

David Jones, Unbelief
Reading: Hebrews 3

January 17, 2016

This reading in Hebrews--Donna and I are in our reading; we read this--it's been some time ago now, but it kind of stood out to me when you read something like this. And you think to yourself, "why did the writer to the Hebrews write this down?" Why was it important and we're going to address that this morning, but before we do, when we read something like this, it is talking about those there that are the Children of Israel that rebelled against God. You have to go back to Numbers the 13th and 14th chapters and I'd like to go there for a minute to get a good picture of what he is talking about here. And then we're going to bring out a few points. This is something that we've all read, the points I bring out this morning are probably something that we've all thought about sometime or another, nothing new. Sometimes we need to be reminded.

In the 13th chapter of Numbers is when Moses sends the spies up into the Promised Land. He choose a man out of every tribe to go up there, and when he sends them up, remember he's in the Wilderness of Paran. Do you realize that where Moses was and where Joshua was, is two different places? Have you thought about that there ever? Have you ever taken time to look at the map and see where this Wilderness of Paran is? Or where Joshua was right across the Jordan from Jericho? Completely different areas. Where the Children of Israel was at this time was almost straight south from where the Promised Land was. And these here spies go up into this land. If you use a chart or map, they cover quite a territory that they go through. This was the instruction that Moses gave. He says [Numbers 13:18-20] Go "And see the land, what it is; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; And what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strong holds; And what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land. Now the time was the time of the first ripe grapes." So they went. They searched out the land. We're told they done been way up north and they would come to this here valley or Brook of Eshcol and this brook is obviously a brook that came through this valley of Eshcol. If you look this up on the map, it's just on the west side of the Salt Sea. But anyhow they come to this brook and cut down a branch--that's verse 23, "one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates and of the figs. The place was called the Brook of Eshcol, because of the cluster of grapes which the Children of Israel cut down from thence. And they returned from searching of the land after forty days." (Numbers 13:24-25). How many days? 40 days. If you look at a map, like you say, they covered quite a territory. They went quite a ways, and they returned. It took them 40 days to do this. I don't know how they traveled-- more than likely it was on foot. But you should look at a map and the area they covered. A lot of this was mountainous range that they had to go through. When they got back, the 27th verse says "And they told him [or told Moses and Aaron], 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." I can't imagine what cutting a branch off and having a cluster of grapes and you have to put it on a stave between two people to carry it. We were in a place--Donna and I was--not too long ago and I seen

these here grapes and I thought man they're huge. I never seen grapes so big. We had to buy some of them. But can you imagine a cluster of grapes that you had to carry on a stave between two people? Think about that for a minute. A land that flows with milk and honey! And that there was the report. Surely this land was like that. And then they come up and say well, but the sons of Anak are there, the land of the giants. Caleb" stilled the people before Moses," verse 30, "and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we" (verse 31). And on down in the latter part of verse 32, he says, " all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature. 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." These were big people they say. We were just like a little grasshopper in our own eyes and that's what we look like to them.

Then we get into Chapter 14, "And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!" (I'm sorry; I get a little emotional sometimes when I go to reading stuff like this). He said in the third verse, "And wherefore hath the Lord brought us into this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? " This is what the children of Israel said when they murmured against God. There's one other place I just thought of in the New Testament where Paul recites the same thing that happened in I Corinthians the 10th chapter, verses 1-11. He recites this same incident.

Of course we're told in several verses on down how Joshua and Caleb--they tried to encourage the people saying we can go up and do this. Verse 11 says "And the Lord said to Moses,"-- the congregation after they'd tried to encourage them to go up and do this well verse 10 there said the whole congregation wanted to stone them because they was the only two who was trying to encourage people. Said the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle which obviously that glory must've been something that it stayed the people from stoning Joshua and Caleb. "And the Lord said to Moses, how long will this people provoke me?" Provoke in this here means to irritate, to agitate, to make angry. This is what they was doing to the Lord because they wouldn't listen to him. ". . . how long will this be before they believe me and all the signs which I have shown among them?" Then Moses pleads for the people, and after he pleads for the people down in verse 20, "And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to your words." But he goes on to say, "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Because all those men who have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put me to the test now these 10 times, and have not harkened to my voice; Surely they shall not see the land which I swore to give to their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it." Going on down about the 28th verse, "Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you." What did he say to them? Remember back in the very first part of this chapter, they said would we have died in Egypt! Would we have died in the wilderness! Now he's saying just as you spoke in my ear that's what is going to

happen to you. He says" Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from 20 years old and upward, who have murmured against me." Now why did they . . . what caused the unbelief? It couldn't have been the fruit and the land flowing with milk and honey. It was reports of the cities and these giants. They didn't want to listen to God. I think they believed in God, but they didn't want to believe his word. In other words, he said it was because of unbelief, but this doubt came in their mind, a little bit of a doubt. Well, we can't do this! We know God said go over and take this land, but we can't do this! There's a little bit of a doubt there, isn't there? And that's what really come into their mind which caused the unbelief that they had, that little bit of doubt. That's the reason that the writer of the Hebrew letter wrote to them, and he accounted for this. You know when we go to thinking of a little bit of doubt, I'm going to give you just a couple of examples and then we're going to move on.

