

Numbers 13

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- [0 : 00] We're going to read the entire chapter of Numbers 13, and I'm going to go into the 14th chapter and get to the first four verses, because I think it helps us take it in context. Remember a couple weeks ago, or last week, we decided that we were going to put together, well, I say we, I made the comment that we were going to put together our Sunday night along with our Wednesday night, so that we're just kind of streamlining.
- So in connection with Sunday nights, we're just making our way through the Bible, and we're now at Numbers chapter 13. This is one of those great pivot points in Scripture, as you will see tonight as we look at it, but let's open with a word of prayer, and then we'll just get into the text together.
- Lord, I thank you so much for allowing us to gather together tonight. Thank you for the privilege it is of looking at your word. Lord, we pray that this midweek time would be of encouragement to us.
- Lord, it would be of greater motivation, that it would call us to place our attention and our focus upon you. Lord, that it would lead us to walk closer with you, and we thank you for all that you are doing.
- We thank you for the way you're moving. Lord, in all things, we give you glory and honor. We pray for those who are working with the teenager, those who are working with the children. God, we pray that you would be magnified in those midst as well.
- [1 : 11] Lord, we just want you to be lifted on high, and we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. The book of Numbers, if you remember, I told you is a book, much like the book of Judges, which spirals down.
- Instead of going upward, there is this great spiral downward. Now, that's not just something that we limit to Scripture, because that is something that also history shows us. Mankind is degenerating.
- We are not getting better, right? We are falling apart. We are breaking down. Man is getting worse, and this is exactly what Scripture teaches us over and over again. But as in the days of Noah, so will man be in the last days.
- And that is that man will get to this real desperate state of sinfulness that God intervenes, and we find that in the book of Revelation. But in Numbers, we start out on a high note.
- In the first nine chapters, they are living in complete obedience. As a matter of fact, the first nine and a half, because even when you get into chapter 10, they're living in complete obedience. And the common repeated thing is, as the Lord commanded, as the Lord commanded, they're following the Lord's command.
- [2 : 15] They're doing exactly what He had told them to do. And then He tells them to do something they weren't real happy about, and that is they need to start moving. All right, it's enough to be sitting here for 11 months at the base of Mount Sinai, to be fed by the Lord, literally, to get these great visions of God's glory over the tabernacle, to have all these great instructions.
- Now let's put a little feet on the ground, and let's start taking these instructions or these truths and applying them to your life. Because for 11 months, God had shown His faithfulness.

For 11 months, God had proclaimed His truth. For 11 months, God had organized His people. For 11 months, God had manifested His presence among them in a supernatural way.

Now He says, now let's go. And really, as soon as they start walking, they start complaining, because the journey is difficult. And then they begin complaining about the food. They begin complaining about this, and they begin complaining about that.

And then we get to this Numbers 12 passage, where Miriam, you know, Moses' sister, kind of starts this trouble. And Miriam and Aaron said, Has the Lord only spoken to Moses? Has He not spoken to us as well?

[3 : 17] For those of you that were here last Wednesday night, we realized that this was really Miriam leading this as a fit of jealousy. She was really being a little bit upset because of who Moses had married, because she was afraid she was going to lose her place of prominence among the women.

So now we come to Numbers 13, and this really is the hinge on which the door of the wilderness wandering swings. If you remember, the Hebrew scripture refers to the book of Numbers as in the wilderness.

It's a one-word title, but the Hebrew for it means in the wilderness. We call it Numbers because it starts out with the numbering or the counting of God's people. The Hebrew people called it in the wilderness because the bulk of the book has to do with their wandering around in the wilderness.

This is where this starts, and this is a result of, or this is what leads to their wilderness wanderings, and we see it here in Numbers 13. The Word of God says, Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Send out for yourself men, so that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I am going to give to the sons of Israel.

You shall send a man from each of their father's tribes, every one a leader among them. So Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran at the command of the Lord, all of them men who were heads of the sons of Israel.

