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"WE ARE WELL ABLE TO OVERCOME IT."

– NUM. 13:26-14:10. – AUGUST 24. –

"Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust." – Psa. 40:4.

ISRAEL having been taught certain great lessons in the wilderness, journeying toward Canaan, and having learned them to some extent, was now at Kadesh Barnea on the southern borders of the land of promise. The people suggested the sending of spies to investigate the condition of things in Palestine before going further. (Deut. 1:22.) The Lord acceded to the proposition and through Moses made selection of twelve chief men, one from each of the tribes – excepting the tribe of Levi and counting both Ephraim and Manasseh for Joseph. This caution in sending the spies was not condemned of the Lord; nevertheless, the people who for more than a year had been guided in all of their affairs by the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night – directing their marchings, locations and camps, the time of their stay, etc., – the people who had been miraculously fed with the quail and who had experienced the continuous miracle of the manna, and who had witnessed the discomfiture of their enemies by divine power when the hands of Moses were held up; – these people might have had faith enough in the Lord to have continued under his leadership whensoever and wheresoever he led them, confident of his care and of his power. [R3063 : page 254]

The twelve spies quite probably separated into small groups and thus made the more extensive investigation; however, their return seems to have been at one time, which is rather against this supposition. Ten of the number reported favorably as respected the land, but unfavorably respecting the possibilities of conquering it; the other two, Joshua and Caleb, with greater faith in the Lord, were less apprehensive and assured the people, "Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." However, the people had not fully learned the lesson of faith in God their Leader, and hence the

report of the majority thoroughly aroused their fears and discouraged them from attempting the conquest.

The majority report was given with an appearance of great equity, telling, on the one hand, that the land indeed was a goodly one, and exhibiting in demonstration some fruits, amongst which was the renowned bunch of grapes from Eshcol, which they had carried suspended on a pole between two of their number; but, on the other hand, they seem to have exaggerated in their description of the difficulties: – having reached a conclusion in their own minds they sought to impress it upon their report; and, like many of our own day, considered that in order to secure their end, a little exaggeration was justifiable; – the people were giants and the Israelites in comparison as grasshoppers; the cities were immense and were walled up to heaven; the land though rich, as evidenced by the fruits they brought, they reported "eateth up the inhabitants thereof"; – meaning either that local warfare was prevalent or that it was a pestilential land, not healthy, or that as a whole it was a barren land and the samples of fruitage they brought represented exceptional portions.

No wonder the people who had looked forward so longingly to this land of promise felt greatly discouraged; such a report would be well calculated to discourage anybody. Yet it was just such a report as the people in general would have made, since it was made by their representatives out of every tribe. The report was an "evil" one, not only in that it exaggerated the difficulties, but in that it also entirely ignored the divine supervision of the past. Among **[R3064 : page 254]** other things that inspired fear was the report of the giants – Nephilim: these they represented as being descendants of the Nephilim, or giants which had caused such terror to the world before the flood. (Gen. 6:4.) The people were so thoroughly disheartened that they set up a great wail of despair; – it was a night of sadness when they had expected joy; it seemed to crush out all the hope which had previously buoyed them up in the journey; they murmured against the Lord as well as against Moses and Aaron, declaring that they would

have preferred to have died in Egypt or in the wilderness. They seem to have concluded that the Lord through Moses would now force them into the land of Canaan, – seemed to see themselves destroyed by the sword, and their families a prey to their enemies. In their frenzy they said, Let us choose from our number a leader instead of Moses, reverse the program – return to Egypt and call it the land of favor!

It must have been a sad occasion for the meek Moses: once before the people had proposed to choose another captain or leader, but this was during his absence in Mt. Sinai; now in his presence they repudiated him and all that he had endeavored to do for them. Only Joshua and Caleb stood by the Lord and defended Moses and Aaron who had fallen on their faces before the assembly; these two professed faith in the Lord; saying, "If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us; their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us; fear them not." But these noble and courageous words of faith were lost upon the angry people: discontent and fear had gained thorough control of their minds, so that instead of loving and appreciating these noble men and their counsel, they were about to stone them to death.

Then the Lord interfered as on a previous occasion; a bright light shining out from the Tabernacle reminded the people that the Lord their Leader was not only gracious and careful, but just; and that he could and would punish transgression as before. A pestilence broke out amongst them, and among its first victims were the ten spies who had brought the discouraging report. Moses pointed out these matters to them and showed what a lack of confidence in God their Leader they had manifested. He gave them also the Lord's message that because of unbelief they had failed to improve their opportunities, and in consequence none of them above twenty years of age should ever enter the land of promise – the youth and children, being held of the Lord as not responsible, were exempted. The Lord explained to them

that for every day that the spies had spent in searching the land to bring an evil report, there should be a year of delay in eventually reaching it. Thus God here answered their prayer. "Would to God that we had died in the wilderness!" – God determined that they should all die there.

Shortly their courage revived and they determined that having come thus far to enter the land of promise they would go forward and take possession of it; – they would ignore the Lord's declaration that they might not now have it; – they would take it anyway for themselves. Another evidence is here given of their lack of faith in the Lord; they did not realize as they should have done how much the Lord's hand had been connected with all their progress thus far, and that without him they could do nothing. When they informed Moses of their purpose, he refused his consent and co-operation, and forewarned them of disaster in any enterprise in which the Lord was not their leader, nevertheless they marshalled a host and went forth, soon to retreat in disorder before their enemies, leaving numbers of their brethren slain upon the field of battle. It was a difficult matter for them to learn to rely, not upon themselves, but upon the Lord. Thence their journey turned again into the wilderness.

