

ON THE VERGE OF VICTORY

11/2003 By Mark Beard

Text: Selected passages from Numbers 13 and 14

Of the 12 spies sent into the land of Canaan 10 were filled with unbelief and fear while 2 (Joshua and Caleb) were filled with confidence and faith. Note the *differences* between those who believed God and those who did not.

I. THE UNBELIEVING MEASURED THE ENEMY AGAINST THEMSELVES.

A. All who went saw that the Land of Canaan was what God said that it would be (v. 27).

27 They gave Moses this account: "We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit.

B. However, the unbelieving lost sight of God when they focused on their enemy (vv. 31-33).

Verses 31-33 But the men who had gone up with him said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are." And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, "The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them."

II. THE BELIEVING MEASURED THE ENEMY AGAINST THEIR GOD.

A. Caleb believed that God was greater than the enemy (Numbers 13:30).

"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.'" NIV

B. Joshua and Caleb knew that the enemy's threat was meaningless (Numbers 14:9).

"And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up."

III. THOSE WHO DOUBTED ENVISIONED DEFEAT.

A. The focus of the unbelievers determined their outlook (Numbers 13:28).

"But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large."

B. For the unbelieving, what they saw was all that mattered.

IV. THOSE WHO BELIEVED ENVISIONED VICTORY.

A. The focus of Joshua and Caleb's faith determined their outlook (Numbers 14:5-9).

Then Moses and Aaron fell facedown in front of the whole Israelite assembly gathered there. Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes and said to the entire Israelite assembly, "The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the LORD is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them." NIV

B. For the believing, what they knew about God was all that mattered (14:9).

"And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them." NIV

V. THE DOUBTS OF A FEW BROUGHT SUFFERING ON ALL OF ISRAEL.

A. Missed opportunities to believe and follow God always result in falling short of God's best (Numbers 14:20-23).

The LORD replied, "I have forgiven them, as you asked. Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the LORD fills the whole earth, not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times—not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it. NIV

B. Unbelief is sin and sin always leads to death—physically and spiritually (Numbers 14:26-30).

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron: "How long will this wicked community grumble against me? I have heard the complaints of these grumbling Israelites. So tell them, 'As surely as I live, declares the LORD, I will do to you the very things I heard you say: In this desert your bodies will fall—every one of you twenty years old or more who was counted in the census and who has grumbled against me. Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.

VI. THE FAITH OF TWO BROUGHT THE NEXT GENERATION INTO THE PROMISED LAND.

A. A "different spirit" can make a great difference in the outcome of one's life (14:24).

"But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it." NIV

B. If we refuse to receive what God has prepared there will always be another to receive it in our place (14:31).

“As for your children that you said would be taken as plunder, I will bring them in to enjoy the land you have rejected.”

CONCLUSION

Far too many stand on the verge of victory, debating whether or not to step out and believe God. Perhaps in noting the *differences* between those who believed God and those who did not, we will all see the necessity of believing God.