

# Kadesh-Barnea

by J. Wilbur Chapman

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*The sermon encourages listeners to move forward into the Promised Land of the Spiritual Canaan, where they can experience the blessings and fruitfulness of the Christian life as God intended.*

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 1:24, Deuteronomy 32:49, Psalm 91:1, Isaiah 1:19, Mark 10:29, John 10:10, Romans 12:1, Galatians 5:22, Ephesians 6:12

**Topics:** "Surrender To God", "Faith And Obedience"

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## Description

J. Wilbur Chapman preaches about the importance of crossing over from the wilderness of failure and discontent into the land of Canaan, symbolizing a life of victory, rest, and communion with God. He emphasizes the need to surrender our will to God, just as the children of Israel had to choose between the wilderness and Canaan. Chapman shares examples of individuals who made the decision to fully surrender to God, leading to a life of joy, peace, and fruitfulness. He urges listeners to take the step of faith to enter into the abundant life God has promised.

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## Transcript

After the children of Israel had gone past Horeb, through the wilderness by the way of the mountain of the Amorites, as the Lord their God had commanded them, they came to Kadeshbarnea at which point they were actually on the borders of the land of Canaan. We would almost have expected to see them breaking their ranks to see who could be the first to enter into the Land of Promise, just as in the olden days a company of Crusaders, when they came near to the City of Jerusalem and saw stretching out before them the object of their hopes and endeavors, some fell upon their faces, others fell upon their knees, some began to pray, and some to weep, until finally at the signal from their leader, every man sprang to his feet and shouted three times, "Jerusalem! Jerusalem! City of the King! City of the King!" And then they broke their ranks to see which of them could be the first to enter into the city.

We would have expected this of the children of Israel. They had endured so many days of wandering and so many years of oppression, that you would have thought they would have hailed with delight the land of freedom. But instead they called twelve spies, and sent them across the border to look over the land and make a report to them. They awaited their return with impatience, and when they came they said that Canaan was a marvelous country; the people dwelt in cities with high walls; they were giants in size and in strength. They said it was a most fruitful country, and they bore with them the famous grapes of Eschol to prove their statement. Ten of the spies said, "Let us not go over," but two of them, Caleb and Joshua by

name, said, "What if the walls be high and the men be strong and the outlook discouraging? The Lord Jehovah is our God, and with Him we shall win the victory."

Instead of listening to the two spies, they took the counsel of the ten. They turned back to their wanderings; they fell by the wayside; they were buried in the wilderness; and not one of them over twenty years of age, with the possible exception of the tribe of Levi, and certainly with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, ever saw the land of Canaan again.

Their sojourn at Kadesh-barnea for them was the time of crisis. Before them was rest, and for years they had been strangers to it. In the Promised Land there was fruit, while Egypt had given them nothing but leeks and garlic and onions. That is just the difference between the Christian's living in Egypt and in Canaan. Before them in the land of Canaan was communion and fellowship with God; they had no altar in Egypt, and they dared not erect one. If they had gone into Canaan, their communion would have been so perfect that they would almost have seen God face to face. Behind them was the wilderness. We can hardly appreciate what these wilderness wanderings were until we read the ninety-first Psalm, written by Moses during the wilderness experience:

"Surely He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence... Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee... Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet..."

Reading this, you will have only the faintest conception as to what the children of Israel chose in preference to rest and communion with God.

We have had our Kadesh-barnea in the past. We have perhaps reached it in the death of a loved one, when God has seemed to call us out of the old life of selfishness and carnal experience into the new life of spiritual power; but many a person has heard God's voice in affliction only to harden his heart, while the Scriptures declare that whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth.

Some of us came to Kadesh-barnea at the time of a great revival. I have in mind now a young man, who in one of the meetings at J..., in the state of Illinois, was thoroughly converted, and at once began to search his heart to see if he was in the position that God wanted him to occupy. He was a young man of large means, and had devoted himself to the occupation of stock farming, and had in his possession several thousand acres of the best land of the state. Fortune seemed to smile upon him in everything that he did. But on the day of his conversion God turned his face away from the farm and gave him a longing for the ministry. For some time he was undecided, but at last he gave up his business and returned to college to take his senior year, which he had previously neglected to take. During the year he devoted himself to the most earnest Christian service. He was thrown in contact with some student volunteers, and for the first time God began to press upon him the work of a foreign missionary; but to go to the foreign field meant the breaking of some very tenderest of ties, and the sacrifice of a palatial home, and the giving up of what men count dear to themselves.