LESSONS FOR SPIRITUAL ISRAELITES.

That the land of Canaan and its rest from the wilderness journeying is intended to be a type for **[R3064 : page 255]** the spiritual Israelites, is clearly shown by the Apostle in his reference to it, and to how Joshua led the people into its rest. (Heb. 4:3-8.) Canaan evidently cannot typify the perfect heavenly state into which the Church hopes to enter; because when Israel did enter Canaan there were years of battling with the inhabitants thereof, – finally overcoming them by the Lord's assisting power. The Scriptures teach us, on the contrary, that when the Church shall have experienced the First Resurrection change, all her trials and difficulties, her conflicts with the Amalekites and Hittites and Jebusites and Philistines will be ended; – that which

is perfect shall have come, and that which is in part shall have been done away. We must, therefore, understand Canaan to represent the Millennial Kingdom condition, into which all who are the Lord's people shall be brought, under the leadership of the antitypical Joshua (Jesus), the Church being the priesthood glorified. The antitype of Canaan's trials and difficulties will be experienced in overcoming the weaknesses pertaining to the flesh, and in developing more and more under the Lord's guidance and blessing into the full perfection of human nature – by restitution processes then in operation, rewarding every act of obedience and reproofing and punishing every act of disobedience.

Fleshly Israel not only made this type in the wilderness, but accomplished in considerable measure its antitype; for during the 1600 years of their experience they were, under the Lord's guidance, being prepared for the Millennial Kingdom (Canaan). At our Lord's first advent they as a nation had reached a place corresponding to Kadesh Barnea, a place of decision in respect to entering into the Kingdom condition. Had they been in the right attitude of heart, full of faith and trust in the Lord, they would have received him, and the Kingdom of God could at once have been established. But in unbelief they rejected him who was the antitype of Moses and Aaron and therefore did not enter into rest; instead, another long, wearisome journey in the wilderness has been their portion, for now nearly 1900 years. Shortly, at the second advent of our Lord, he, as the antitype of Joshua, will lead all his people Israel, as many as shall come into the faith of Abraham, and thus become his people, into the land of promise – into the Millennial Kingdom with its blessings, mercies and promises.

But is there a lesson for spiritual Israelites in connection with these Canaan fightings, etc.? Yes, we answer: we are to be like Joshua and Caleb, and *by faith* are to enter into the land and confirm the Lord's promises and give a good report thereof. By faith we have already entered into divine favor; we must have already tasted that the Lord is gracious; we have already experienced forgiveness of sins; we know

as the remainder of mankind know not, – even those who seek righteousness and harmony with God – that the Lord's power is not limited. We realize that we are fully able to meet the conflicts and difficulties and trials belonging to a consecrated life. By faith we are already living in this Kingdom; already we are battling with the world, the flesh and the devil, day by day, but at the same time resting – in the promises of the Lord; in the strength and grace which he supplies; in the victories which he grants us.

It will be remembered that the name Joshua is otherwise translated Jesus (see Heb. 4:8) and means "deliverer of his people – help of God." The name Caleb signifies "dog"; and this reminds us that the poor of this world, rich in faith, who are to be heirs of the Kingdom with their Lord Jesus, were represented in our Lord's parable as being on a level with the dogs. As the rich man, representing Fleshly Israel, to whom belonged the promises as the child of Abraham, failed to enter into them because of his unbelief and rejection of Jesus, and was cast off from divine favor for a time, so Lazarus represented those "dogs" who have, during this Gospel age been accepted as children of Abraham through faith. Viewing Joshua and Caleb from this standpoint as representing the Lord and the faithful though despised few who share with him the people's wrath for their good report, we can see that these alone, at the present time, have the proper faith in God to enter into his rest in advance of the world, and to make full consecration of themselves to him and his service, and to battle with the world, the flesh and the devil, and to conquer through the blood of the Lamb. And these, now by faith fighting the good fight, shall in the near future as God's representatives lead forward all the hosts of his people – redeemed mankind – who, learning lessons of bitter experience in the wilderness condition, will eventually be glad to enter into Millennial Canaan, there to inherit the rich promises of God's Word.

The essence of this lesson is represented in the Golden Text. Faith and trust in the Lord is the paramount essential for acceptance and

blessing at his hand, – "Without faith it is impossible to please God." "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." If we leave the world (Egypt) to become the Lord's people, and receive the lessons of experience at his hand with proper faith in him, the outcome will surely be a readiness and promptness to make a full consecration, a full submission of ourselves to do the Lord's will; to follow his leadings; to inherit whatsoever he has for us. And if the faith be of the proper kind we will say with the Prophet, "I will fear no evil for Thou art with me – thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." Such, and such alone, can be lead of the Lord in this present Gospel age, in which we must walk by faith, not by sight. Such alone will have the confidence to go forward encountering the various oppositions within and without in the present time. Such will eventually be God's representatives and leaders in the blessing of the world in the Millennial age. Let us learn well the lesson of faith, of trust: as God informs us **[R3065 : page 255]** of his appreciation of this quality, and that he can deal with us only in proportion as we possess it, so in our own experiences we find that we love most to assist and encourage those who manifest an abiding confidence in us.

