

Place: Lurgan Baptist  
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Reading: Numbers 13:1-3, 17-33

## FROM EGYPT TO CANAAN

### 13. KADESH - BARNEA - THE PLACE OF FAILURE !

As we have noted before the journey from Egypt to Canaan can be divided into various parts.

1. From Egypt to Sinai ( Exod 1:1-19:1 )
2. From Sinai to Kadesh-Barnea ( Num 10:11-15:1 )
3. From Kadesh Barnea to Kadesh-Barnea ( Num 16:1-20:21 )
4. From Kadesh-Barnea to the land of Canaan.  
( Num 20:20- Joshua 4:1 )

Israel now stood at the crossroads, *Egypt was behind them, God was with them, and Canaan was before them.*

Israel are faced with a tremendous choice. What will they do ? Will they go forward in obedience to the Lord or will they go backward in disobedience ? You see, Kadesh became a watershed in every sense of the term. It is a name written in flaming letters, for Kadesh proved a turning point in the entire enterprise so far as that whole generation was concerned. Before Kadesh the children of Israel were pilgrims advancing with purpose at the commandment of the Lord. After Kadesh they were simply wanderers going around in circles. They were like the proverbial door on its hinges, all the time moving backwards and forwards, but never getting anywhere. *It was only when they had come full circle and were brought back again to Kadesh, that the Lord moved to bring the new or second generation of the people into the land of Canaan by the hand of Joshua.* ( Num 20:1 ) Now sometimes Kadesh is linked with the wilderness of Paran, and sometimes with the wilderness of Zin. The reason for this seems to be that Kadesh straddled the border between the two areas, a border which at best was probably ill-defined. But its chief significance lay in the fact that Kadesh was the gateway to Canaan.

So it was here at Kadesh Barnea, on the border of Canaan, that Israel foolishly forfeited their opportunity to enter the Promised Land and claim their inheritance.

This tragic failure has made the name “*Kadesh*,” a synonym for defeat and lost opportunity. Israel’s downfall at Kadesh is a solemn reminder to us today that it’s a dangerous thing to trifle with the will of God. My .... you may end up spending your life wandering around just waiting to die. You sooner or later, each of us will face our own Kadesh-Barnea crisis, when we will have to make a choice. Will we press on to the Canaan life of victory, or will we return to the purposeless and unsatisfying life of the desert ?

*Now Canaan is often referred to as representing heaven. But this can be only so in the rather limited sense that Canaan came at the end of the journey. Its real significance is much more*

*immediate. Canaan represents God's full purpose for his people. He would not only bring Israel out of Egypt, and through the desert, He would also bring them into Canaan. In the same way, the Lord has much more in mind for us than that our salvation should simply be an escape from hell. Bless God, it is that, but its much more. His purpose in saving me said Paul was "to reveal His Son in me."*

( Gal 1:6 ) The same apostle declared in another place,

*" whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. "* ( Rom 8:29 ) This means that there can be no finality to Christian experience in this life. On the contrary, there is a constant pressing on towards the mark. ( Phil 3:14 )

You see, the spiritual equivalent to that generation missing the land, is not that present day believers may miss heaven at the last. Rather, it is the very real possibility of missing the full purpose of our calling in the present, of failing to realise in the here and now, that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. My .... have you come a certain distance in spiritual things, only to vegetate in a kind of spiritual vacuum ? Have you become like a stagnant pool, rather than like a watered garden ? My .... Kadesh- Barnea carries a solemn warning for us all ! Are we going backward or forward ? Is it to be the old life of failure or the new life of fruitfulness ? Lets this .... have a look at Israel this .... on the borders of Canaan at Kadesh Barnea and notice,

### **(1) THE REQUEST**

You see, at first sight it appears as if the sending forth of the twelve spies to search the land of Canaan had its origin in the commandment of the Lord, but by comparing Scripture with Scripture we see,

#### **(a) WHERE IT ORIGINATED:**

Look if you will at ( Deut 1:19-23 ) Sending the spies therefore, was an idea that appears to have originated with the people. The Lord seemingly condescended to their request and Moses too, went along with the idea. But why should twelve men be sent into Canaan to spy out the land ? The Israelites already knew what kind of land it was for God had already more than once described it as *" a land flowing with milk and honey. "*

( Exod 3:8 ) The promise of God was unchanged. To Abraham the patriarch, God had covenanted to give the land. Do you recall this covenant ? *" In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram saying, unto thy seed I have given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river the river Euphrates. "* ( Gen 15:18 ) To Moses the prophet the Lord said, *" And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey. "* ( 3:8 )

God's purpose was to set them free, that was emancipation, to take them out, that was separation, to bring them in, that was possession. Now forty years later Moses is reminding the new generation of the land God had given unto them. ( Deut 1:20-21 ) My .... was God's promise concerning this land not sufficient ? Was description of this land not enough ? Apparently not so