[4 : 32] These then were their names, from the tribe of Reuben, Shamua, the son of Zechur, from the tribe of Simeon, Shephat, the son of Hori, from the tribe of Judah, Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, from the tribe of Issachar, Irgal, the son of Joseph, from the tribe of Ephraim, Hosea, the son of Nun, from the tribe of Benjamin, Palti, the son of Raphu, from the tribe of Zebulun, Gadil, the son of Sodhi, from the tribe of Joseph, from the tribe of Manasseh, Gadil, the son of Susi, from the tribe of Dan, Amil, the son of Gamaliel, from the tribe of Asher, Sathur, the son of Michael, from the tribe of Naphtali, Nabi, the son of Vopsi, from the tribe of Gad, Gul, the son of Machi, from the, these are the names of the men who Moses sent to spy out the land, but Moses called Hosea, the son of Nun, Joshua.

Joshua, just stop right there because I need to put this, need to let you know this because it's not necessarily in the message. I know I'm kind of stopping this midstream, but you need to know why Moses called Hosea Joshua, because it has application.

He didn't just change his name. Anytime you see a name change in scripture, it means something, right? Anytime God calls Saul Paul, it means something. When he referred to Simon as Peter, it meant something.

Hosea means salvation. Okay? Hosea, the son of Nun, Hosea means salvation. You know what Joshua means?

God saves. So his name was salvation. And Moses, in calling him Joshua, reminded them that salvation wasn't coming through Hosea.

[6 : 10] Salvation comes from the Lord. It's the Lord saves. So he took his root name and highlighted where salvation was coming from. Salvation does not come through Joshua, by the way.

Joshua leads them into the promised land, but he is not the Savior. The reason he is no longer referred to as Hosea, because he is not the Savior. It is the Lord who is the Savior. You just need to know that. Okay?

Because this is why his name's changed. Not that his parents did bad in naming him Hosea. Okay? Just letting you know, Nun is not a bad person because of that. So we move on. Verse 17. When Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, he said to them, Go up there into the Negev, then go up into the hill country, see what the land is like, and whether the people who live in it are strong or weak, whether they are few or many.

How is the land in which they live? Is it good or bad? And how are the cities in which they live? Are they like open camps or with fortifications? How is the land? Is it fat or lean? Are there trees in it or not?

Make an effort, then, to get some of the fruit of the land. Now the time was the time of the first ripe grapes. So they went up and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin, as far as Rehob, at Labo Hamath.

[7 : 16] When they had gone up into the Negev, they came to Hebron, where Ahimion, Sashi, and Talmi, the descendants of Anak, were. Now Hebron was built seven years before Zon in Egypt.

Then they came to the Valley of Eshcol, and from there cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes, and they carried it on a pole between two men with some of the pomegranates and the figs. That place was called the Valley of Eshcol because of the cluster which the sons of Israel cut down from there.

When they returned from spying out the land at the end of forty days, they proceeded to come to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the sons of Israel in the wilderness of Paran at Kadesh. And they brought back word to them and to all the congregation and showed them the fruit of the land.

Thus they told them and said, We went into the land where you sent us, and it certainly does flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large, and moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there.

Amalek is living in the land of the Negev, and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites are living in the hill country, and the Canaanites are living by the sea and by the side of the Jordan. Then Caleb quieted the people down before Moses and said, We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it.

[8 : 33] But the men who had gone up with him said, We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us. So they gave out to the sons of Israel a bad report of the land, which they had spied out, saying, The land through which we have gone and spying it out is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great size.

There also we saw the Nephilim, the sons of Anak, are part of the Nephilim. And we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight. Chapter 14.

Then all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. All the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, Would that we had died in the land of Egypt, or would that we had died in the wilderness.

Why is the Lord bringing us into this land to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become plunder. Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt? So they said to one another, Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt.

Numbers 13 through Numbers 14, verse 4. We see here what it looks like, because we're looking at the rebellion passages. We see here the people seeing what God had provided.

[9 : 50] I just want you to focus on that. Seeing what God had provided, yet failing to attain it. They see what the Lord has provided, but they fail to take hold of it.

