost the “you’re a nice guy” thing. “You’re doing great work, but...” Well forget that. I want to hear what after the ‘but’ is because that’s the most important thing.

That’s the mistake they made here. The word *but* is going to get them into trouble. “*But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there. (That’s in Hebron where the giants are.) The Amalekites live in the Negev; the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live near the sea and along the Jordan.*”

In other words, this Promised Land that we have here has a lot of challenges. It’s not going to be easy. These challenges are big. There are giants in the land. These people have fortified cities. This is going to be hard.

I want to suggest that every time God invites us into the Promised Land, there are challenges. It’s not easy to serve the Lord. It’s not easy to trust God in our lives. That when we say, “Yes God, I’m going to obey you,” we often face challenges. But with those challenges comes this rest, this peace, this satisfaction of being in the land that God has. The promises come with obedience.

It’s a beautiful picture. It’s a sad story because these guys focus on the wrong things.

What are you going to focus on? Are you going to focus on the problems all around you or are you going to focus on, yes, the Lord’s blessing. I’m going to trust Him in the midst of this. These guys could have as good leaders said, “We’re afraid. But we know God is going to protect us as we go forward.” That’s what they should have said. They didn’t. So they’re arousing fear in the people that they were leading.

I like looking at this passage from a leader’s perspective because I’m a leader and I’m trying to learn lessons about leadership from the book of Numbers as I go through. It just reminds me as a leader that we have to be careful. Young people can be leaders at school, and if you’re a leader be careful what you say because people are following you.

Then comes the hero in the story, if you’ll see in verse 30. Caleb.

I saw this cartoon about Caleb that I liked. This is Moses talking to Caleb and says, “I don’t think you completely grasp the seriousness of the situation here, Caleb.” Caleb has got his surfboard and he’s going to go when they are crossing the river at the Red Sea.

The idea here is that Caleb is a different kind of guy. Caleb is the kind of guy that is focusing on God’s promises. “I want to do what God has to say.” I like that. That’s the kind of person I want to be.

So verse 30 says this: *Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it."*

The word *silenced* means shut up. That's what it means. I don't use those words typically, but that's what it means. He shut the people up so that he could talk to them because of the uproar that was going on. You know how it is when you start feeling anxious and fearful, your heart just starts to get upset. He silenced them so that he could talk to them.

God does that in our lives too. Sometimes we start getting upset with anxiety and God needs to silence our hearts so He can talk to us. And that's what He's going to do here. Because every promised land has its giants. Every blessing has its challenges.

I want to take off on this guy Caleb here for a moment just because he's such a special guy. If we do a study of him in the scriptures we see some important things about him.

I want to take you to a later part of Caleb's life, in fact forty years later. Because the only two guys that are going to get to go into the Promised Land -- all the rest of them are going to die. All the leaders twenty years and older are going to die. The only two guys that get to go in are Joshua and Caleb. They're going to go into the Promised Land under Joshua's leadership and they're going to conquer the land. The land is going to be conquered and then Joshua's going to divide up the land according to the allocation of each tribe. So people are getting their land.

So I want to take you to Joshua 14, which is the place where Caleb comes to Joshua and says, "Hey, I want my land." I want you to see this story because it ties really well into what we just saw, as he was one of the spies that went into the land. This is out of Joshua 14, forty years later.

*Now the people of Judah approached Joshua at Gilgal, and Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, "You know what the Lord said to Moses the man of God at Kadesh Barnea about you and me." You remember Kadesh Barnea is in the south there. That's where they took off to go into the land. They reported back.*

*"I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh Barnea to explore the land. And I brought him back a report according to my convictions (I like that – according to my convictions. Do we have enough convictions to stand up and say, "I will trust the Lord in the midst of the challenges"?), but my fellow Israelites who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt in fear. (The danger of leadership who isn't following the Lord.) I, however, followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly (with all of my heart). So on that day Moses swore to me, 'The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children forever, because you have followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly.'*