Israel come with this proposal. “ *We will send before us and they shall search us out the land.* ” ( 1:22 ) My .... was this not the first wavering step of doubt ? Sure, Moses endorsed their request and got permission from the Lord to carry out the plan ( Num 13:1-3 ) But it appears that God was letting the Jews have their own way, not because their way was the right way, but because He wanted to teach them a lesson. They needed to learn to trust the Word of God and to do the will of God, His way not their own way. ( Prov 3:5-6 )

The Lord often seems to condescend to meet people in the state in which He finds them at a given time. Do you recall on a previous occasion when Israel despised the manna and desired flesh to eat. ( Num 11:4-7 ) The psalmist says, “ *He gave them their request but send leanness into their soul.* ” ( Ps 106:15 ) Do you remember when Israel demanded a king ? Their cry to Samuel was, “ *Gave us a king to judge us .... that we also may be like all the nations.* ” ( 1 Sam 8:6, 20 ) He says, “ *I gave thee a king in mine anger and took him away in my wrath.* ” ( Hosea 13:11 ) My .... sometimes the Lord allows us to carry out our own unbelieving plans to our own confusion. If we will “ *lean on our own understanding,* ” ( Prov 3:5 ) the Lord sometimes lets us take our own way until we discover what utter folly our fancied wisdom is. You see, this request originated in the will of man. (a)

### **(b) WHAT IT REVEALED:**

You see, it revealed

#### 1. DISBELIEF IN THE WORD OF GOD:

The twelve spies travelled about 500 miles during the forty days of their survey of Canaan, but they discovered nothing that God hadn't already told them. They already knew the names of the pagan nations that lived in the land ( Gen 15:18-21 ) They knew that it was a good land and a rich land flowing with milk and honey.

( Exod 3:8 ) But instead of trusting the Lord and believing the Word they demanded that spies be sent and what to do ? ( Num 13:18-20 ) Do you know what in effect they were saying, “ *we cannot accept God's description of the land of Canaan, we must it confirmed by man.* ” My .... is this not what we do so often ? God's promises to do certain things for us, in us, with us, through us, but instead of going forward and counting on the Lord we stand still in unbelief. Is this not what Sarah did ? The Lord promised to gave her a son, but Sarah was past her sell by date, so she laughed and said,

“ *Shall I of a surety bear a son which am old ?* ”

( Gen 18:13 ) It was the laugh of unbelief at the promise of God, but how different was old Abraham for of him we read that “ *he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief but was strong in faith giving glory to God.* ” ( Rom 4:20 ) Tell me, are you like Sarah or Abraham ?  
1.

#### 2. DISTRUST IN THE WAY OF GOD:

Had God not promised to guide His people to the promised land ? ( Exod 32:34 ) Had He not given to them the majestic pillar of cloud and fire “ *to lead them the way.* ” ( Exod 13:21 ) Well, if that was so, what kind of language was this. “ *We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go, and into what cities we shall come.* ” ( Deut 1:22 ) My .... the guidance that the Lord had given His people was right up until now, it had never failed but now they were substituting the guidance of men for the guidance of God. Is that what you are doing ? Have you got your eyes off the Lord and are you now going your own way ? 1, 2,

### 3. DOUBT IN THE WISDOM OF GOD:

Do you know what God said to them ? Well, look at ( Deut 1:8, 21 ) Do you see their response ? “ *we will send men before us and they shall search us out the land.* ” ( 1:22 ) Their duty was not to send men to search rather their duty was to go up and take. But they thought they knew better than God. My .... just as God sought to lead Israel into the land of fruitfulness so He seeks to lead us into a life of fruitfulness. ( Eph 1:13 ) Canaan is not life in heaven but what Paul describes as life in the heavenlies. Canaan is not heaven but a suburb of heaven. Its stand for a life of victory that is possible to know and to enjoy here and now, but it entails going up and possessing our possessions. Is that what you are doing ? Are you going forward, or backward ? Is the cry of your soul,

**“ Lord lift me up and let me stand  
By faith on heaven’s table land  
A higher place than I have found  
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.”**

