

Church of God Sunday School

MOSES SENDS OUT SPIES

Numbers 13:1 — 14:45; Deuteronomy 1:19-46

The children of Israel were finally drawing near to the land God had promised to give them. After spending many months at Mount Sinai, they traveled for three days and camped "in the wilderness of Paran [*PAY-ran*]" (Numbers 12:16). It was at this time that the Lord told Moses to send men to "search the land of Canaan," the Promised Land.

So, Moses chose twelve men—rulers in their tribes—to spy out the land. Moses told these men to see what the land was like: were the people "strong or weak, few or many"; did the people live "in tents, or in strong holds"; was the land "fat or lean"; and was there "wood therein, or not"? Then, Moses said, "Be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land."

What an interesting journey the spies had. They traveled through wilderness and over hills. They saw men who were much bigger than they were—giants! They also found wonderful brooks of clear, running water. Many fruits, such as figs, pomegranates, and grapes, grew there.

When the spies came to the brook of Eshcol (*ESH-kol*), they cut down a grapevine branch that had only *one* cluster of grapes on it. The cluster of grapes was so large that it was put on a pole and carried by *two* men! All the fruits grew in abundance. Think of what a wonderful land God had ready for His people.

After searching the land for forty days, the spies came back to Moses and the people. The spies showed the people the grapes, the pomegranates, and the figs. They said that the land "floweth with milk and honey." They meant that it was a rich land, full of every good thing to eat. (God had already told them that it would be a land like that.)

When this much had been told of the land, ten of

the spies added, "Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there [these were giants]." Those spies were afraid, and they frightened the people!

Caleb and Joshua were two of the twelve spies. They believed, or had faith, in God. They knew that Israel could not conquer the people of the land in their own strength, but with God they could. Caleb came forth and quieted the people. Then he said, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it."

But the ten other spies discouraged the people with their evil report of the land. They said: "They [the people] are stronger than we. . . . And there we saw the giants . . . and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers."

God knew about the giants. He did not want the people of Israel to try to go in their own strength. God wanted the people to trust Him. The battle was His. If they would trust Him, they would see the wonderful things He could do for them.

The people believed this depressing report from the ten spies. They began to cry and wept all night. Once again they blamed Moses and Aaron, saying that it would have been better if they had died in Egypt. They even said that God hated them!

Then the children of Israel said, "Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt." (Had they forgotten how bad slavery was in Egypt?) Moses and Aaron were heartbroken at their unbelief. They tried to encourage the people. They reminded them of God's leading and protection. But they would not listen.

Joshua and Caleb, the two believing spies, tore their clothes in grief. They told the people that Canaan was indeed an "exceeding good land." They told them



not to rebel against God and not to fear "the people of the land." The Israelite people should have believed Joshua and Caleb. Instead, they wanted to stone them!

When God saw the unbelief in the people's hearts, He appeared in His glory in the tabernacle, and all Israel saw it. The Lord said to Moses, "How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?"

God was ready to destroy them all and make a great nation from Moses and his children. Moses interceded for the Israelites. He told the Lord the other nations would say that God had not been able to bring the Israelites into the Promised Land. Moses also reminded God of His patience and His mercy and His forgiveness.

Moses asked God to pardon the sin of the people. The Lord did pardon their sin, but they had to reap for their unbelief. The ten spies with the evil report died by a plague. The Israelite people had to wander in the wilderness for forty years—a year for each day the spies had searched the land. Because of "the murmurings of the children of Israel," God said that all who were "twenty years old and upward" would die in the

wilderness. They would never enter the Promised Land, but their children would grow up and go into it. (Because of their faithful report, Joshua and Caleb would be able to enter the Promised Land.)

After the people heard God's judgment, they went to the top of the mountain early in the morning. In spite of their sin, they were determined to go into the Promised Land. Moses warned them not to go. God was not with them.

Moses and the Ark of the Covenant did not leave the camp. But even that did not stop the people! They went in *their own strength*, presuming that God would be there—and God let their enemies, the Amalekites (*uh-MAL-uh-kites*) and the Canaanites (*KAY-nuh-nites*), defeat them. The people of Israel "returned and wept before the LORD," but God would not listen to them.

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**MEMORY VERSE:**

*"Take heed . . . lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."  
—Hebrews 3:12*

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Circle the Names of the Two Spies Who Were Not Afraid

