

## LESSON 8- BATTLEFIELD PROMISED LAND

In case you haven't noticed, we live in a world filled with controversy. This occurs when the status quo is challenged, whether rightly or wrongly. As a pastor, you can quickly become engulfed in controversy in any arena. The Bible is a very controversial book, and I'm not just talking about attacks from atheists. There are plenty of battles fought within the camp of Christianity. Believe me, I was just at a meeting of pastors. The disagreements abound.

One of the most controversial sections in scripture concerns the conquest of Canaan – the promised land. The Israelites were to invade Canaan and kill all the giants as well as dispossess the Canaanites. While most people who take umbrage at these orders are not aware of all the details of the story, it is still quite disconcerting to many that God would

command what they refer to as genocide. In actuality, that is not what God called for, once you look at all the evidence. It never ceases to amaze me how people look back some 3500 years in history and attempt to apply our ways to those of the ancient near east. They tend to look down on people of that day as barbarous cavemen. This is known in scholarly circles as “chronological snobbery.” This is when people look at the past without all the clues and then judge the ancients by our modern standards. I wonder how, if the Lord tarries, how people 1,000 years from now will look back on us and how we do things.

At any rate, we have to see things from their worldview. And as Christians we always have to have a biblical worldview. This means that we have to see the entire Bible as one plan, having come from God, unfolding over the course of time. Time changes things. Yet God’s plan still moves forward. And it progresses as He, God,

works in and through people from different times, places and cultures. If we don't appreciate their times and cultures, we will miss much of what happened and why.

God promised Abraham that He would give him a land for his children and these children would be God's people. The rest of the known world had been given over to nations that didn't want to follow God. After having been enslaved in Egypt, God led His people out of captivity towards the land they had been promised. But there was a problem. There were people already there. And some of them weren't just any ordinary group of Canaanites. They were giants.

The bible is a marvelous story that should capture our imaginations as well as anything C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien ever cranked out. In fact, their writings closely follow the themes of the Bible, but because of the way they're

written, they seem to capture us in a way that the Biblical narrative often doesn't. That is a shame.

Getting back to controversy, non-believers are taken aback by the command to clear the promised land of its inhabitants by what they see as barbarous warfare and a general lack of manners. In a day where Europeans are seen as having taken America from peace – loving indigenous people who never fought for land among themselves, the story of the conquest is touted as just another power play by one group over another, using the excuse of religion as a justifiable means to an unholy end. But to look at things through that lens is to misunderstand what was actually happening and thereby misunderstand the purpose of history itself.

There was a reason Moses' and eventually Joshua's marching orders were what they were. There was/ is a spiritual battle going on in the

heavens and it manifest here, on earth. In fact, while the battle we are looking at today was for the Promised Land, the ultimate battle is for the planet.

Having left Egypt, with Pharaoh's army now residing at the bottom of the Red Sea, Israel continued on to Mt. Sinai, where they stayed for a year, learning about the Law and the character of God. After this time of learning they were to take the land that was promised them. But, once again, there was a problem.

One thing we all must learn is that there is no down-time from learning when it comes to following God. There is always a lesson to learn. And Israel was about to learn a few lessons.

They were told to take the promised land and Moses sent out spies to do some recon. But, par for the course, things didn't go according to plan.

**Num. 13:1 – 14:4**

**1 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 “Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel; from each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, every one a leader among them.” 3 So Moses sent them from the Wilderness of Paran according to the command of the LORD, all of them men who were heads of the children of Israel. 4 Now these were their names: from the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur; 5 from the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori; 6 from the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh; 7 from the tribe of Issachar, Igal the son of Joseph; 8 from the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Nun; 9 from the tribe of Benjamin, Palti the son of Raphu; 10 from the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel the son of Sodi; 11 from the tribe of Joseph, that is, from the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi the son of Susi; 12 from the tribe of Dan, Ammiel**

***the son of Gemalli; 13 from the tribe of Asher, Sethur the son of Michael; 14 from the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi the son of Vophsi; 15 from the tribe of Gad, Geuel the son of Machi.***

***16 These are the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun, Joshua.***

***17 Then Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, "Go up this way into the South, and go up to the mountains, 18 and see what the land is like: whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, few or many; 19 whether the land they dwell in is good or bad; whether the cities they inhabit are like camps or strongholds; 20 whether the land is rich or poor; and whether there are forests there or not. Be of good courage. And bring some of the fruit of the land." Now the time was the season of the first ripe grapes. 21 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.”***

### ***Chapter 14***

***1 So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. 2 And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, “If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! 3 Why has the LORD brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?” 4 So they said to one another, “Let us select a leader and return to Egypt.”***

If you've ever been tasked with leading a group of people to carry out a plan and some of them jump ship or drag their feet, then you know what God and Moses were feeling. If you've ever wanted to bless someone with something but also want them to have some skin in the

game so they appreciate it more, yet they don't want what you're offering as badly as you want them to have it, then you also understand.