Sometimes I think a number of us, when we open up our scripture, we see the promises of God. We see all that God has told us He would give us freely. We see what He has promised His people, yet we somehow or another fall short of attaining all that He has promised us.

This isn't a name it, claim it theology. This is just living according to biblical promise. What God has said is rightfully ours. And we see just three things here from this passage as we look at it in a broad spectrum.

Number one, we see that they saw the promise because of a reassurance of that promise. We see the reassured promise. It says, Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Send out for yourself men, so that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I am going to give them.

One thing we notice all throughout the Old Testament, or one thing we notice all throughout the book of Exodus, we get into Leviticus, we get to the book of Numbers, every time God starts to speak of the promised land, He always uses this phrase, which I am going to give them.

[11 : 06] God reassures His promise over and over and over again. Every time He refers to this land, the Lord very clearly says, This is the land I am going to give my people.

There is never a doubt that they may have it. There's never a doubt that they could have it. It's never if they are good enough, they will have it. Remember the book of Exodus says that He brought them out of Egypt in order to take them into the promised land.

There's that theme. He brought them out to take them in. So why did He bring them out? In order to take them in. You cannot have the one without the other. The whole reason God delivered them from Egypt, the whole reason He delivered them from slavery, was in order to bring them into the promised land.

So for a believer to walk in doubt of attaining heaven, based upon their circumstances or their world, would be a similar situation. God redeemed us and saved us not to give us a better life now.

He redeems us and saves us that we may live with Him for all of eternity. And to doubt the reality of that promise is just to be as these people here, that God brought me out, but He cannot take me in.

[12 : 21] Because assuredly, as God says He's going to do something, He will not fail to keep that promise, and He cannot fall short in keeping that promise. We need to understand this, that every time God speaks to His people about the promised land, He is reminding them, this is the land I am going to give you.

He does not say, this is the land you're going to go earn. He does not say, this is the land you're going to go fight for. He says, this is the land I am going to give you.

What's happening here, is will they believe the very promise of God? Doubting one's salvation, and I understand it's a reality.

Listen, I understand, friend, that we walk sometimes in the weakness of our flesh, and sometimes the flesh seems to have better days than the Spirit does, and we seem to have this constant battlefield going on within us, but we need to understand this too.

When we get to this place, if we have fully trusted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, if we have committed our lives to Him, and we have surrendered ourselves, if His death was in our place, if we come to this place where we're doubting our salvation, really what we're doing is, we're doubting what God has promised us.

[13 : 39] Because He says, whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. And I'm not saying that we're going to always feel saved, I'm not going to say we always feel right, but based upon the very promise that God has extended to us.

There we go again. We walk by faith in what He has clearly proclaimed, not on how we feel at that moment. Now, I want to set this in proper context because God is reassuring them of His promise here.

He is showing them that this is what He's giving them. But there was this phrase that just kept sticking out to me, and I kept trying to figure out why it was there. And it was right there at the very beginning. It is that first word that says, then, then, then the Lord said to them.

Because I have a problem with this passage. If you want to talk about questions, here's a question I have. And if we don't get past the first point, that's okay. But I had a problem with this. If God didn't, why would God let them go spy it out if God knows that they're going to come back and give a bad report?

Anybody ever thought that? I mean, God is God. He knows what's going to happen, right? God knows that if He sends 12 in there, 10 are going to come back. By the way, we just need to go ahead and step back right here and say that every time Scripture allows the majority to rule, the majority goes wrong.

[14 : 58] We need to go ahead and affirm that. We need to go ahead and see this, that the majority is not always right. Okay? I'm not saying that we ought to have this dictatorship.

There's only one that's right, and that is the one who is the head. There's only one who's always right in the church. That is the head of the church, and that's definitely not the pastor because it says that Christ is the head of the church, and we are just members of it, right?

So the majority can always be wrong, and we see this over and over again, referred to as in Scripture. But we see here that God told them, it says, Then the Lord said, Why is the word then there?

Because it doesn't fit in with chapter 12. Because they're just journeying, and then the Lord tells them to do this, and this. You know, I was kind of scratching my head, but I've told you this before. The best commentary on Scripture is Scripture.

