

# Study Questions

## Numbers 13:1–3, 17–33; Deuteronomy 1:22–23 (NKJV)

### 1. What does the difference between Numbers 13:1–2 and Deuteronomy 1:22–23 reveal about the origin of the spying mission?

Numbers emphasizes that the LORD commanded Moses to send the spies (Numbers 13:1–2), while Deuteronomy reveals that the people first suggested it (Deuteronomy 1:22–23). This tension highlights that God sometimes grants the requests of His people, even when motivated by fear or lack of trust. Similar to Israel demanding a king in 1 Samuel 8:6–7, *God permitted what was not His perfect will*. The deeper lesson is that God may allow what reveals our heart, but His desire is that we walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7).

### 2. Why did God require one spy from each tribe, and why were they leaders?

Each spy represented their tribe (Numbers 13:2–3), ensuring accountability and communal participation. Leaders carried influence, so their report would shape the faith or fear of their people. This illustrates the biblical principle that leadership carries responsibility not only for decisions but also for the faith of those they influence (James 3:1; Hebrews 13:17). The failure of most of the spies shows how leadership without faith can mislead a whole nation.

### 3. In what way did Moses' instructions to the spies challenge their perspective of God's promise, especially in light of God's earlier promises in Exodus 3:8, 3:17, and 13:5?

Moses instructed the spies to evaluate the land's people, cities, and produce (Numbers 13:18–20). This task could have been approached either as a confirmation of God's word or as an opportunity for fear. The LORD had already revealed His promise clearly: He would bring Israel "up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites..." (Exodus 3:8, NKJV). Again in Exodus 3:17, He promised to deliver them and bring them into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. In Exodus 13:5, this promise was tied directly to His covenant oath sworn to the fathers.

Therefore, the mission of the spies was never to determine *whether* the land could be taken, but to witness how God's promises were true. Their report should have strengthened Israel's faith by confirming God's word—especially through the abundance of the land's fruit (Numbers 13:23, 27). Instead, most of the spies interpreted what they saw in unbelief, forgetting the covenant promises. Caleb, however, viewed the same evidence through faith and aligned his confidence with God's revealed word (Numbers 13:30).

This shows that God's promises are the lens through which His people must interpret circumstances. Facts on their own can breed fear, but facts interpreted through faith in God's word produce courage and obedience (cf. Romans 4:20–21; Hebrews 11:1).

#### **4. What does the abundance of the fruit (Numbers 13:23, 27) signify in light of God’s covenant promises?**

The cluster of grapes, pomegranates, and figs were tangible evidence of God’s faithfulness to His promise of “a land flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:17; Numbers 13:27). The fruit testified that God’s word was true. However, the people allowed fear to overshadow the evidence. This reflects the New Testament principle that God provides assurance of His promises, yet unbelief can cause us to miss them (Hebrews 4:1–2).

#### **5. How did the spies’ report mix truth with factual distortion?**

The remarkable fact is the report of the ten spies included no reference to God; they seemed to have lost sight of Him completely for the time being. It began with the ten spies comparing themselves with the land’s inhabitants, and two spies compared the inhabitants with God.

The spies gave a partial truth. They faithfully described the land’s fruitfulness and acknowledged its abundance (Numbers 13:27). They accurately noted the strength of the people and the fortifications of the cities (Numbers 13:28). But then their words shifted: “*the land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants*” (Numbers 13:32). This was not fact but fearful exaggeration.

The statement was self-contradictory. A land that “devours its inhabitants” would not be overflowing with fruit or populated with powerful nations. The spies’ claim revealed the way unbelief twists perception. Fear turned blessings into curses, abundance into threat, and opportunity into disaster. Their “bad report” (Numbers 13:32) was not neutral observation but a narrative shaped to justify unbelief.

This is a warning for God’s people: unbelief doesn’t merely see obstacles — it reinterprets reality in a way that makes obedience seem impossible. Just as the serpent distorted God’s word in Eden (Genesis 3:1–5), the spies distorted the truth of Canaan. By contrast, Caleb declared the same land could be possessed at once (Numbers 13:30), proving that faith and unbelief interpret the same facts in radically different ways.

#### **6. What is significant about the spies’ description of themselves as “grasshoppers” (Numbers 13:33)?**

This self-image reveals the impact of unbelief. They compared themselves to giants rather than to God. In their eyes, they were small, and they projected that weakness onto how the Canaanites viewed them (“so we were in their sight”). This distorted perception is the opposite of faith, which sees God’s power as the defining reality (Psalm 27:1; Romans 8:31). It is an example of what Paul later warns about—being “carnally minded” rather than “spiritually minded” (Romans 8:6).

Overall, the unbelieving spies appealed to their “authority”—as those who had seen the strong cities and people. They thought and said that the facts and practical realities were on their side. Yet, the most fact-based and practical thing the believer can do is to trust the promises of the living God. Ultimately, their unbelief was not according to the facts, but despite the facts.

## **7. How does Caleb's voice of faith stand as a model for believers today?**

Caleb silenced the people and urged immediate obedience (Numbers 13:30). His confidence was rooted not in military strength—Caleb used “take the land” rather than “conquer” the land—but in God's promise. His faith anticipates New Testament exhortations like 2 Corinthians 4:18, which calls believers to fix their eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen. Caleb's example shows that true faith often requires standing against the majority (cf. Matthew 7:13–14). His later reward (Joshua 14:6–12) demonstrates that God honors steadfast trust.