

7 And they spake unto all the company of the children of Is'ra-el, saying, The land which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land.

8 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.

9 Only rebel ye not 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.

10 But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Is'ra-el.

General Statement.

The encampment at Kadesh-barnea formed a crisis in the history of the Israelites. It marked the end of their journey and the beginning of their wandering. They were within sight of Canaan, the land of their promise and the goal of their hopes; they had tasted of the luscious fruit which grew upon its vines; they had heard a good report of its riches and its beauty. If they had possessed faith in their God and confidence in their leader, they might at once have marched upon their foes and taken their inheritance. But they still had the hearts of slaves, cringing under adversities instead of battling against them. They yielded to fear of the people in the land, as they heard of their tall warriors and their strong walls. They dared not enter the land of promise, and by their terror showed that they were unworthy of their privileges. To begin the war

against the Canaanites with these craven hearts was to be beaten in advance. There was no alternative but to turn back into the wilderness and to remain there until the generation of slaves could die off and be replaced by a generation of freemen who were capable of being disciplined and trained into the capacity for conquest. Their great leader, Moses, saw this clearly, and gave orders for a return to the desert of Paran. But the people showed their weakness of character still more by their sudden resolution to go into Canaan at once. They received a sharp and sufficient lesson when the mountaineers came down upon them and chased them from their land, as a swarm of bees drive away a crowd of boys. They were willing enough after their defeat to go back to the desert; and there they remained during thirty-eight years, which are a blank in history.

Explanatory and Practical Notes.

Verse 1. All the congregation. All except Caleb and Joshua, who stood in a glorious minority for God. (1) *Majorities are not always right; and the voice of the people is not always the voice of God.* **Lifted up their voice.** In the manner of the Orientals, with loud cries of sorrow. **The people wept that night.** They were disappointed in the report of the spies concerning the difficulties in the way of entering the land of Canaan. Their conduct showed at once their weak, slavish spirit, and their lack of faith in God. (2) *Unbelief in God makes cowards of men.*

2. Murmured against Moses and against Aaron. They regarded these as the authors of all their misery, as under their leadership they had left Egypt and traveled through the wilderness, with the promise of rest in Canaan, but only to be disappointed at the end of their journey. Their murmuring against their two leaders was in reality a complaint against God. Exod. 16. 8. **We had said, If the LORD be with us, we would have brought forth the land of Egypt.** They forgot all God's mighty works in their behalf, which ought to have encouraged them to expect his continued help. They would rather be slaves under the lash than free men conquering their foes. **Died in this wilderness.** They had their wish, for their dead bodies were strewn along the sands of the desert during the next forty years. Yet even this was better than to enter Canaan with the spirit of defeat instead of victory. (3) *Sometimes God gives men what they ask to show them their own folly.*

3. Wherefore hath the LORD brought us. From complaining against God himself. **To fall by the sword.** In their unbelief and wickedness they magnify the dangers and difficulties, and utterly forget or fail to see the hopeful aspects of their condition. They forget what God has done, and they fail to see what God can do in the fulfillment of his promises. **Children should be a prey.** Should be taken captive by their enemies, the Canaanites. **Better for us to return to Egypt.** This is the world's way ever, to find insupportable difficulties in doing God's will, and to prefer slavery in sin to a struggle for freedom. (4) *Of the insight of faith, to see the things of God, and the courage to choose the unseen.*

4. They said one to another. Their murmurings were taking shape in definite plans of revolt. **Let us make a captain.** Knowing well that Moses would never lend them back to the land of bondage, they proposed to renounce his authority and choose a ruler more to their own mind. Nehemiah says, a thousand years later, that they did appoint such a captain. Neh. 9. 17. **We are to keep in mind that throughout the history of Israel there were always two sections, a vast mass of ignorant materialistic people, constantly tending toward idol, and a few select, spiritual souls, the "remnant," who were true to the true Israel.** (5) *Do you belong to the true Church of God, or do you have merely a name among his people?*

5. Moses and Aaron fell on their faces. They had no resource left for this great emergency except that of prayer, and prayer never fails. (6) *There is no hour when prayer will not prove availing.* **Before all the assembly.** By this public act of calling upon God they would awaken their recreant people, and call their attention to the Lord whom they had forsaken. (7) *Let us never be ashamed to confess ourselves servants of God.*

6. Joshua the son of Nun. He was one of the spies, an Ephraimite, born in bondage, but bearing the heart of a freeman. He had been appointed by Moses his "minister" or assistant, had been by his side on the mount of God, and as military captain had led the Israelites in battle with Amalek. (8) *See in Joshua how greatness of soul.* **Caleb the son of Jephunneh.** The term *Kenezite* given to Caleb and the peculiar expressions concerning him have led to the opinion that he was not an Israelite by birth (though descended from Abraham through another line), but had united with the people of God. He showed on this occasion a fidelity which was rewarded in a long life and abundant triumph. Joshua and he were the only men of full age at that time who lived to enter Canaan, forty years afterward. He chose the walled city Hebron, especially dreaded by the other cowardly spies, fought against its giants and slew them, and made the city his possession. See Josh. 14. 6-15; 15. 13-20. (9) *See in Caleb how God rewards strong faith.* **Of men that searched.** Their conduct is placed in noble contrast with that of their fellow-spies. **Rent their clothes.** The usual mark among the Orientals of strong emotion, whether of anger or of sorrow.

7. They spake unto all the company. Their conduct showed: (1) A noble independence; they were not ashamed to stand alone if need be, rather than follow the multitude in evil. (2) A noble courage; they dared to oppose the majority, even to the danger of death and the certainty of unpopularity. (3) A noble faith; they believed in God's promises, and saw the land of Canaan not as unconquerable, but as already conquered. See Heb. 11. 1. **An exceeding good land.** And therefore worth all their endeavor, whatever it might be, for its conquest. (10) *May we not say of all God's promises that they are worth all they cost of self-denial?*

8. If the LORD delight in us. Here was the sole requisite of success, the favor of God. The other spies saw only Israel's weakness; Caleb and Joshua saw Israel's omnipotence in their omnipotent God. **He will bring us into.** Notwithstanding the giants and the strong walls, which would be as nothing. And such indeed they were forty years afterward, when Joshua led the people to the conquest. (11) *What we need is not confidence in ourselves, but faith in our Lord.*

9. Only rebel ye not. The condition of success in