It was his Kadesh-barnea. Canaan seemed to be before him, and the wilderness was behind. For a little time he hesitated, and then at last he boldly declared himself for Christ, put his all upon the altar, and determined to go to China. When once the question had been settled, he became restless as he thought of the thousands of souls dying without Christ, and so while he pursues his studies in this country he has

placed in the control of a foreign missionary society sufficient funds to keep a worker in the place he one day hopes to occupy.

No words can describe the joy that fills his soul to-day. His face is radiant. His peace flows like a river. God has undoubtedly equipped him with wonderful power over other men. He came to Kadesh-barnea and when others would have thought the sacrifice was too great to make, he made it with joy, and God has verified His promise unto him as found in Mark, tenth chapter, verses twenty-nine and thirty:

"Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."

Some reach Kadesh-barnea in the progress of a Bible conference. I do not know but that I did myself. For five years I had struggled against what I believed was God's plan for my life, but to walk in the way He had marked out was to change all the plans of my student life and my early ministerial career; it was to give up the things I had worked for years to obtain; and the fact is, I was unwilling to do it. The sacrifice was too great in my estimation, and the returns would be too small. No words can describe the unrest that filled my soul. At last one day I was sitting in my home in the country, reading the account of Mr. Meyer's address at the Northfield Conference, when my eye lighted upon this expression:

"If you are not willing to forsake everything for God, then are you ready to say, 'I am willing to be made willing?'"

That seems a very simple sentence when put into words, but it was for me a star of hope in what was midnight darkness. I felt that I could say that, and upon my knees I whispered:

"I am willing to be made willing."

In less time than I am taking to write it, God lifted the cloud that had been before me for years. He removed the mountain over which it seemed impossible for me to pass, and suddenly the way became bright with glory, and the first step taken, the next became a delight, and no words can describe the joy and the peace which have been mine since the first step was taken.

There are just two things to do when one reaches Kadesh-barnea. The first is to go back to the wilderness. And what will this mean? For Israel it meant fighting and failure, it meant lusting for that which it was not right for them to have. It meant idolatry; it meant murmuring against God.

Some one who is reading this may have come to Kadesh-barnea, and is not ready to step over the line into the Canaan of blessedness. Reader, if you should turn back, what would the wilderness mean for you? It would mean an up-and-down, hot-and-cold Christian experience. It would mean that to-day you will be in fellowship with Christ, and to-morrow you will doubtless question if you have been converted. To-day you will be so near to Him that you feel as if you can reach out your hand and touch Him, and to-morrow you will follow Him afar off, and as a result of it you will deny Him. It would mean to-day a willingness on your part to do anything He might call you to do, either to live for Him or to die for Him, and to-morrow you rebel at the least suggestion of service. It would mean that instead of being a spiritual Christian you would be a carnal Christian, and if you are a carnal believer, Paul says that first of all you are a babe, and then you are filled with envy, and then you are engaged in strife. All of which must be most unsatisfactory.

In a recent address delivered at Northfield the Rev. C. I. Scofield, D. D., made the following suggestion as to a wilderness life for a Christian. He says: "There is a proper wilderness experience, and it is sometimes necessary that a child of God shall learn to depend upon God, shall learn by an experience which may be bitter as at Marah or blessed as at Elim, that all his springs must be found in God. This is a young convert's experience, and a proper wilderness experience. But it loses its propriety from the very day of arrival at Kadesh-barnea. A wilderness experience after we have looked over into the land, is but one prolonged disobedience.

What is it to be in the Wilderness After Kadesh-Barnea?

