

THE CHURCH IN NEW YORK CITY
CHILDREN'S MEETING LESSON

DATE: January 25, 2015

SUBJECT: THE TRAVELS OF THE CHOSEN CHILDREN OF ISRAEL: The Spying of the Good Land

SCRIPTURE: Numbers 13:1-33; 14:1-45; Deuteronomy 1:22-35, 40-46; 9:1-6

AIM: To see the importance of believing God and His promises and to see the consequences of having an evil heart of unbelief.

MEMORY VERSES TO CHOOSE FROM: Hebrews 3:12 ("Beware, brothers, lest perhaps there be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief in falling away from the living God..."; Mark 9:23b ("...All things are possible to him who believes."); 2 Corinthians 5:7 ("(For we walk by faith, not by appearance)")

SUGGESTED SONGS: 20 ("All Things are Possible"); 33 ("When Your Fears Grow Mountain High"); 25 ("I Believe God"); 1600 ("Caleb"); 9531 Bible Story Songs-Vessels Unto Honor 11 ("A Child Has Joy"); 5 ("Grumblers"); 158 ("Hallelu"); 22 ("Faith, Mighty Faith"); 1302 ("Be Strong and of Good Courage"); 90 ("Five Barley Loaves"); 8317 ("In the Ten Commandments"); 8308 ("Do All Things Without Murmuring"); 8324 ("The Land We Saw Was Exceedingly Good"); 8326 ("On Wings of Eagles"); 9532 ("I'll Guard My Tongue"); 9522 ("Everything We Do or Say")

BACKGROUND: In last week's lesson, we saw how the children of Israel murmured against God about their situation in the wilderness, and how they lusted after Egyptian food. This angered God and many died in the wilderness because of their murmuring and lusting. This week's lesson occurs one year later; it is now two years since the children of Israel came out of Egypt and they have finally come to the border of the promised good land.

CONTENT: Jehovah told Moses to send spies to Canaan. Canaan was the land that God had promised the people of Israel. The group of twelve spies was made up of one man, a leader, from each of the twelve tribes. One of the twelve spies was Joshua, the son of Nun. When Moses sent out the spies, he told them which way to go: "Go up this way into the Negev, and go up into the hill country." Do you know what the spies were sent for? They were sent to find what the land was like, whether the people who lived in it were strong or weak, whether they were few or many, whether the land was good or bad, whether the cities that they lived in were like camps or with fortifications (something built to strengthen or protect), whether the land was fat or lean, whether there were trees in it or not. He told them to strengthen themselves and bring back some of the fruit of the land.

When the men went to spy out the land, they came to a place called the Valley of Eshcol. There were very large grapes there because the land God had promised was very good. Do you know how large the grapes were? The men cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes, and they had to carry it on a pole between two men! They also cut off some of the pomegranates and some of the figs. After forty days of spying, they came back to Moses and Aaron and to the people of Israel. The spies reported what they saw and showed them the fruit of the land. They told Moses that the land indeed flowed with milk and honey, and this was its fruit. But the spies also reported that the people who lived in the land were strong, and the cities were fortified and very large and they saw the descendants of Anak there. There were also the Amalekites, the Hittites, the Jebusites, the Amorites and the Canaanites. There were a lot of enemies in this land that would have to be defeated before the people of Israel could take over! But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, "**Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.**" But ten of the spies did not agree with Caleb. Instead, they were very negative and said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." The spies scared the people of Israel by saying that it was a land that eats up its inhabitants; and all the people that they saw in it were men of great size. The ten spies said that they were like grasshoppers compared to the

people they saw. This report was evil, and it caused all the people to lift up their voice and cry and weep that night.

Even though God had done very great things for the children of Israel many times, they believed the evil report instead of believing in what God can do. All the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron; and the people said, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness!...Our wives and our little ones will become plunder. Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?" They even said to one another, "Let us appoint a captain, and let us return to Egypt." This caused Moses and Aaron to be so upset that they fell on their faces before the people of Israel. The two positive spies, Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, tore their clothes. They told the children of Israel that the land was an exceedingly good land. If Jehovah was pleased with them, then He would bring them into the land and give it to them. "Only do not rebel against Jehovah, nor should you fear the people of the land, for they are our bread. Their protection has been removed from them, and **Jehovah is with us; do not fear them.**" Instead of listening to Joshua and Caleb and believing in God, the whole assembly said to stone them with stones!

