

Hebron, the Sons of Anak, and Gideon's 300

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The Spies in the Land — A Rich Possession Already Given

Numbers 13 records the sending of twelve spies into Canaan — one from each tribe, each a prince among Israel. God's purpose was not to determine whether the land could be taken; that was entirely in His hands. It was to survey what He had already given them, so that they might go about possessing it wisely. And what they found was extraordinary: a single bunch of grapes so large that two men were needed to carry it on a pole. A land flowing with milk and honey. Everything ready. Everything already provided.

Egypt had been a place of bondage — the world under the power of Satan, with all its attractive things and all its soul-shackling chains. Israel had been delivered from it with a great deliverance, Pharaoh and his armies destroyed. Canaan was different. Canaan was not a desert they would have to cultivate; its riches were already there, waiting to be possessed. The question was not whether it was good — it was unmistakably good. The question was whether they would enter in.

Hebron Built Seven Years Before Zoan — Communion Before Wisdom

In the midst of the spies' survey, the Spirit of God inserts what seems like a passing historical remark: Hebron had been built seven years before Zoan in Egypt. Why is that there? Zoan was the seat of Egyptian intelligence, the city where the wisdom of Egypt was concentrated. Hebron, by contrast, was the place of communion — it was at Mamre in Hebron that Abraham pitched his tent and

built an altar to Jehovah. Genesis 13:18 tells us that. Abraham was satisfied to have a tent as long as he had an altar.

Seven in Scripture speaks of completeness, a whole thing. So what the Spirit is saying here is that communion with God was established a perfect and complete period before the wisdom of man ever gathered itself together in Zoan. First, there was an altar. First, there was communion. After that came all the intelligence and scholarship and greatness of Egypt. But Hebron came first. And this is what the spies were supposed to have before them.

What does Hebron represent to us? Colossians 3:1–3 answers: if ye have been raised with the Christ, seek the things which are above where the Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Have your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth. For ye have died and your life is hid with the Christ in God. Hebron for us is this — having our mind on the things above, where Christ is. That is communion. That is our tent and altar.

The Sons of Anak — What Blocks Communion Today

But sitting in Hebron were the sons of Anak — large men, formidable, frightening. So frightening that ten of the twelve spies came back and said: we cannot go up, for the giants are too great for us. Only Caleb and Joshua had a different spirit. The sons of Anak in our day are the two sides of what draws the mind down from things above: the things that frighten us on the earth, and the things that attract us on the earth.

Anak means ornamented — something shiny, something that draws the eye. Ornamented things always have that effect. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, says Proverbs, nor the ear with hearing. There is always a new shiny object. TikTok today, something else next year. Things that are impressive, that demand attention, that interfere with communion with the Lord.

The sons of Anak have names that each represent a form of this interference. Ahiman means liberal — and there is much liberality in the world today, much that looks good, much that makes things better for people, and that can draw our thoughts away from what the Lord is doing toward what men are doing. Sheshai means white linen — the world dresses things up to look righteous and good, things that have nothing of God in them but appear presentable and even holy. Talmai means furrows — the honest work of men, the farming of God's earth without ever ascribing anything to God, the plowing of the wicked which Proverbs says is an abomination. All of it looks reasonable. None of it is Hebron. All of it blocks communion with the one who is sitting at the right hand of God.

Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. — Colossians 3:2–3

Gideon — An Empty Vessel in a Dark Day

Judges 6 finds Israel in a similar condition — impoverished because of the Midianites, crying to the Lord. And the Lord had someone already prepared: Gideon, a young man threshing wheat by the winepress to hide it from the enemy. Two things are immediately notable. He was threshing wheat, not the cheaper barley — there was something more substantial in this man's occupation than the average. And he was doing it hidden, because things were dangerous.

The angel addressed him as a mighty man of valor. This is the same character as the Lord's word to Daniel: oh man, greatly beloved. The Lord speaks to us in terms of what He is making us, not what we feel ourselves to be. Gideon felt himself to be the least in his father's house, in the weakest clan of Manasseh. The Lord said: I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man. That was sufficient. The company of the Lord is all the resource anyone ever needs.

Before the Lord could use him, Gideon had to cut down the groves of Baal. An empty vessel for the Lord cannot be a vessel that is simultaneously filled with idolatry. And when he brought his offering — a kid and unleavened cakes — the angel said: pour out the broth. The Lord needed the vessel empty. With broth in it, it could not be used. We sing: I am an empty vessel — fill Thou my vessel. That is the condition for usefulness.

Then the famous reduction. 32,000 men. 22,000 went home because they were fearful and afraid. 10,000 remained, still too many — lest Israel should boast that their own hand saved them. Down to 300 who lapped water quickly, not getting occupied with their thirst. 300 against an army that filled the valley. And the Lord delivered the Midianites into their hands with trumpets, empty pitchers, and lamps — the cry: the sword of the Lord and of Gideon. The wisdom of Zoan could not withstand it. The world turned on itself in confusion.

Three hundred is a multiple of three. Where two or three are gathered together in His name, there He is in the midst. Not size, not impressive resources — but the Lord in the midst. That is what prevails.

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