Let's go over to the book of Acts. I think everyone can probably tell where I'm going. The book of Acts, the 5th chapter. Doubt is something that creeps into our minds sometimes. Here in this fifth chapter we have an event take place just like the event that took place almost back in the Old Testament when the Children of Israel came to the Promised Land. There was a bunch of new converts. It was Pentecost and there were a lot of people gathered at Jerusalem. Remember that's when the apostles stood up and they gave their sermon about how they crucified the Lord, and there was 3000 souls saved from that there sermon Peter and the other apostles gave that there time. And there's a lot of people staying there because they wanted to hear more. And we have the event in the fourth chapter of how a lot of people were starting to sell their land and they was bringing it to the apostles for the apostles to distribute to the people that had need, and there was a lot of people there from all over because the Jews were scattered all over, but they was supposed to come back to Jerusalem three times a year to worship God, and Pentecost was one of them. And so they was there for that purpose and then because of the preaching of the apostles and there were so many staying--well there was a need, there was hunger I'm sure, a lot of hunger. So they were selling their lands and bringing it to the apostles. We have this event of Ananias and Sapphira in the fifth chapter. They sold their land also, and they brought it to the apostles. First, Ananias was the one that came, and he brought what he'd sold--what they'd supposedly sold the land for. When he gave it to him, Peter questioned him about it because of course Peter was an inspired apostle. And the Holy Spirit was within him, and God knew that Ananias had sold the land for more than what he did. Peter said to him look before you sold it it was yours and after you sold it it was still in your power. You could've done what you wanted. I'm sure it would've been fine if they'd have come and said well I sold it for this amount, but I'm only going to give you this amount, he'd probably have been fine. But he didn't. He said I sold it for this amount. And he knew it was a lie. Now what caused Ananias and Sapphira to do this? We're first told that Ananias came in and the fifth verse tells what happened to him. Down in the 10th verse, we have his wife come in later and they had agree together to do the same thing. What caused them to do that? Have you ever thought about that? Was it just a little bit of doubt that they had in their mind? Think about that. Were they thinking within themselves . . . you know a lot of times people get carried away because other

people are doing it. It happens today real easy. Some group of people you know are doing something and you think maybe we should do this, too. I think this is what happened to Ananias and Sapphira. A lot of people that they knew and their friends and stuff were selling their land and they got caught up saying well maybe we should do this, too. But they got to thinking what's going to happen to us once all of this is gone? They had a little bit of doubt in their minds and that doubt--just like the doubt the Children of Israel had back in the Promised Land--what it caused. What did it cause the Children of Israel? It caused death. What did it cause Ananias and Sapphira? It caused death.

Let's go to another example, a well-known example. Let's go to the book of Matthew, chapter 14. In the 14th chapter of Matthew, we're going to be considering mainly verses 24-31. We have an event here of Peter. Now we're all familiar with this story. Jesus had just fed the 5000, and he told his disciples, he said you get in the boat and go to the other side, over there. And I'm going to send the people away. And later on, they did that there. They was out in the middle of the lake. Jesus has sent the people away, and Jesus went walking on the water out to them. The disciples seen him and at first they were scared, they thought it's a spirit. And Jesus called out "Don't be afraid. It is I; it's me. Don't worry about it." Then Peter said, "well if it's you Lord, let me come to you." and Jesus told him to come and that's what Peter did. He started going to him. When he saw the wind in the 30th verse, "But when he saw the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me." Jesus, at the end of the 31st verse says, "O thou of little faith." Why did you doubt? Now doubt is a terrible thing. Now you think about that. Peter was fine until he started to doubt. And when he started to doubt, he started to sink. Now when we go to doubting, I think we go to sinking also.

Now again when we think about the writer to the Hebrews and why he wrote that. . . . let's go back to that there third chapter of Hebrews. Let's look at verse 12. Why did he write this here to them? And why do we consider doubt and why it's so important? He says, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." And then on down in verse 15, he says, "While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation." In other words, the writer to the Hebrews realizes that we can become just like what the Children of Israel was. Because a little bit of doubt comes in us. You know when I look back at this story over in Numbers of the Children of Israel, I have to think well maybe it was the influence that they just come out of. You know they just come out of Egypt, and they've been under bondage for four hundred years. They were slaves and under task masters. But think about it, could that have been an influence on them? We can't go up against these people because we're just little people. We're not men of war, we've been slaves. A little bit of doubt, a little bit of unbelief. You know just the same way they had influence in their lives and made decisions like they do, you know we have a lot of influence around us and a lot of it's not good. How does it affect you? How does it affect you? We have people out there that don't even believe in God and then we have those there people who don't have any religion at all. And they are all the time putting out their propaganda --everything that you look at, everything you hear on the radio, the

things that you see on TV, the things you see in newspapers, books, magazines-- always is against God's word. We see it all the time. How does that affect you? Does it create a little bit of doubt to come up in your mind? The question comes up--does God expect us--that is you and me-- not to have doubt in our lives?

