

The Twelve Spies Report on the Land of Canaan

Numbers 13:21-33

Numbers 13:21-33 - *“So they went up and spied out the land from the Wilderness of Zin as far as Rehob, near the entrance of Hamath. ²² And they went up through the South and came to Hebron; Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the descendants of Anak, were there. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) ²³ Then they came to the Valley of Eshcol, and there cut down a branch with one cluster of grapes; they carried it between two of them on a pole. They also brought some of the pomegranates and figs. ²⁴ The place was called the Valley of Eshcol, because of the cluster which the men of Israel cut down there. ²⁵ And they returned from spying out the land after forty days. ²⁶ Now they departed and came back to Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. ²⁷ Then they told him, and said: “We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. ²⁸ Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there. ²⁹ The Amalekites dwell in the land of the South; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the banks of the Jordan.” ³⁰ Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, “Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.”*

³¹ But the men who had gone up with him said, “We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we.” ³² And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, “The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. ³³ There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.”

Background Notes

You can follow the expedition of the twelve spies on a Bible map. They traveled about 500 miles on their scouting trip. As they traveled north from the wilderness, the spies came to Hebron. Hebron was a place of great memories, because the patriarchs are buried there, in the cave of Machpelah. In the Valley of Eshcol, the spies cut down a cluster of grapes that was so large that two men had to carry it between them on a pole! Verse 21 tells us that they went as far as “Rehov, near the entrance of Hamah.” This location was as far north as Lebanon is today. The spies couldn’t deny that the Promised Land was a good land and a productive land!

In verse 33 we read about “giants” (*nephilim* or *nephili* is the Hebrew word that’s used here). Who were these “giants”? They certainly were large in stature, as Deuteronomy 2:10 indicates. Thus the Hebrew word *nephilim* is translated “giants” in the King James Version.

This same Hebrew word is used in Genesis 6:4 for some people who lived before the global Flood of Noah’s day: *“There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.”* Does this mean that some giants or *nephilim* survived the global Flood? No. All human life perished in the Flood, apart from Noah and his family.

So how do we explain these *nephilim*, or “giants,” who lived before and after the Flood? It’s quite simple. There were people of unusually large stature before the Flood, and there were people of unususally large statue after the Flood. Remember the “giant,” Goliath, who lived at the time of David. The human gene pool that God created in Adam and preserved in Noah allowed for people of large stature, or “giants.”

Doctrinal Points

1. **Unbelief** sees obstacles from the **human** perspective.

The first part of the report of the spies when they returned to Moses and the children of Israel at Kadesh is found in verse 27: *“We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit.”* So far, so good. They correctly reported that the Promised Land was a good and productive land.

But then came the bad report, in verses 28-29: *“Bur the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants off Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the South; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the banks of the Jordan.”* By the way, watch out whenever you use that word “**but**”! Use of the word “but” may be an indication that you’re looking at obstacles from the **human** perspective - not from **God’s** perspective!

Continuing on with the negative report in verses 31-33: *“We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we. And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, “The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.”*

What was the basic problem here? The basic problem here was **unbelief**. In fact, Hebrews 3:19 says that Israel could not enter the Land of Promise and rest because of unbelief. **Unbelief sees obstacles**, because **unbelief looks at things from the human perspective**.

It was true in the case of the people of Israel then, and it's true of us today. Do you have obstacles in your Christian life? Obstacles that are keeping you out of the Land of Spiritual Blessing? Obstacles that prevent you from enjoying your spiritual blessings in Christ? Obstacles that are keeping you defeated in spiritual battle?

What are some of these obstacles that might be keeping you out of the Land? Maybe it's the obstacle of not really wanting to get differences and problems resolved between you and a fellow-believer. Maybe it's the obstacle of "fear of becoming over-involved" in serving the Lord. Maybe it's the obstacle of "fear of witnessing" to your neighbor or co-worker. Maybe it's the obstacle of thinking that believing the biblical account and worldview of Creation takes too much faith.

Are any of these obstacles keeping us out of the Land of Spiritual Blessing? Do these obstacles appear to us like "fortified cities" or "giants" – too hard to conquer? If so, our problem is **unbelief!** Not unbelief as to trusting in Jesus for our salvation, but unbelief about walking fully with the Lord and entering the Land of Spiritual Blessings – the Land in which God wants us to live! Unbelief sees obstacles from the human perspective! What's the solution?

The answer is faith.

2. Faith sees obstacles from the divine perspective.

Did you ever look down on people from the top of a tall building? Can you tell the difference between a tall person and a short person? No! They **all** look like grasshoppers, right? That's like looking at things from the **divine perspective!** Did you ever look down on a high barrier wall from an airplane? It doesn't look like an obstacle, does it? From God's perspective, giants and fortified cities with high walls are nothing. **That's what faith is all about -- seeing things from God's perspective!**

That's the kind of faith that Joshua and Caleb had. *"Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it" (v30).*

And Numbers 14:9 says that Joshua had the same divine perspective as Caleb: *"Only do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people of the land, for we will devour them; their protection has departed from them, and the LORD is with us. Do not fear them."*

When Israel finally did enter the Promised Land by faith - forty years later - conquering fortified cities like Jericho was "a piece of cake" for them! And do we read **anywhere** in the book of Joshua about **any** "giants" being **any** kind of problem for Israel during the time of the conquest? **Nowhere**, right? So if only the spies and the people had shown faith at this point! Remember what Rahab, a resident of pagan Jericho, said about Israel in Joshua 2:9 - *"I know that the LORD has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you."*

God has ways of moving obstacles for the faithful believer. What about those obstacles like doubts about your security, or doubt concerning God's ability? What about the high walls of reluctance to get problems cleared up between you and a

fellow believer, or reluctance to get more involved in Christian service? What about the giants of worldly thinking, or the obstacle of being too busy even to pray? The problem on our part is **unbelief**.

Most of us really don't have the faith to live in the good of God's promises. We may say that we do, but are we really living by faith in God's good promises? We tend to fall short of the Land of Blessing, and spend too much time "wandering in the wilderness" of Christian experience because of our lack of belief. The solution is "more faith!" 1 John 5:4 says, "*For whoever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.*"

Faith sees obstacles from the divine perspective.

Practical Application

How do you spell "giant"?

Do you spell giant with a capital "G" or a small "g"? Spelling Giant with a capital "G" may indicate that you spell **God** with a small "g"! Unbelief and lack of trust in God spells giant with a capital "G" and God with a small "g." Faith spells giant with a small "g" and God with a capital "G"!

If you're spelling giant with a capital "G" you need to begin to take little steps towards more faith - just one little step at a time! Remember - the Lord said if you have faith the size of a mustard seed (and that's pretty small), if that faith is genuine, that's what counts.

So begin to take those little steps of faith. Trust God just a little bit more than you do now. Trust Him to do what He promises to do! Trust that He can and will answer prayer! Pray in faith, based on the promises of God, just a little bit more than you've been praying before. Trust God to help you take that first step of faith toward reconciling differences that may exist between you and a fellow believer. Read and study God's Word just a little bit more. Commit yourself to defending the biblical worldview just a little bit more than you do now.

And guess what? If you do this, you will find that your "capital 'G' Giant" will shrink down to a "small 'g' giant"! Praise the Lord!

How do **you** spell "giant"?