Scripture is what we call progressive revelation. The greatest example to this is when we get to God called Abraham out of the land of the Ur, the Chaldeans, and he went so far, and he stopped halfway, and then when his dad died, he went a little bit further.

[16 : 02] Remember where he stopped about halfway, he never made it to the promised land, and then his dad dies, and he goes a little bit further. Always wondering why. Then we go reading the book of Acts, and Stephen is giving his defense before the Sanhedrin.

He references this, and the fact that God told Abraham to leave his father and mother and go to the promised land. Abraham decided to let his dad lead the charge.

So God stopped him halfway until he took that roadblock out of the way, that is, his dad died, and then he had all of Abraham's attention. We see this progressive revelation. Deuteronomy chapter 1. Deuteronomy chapter 1.

If you turn to Deuteronomy chapter 1, I'm not going to ask you to, but you need to write this down. Moses is recounting their travels very quickly. Deuteronomy means second law. It's the second telling of everything that happens in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.

In Deuteronomy chapter 1, he says we traveled from here to here, from here to here, and then we came to Kadesh Barnea. I think it's about the 18th verse, 19th verse. He said we came to Kadesh Barnea, and I told you, go in and take possession of the land which the Lord has given you.

[17 : 01] Go in and victoriously drive out all of its inhabitants. God is giving us the land. Let's go take possession. And then he says around verse 20, he says, but you said, Moses, let's send some spies out to see this land first.

And Moses said, and it sounded good to me, so I asked the Lord, now come back to Numbers 13. Then the Lord says, okay, if that's what you want to do, go ahead. See, the command was, the promise was, and you only get this when you're reading Deuteronomy 1.

Go take what I have promised you. It's yours. The rebellion was, well, before we go, let's talk about it a little bit. Let's get a few people to go look at it and make sure it's what we want to do.

Let's make sure it's the right move. But God says over and over again, go take, go take, go take. This is what I'm promising you. And they said, well, we'd rather send 12 to look at it first.

We want to be prepared. I believe in preparations. I believe in getting right. I believe in, you know, considering the outcomes. But God had told them, God had given them a command, and he reassured them with this promise.

[18 : 12] I am giving you the land. Go get it. And they stopped. Then God says, okay, if you want to go look at it, go ahead. It's in 12 men.

12 younger men. These are not the 12 leaders that we meet in the first of the book of Numbers. These are 12 younger men because someone a lot smarter than me did the math. They traveled probably over 500 miles on those 40 days on foot looking at the land.

So think about this. Those 12 men walked 500 miles. They never had to walk because God said, just go get it. So there's a reassured promise. The second thing we see is there's the realized provisions.

What had God said about the land? It is a land flowing with milk and honey. It is a land that has houses you did not build and wells you did not dig and gardens you did not plant. It is a land that is luscious in its provision. Have you ever realized how God describes the land?

Have you ever realized what God says about what he's promising them? Not only what he says, but what he doesn't say. Pay attention to that, right? We have to pay attention so much to what God says and also to where God is silent.

[19 : 14] God says, it is a land lush with provisions. It is a land whose fruit is ripe. It is a land that is ready for you there. It is a land that has everything you need.

And I love God's divine hand of leading because this one phrase says, now the time was the time of the first ripe grapes. God brought them there right when the harvest was coming in, literally.

He said, I want to show you how magnificent it is. So they went to spy it out and sure enough, they come back and they said, you know what, look, here's the cluster of grapes. I mean, they had to put it on a pole and two men carry it.

Here are pomegranates, here are figs, here are grapes. The land really does flow with milk and honey. All they did was realize that what God had told them was accurate.

But then they started talking about the things God never said. Well, the cities are fortified to the heavens. The people are giants. There's a lot of people there.

[20 : 13] Anak is there. You know, there's all these people and they're a lot bigger than us. Have you noticed that every time God described the promised land, He always described what He was providing in it and He never once talked about the people there other than the fact that He was judging them for their sin because the size of the people didn't matter.