## (2) THE REPORT

Twelve men travelled 500 miles to “ *spy out the land of Canaan.* ” ( Num 13:17 ) They went from Kadesh-Barnea to the extreme north to Rehob, near Sidon ( 13:21 ) and they brought back not only the word of their testimony but also the fruit of the land. ( Num 13:23 ) You see, this was the earnest of their inheritance, the foretaste of that to which they were travelling. What a beautiful type of the “ ***earnest,*** ” which God now gives to His people of the inheritance to come. And what is that earnest ? Well, Paul gives the answer in ( 2 Cor 1:21-22 ) “ *Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us is God. Who hath also sealed us and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.* ” ( Eph 1:13-14 ) The earnest was a kind of first instalment, a down payment that guaranteed and secured the whole. So the Lord has put His Spirit within our hearts to be an earnest, a foretaste of the glory to come. The fruits of Canaan were an earnest to Israel of the fertility of the promised land, so the Spirit of God and the fruit He produces is an earnest of the perfect holiness and unspeakable glory of that land to which the Lord is guiding us ! But they not only brought fruit, they brought a report. Look if you will at ( Num 13:26-33 ) Do you see here,

### (a) THE CONFESSION OF THE TWELVE:

Look at ( Num 13:17 ) As a result of their search, there was full agreement among them that it was “ *a land flowing with milk and honey.* ” They were unable to say anything against the land itself, it was all that God had said it was. ( Exod 3:8 ) But there the consensus ended. The exploring team was split. A majority report was submitted by what could be called the Timorous Ten, the men of sight and reason. A minority report was submitted by the Trustworthy Two, Joshua and Caleb, the men of faith and vision. And what contrasting pictures they were. For do you see here not only (a)

### (b) **THE CONSTERNATION OF THE TEN:**

As they set before the people difficulty after difficulty, problem after problem ! “ *The people be strong.* ” “ *The cities are walled.* ” “ *We be not able to go against the people.* ” “ *And there we saw the giants.* ” The Bible says

“ *And they brought up an evil report of the land.* ” Evil, not because it was untrue, but because it left God out of the picture. *The majority interpreted God in the presence of the difficulties, instead of interpreting in the presence of a God to whom nothing was impossible.* They gazed at the giants, the two gazed at God. The majority had great giants and a little God, the two had little giants and a great God. Someone has defined a committee as “ ***a group of people who individually can do nothing and collectively decide nothing can be done.*** ” Because the ten had their eyes on the giants, they were filled with unbelief. “ *We be not able to go up.* ” They did not believe that God could bring them into the land. Now you think of the assurances that God had given to them.

#### 1. The Promises God had made to them:

Had He not assured them time and again that He would give them this land ? ( Exod 3:8 )

#### 2. The Works God had wrought for them:

Is it possible that they had already forgot about the wonders that God had wrought for them in Egypt and at the Red Sea ? What short memories we have.

#### 3. The Gift God had given to them:

For the pillar of cloud and fire was the visible presence of the Lord among His people.

Yet despite all these things unbelief filled their hearts. He was a professional thief. During his reign of terror from 1875 to 1883 Black Bart is credited with stealing the bags and breathe away from 29 different stagecoaches, and he did it without firing a shot. His weapon was his reputation. His ammunition was intimidation. A hood covered his face, no victim ever saw him, no sheriff could ever follow him. *He never fired a shot or took a hostage. He didn't have to his presence was enough to strike a paralysing fear into his victims.* Years later when the authorities caught him they found that he was someone they should not have been afraid of. For when they

caught him they didn't find a blood thirsty bandit, rather they found a mild mannered druggist from Illinois. The man the papers pictured storming through the mountains on horseback was in reality, so afraid of horses that he to and from his robberies in a buggy. He was Charles E. Boles, the bandit who never once fired a shot, because he never once loaded his gun. My .... what difficulties, what Black Barts what problems are filling your heart with fear ? Do you know something ? You are sending out a report to the outside world by the way you live ! If you are fluctuating in your Christian walk, if you are always filled with negatives, if you are constantly murmuring and complaining, what kind of impression is your neighbour getting of the Christian life ? What kind of report are sending you out to the outside world ? (a)(b)

### **(c) THE CONVICTION OF THE TWO:**

The ten said “ *we be not able to go up,*” the two said “ *we are well able,*” the ten said, “ *the people be strong,*” the two said, “ *fear them not,*” the ten said “ *there we saw the giants,*” the two said, “ *the Lord is with us.*” Now Caleb and Joshua had seen all that the ten saw. They neither underestimated their foes, nor minimised the magnitude of the task. The difference was just this. The ten matched the strength of the giants with their own strength, the two matched the strength of the giants with the omnipotence of God. The ten gazed at the giants, the two gazed at God.