*Now then, just as the Lord promised, he has kept me alive for forty-five years since the time he said this to Moses, while Israel moved about in the wilderness. So here I am today, eighty-five years old! I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. Now give me this hill country that the Lord promised me that day. You yourself heard then that the Anakites (those are the giants that we already read about) were*

*there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the Lord helping me, I will drive them out just as he said.”*

*Then Joshua blessed Caleb son of Jephunneh and gave him Hebron. Remember Hebron in the picture? Where Anak was and his sons, the giants. That’s where they met the giants. Caleb says, “Give me that hill. I want that hill. I may be eighty-five, but I can still take it.” Joshua gave him Hebron as his inheritance. So Hebron has belonged to Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite ever since, because he followed the Lord, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly.*

The word *wholeheartedly* is used thirty times there. That was why God said, “I’m going to let you take that land.” So Caleb got the land of the giants. “I’ll take it! Give me that hill! I’ll go in there and take them.” Because why? “Because I trust God that God is going to rescue me.”

When I grow up I want to be like Caleb. He is just a man who has passion, he’s serving the Lord, and he’s moving forward in a way that is admirable. He is a leader that we can all emulate in our lives.

God has called you and me to trust Him in the face of giants. And it’s not the giants – you’ve got to understand this – it’s not the giants, the tall, big, furry guys that are scary. It’s not the fortified cities. It’s not the numerous people there that are the problem. It’s the giants of fear that they had inside of their hearts. Those become the obstacles that God wants to address in our own lives for us so that we can overcome those obstacles that are preventing us from enjoying what God wants us to have. It is the sin of unbelief that’s going to bring judgment.

We’re going to read more about that next week. I was going to try to do all of this in one week, but there’s just so much here I wanted to spend a little time on this guy Caleb and the whole message of what this Promised Land is for us.

But the story is a sad one because they’re going to wander around for forty years, having to build their faith. God is going to strengthen them so they can come in and do what’s right. But they could’ve enjoyed the blessing. They could’ve enjoyed it as they go in.

So as we come to the book of Hebrews, chapters 3 and 4 call the Promised Land *rest*. They were not able to enter the *rest* that God had provided for them. I spent time this week just meditating on the rest that God wants to provide for us. It’s attached to His promises. He has a promised land that He wants us to go into. Now to make that more practical for us, it has to do with obedience. God has called each of us to obey.

Often when I’m counseling with someone, I say this question to them: “What is God telling you?”

“I don’t know.”

I say, “Well why don’t you go spend this week and ask God what He is telling you to do in your marriage or what He’s telling you to do about this decision. Go ask the Lord because He will speak to you, and then come back and tell me what He’s telling you, and I’ll help you do it. I’ll give you some ideas to make that happen. But first go listen to the Lord because God will

explain that to you, or He'll share it, or He'll give you an impression about what you need to do in your life."

I would suggest that God does that in each of our hearts. You know what you need to do. If not, then ask God because He'll tell you what you need to do as you obey Him and trust Him. What does it mean to enter into that Promised Land, to enter into the promises of God and experience the rest, the satisfaction that God wants to have in each of our hearts?

You might read Hebrews 3-4. It's an interesting passage about how God has provided rest for us today through Jesus Christ. A special relationship with Him does that in our lives.

Well you can read ahead. We're going to finish chapter 13 and do 14, Lord willing, next week as we see more of what God wants to do. In fact, I've identified several different reasons why God left giants in the land and I'll be here to share that with you next week. Okay?

I'll trust God will work this into your heart in a way that will help you to be the person that God wants you to be. Would you stand with me as I pray before we worship the Lord some more.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we come before you and we do want to trust you. We want to believe in you. But like the man said to Jesus in the New Testament, "*Lord, help me in my unbelief.*" Give us the courage to obey you first so that you'll give us the strength to do what's right. Lord, I pray for each person here and the challenges they face, the giants that may appear in their hearts because of the things that are out there. You'd encourage them, give them hope, give them next steps of obedience in their lives. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.