

Exploring *THE LAND OF CANAAN*



Colour me!



Numbers 13:1-4a, 24-33

The Lord said to Moses, "Choose a leader from each tribe and send them into Canaan to explore the land I am giving you." So Moses sent twelve tribal leaders from Israel's camp in the Paran Desert with orders to explore the land of Canaan.

The twelve men left to explore Canaan. When they got to Bunch Valley, they cut off a branch with such a huge bunch of grapes, that it took two men to carry it on a pole. That's why the place was called Bunch Valley. Along with the grapes, they also took back pomegranates and figs.

After exploring the land of Canaan for forty days, the twelve men returned to Kadesh in the Paran Desert and told Moses, Aaron, and the people what they had seen. They showed them the fruit and said: Look at this fruit! The land we explored is rich with milk and honey. But the people who live there are strong, and their cities are large and walled. We even saw the three Anakim clans. Besides that, the Amalekites live in the Southern Desert; the Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites are in the hill country; and the Canaanites live along the Mediterranean Sea and the River Jordan.

Caleb calmed down the crowd and said, "Let's go and take the land. I know we can do it!"

But the other men replied, "Those people are much too strong for us." Then they started spreading rumours and saying, "We won't be able to grow anything in that soil. And the people are like giants. In fact, we saw the Nephilim who are the ancestors of the Anakim. They were so big that we felt as small as grasshoppers."

Commentary

After their long journey across the desert from Egypt, Moses and God's people have finally arrived at the borders of the promised land. In fact, this was the very country in which their ancestors had once lived, before they had come down to Egypt—the promised land that Abraham had travelled west to find.

Moses is anxious to spy out the country and plan his strategy for occupation. The twelve spies do a thorough job, noting the cities, the different tribal groups and the land's potential for growing crops. They even bring back a huge bunch of grapes. But they don't come back with a hopeful report. They have looked at Canaan not through the eyes of faith but with fear. They see problems, not possibilities, and only Caleb believes that God will help them take the land.

God's people had a grasshopper mentality before the giants of the land, and this lack of trust in God delayed their eventual arrival in the promised land. The journey from Egypt, which should have taken only months, lasted 40 long years. They had forgotten whose people they were and what a great God they served.

Questions

- ▶ Can you imagine how excited and nervous the twelve leaders must have been as they set out to explore Canaan? Have you ever felt like this?
- ▶ What surprises did they find as they travelled about?
- ▶ What was it, do you think, that frightened them the most?
- ▶ Why could Caleb take such a different attitude?
- ▶ The spies clearly lied and exaggerated to make their point at the end. Have you ever been tempted to do that?



Visual aid

Have a bunch of grapes on hand, and, if possible, some figs and pomegranates to taste. These were some of the fruits that the spies brought back from Canaan.



Activity idea

Play 'I spy', or arrange for a number of unusual objects to be left around another room in your house. Send out each member of the family in turn to spy out what they can see in a given time. When everyone has had a look, compare their stories. Who spotted most items? Where were they? What could link them all up? (Use your imagination.) And where there is a difference of opinion, who is most believable?



Prayer idea

Write the words 'But God' on a large round piece of paper. Put down 2 coins, one at a time, to represent some of the challenges and problems facing you as individuals or as a family. Each time you put down a coin, cover it with the big circle showing the words 'But God' and add a prayer of faith.

Key verse

Let's go and take the land. I know we can do it! (Numbers 13:30).

New Testament story link

Acts 18:4-11: Paul faced setbacks and problems in Corinth, but God reminded him in a dream that he was still with him.



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