"The marks of it are, first of all, restlessness. In the wilderness the children of Israel wandered about. They had no abiding-place. The camp might be in some beautiful oasis, and it may well have been in the hearts of the people to remain there under the shade of the palm trees, and by the ever-flowing fountains of water. But in the wilderness this was never possible. Before long the pillar-cloud lifted, and then the tents must be folded and the weary journey resumed. There are no restful Christians in the wilderness. Happy moments come, indeed, but they do not stay.

"The second mark of the wilderness experience is discontent. The children of Israel murmured in the wilderness. They found the way hard, and they said so. They murmured against God and against Moses. They wished themselves back in Egypt. They thought regretfully of the flesh-pots of Egypt, and ceased to have any appetite for the manna which fell from Heaven. They said to Moses, 'Our soul loatheth this light bread. Just a wilderness Christians have no relish for the simple things of Christ, 'the sincere milk of the Word.'

"The third mark of a wilderness experience is fruitlessness. The children of Israel fought in the wilderness, but they got nothing by it but the right of way for the day's march. How different the conflicts after Israel entered the land! Then a victory meant possession.

"The fourth mark of a wilderness experience is that it is negative. The Israelites in the wilderness were not doing Egyptian things. Here is just where we find the majority of the people of God. With all the prevailing worldliness of our day, and conceding, as I do, that the old line of demarcation between the Church and the world is very much effaced; fully aware that there is a broad border land where one can hardly distinguish Church from world, I yet do not believe that the great majority of the real people of God in the world to-day are doing Egyptian things. The difficulty is that they are living in a poor, negative experience of not doing things. They do not dance, they do not play cards, they do not attend theaters; but when you inquire for the positive and aggressive side of their Christian lives, it is absent. They are simply negative.

"And another thing we need to see about that wilderness. It had two borders. There was the Egyptian side of the wilderness, and the Canaan side. A Christian lingering on the Egyptian side of the wilderness is peculiarly discontented, and in him may be found all the marks of the wilderness experience. He is continually looking over into Egypt, and wishing he might have liberty to do Egyptian things. It is on this side of the wilderness that the backsliding takes place. There is a story of a little girl who often fell out of bed, and who was finally asked by her mother to think why she was always falling out of bed. After a period of reflection, she answered, 'I think it is because I go to sleep too near where I get in.' That is just the trouble with the great majority of Christians. They do come out of the grosser forms of worldliness, but they linger so near the borders of the world that they are always rather longing to go back into the old things, and not infrequently they do slip back.

"Then there is the Canaan side of the wilderness. That is Kadesh-barnea. It is the place where weary Christians, after an experience of wilderness wandering which has made them heartsick, stand and look over into a better experience. You know how this comes. Perhaps some day you took your Bible when you were tired, so tired of unrest and sin and defeat, and you read there the great words of the Apostle Paul: 'The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death,' and you say, 'Oh that that might be true of me!' Then perhaps you read in Galatians that other great word of his, 'I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.' And again you groan and sigh and say, 'Oh that this were true of me!' Then perhaps you come to the great decisive verse, the first verse of the twelfth chapter of Romans, 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.' And there, just there, you are at Kadesh-barnea! It may be that sometime you have heard from the lips of some servant of the Lord strong testimony concerning an experience of rest and victory and possession here in this troubled world, and again for a moment you have been at Kadesh-barnea, and looked over into that good land, and wished, oh! so fervently, that you might be there too. Possibly sometime you have met some tranquil saint, peaceful, restful, poor perhaps in things of this world, the body racked by pain possibly, but with a great content in the heart; and you have said, 'There is something I am a stranger to.' The late Reginald Radcliffe, of Liverpool, told me that walking down a London street one day with the Rev. William Pennefather, of blessed memory, a sturdy beggar approached them. He looked for one moment into the shrewd face of Radcliffe, the able Liverpool lawyer, and then into the face of William Pennefather, and without a moment's hesitation he approached the latter, and said, 'Oh, man with Heaven in your face, give me a penny!' Maybe you have met some one with Heaven in his face, and you have longed to have Heaven in your face too; and then you were at Kadesh-barnea, just on the border land."

The thing for us to do, if we have reached Kadesh-barnea, is to cross over the line.

