

Numbers 13:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Moses by the commandment of the LORD sent them from the wilderness of Paran: all those men were heads of the children of Israel.

Analysis

Moses 'sent them from the wilderness of Paran: all those men were heads of the children of Israel.' The phrase 'heads' (rashim) indicates these were tribal leaders, not random scouts - men of authority and influence. Their unanimous bad report (except Caleb and Joshua) proved devastating because of their leadership status. This teaches that leadership position doesn't guarantee spiritual discernment. Even respected leaders can spread unbelief and discourage God's people. The New Testament warns about false teachers (2 Pet 2:1-3) and urges testing leaders' teaching against Scripture (Acts 17:11, 1 John 4:1). Position must align with faithful character.

Historical Context

The spying mission occurred at Kadesh-Barnea in Paran wilderness, on Canaan's southern border. God commanded the spy mission (Num 13:1-2) after Israel requested it (Deut 1:22-23), showing God permits actions that reveal hearts even when He knows the outcome. The twelve leaders represented each tribe, ensuring comprehensive report and tribal buy-in. Their failure to trust God despite seeing Canaan's fruitfulness cost an entire generation Canaan's entrance. The incident demonstrates that investigating God's promises is permissible, but unbelief after seeing evidence brings severe consequences.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. Do you trust respected leaders' opinions over God's clear promises, or test everything against Scripture?
2. How does this passage warn you about the responsibility that comes with spiritual leadership and influence?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּשְׁלַח מֹשֶׁה מִמִּדְבָּר וְעַל פָּאָרָן
sent And Moses them from the wilderness of Paran H5921
H7971 H853 H4872 H4057 H6290

בְּנֵי בְּאֵשׁ אֲנָשִׁים כָּל מִיְּהִי הָרָגִים
by the commandment of the LORD H3605 H376 heads of the children H1121
H6310 H3068 H3478 H1992

וְיַשְׁבָּא לְקֹמָה: וְיַשְׁבָּא
of Israel were H3478 H1992

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 12:16 (Parallel theme): And afterward the people removed from Hazereth, and pitched in the wilderness of Paran.

Numbers 32:8 (Parallel theme): Thus did your fathers, when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to see the land.

Deuteronomy 1:19 (References Lord): And when we departed from Horeb, we went through all that great and terrible wilderness, which ye saw by the way of the mountain of the Amorites, as the LORD our God commanded us; and we came to Kadesh-barnea.

Deuteronomy 9:23 (Word): Likewise when the LORD sent you from Kadesh-barnea, saying, Go up and possess the land which I have given you; then ye rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God, and ye believed him not, nor hearkened to his voice.

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