

Monday 16th November

Numbers 13:1-33

Key verses 13: 30-33

**30** Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it."

**31** But the men who had gone up with him said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are." **32** And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, "The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. **33** We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them."

In only their second year of wanderings in the wilderness the Israelites come to the land God wanted them to live in. 12 men are chosen to go and explore the land with Moses giving them specific things to look for. After a 40 day, 500 mile round trip they return with their report. Initially it's good. A cluster of grapes that takes 2 people to carry plus figs and pomegranates sounds good to me! (v23). Then the abundance of milk and honey as promised by God in Ex 3v 8. There could have been no doubt this was where God wanted them to go.

Then 10 of the spies start to exaggerate the negatives so much so that it led to further grumblings and eventually a rebellion amongst the people. Caleb displayed immense bravery to oppose the ten. He could see they were spreading fear and disbelief in God!

The sad result of this was that instead of entering the land they were so close to they ended up wandering the desert for another 38 years before coming back to Kadesh again. They suffered a total of 40 years, 1 for every day of the exploration! (Nu14:34). This was a massive moment. How costly was their lack of belief in God's power to overcome the difficulties they feared! Also can you imagine the burden that Moses, Aaron, Caleb and Joshua carried for the next 38 years?

The question that bothered me in this story was why it was necessary for the spies to go exploring in the first place. Why not just press on and go in? After all God was with them! I read around and found my answer.

We all have difficult challenges and decisions in life. Like Moses, it is wise for us to first decide what we need to know about those situations and then to obtain the knowledge. God wants us to think things through (Prov. 12:15, 15:22). It however is human nature to be swayed by the pessimists and we must be careful not to let the negatives outweigh the positives, especially when we are doing something we know God wants us to do.

This event is recorded to teach us that even when we are sure we are doing God's will that we don't go into it blindly without using our brains. After all, none of us would cross the M6 on a bank holiday boldly claiming God's protection!!