

## ***The Misunderstood Commission***

If I were to give you their names, you probably wouldn't recognize the list: Shammua, Shaphat, Igal, Palti, Gaddiel, Gaddi, Ammiel, Sethur, Nahbi, and Geuel. Add two more names, Joshua and Caleb, and many Bible students would suddenly have a flash of recognition – the twelve spies.

The setting is after the Exodus from Egypt. Israel is in the wilderness. They are camped outside the Promised Land. The spy mission is God's idea: "Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the people of Israel" (Numbers 13:2, *ESV*). Moses also states their commission:

Go up into the Negeb and go up into the hill country, and see what the land is, and whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, whether they are few or many, and whether the land that they dwell in is good or bad, and whether the cities that they dwell in are camps or strongholds, and whether the land is rich or poor, and whether there are trees in it or not. Be of good courage and bring some of the fruit of the land.  
Numbers 13:17-20, *ESV*

It is interesting to note that in the commissioning of the spies the issue is never whether we can take the land or not. Taking the land is a given. God has promised.

The ten spies failed not because they reported strong peoples and fortified cities in the land. Their failure was saying, "We are not strong enough; we can't do it." The issue had never been Israel's strength. The issue always was God's strength, and what could be accomplished by faith. They misunderstood their commission.

We too have a commission – a great one in fact. It is about going into all the world, making disciples, baptizing, and teaching. It would be failure for us to say, "We are not strong enough; we can't do it." It is not about our strength. It is about God's strength, and what can be accomplished by faith. For this commission too comes with a promise: "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20, *ESV*).

– Russ Holden