

## **Caleb, A Good Spy & Warrior**

**By**

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(Num. 13-14; Josh. 14:6, 15:13-19)

Today let's talk about Caleb, all right? Caleb was a godly man who lived thousands of years ago, and he was a spy and a warrior. He sounds exciting, doesn't he?!

We first hear about Caleb in the book of Numbers in the Old Testament. Now, what was going on then? Well, you remember don't you, that the children of Israel (the Jews) had been slaves in Egypt? Well, that's when Caleb lived. Yes, Caleb was with the Jews when they were slaves, and then the Lord had Moses take them all (over a million of them!) out of Egypt. So that means that Caleb was there when the Lord made a dry path through the Red Sea so they could get across safely. And Caleb would have eaten the manna that the Lord gave them for food in the wilderness. Caleb was there when the Lord spoke to all the children of Israel from on top of Mt. Sinai. And Caleb would have seen the big pillar of cloud over their camp each day and the big pillar of fire over their camp each night. But why were those pillars of cloud and fire there? Yes, the Lord was in the big pillars of cloud and fire, and the Lord was leading them that way. Of course, the pillar of cloud would not only lead them in the daytime, but it would also give some shade in the hot desert too, wouldn't it? And the pillar of fire would not only lead them in the night time, but it would also give them light too, wouldn't it? And when they looked at the pillars, they could remember that the Lord God was with them, couldn't they?

Well, the Lord had promised the children of Israel that He would lead them to the Promised Land of Canaan, and the Lord would let them have this land for their very own. In fact, about 400 years before this time here, the Lord had promised that land of Canaan to Abraham, that He would give the land to Abraham's descendants forever. And, of course, the Lord always keeps His promises, doesn't He? (Remember, Abraham was the great-great-great-grandfather of Caleb and all of the other Jews.)

By the way, the Bible often calls the Jews "the children of Israel". That does not mean that they were all little children! No, it means that they are all descended from Israel. Israel was the great-great-grandfather of all of them. But do you remember who Israel is? Yes, that is the other name of Jacob, isn't it? So when I say "the children of Israel", I'll be talking about Jacob's great-great-grandchildren. But let's go on with the story of Caleb now.

Well, after the children of Israel had left Egypt, the Lord led them across the wilderness until they got near the land of Canaan. Then the Lord told Moses to send men to spy out the land of Canaan, that is, to see what it was like. There were 12 tribes of the Jews, so the Lord told Moses to send 12 men, one important man from each of the 12 tribes.

Now, why would they need men to spy out the land? Well, you see, there were already people living in the land of Canaan. But they were very wicked people. They didn't worship the Lord God.

No, instead they worshipped idols! Isn't that silly as well as wicked?! After all, a statue that men make can't do anything for anybody, can it?! But the Lord God who made the whole world and everything in it can do all sorts of things for people, can't He? And we should only worship the Lord God, shouldn't we? But these people in Canaan worshipped idols and also did many very wicked things to people, too. So the Lord was going to punish the wicked people by taking the land away from them and giving it to the children of Israel.

So now the children of Israel were near the land of Canaan, and Moses sent the 12 men to spy out the land. That means that they were to go look over the land of Canaan, to see what it was like, and then to bring back a report to Moses of what it was like. After all, the Lord was going to have them conquer the land of Canaan, so they should know what the land was like first, shouldn't they? Well, the man from the tribe of Judah that Moses chose to be a spy was Caleb. Another man from a different tribe that Moses chose to be a spy was Joshua. (Yes, this is the same Joshua who became the leader of the Jews after Moses died! Joshua was already sort of an army general.)

Moses told the 12 men, "Go into the land of Canaan and see what it's like. See how the people there are, too, whether they are weak or strong. Whether they live in cities or tents or forts. And check to see whether food grows well there or not, and whether there are trees or not. Be brave!"

Now, it was the time of the year when the grapes were first getting ripe. And Moses told Caleb and Joshua and the 10 other men, "And bring back some of the fruit that grows in the land."