*Ten men who failed to see God  
Saw cities impregnably high  
Two men, looking off unto God  
Saw doom for those cities draw nigh*

*Ten men who failed to see God  
Discouraged their fellow-men  
Two men perceived God everywhere  
Are you one of the two .... or the ten ?*

You see, these two groups find reflection in the church of Christ today ! They are those who see only problems, giants, difficulties, for them life is practically a tunnel with a cradle at one end and a grave at the other. They are never happy but when they are miserable. But then they are others who are constantly feeding feasting on the fruit of the land. They are the optimists and their optimism has the surest of all foundations, the promises of God. ( Num 14:7-8 ) My .... where do you stand ? Are you standing with the optimists on the sunny side of life or with the pessimists brooding about the giants ? Are you like the timorous ten or the triumphant two ? How did it all end ? (1) (2)

### **(3) THE RESULT**

It was this,

***“ They came to the gates of Canaan  
But they did not enter in  
They came to the very threshold  
Yet they perished in their sin.***

( Num 14:29 Heb 3:19 ) There was

**(a) *DISCOURAGEMENT:***

Look if you will at ( Deut 1:28 ) Because they lacked faith, all the spies except Caleb and Joshua were discouraged at the prospect of entering the land and fighting the enemy, and their discouragement quickly spread throughout the camp. Doubt had turned into unbelief, and unbelief is rebellion against God.

( Num 14:9 Heb 3:16-19 ) What a picture we have in

( Num Ch 14 ) the people are weeping, murmuring, rebelling “ *Let us make a captain and return into Egypt.* ” ( 14:4 ) The Lord responds by saying, “ *How long will it be ere they believe Me.* ” ( 14:11 ) Are you a discouraged believer this .... ? Does your discouragement flow from your unbelief ? Have you failed to take God at His Word to rest on His promises ? (a) Then there was,

**(b) *DELAY:***

Look if you will at ( Num 14:34 ) Now what was this breach of promise ? ( 14:28-31 ) Now there was no change here in the promise itself. It stood unaltered, unchanged, but there was a delay in the time of its fulfilment ( 14:34 ) and there was a change in the persons to whom it should be fulfilled. ( 14:31 ) For those who came out of Egypt experienced,

**(c) *DISCIPLINE:***

The discipline of God ! God’s judgement was threefold.

(1) The nation would wander for 40 years, one for each day the spies had explored the land. (2) During that time the older generation, twenty years and upward would die and not enter the land, except for Caleb and Joshua. (3) The ten unbelieving spies died because of the evil report they delivered. ( 14:37 ) The Jews had lamented that they wanted to die in the wilderness ( 14:2 ) and they had complained that their children would die in Canaan

( 14:3 ), but God had declared that their children would live in Canaan and the adults would die in the wilderness. Out of their own mouths God passed judgement. My .... be careful what you say to the Lord when you complain, He may take you up on it. Do you know something ? *Moses led the world’s longest funeral march, and Caleb and Joshua watched their generation die.* Does God deal with His people in chastisement when they sin ? Yes ! Only two out of the original multitude that left Egypt came into the promised land.

My .... How much are you losing out through unbelief ?

Kadesh-Barnea, the place of failure ! For instead of going forward in faith, they turned back in unbelief ! What about you this .... ? How do you stand in relation to these things ? Let us ever remember that,

**1. Every moment spent in the wilderness after Kadesh-Barnea is reached, is lost time ..... a blank:**

Have you ever noticed this ? That the movements of God's people are not on His calendar ? ( Num 16-20:21 )

My .... From the time that Israel despised the promised land ( 14:31 ) until they returned to its borders after these years of wandering there is no record save the stoning of the Sabbath breaker and the sin and doom of Korah. ( Num 15:32-16:1 ) During these years they were like a regiment of soldiers marking time, but no progress. On a sun dial in St. Marks these words are written “ *I number none but the cloudless hours.* ” My .... beware every hour spent out of fellowship with God, or short of His purpose's for your life will in the annals of eternity be unnumbered, uncounted ..... a blank.

**2. Their wilderness wandering was marked by extreme restlessness and by bitter discontent:**

They were like the troubled sea which cannot rest. Murmuring and complaining ! ( Num 20:3 ) Is this not a picture of a believer out of touch with God ? Restless, discontent, murmuring ! Their experience summarised in Cowpers words.

*“ Where is the blessedness I knew  
When first I saw the Lord  
Where is the soul refreshing view  
Of Jesus and His Word*

*What peaceful hours I once enjoyed  
How sweet their memory still  
But they have left an aching void  
The world can never fill.”*

**(3) They got right exactly at the spot where they went wrong:**

It was at Kadesh Barnea they listened to the unbelieving spies and began to wander, ( Num 13:26 ) and it was from that same spot years later that they commenced their forward march which culminated in the entrance into and conquest of the land of Canaan.

( Num 20:14-22 ) My .... spiritually speaking are you wandering aimlessly ? Do you need to get right at the spot where you've gone wrong ? My .... In the light of all these truths may we forget the things which are behind, and ever press onward, forward and upward !

Listen again to these words,

***“ Only one life twill soon be past  
Only what’s done for Jesus will last  
Lord at Thy feet myself I cast  
Help me, run well for Thee.”***