Right? The amount of resistance they offered didn't matter. God said, I'm providing you all of this. But when man went in, they looked past their provisions and started looking at the obstacles.

I started looking at the things in the way. You know what happens to us as believers? We open up Scripture and we see that God has promised all these things for His people. God has said these things He will do for us.

God has said over and over and over and over and over again that He will do all these things for us. And we see all these things as a reality and then we look up from the Bible and we begin to look around at all the obstacles.

We say, well God, you didn't tell me about these. And God says, those things are secondary issues. Look at the primary issue. There's always going to be an obstacle. It says the Nephilim are there as well. Now the only other place we have the Nephilim mentioned in Scripture, the only other place we have the Nephilim mentioned in Scripture is Genesis 6 where it says that the sons of God came down and noticed the daughters of men.

[21 : 31] And those were the days of the Nephilim preceding the days of Noah. Now, I can't really give a great biblical answer to that. I can give you a biblical answer or it's an answer that kind of makes us at times be a little confused.

Some interpret this that this was, and I kind of follow this interpretation. The only time the phrase the sons of God is ever used is in direct reference to angels. We see it also referenced in the book of Job where it says there was a day when the sons of God came and gave an account to God and Satan came there as well and he said, have you considered my servant Job?

The angels are there directly referenced as the sons of God. So, really the only thing that is consistent in the biblical is the sons of God would be angels. So, some say that this would be an illegitimate combining of angelic beings with the daughters of men.

And the Nephilim were the offspring of that in some ways. There's no way that could ever happen. Well, when you read the New Testament in the book of Peter, I can't remember if it's 1 Peter or 2 Peter, but it also references in those days when the angels left their proper abode, which were also and connected to the days of Noah, which is also the days of the Nephilim.

So, they were seen as these superhuman, super powerful beings. Now, some would say, well, the Nephilim just mean giants. They were just big giants, you know, big men. So, you go home and look it up and you'll see some commentators will say, well, the sons of God, that's just what God called the people in early creation.

[22 : 58] I'm not buying that because if it's not a consistent theme running through Scripture, I mean, if you want to read it as that, I'm not here to tell you you're wrong. I'm just saying that I can't go that way because that's not what's consistent throughout Scripture.

But, anyhow, the Nephilim were seen as these superhuman, super strong beings. Okay? That's why it scared them so much. Again, secondary issue.

Secondary issues always take our eyes off of the realized provisions. We fail to see that what God has told us would happen actually happening because we're looking around at other things.

We're beginning to focus on secondary things. So you see the reassured promise. You see the realized provisions. And then we get to this third thing and this will be where we stop tonight.

A resistant people. A resistant people. Caleb says, hey, let's go in. Let's do this. I love Caleb, by the way. Caleb's one of my favorite guys in the Old Testament.

[24 : 00] The reason I love Caleb is not so much here because we know that Caleb and Joshua were the only two who brought back a good report. Joshua ends up leading the people in. The reason I like Caleb is when you get to the book of Joshua and it says in the early pages that God gave Caleb a promise.

God told Caleb that wherever he had walked he would give it to him. That's pretty cool, right? Now Caleb's trusting the promise of God here because Caleb's like, hey, let's go get it. God said we can have it.

Let's go get it. Now we know Joshua seems to be silent in this passage. We'll see it later on. But Joshua seems to be in the background and the other two are like, no, there's giants there, there's giants there, there's giants there and the majority is screaming and shouting and Caleb's like, no, let's go.

Well, God told Caleb wherever you have walked I will give it to you and Caleb's like, all right, I got a nice piece of ground picked out over there. So when they go into the promised land all the way into the book of Joshua, that's why I love Caleb so much.

Caleb goes and fights and he's fighting and he's fighting and he's fighting and God's using him, God's using him, God's using him and then the fighting kind of dies down a little bit Caleb goes to Joshua and Caleb says, hey, Joshua, God told me I could have the land where I had walked.