And I'm just going to give you a couple of examples in the 21st chapter of Matthew --the barren fig tree--18th verse of the 21st chapter. He says "Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away! Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Does God expect us to have doubt? Or does he expect us to believe? That's what Scriptures tells us here.

Let's go a bit further. Let's go to the book of James. I'll give you an example there. James the first chapter. In the first chapter of James, it is talking about if anyone is lacking wisdom, he says to let him ask of God starting in the fifth verse it says "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him, But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, for he that waivers is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." Can we have faith and have doubt at the same time? No. When we ask --we're supposed to ask, believing. He says if we asked and we have that doubt in our minds, we're like the wind that's blowing the waves and you'll go whichever way the wind carries you. Now again, can doubt cause us to sin? I think we have to answer that, absolutely, because the Children of Israel sinned and they wasn't allowed into the Promised Land. It caused Ananias to sin, caused them to lie. It even caused Peter to sin because he took his eyes off Jesus, and he lost his faith, and he started to sink. Doubt can cause us to sin.

I just had another thought come in my mind-- Revelation the third chapter to the one of the seven churches of Asia. It refers to Laodicea, I believe it is. Remember what he said to them, because you're neither hot or cold. He said because you're lukewarm I'm going to spew you out of my mouth. Does that sound like a person that is partly believing and partly doubting? Yeah, halfhearted worship. Someone halfhearted wanting to seek God.

As I quickly draw this to a close. . . Just the same way you doubt can cause us to sin. The writer in Hebrews gives us a solution how we can keep from having doubt in our lives, having that unbelief in our hearts. Nancy put it on the front of her bulletin. Look at that there 13th verse of that third chapter: "But exhort one another daily while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Exhort one another . The word "exhort" means to call near ; it's like if you got someone with

problems and you put your arm around them and say come on in here, try to encourage them, try to strengthen them. That's what he's saying here, but look at the wording of this. He says exhort one another daily while it is called today, while it is today. Now think about that. How can you exhort someone daily if you're not seeing them? I guess my point is, here, brethren, is the fact that a lot of times we get to thinking within ourselves that the only time we need to go to worship services is on Sunday morning to partake of the Lord's Supper. That's true; we do. But how are you going to get to know someone to help them if you don't even know if they're having any trouble or problems unless you see them more often. Let's go to the 10th chapter of Hebrews, the 24th and 25th verses. It says, "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:" Now this word "provoke" here has a different meaning than what provoke to the Lord meant over in the Old Testament when we looked at it in Numbers. Over there it meant to irritate, to agitate. Here it means to challenge, to kind of get inside a person, to go a little bit further than what you are. Let us provoke one another to love and good deeds. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together," Sometimes we get to thinking inside ourselves why I don't have to be there. I've got something else I'd rather do, and you go do that there. Is that a little bit of doubt in our minds? Thinking well, God don't mean this. Maybe it's not necessary that we're there all the time. Is that what he said? How to get rid of this doubt, to exhort somebody, to admonish them, to edify them? And we can't do that there if we're not getting together. I know the Bible talks about one time upon the Lord's Day the congregation came together. When the elders see fit we should come together more often, whether it's Sunday night or Wednesday night, that's really the only other times that they really like the congregation to come together. And it's for one reason-- to strengthen each other, so we can exhort, so we can instruct, so we can build each other up, kind of put our arms around each other and say yeah, it's been a hard time--and we can't do that there unless we're here, unless we're seeing each other, unless we get together. I believe that there is the reason he wrote that there to the Hebrew brethren. Don't let this here deceitfulness of sin creep in and harden your hearts. Don't let these doubts and the things in the world that surround you creep into your life. Thinking that God's word don't mean this; God does mean it. You know a lot of times we're driving down the road and you'll see a speed sign saying 35 mile an hour and there's nothing there and you think 35 mile an hour through here? How come? so you're doing 45 and all of a sudden you're stopped. It meant 35 mile an hour. God's word means the same thing. He wants us coming together. He wants us to edify each other; he wants us to exhort each other and build each other up. By so doing, that doubt and unbelief never comes into our lives. I think that's what we get out of these few verses of this one chapter.

At this time we'll offer the gospel invitation. One thing we might see in the examples of where God entered in, and it entered into Peter when he began to sink to his death. He said Lord, save me! and the Lord took him by the hand and lifted him up. You know the Lord is still there. All we have to do is say that, Lord save me. The Lord's hand is there and he's reaching out for us. If you haven't become one of his children, and you'd like to do so, there's been an invitation number announced. You're welcome to come forward as we stand and sing if we can help you in any way . . .