

## Arrival at Canaan and Exploration of the Land

### Arrival and Exploration (13:1-20)

We find that God does not waste any time in fulfilling His promises. He said He would bring the Israelites up to Canaan and now not long after they left Sinai, we find them encamped at the Desert of Paran (the southernmost part of Canaan).

The people now requested to know something about the land (Dt 1:19-25), so from here, Moses was instructed to “send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites.” This exploration would give the Israelites an opportunity to see the beauty of the land that was theirs. It would also give them a chance to discover what work was yet before them.

The explorers were to be *leaders* from each tribe. Their names are recorded for us:

Shammua	(Reuben)
Shaphat	(Simeon)
Caleb	(Judah)
Igal	(Issachar)
Hoshea/Joshua	(Ephraim)
Palti	(Benjamin)
Gaddiel	(Zebulun)
Gaddi	(Manasseh)
Ammiel	(Dan)
Sethur	(Asher)
Nahbi	(Naphtali)
Geuel	(Gad)

The explorers were to look for certain things as they entered the land. Take note of some of these things in vv17-20:

A brief description of the exploration itself is given in vv21-25. The spies traveled from the far south to the far north of Canaan, a distance of about 250 miles each way. They were “on the road” for 40 days. They returned with a cluster of grapes from the Valley of Eshcol (Eshcol means *cluster*).

## Report on the Exploration (13:20-33)

The account the spies gave to Moses seemed at first to be good news. It was a beautiful land. It was “flowing with milk and honey!”—an expression that suggested that it was a fertile place with plenty of food and good things to supply their nation. They showed the sample of fruit they had brought with them.

But as soon as they had shown the good things, they began a recital of the negative. They reported that: 1) The people who lived in Canaan were powerful; 2) The cities were large and fortified; 3) The Anakites, Amalekites, Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites lived there as well as the Canaanites. There were *many* people they would have to displace.

Apparently this stirred up the crowd until Caleb finally quieted them and said, “We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it.”

The response from the others (except Joshua) was negative. A bad report about the land began spreading throughout the camp. The elders said that the people of Canaan were too large and too powerful to be conquered.

Sadly, this chapter shows human nature at it’s sinful, distrusting worst. Note the following failures of Israel when they arrived at the gateway to Canaan.

- ! **It was the *leaders* who failed.** God had called for leaders among the people to become the explorers. These should have been the men who were most anxious and most confident to inherit the land that had been promised to them. Instead, they lost sight of the LORD and His promises to them.
- ! **The people badmouthed the place God had prepared for them.** In v32 the spies began to spread bad reports about Canaan. Here they had *arrived* at the place that was *their own*. No longer were they in slavery. Their travels were ended, yet here they were already “looking a gift horse in the mouth.”
- ! **They doubted God’s promise.** This sin, above all others, is ever so clear in this chapter. God had *promised* them this land. They ought to have had confidence that He would deliver. Instead, they were scared and didn’t think He could give what He had said. How often isn’t this true of us? God promises to take care of us but as soon as we see the Amalekites on the horizon, we forget or doubt His loving concern for us. The issue before the people at Canaan’s gate was simple: Would they enter the land on the basis of God’s strength or would they be deceived by what they saw?

Thankfully, there are two bright spots in this chapter. The first being that the land was exactly as God had promised it—it was a wonderful place that would serve their needs better than they could have imagined. Second, we see one man who did stand up for the LORD. Caleb tried to convince people to continue into Canaan and pointed out that they could “certainly” defeat the inhabitants. In the next chapter, Joshua too joins Caleb in defending God’s plan. These two exhibited a faith in the LORD that the others did not have.