

## Seeing God's Glory

Numbers 14:21-24

**“<sup>21</sup> But *as truly as I live*, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD. <sup>22</sup> Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; <sup>23</sup> Surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it: <sup>24</sup> But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.”**

In the last message in this series, we investigated the crossroads in God's Word. These are the intersections at the corner of "Your Story" and "God's Glory." We learned that at these "cross-roads," our greatest needs intersect with God's glorious deeds through the Scriptures. In our text today, we learn something about how we should respond to what we have learned in the past. All of us who have learned to drive have learned how to approach different kinds of intersections. There are ordinary Stop signs. Those in the city are routine; but the ones in the country may have rumble strips leading up to them. Those will wake you up! Your approach to the four way Stop signs are a bit more complicated; you have to learn who has the right of way and when. Then there are Yield signs, and of course, the Do Not Enter signs. Traffic lights show up in red, yellow and green, and each tells you how to approach the intersection. Green arrows give you guidance. Red or yellow flashing lights give you a warning. All of us have learned how to approach different kinds of intersections. Past experience has taught us how to respond in the present.

It's the same way with Biblical intersections. When God's glorious deeds have met our greatest needs, we should remember the lessons. We should recall how we learned to trust the Lord when His actions calmed our anxieties. Past experience should teach us to trust Him in the present. Using today's text we can sum up the message in one sentence: Praise God, don't provoke God.

According to Numbers 13:25-26, the twelve spies whom Moses had sent out met with the people at Kadesh. They had studied the Promised Land for forty days from the wilderness of Zin in the south to Rehob in the north, giving special consideration to the beautiful Hebron valley (Numbers 13:21-24). But the problem began when they started giving their report. Those men told the people more about their doubting hearts than about the land they had surveyed.

Listen to their report from Numbers 13:27-33 – **“<sup>27</sup> And they told him, “We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. <sup>28</sup> However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. <sup>29</sup> The Amalekites dwell in the land of the Negeb. The Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the hill country. And the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and along the Jordan.” <sup>30</sup> But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, “Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it.” <sup>31</sup> Then 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 are.” <sup>32</sup> So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, “The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height. <sup>33</sup> And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim), and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.”**

Now you've wrestled with this issue before. How can different people look at the same set of facts and come to very different conclusions? All twelve spies said that the land overflowed with milk and honey (13:27). So how did Caleb (13:30) and Joshua (14:30) say **"We are well able to overcome it,"** while the other ten spies respond with **"We are not able . . ."** Using our earlier illustration it all comes down to this: what did they learn from the previous intersections? What did they learn about the God of the glorious deeds when they had really needed Him? And could they apply what they had learned?

Praise God and trust His promises. Don't listen to the negative nay-sayers who fearfully say that you don't have the ability to succeed. You never know what God will do through you. The following telegram was received by Bishop Milton Wright on the evening of December 17, 1903:

"SUCCESS FOUR FLIGHTS THURSDAY MORNING ALL AGAINST TWENTY ONE MILE WIND STARTED FROM LEVEL WITH ENGINE POWER ALONE AVERAGE SPEED THROUGH AIR THIRTY ONE MILES LONGEST 57 SECONDS INFORM PRESS HOME CHRISTMAS. OREVELLE WRIGHT"

Wouldn't you like to have been down in Dayton when Bishop Wright rose to speak that next Sunday morning? I would love to have been there, but perhaps for a different reason than you think. You see, at a church gathering in 1870, a bishop was quoted as saying, "The millennium is at hand. Man has invented everything that can be invented." The presiding officer challenged those words, suggesting that a great invention would occur within 50 years. The bishop asked the officer to name such an invention, and the officer responded with, "I think man will learn to fly." The bishop replied, "This is blasphemy. Don't you know that flight is reserved for angels?" And the bishop's name? You guessed it. Bishop Milton Wright – father of Orville and Wilbur Wright. His boys turned a problem into a project; you can do the same.

As we follow the text, we come to the "so what" portion of the message: practical applications. It would help us to look closely to see if we mirror these responses. Then we will get to the bottom of why they responded the way that they did. Keep this sentence in mind: Praise God, don't provoke God.

### The Disastrous Difference in Perspective

#### Ten Spies

Focused on "giant" problems, 28-31  
 Exaggerated their fears, 32-33  
 Caused people to lose heart, 14:1-3  
 Caused people to rebel against God, 14:4  
 Lead people to consider revenge, 14:9  
  
 Provoked the Lord, 14:11, 22  
 Brought about 40 years of wandering and died by the plague, 14:32-37  
 Left victories for another generation, 14:31

#### Two spies

Focused on timely obedience to God, 30a  
 Recognized their God-given ability, 30b  
 Concentrated on God's great ability, 14:8  
 Lead people away from fear and rebellion, 14:9  
 Lead people from fear to faith in the Lord's abiding presence, 14:9  
 Had a different spirit, 14:24  
  
 Embraced God's promise to win the victory, because they followed the Lord with their whole hearts, 14:38; 32:12

When you meet the Lord at the cross-road of your greatest need, do you intend to provoke Him or praise Him? Ten spies provoked Him to anger and two spies praised Him. Which kind of person will you

be when you face your frustrations and fear of failure? Where will you lead others? Consider how our text can help us today. Praise God, don't provoke God.