When the spies returned, all but two said it couldn't be done. There were giants in the land and that was enough to scare most of the spies away from the mission. And that is what rogue element of the divine council wanted. The purpose was to keep Israel from inheriting the land. This was a jab at God Himself – an attempt to foil His plan that would eventually lead to the reclaiming of the earth for His children. Could God have just reached down and wiped out the giants and then cleared the land of the Canaanites? Yes, but that would preclude using His people to work out His plan. And that is what the Bible is about.

But why couldn't the Israelites see the victory? Hadn't they already seen God wipe out the greatest superpower of their day? Yes, they

had, but we humans tend to have short memories when it comes to God's blessings. And this time it was a little different. God whipped the Egyptians, but Israel would have to engage in battle this time. They weren't battle – tested. But the fact was that God had given them the land and would ensure their victory. Yet they couldn't see it. Because of this, God threatened to disinherit Israel and start over. That should be familiar language if you've been following along with the study.

### **Num. 14: 11,12**

**11 Then the LORD said to Moses: "How long will these people reject Me? And how long will they not believe Me, with all the signs which I have performed among them? 12 I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they."**

The threat was real. After all, it wouldn't be the first time God had started over or disinherited anyone. But Moses interceded and Israel would get a second chance. There was, however, a price to pay. The adults who doubted God would not inherit the promised land. They would wander for another 40 years until the generation of the faithless died out. **When we act in doubt and fear, we stunt our own growth and slow the advance of our own lives.**

But God is a God of second chances, and we can read of this second chance in Deuteronomy chapters 2 and 3.

**Slide showing Bashan here**

As the Israelites made their way up the eastern side of the Jordan, they went through lands that had once been inhabited by giants. Eventually they made their way to Bashan. Bashan was known as, "the place of the

serpent.” In the minds of the Israelites, God has led them right up to the gates of Hell. Once there, they had to defeat two kings who were giants Og and Sihon. They defeated them soundly. Why had God led them this way? They had to learn a lesson. They could, with God’s help, defeat the giants. And now that they had some positive battle experience, they were ready for the conquest of Canaan. Once again, everything is a learning experience for the children of God who care to see and walk in faith.

Going back to the controversy of the conquest, most people picture the conquest as a blitzkrieg of total annihilation. They see God as having His people commit genocide. But if you read the conquest and the rules of engagement, you will see something very different. Some cities were offered surrender. Only the giants were to be totally annihilated. The others were offered the chance to leave. In fact, only three cities and

that term, cities, is a stretch in one instance. Only Jericho, Ai and Hazor were destroyed. And those who pledged their allegiance to YHWH, such as Rahab and her family, were allowed to live as Israelites. So, things weren't near as bad as they've been made to be. Read the account for yourself. However, there was a problem. Some of the giants escaped to the southwest, to what we now refer to as the Gaza strip. This was Philistine territory. This is why we read later, in King David's day of Goliath and his brothers – all giants.

### Map of land Israel actually conquered

The truth is that Israel, having subdued the central mountainous region, never ventured into the coastal plains and other surrounding areas. They were satisfied with what they had, though they had yet to do all God had declared. And because of this, the Philistines would be a thorn in the side of the Israelites for years to

come. Israel eventually descended into idolatry and civil war, leading to exile. Once again, God's plan had once again been foiled due to the weakness, fear and lack of faith of His people. The bloodlines of the giants had been allowed to go on for a while and the Promised Land never became what it was intended to be. It was time for a new approach. The only way God's Law and covenants would be fulfilled would be for Him to fulfill them Himself. God would have to become man in order for mankind to be saved and find his place as God's family here on earth.

## **WHY ALL THIS MATTERS**

- **When we act in doubt and fear, we stunt our own growth and slow the advance of our own lives.**
- **We all have fears, but we have to face them in order to move forward with God's plan for each of us.**



- **We have a purpose on earth, as God’s children and that requires faith to remove our fear in order that we fulfill our vocation – the Great Commission.**
- **Humans are weak, but God is invested in His creation, His imagers and will see to it that we will succeed as He covers us with His grace.**
- **The conquest, though it took place here on earth, was a spiritual battle. That war is still being fought by those who take up the challenge.**
- **Israel’s conquest was incomplete. They became satisfied with what they had though they had fallen short of what God wanted them to have. They settled. And it cost them dearly. By not ridding the camp of the “herem” things dedicated for destruction, in this case the Giants and Canaanites, they allowed the root germ of**

**a virus to remain among them and it cost them. They were conquered and exiled.**

- **We can't let fear halt us. We must move forward in faith.**
- **We must, in God's strength, conquer our fears.**
- **We can't settle for falling short of what God has tasked us to do. The unclean thing will come back to haunt us.**
- **And finally, we must look at this world and our Bibles through the proper lens in order to rightly divide the word of truth. Seeing a spiritual battle through modern eyes is not seeing at all. It is to willfully walk blindly through a world meant to ensnare us at every turn.**
- **It is only when we see things as God sees them and act accordingly, in faith, that we understand and move things forward.**