So Caleb and Joshua and the 10 other men went into the land of Canaan while the rest of the many, many children of Israel stayed back in the wilderness. The 12 spies walked all over the land of Canaan. They looked at the land for 40 days. When they were ready to go back to Moses and the others, they picked one big bunch of grapes to take back and show them. The bunch of grapes was so big that two men had to carry it together between them on a big stick! They also took back with them some pomegranates and figs that had been growing there.

When they got back to the wilderness where everyone was camped, the 12 men went to Moses and his brother Aaron (who was the high priest of the Lord) and to all the children of Israel, and they showed them the beautiful, delicious fruit. And the 12 men who had spied out the land told them, "We went into the land just as you told us to do. Here is some of the fruit from it. It's like a land flowing with milk and honey." Now that doesn't mean that milk and honey were in the rivers! No! That was just a way of saying that lots and lots of good food grew there. It was a wonderful land.

But then they said, "However, the people who live there are strong. And their cities are very big and have walls around them. And there are lots of different people living all over it."

Well, this upset the children of Israel.

But Caleb quieted the Jews down. Caleb said, "Let's go up and take the land right away. We can do it!" And Joshua agreed with Caleb.

But the 10 other spies said, "We can't win against these people! They are stronger than we are!"

The land we went through is a terrible land! And all of the people we saw were very big. And we saw giants in it!! Why, we were like grasshoppers beside them!" (They said this because some of the people who lived there were warriors who were bigger and taller than even the tallest basketball players today!)

And the 10 other men said such awful things that the children of Israel were really scared! Big cities with walls! Lots of people! And giants!! And the people began crying loudly! In fact, they cried all night.

Then the children of Israel complained about Moses and Aaron and said to them. "We wish we had just died back in the land of Egypt! Or that we had died in this wilderness here!"

The men of Israel complained some more, saying, "Why has the Lord brought us into this land just to be killed by swords? And then our wives and children would all be captured. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?"

Then they said, "Let's make ourselves another leader and go back to Egypt."

Well!! Moses and Aaron were very upset!! They fell on their faces in front of all of the children of Israel who were gathered there. And Joshua and Caleb were very upset, too, and they tore their clothes! (People sometimes did that then to show how upset they were.)

Then Joshua and Caleb spoke to all the children of Israel who were gathered together there. They said to them, "The land we went through is a very good land! If the Lord is happy with us, then He will take us into this land and give it to us. Why, it's a land which flows with milk and honey!"

Joshua and Caleb said, "Just don't rebel against the Lord. Don't be afraid of the people of the land. They can't defend themselves. The Lord is with us; so don't be afraid of those people!"

So do you think this made the people happy? No! Instead, the children of Israel who were gathered there started telling each other that they should throw rocks at them and kill them!!

-- But what do you think happened then?! Why, suddenly the glory of the Lord shone out brightly before all of them!! And the Lord said to Moses, "How long will these people provoke me? And how long will it be before they believe me? After all, I have shown many signs among them!"

These signs would be miracles, signs to show them that He was God and was with them and could take care of them. Remember, the Lord had led them out of Egypt. The Lord had parted the Red Sea making a dry path across it for them. The Lord had given water to all those many, many people and their many animals out there in the desert, the wilderness. And the Lord had given them manna to eat so that they had enough food in the wilderness. And the Lord had actually spoken to them from on top of Mt. Sinai. And the Lord was leading them all the time from the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night. They could all see those pillars. And the Lord had promised to give them the land of Canaan. But now they had forgotten all of that. They had forgotten how powerful the Lord God is. And they had forgotten that the Lord always keeps His promises.

Then the Lord said to Moses, "I will kill them all and make a greater nation out of you."

But Moses begged the Lord to forgive the children of Israel. And then the Lord said He would forgive them. But they had been very disobedient, and they had forgotten how powerful the Lord is, hadn't they?

So then the Lord said, "Yes, I will forgive them. But because they have seen my glory and my miracles and have not listened to me, they are going to wander in the wilderness for 40 years until all of the people who are now over 20 years old have died. They won't be able to see the land I promised to their ancestors. But then I will take their children into the land that they didn't want."

But what about Caleb and Joshua? The Bible tells us that Caleb was 40 years old when he helped spy out the land. And Joshua must have been way over 20 years old, too, because, remember, Joshua was like an army general at the time. Well, the Lord hadn't forgotten their faithfulness and their belief in Him.