[25 : 07] Joshua's like, okay, go get it. You know where that land was? That's where all the giants were living. That's where he wanted. And it says, and Caleb was 80 years old and he said, I'm going to go take it and he went and took it because his age wasn't a matter.

God told him he could have it. So even in his old age and yes, 80 was old at that time. Don't say, well, people were living 900 something years. That was a long time before that, right? 80 was still old then.

Even in his old age, Caleb's like, God said, so I'm going and he went and took it. That's why I like Caleb because if God promised him, he believed that what God had promised would actually come about and he's sitting there going, this is what God says, so let's go do it.

Let's go do it. Let's go do it. And they said, no, we're not going to do it. So he was probably 40 years of age, a little bit younger than that here, maybe because there's 40 years in the wilderness. Joshua is considered a young man, so Joshua was probably quite a bit younger than that, at least over 20 because he was of military age.

But we see here that Caleb is believing, but the majority are disbelieving. And it says, so they stirred up the crowd and then all of a sudden, everybody else started joining in.

[26 : 20] You know, it only takes a few of us to start doubting what God has promised before others are led astray as well. It's a wonderful thing. They call it this herd mentality and they call it, you know, it's amazing.

I know it's kind of kind of conniving, but it's something that sticks out to me in my childhood. I think I've told you this before, but Winn Phillips, many of you know Winn. Winn was my best friend growing up and, you know, we were very close growing up.

We really didn't even have to talk to really know what each other was thinking. But I remember when we were in high school, at that time, you would eat lunch and you could go stand outside and Winn and I would always get done early and go stand outside because most of the high schoolers would come out there and just for humor, Winn and I would just go stand outside and just look at the sky and just stare at the sky.

And the whole reason we'd done it is because we loved the fact that everybody else that came out there was trying to figure out what we were looking at. Now, we weren't looking at anything. Just being honest. But before you knew it, there'd be 20, 30 people out there staring at the sky trying to figure out.

What we found out is that people can be misled very easily. And somebody would finally say, what are you looking at? I'd say, oh, nothing. We've just been looking at the sky this whole time. But that's what happens in our churches.

[27 : 32] Well, most of us, we get our eyes off other things. We start looking in other directions. We start leading. People are misled and all of a sudden people begin to be resistant. So it says they all started crying and weeping. Oh, we should have stayed in Egypt.

We should have stayed in Egypt. Let's get a new leader. Let's go back to Egypt. Why? Because they're failing to trust what God had promised them.

Go back to Hebrews. Not believing the promise of God. Rather, trusting in what these 10 men have said. Yeah, everything God said is there.

The land is great. It's there. But, you know, God didn't tell us about this. I'm going to go ahead and tell you. everything God has promised me when I accepted Him by faith, I gave my life to Him and I started reading Scripture.

I just always felt like I would take His Word literally. Everything He's promised me has come about. There have been a lot of things He didn't tell me about. Okay, and I'm thankful for that. I'm thankful He didn't tell me that less than a year after I accepted Him as my Lord and Savior, I'd get laid off and my wife being nine months pregnant.

[28 : 38] I'm thankful He didn't tell me that you would have to walk through a lot of different struggles, a lot of financial struggles, a lot of physical struggles. I'm thankful He didn't tell me a lot of things that were there. All He told me is this is what I'm going to do, this is what I'm going to do, this is what I'm going to do, this is what I'm going to do.

All those other things are secondary issues because it really doesn't matter what opposes us, it only matters who has promised things to us.

And when God says that's the land I'm going to give you, that settles it. But too often we become a resistant people because we say, but God, I don't see how you can.

Rather than being, okay God, I'm going to move forward and I'm going to watch how you do. The only real question we have to ask ourselves is which one will we be? Because it's hard when the reality is we know there's a lot of things God's promised but we also know there's a lot of things He's left out.

and we're not walking on the unknown, we're walking on what He has already shown us. So let's see all that He has promised and let's keep our focus there because everything else is just there to distract us and to call us away from following Him completely.

[29 : 59] Numbers 13 into Numbers 14. We see God's people seeing what He has promised yet failing to walk forward in it.

Thank you brother. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.