Then the glory of Jehovah appeared in the Tent of Meeting (the tabernacle) to all the children of Israel. God spoke up. Jehovah said to Moses, "How long will this people despise Me? And how long will they not believe in Me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them? I will strike them with pestilence and dispossess them, and I will make you into a nation greater and mightier than they." But Moses told Jehovah that the Egyptians would hear of it, for by His might He brought up this people from their midst. They would tell the inhabitants of this land. He asked Jehovah to pardon the iniquity of the people according to the greatness of His lovingkindness. Then Jehovah said, "I have pardoned them according to your word; But as surely as I live...None of those men who have seen My glory and My signs, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have tried Me these ten times and have not listened to My voice, Shall see the land which I swore to give to their fathers, nor shall any of those who despised Me see it. Only My servant Caleb, because he had a different spirit and has fully followed Me, will I bring into the land which he entered; and his descendants shall take possession of it. Now since the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwell in the valleys, turn tomorrow, and set out into the wilderness by the way that leads to the Red Sea."

Jehovah spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, "How long *shall I bear* with this evil assembly, which murmurs against Me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they are making against Me. Say to them, 'As I live, declares Jehovah, just as you have spoken in My ears, so will I do to you. Your corpses shall fall in this wilderness, and none of you who were numbered, according to the number you counted from twenty years old and upward, who have murmured against Me, Shall come into the land, in which I swore to settle you, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.'" God also said, "But your little ones, whom you said would become plunder, I will bring in, and they will know the land which you have rejected. But as for you, your corpses shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and they shall suffer for your unfaithfulness until your corpses have been consumed in the wilderness. According to the number of the days which you spied out the land, forty days, a year for every day, you shall bear your iniquities, forty years; and you shall know My displeasure.' I, Jehovah, have spoken; surely I will do this to all this evil assembly who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die."

The ten men who brought an evil report and caused all the people of Israel to murmur against God, ended up dying by the plague before Jehovah. Only Joshua and Caleb remained alive because they brought a positive report and believed that God could give them the land.

When Moses told the children of Israel what God said, the people mourned greatly. They got up early in the morning to go up to the top of the mountain, saying, "Here we are; now we will go up to the place which

Jehovah has spoken of, for we have sinned.” They were going to try to get the land, but without God! Moses warned them, “Why now do you continue to transgress the commandment of Jehovah? This will not succeed. Do not go up - for Jehovah is not among you - so that you are not struck down before your enemies. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and you shall fall by the sword. Because you have turned back from following Jehovah, therefore Jehovah will not be with you.” But instead of listening to Moses, they presumed to go up to the top of the mountain, even though neither the Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah nor Moses had departed out of the midst of the camp. God was not with them, yet they thought they could win against enemies by themselves. The Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that hill country came down and struck them and beat them back as far as Hormah.

SUGGESTED APPLICATIONS:

- **We should be like Joshua and Caleb, who had believing hearts.** Two of the twelve spies had believing hearts. The other ten spies had discouraging news, which caused the people of Israel to doubt God’s word and God’s promises. Even if some around us, perhaps our classmates or others, doubt God’s word or try to discourage us, we must continue to believe and trust in our God and in His Word.
- **To believe God and trust in Him is to honor Him.** The Lord said that the unbelieving children of Israel despised Him and He called them evil. The unbelieving spies’ report is also called evil. It offends God greatly when we do not trust in Him.
- **No matter how difficult the outward situation is, we should trust in God.** Perhaps someone in our family is sick, and we need to do more in the house to help out. Maybe we are unhappy about things and we want to complain. Perhaps some children are afraid of the dark or afraid of bad dreams. We can pray and trust in God rather than look at our difficulties. God is pleased when we trust in Him.
- **We need to be careful not to murmur against those whom God put into authority.** Those who gave the evil report ended up murmuring against authority and leading many others to murmur against God. Even a little complaint or murmur can end up with serious consequences. We might think that a little complaint in agreement with our classmates, e.g. “Why does the teacher give us so much homework?” is nothing, but it actually sows rebellion. Instead of grumbling, we must learn to speak the truth and cheerfully obey God and the authorities in our speech and in our attitude.

Adapted from the Church in New York City Children’s Meeting lessons: 11/13/88; 1/28/96; 1/24/04; 1/31/10