The Lord told Moses, "But Caleb and Joshua who believed me, they will be able to go into the land."

And the Lord said, "When you go into the land, then Caleb will have the part of the land that he himself had spied out."

So then the children of Israel had to go back into the wilderness and wander in the wilderness for 40 years. That was one year of wandering for each of the 40 days that the 12 men had spied out the beautiful land of Canaan. That is sad, but it was their own fault, wasn't it?

Well, when the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness were over, and all of the people who had been over 20 years old were dead (except Caleb and Joshua, the two faithful spies), their children were then grown up. Moses was dead, too, and now Joshua led the children of Israel into the land of Canaan. And, as the Lord had promised, they were able to take the land. And they divided up the land of Canaan among the 12 tribes of Israel. But they hadn't conquered all of it yet, though.

Well, one day Caleb went to Joshua. And Caleb said to Joshua, "You remember what the Lord told Moses about us after we spied out the land. And Moses promised me that I would have the land here in Canaan that I had walked on as a spy. Well, I'm 85 years old now, and I'm just as strong as I was then, and I can still be a warrior. So now give me this mountain that the Lord told me about then. If the Lord is with me, then I'll be able to conquer it."

Joshua blessed Caleb and said the land he wanted was his to take. So Caleb went to the part of the land called Hebron and fought against the people and drove them out of Hebron and took it for himself. And the people Caleb drove out were giants!! Remember how scared the children of Israel had been when they heard about the giants?! But the Lord was with Caleb, wasn't He?

Then Caleb went to another part of the land named Debir. This also had been promised to

him. And for some reason Caleb didn't do the fighting there himself. Instead, he said, "Whoever fights and captures this city, I'll let him marry my daughter Ach-sah."

Well, Caleb's nephew Oth-ni-el did just that! Othniel took the city of Debir, and then Othniel married Caleb's daughter Achsah.

Well, Achsah sounds like a smart girl, because when she married her cousin Othniel, she got Othniel to ask her father Caleb for a field as well as the city. (The fields where food was grown would be outside of the city.)

And then Achsah got off her donkey, and Caleb said to his daughter, "What do you want?"

Achsah said, "Please give me a blessing. You have given me a field, please also give me the springs of water that are there." So Caleb gave his daughter 2 springs of water as well as the field. (Water is very important, isn't it?)

By the way, Caleb's nephew/son-in-law Othniel became one of the judges of Israel.

And that is all we really hear about Caleb in the Bible. But what can we learn from this true story of Caleb? Well, to start with, we can learn that God always keeps His promises, can't we? And because God always keeps His promises, we should always trust Him to do that. Also, we can learn that we should keep promises we ourselves make to other people, like Joshua did when he told Caleb to take the land that had been promised to him. The story of Caleb can also help us remember that the Lord can protect us and take care of us, and we should trust and follow the Lord, even when most other people don't.

Yes, Caleb was a man who trusted and believed the Lord. And we should all trust and believe the Lord, too, shouldn't we? We can trust the Lord to take care of us, and we can trust the Lord to keep all of His promises to us, can't we? And what is the most important promise of all of the Lord's promises that we need to remember? Yes, God promises that if we trust Jesus to save us from our sins, He will. Then someday we can be with God. Yes, God loves us very much. God the Father had God the Son (that's Jesus) come into the world as a man, and Jesus did many miracles. And Jesus fulfilled many prophecies that had been written hundreds of years before. But why did Jesus come? That's right. Jesus came so He could die for our sins, as the prophets had said would happen. But then 3 days later Jesus was alive again, and lots of people saw Him alive again, didn't they? Then He went back to heaven where He is still alive. And if we believe this and trust Jesus to forgive our sins, He will. Then we should turn from our sinful way of life and do the things God wants us to do, shouldn't we? After all, then the Lord Jesus will be our King! And someday the Lord Jesus will come again as a Warrior King! So we should be like Caleb and trust and believe the Lord.

I hope you enjoyed hearing the true story of Caleb, the good spy and warrior for the Lord.