

## THE LAND OF CANAAN AND THE CHURCH

**Num 13:32** *And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature.*

Most messages about the Land of Canaan compare it to heaven. Traditionally, the land of Canaan becomes a metaphor for the Christian entering the Kingdom of heaven after much affliction and suffering which the 40 years of wandering in the desert is made to represent. I do not wish to undo the power and effect of those sermons upon our lives, but, today, let us approach the Land of Canaan from the viewpoint of entering the Church of Jesus Christ itself. I say this because it is difficult to align the existence of giants called Anak, harlots such as Rahab and fighting Canaanites with heaven; heaven has no sons of Anak nor Canaanites. It does make more sense to compare the Land of Canaan, then, with the struggles, defeats and victories we encounter in living the Christian life. Note how the Lord addressed the Church of Pergamum – he knew that it was dwelling in a very dangerous place spiritually.

**Revelation 2:13** *“I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth”.*

The first important lesson to draw in entering the Church is to accept the necessity of fighting the righteous battles of the Lord. The children of Israel had been slaves for over 400 hundred years. Their spirits had been broken under the yoke of slavery. Once they experienced the harshness of the desert and the threat posed by the Amalekites, they wanted to return to Egypt and serve pharaoh and his gods. No, we cannot allow this to happen, saints of God. We have entered the land of Canaan, and we must fight the righteous battles of the Lord. Abigail managed to appease the anger of David who was about to kill her husband Nabal with these words, “I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid: for the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the LORD, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days” (I Sam 25:28).

What does it mean to fight the battles of the Lord? Let me put it this way: don’t look for the seven tribes of Canaan outside of you – look for them inside of you, in your flesh. In

fact, the apostle Paul names 17 tribes of Canaan – all dwelling inside of us. “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal 5:19-21). Once the children of Israel crossed the Jordan, there was no returning. Once the Christian has been baptized in Jesus name, there is no returning to the world. A battle waits us ahead.

***1 Timothy 6:12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.***

The great sin of the 10 spies who brought back a bad report from the Land of Canaan is this: while they confirmed that the land was good as God foretold, they were unwilling to fight the battles of the Lord. “And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it” (Numbers 13:27).

There are Christians who confirm that there are indeed great blessings in the Church of Jesus Christ but they are unwilling to fight the flesh and the Devil. They only want the benefits and no discomfort. For the Christian who fights the good fight, the Lord will ensure that you will experience more blessings than there are problems and setbacks. Even the world knows this principle. Roman soldiers were compensated with regular wages, known as stipendium, along with shares of loot and a steady provision of supplies. They often received cash bonuses, called donatives, after significant victories, and upon retirement, many were granted land or pensions, known as praemia. Additionally, military service could confer Roman citizenship, providing legal and social benefits. These rewards ensured the loyalty and motivation of soldiers, contributing to the military's success and the expansion of the Roman Empire.

At the Battle of Gaugamela, Alexander the Great faced significant odds, with his 47,000 troops against a much larger Persian army commanded by King Darius III, estimated to be between 100,000 and 250,000 strong. Despite being outnumbered, Alexander employed innovative tactics such as the oblique formation to concentrate his forces at a single point, used a flexible phalanx, and led a decisive charge with his Companion Cavalry targeting the Persian center and left flank. He chose the battlefield terrain to negate the advantage of Persian chariots and used psychological warfare to undermine enemy morale. These strategies disoriented and defeated the Persian forces, leading to a decisive victory that

marked the collapse of the Persian Empire and the expansion of Alexander's dominion, exemplifying his ability to triumph against formidable numerical disadvantages through strategic brilliance and leadership.

The children of Anak were giants. The Anakim are not dead, they sometimes reappear in the Christian life. Sometimes the Christian encounters problems that are truly gigantic. But remember David? For every Goliath there is a David. “So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David” (I Sam 17:50). Another mistake the 10 spies made was to allow themselves to be impressed by the giants alone. “And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight” (Numbers 13:33). Firstly, if you look at every giant through the lens of God, you become the giant, and they the grasshoppers. Secondly, this was a form of deception. No giants ever posed a problem for Israel – they destroyed the Anakim. These giants do not appear as a problem at all in the annals of the history of Israel. But the real giants were the dwarfs or the sins that appeared as small problems – being induced to worship the gods of the Canaanites; being deceived into making treaties with the Canaanites, as Joshua did; intermarriage with the Canaanites etc.

*Jdg 2:1 And an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you.*

*Jdg 2:2 And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?*

*Jdg 2:3 Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.*

In conclusion, the Land of Canaan serves as a powerful metaphor for the Christian spiritual journey, highlighting the challenges and triumphs encountered within the Church. Just as the Israelites faced formidable giants like the Anakim, Christians today confront both visible challenges and more insidious internal struggles, manifested in sins and temptations. The story of the ten spies, who were daunted by the giants despite God's promises, contrasts sharply with the faith of David, who relied on God's strength to defeat Goliath. This underscores the vital lesson that believers must approach their battles with spiritual conviction and trust in divine guidance. The history of Israel further reveals that the true

dangers often lay not in the giants but in subtle temptations, such as forming alliances and adopting the customs of surrounding peoples, which led to disobedience and spiritual downfall. By focusing on the deeper metaphor of Canaan, Christians are reminded to persevere in their faith journey, confronting both large and small challenges confidently, understanding that true victory lies in unwavering faith and adherence to God's commandments. This story encourages believers to remain vigilant and dedicated, ensuring that their spiritual path is aligned with divine purpose and direction.