**In the strongest possible manner, the Lord has given you His promise: all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. v. 21**

**"<sup>21</sup> But *as truly as I live*, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD."**

If you were a witness in a courtroom, you might be asked to place your hand on a Bible. Why? This would be to make your promise or swear your oath with God as your witness. But how does God Himself give you an oath? Hebrews 6:13 reminds us that God cannot swear by someone greater than Himself. (No one is greater than God.) So God made a promise to Abraham by swearing by Himself. This is what you see in verse 21 as well. The Lord said, ". . .**as truly as I live . . .**" And what He promised is exceptionally good news for mankind: **"all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord."** Passages<sup>i</sup> such as this remind us about the coming Kingdom age here upon the earth. During the one thousand year millennium, after the Second Coming of Christ, He will rule with the Earth with a rod of iron (Revelation 19:15-16; 20:1-6). The Old Testament prophets repeatedly described this coming Golden Age upon the earth.<sup>ii</sup> Though given with a warning the people of Israel, this glorious promise is ever before our eyes. No matter how bad this world gets, we know that, when Christ returns, the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. How does this promise help you to keep moving along on the storyline of your life? Be sure to praise God, don't provoke Him.

**God has shown you His glory, and this should cause you to be attentive and obedient. v. 22**

We can learn a lot from what the Lord said about that situation. Consider verse 22: **Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice;**

- **Men have seen the glory of God and His miracles (such as those which He did in Egypt and in the wilderness). Do we do this?**

Let's turn to 2 Peter 1:16-19. We will need to return to these verses during this series, but for now, let's consider one very important truth. Peter described his eyewitness account of the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ. With his own ears, Peter heard the voice of God the Father speak the words, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Wouldn't it have been an amazing experience to have been there and heard that? Yet listen to what Peter says next, **"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place . . ."** Peter told the people he was writing to that they had something far more certain than an experience; they had the very Word of God. He referred to it as **"a more sure word of prophecy,"** adding the exhortation **"whereunto you do well that you take heed."** Here is the point: We have seen God's power and miracles in our Bibles. This "sure word of prophecy" has repeatedly shown us God's glory. Why is this important? You have the full revelation of God in the Scriptures. Consider that in your Bible, the phrase, "out of the land of Egypt"<sup>iii</sup> occurs seventy-one (71) times after the Exodus event. It occurs 3 more times in the New Testament. Even if you had been an eyewitness of the Exodus, you could have greater confidence, and more certainty in what is written in the Word of God. So what should we do when we can see His glory in the Word? Be sure to praise God; don't provoke God.

■ **Instead of trusting the Lord, they tested<sup>iv</sup> the Lord repeatedly. Do we do this?**

In the footnotes below, we have listed these ten times that the people tested the Lord. When they wrestled with their greatest needs, they refused to look for God's glorious deeds. But God was gracious and delivered them. But here on the verge of the Promised Land, God dealt with His people severely. They had exaggerated their fears and snatched defeat from the jaws of victory. They provoked God instead of praising Him. Make up your mind to please God by praising Him; don't provoke Him.

Why was God provoked with them? Remember that the Promised Land was really about the Promised Lord. God had made a promise to Abraham that in his descendant all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 26:4). God planned for His Son to be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), in the Promised Land. We know that God fulfilled His promises. Now we have a greater responsibility to embrace the Promised Lord – who died for our sins, was buried and rose again. Do not provoke God with your unbelief; praise God for He has fulfilled His promises to you in His Son.

■ **Instead of listening to the Lord, they lashed out at their leaders. (see 14:10) Do we do this?**

Instead of recognizing God's glory as He worked through their leaders, they talked of killing them. Is it any wonder that God was provoked with His people? So this text brings us to the point of decision:

**You will respond to the glory of God in one of two ways; take heed to how you respond. vs. 23-24**

**<sup>23</sup> Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it: <sup>24</sup> But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.**

God showed His glory to all twelve spies. But ten men provoked Him while two praised Him. Which kind of person will you be when you see God's glory?

■ **You will provoke the Lord by your faithless response to Him.**

■ **You will please the Lord by your faithful response to Him.**

- Caleb had a different spirit – a different attitude fueled by his faith in the Lord.
- Caleb followed the Lord with all his heart.
- Caleb received a promise from God, and a promise for the generations that would follow him.

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<sup>i</sup> Habakkuk 2:14, Isaiah 11:9; 40:5

<sup>ii</sup> See for instance Isaiah 11:1-9, Micah 4:1-4

<sup>iii</sup> According to Exodus 13:17-18, God did not lead His people by the easier route to the Promised Land (through the land of the Philistines). Instead, He showed them His mighty power in parting the Red Sea and destroying their enemies. And according to Exodus 13:21-22, God gave them the miracle of the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night.

<sup>iv</sup> The word "tempted" or "tested" in verse 22 is in the Piel stem, which probably means that this is intensified over the ten times these tests occurred (Exodus 14:11; 15:23; 16:2-3; 16:19-20, 16:27; 17:2-7; 32:1-6, Numbers 11:1; 11:4-9; 13:1-14:45)