We have been told something of the beauty of the original Canaan, and that the land literally flowed with milk and with honey. The Bible gives us glimpses of its fruitfulness. "And they turned and went up into the mountain, and came unto the valley of Eshcol, and searched it out. And they took of the fruit of the land in their hands, and brought it down unto us, and brought us word again, and said, It is a good land which the LORD our God doth give us" (Deut.1:24,25).

So let us send spies over into the Spiritual Canaan, that we may learn of that as a dwelling place. Moses must have had it in mind when he said: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Psalm 91:1). And Paul must have thought of it when he said so much to the Ephesians about the heavenly places; and Jesus must have been teaching about it when He said: "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

The fact is, every description of the Christian life, as God intended we should live it, makes it a life of blessedness and glory, but the spies must also find out for us if it is a land of fruitfulness. This we learn to be true when we read: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22,23).

You should bear in mind that the expression is not the fruits of the Spirit, but fruit: and it is never to be forgotten that we may have all of these blessings if we are but living as God intended we should live. Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance.

It is not possible for me to take up all these different blessings at this time, but we may consider briefly two or three.

Meekness is not, as some have supposed, lifelessness, but the word "meekness" as used in the Bible is the same Greek word that is used in Xenophon's "Anabasis" for the training of horses; and the Scripture idea of a meek man is a tamed man. If this be true, it is not discouraging if one has a fiery temper or a miserable disposition.

A fiery temper is a good thing if it is controlled, instead of controlling us. It is like the steam in an engine. It really serves to send us on to greater victories. Oh, the blessedness of putting all that we have into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, both to keep and control, to be tamed by Him!

It is not an easy thing to define peace. Webb-Peploe says that to his mind the best way to define it is to take its opposite, and contrast it with peace. It is the opposite of unrest, or confusion, or strife. Jesus certainly spake the truth when He said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." It is not a peace like His, nor the peace between us and God which He had purchased with His blood, but His own peace; and the fact is, it has been waiting for us ever since we were converted, but we have never entered upon its possession by crossing over from Kadesh-barnea into Canaan.

It is also a difficult thing to define love. As a part of the fruit of the Spirit, it is not ordinary human affection; it is as far beyond it as the day is brighter than the night. It is the same in kind as that which filled the heart of God, as that which impelled the Son of God to die for us, and still impels Him to make intercession for us.

All this, and more, we would have if we had but crossed over into Canaan.

When the spies returned from Canaan and made their report to the children of Israel, they declared that there were giants there of such stature that they themselves were only like grasshoppers for smallness. I am well aware that this expression typically refers to the enemies which one meets even in the spiritual Canaan, and which Paul had in his mind when he said (Ephesians 6:12):

"We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

But it is also true that the people who dwell in Canaan are always giants in their power both Godward and man-ward. This is the place where Mr. Spurgeon dwelt in sweet fellowship with his Divine Lord. This is the land in which George Müller abides, and where he has learned so perfectly the will of God concerning him, that God never seems to say "no" to his requests; for George Müller never asks for anything but that which is in accordance with God's plan for him. This is the place where Mr. Moody dwells, and if men say that the secret of his power is not in his sermons or in his manner of delivery, then I would make reply it is in the very life of the man, in the atmosphere that surrounds him. This is the land where Hudson Taylor abides, and it is here we find the secret of the China Inland Mission. God never seems to refuse Hudson Taylor either money or men.

I one day said to Dr. McCarthy, who represents him in this country:

"Can you tell me the secret of Hudson Taylor's power?"

He made quick response that he believed it was to be largely found in this: Missionaries in China are constantly surrounded during the day by the Chinese people, so they have little time for communion with God, or for the study of His word. To overcome this difficulty, Hudson Taylor acquired the habit of rising every morning between two and three o'clock, and going alone into his room, turning the key in the door, and spending the entire time in communion and fellowship with Christ. Sometimes he would sit for a whole hour without saying a word; at other times he would be upon his knees in prayer; on other occasions he would be engaged in poring over the pages of the Bible. But sometimes he would sit with closed Bible and folded hands and open eyes, looking upward apparently into the very face of God, and saying over and over again the name of Jesus Christ.

"Sweetest name on mortal tongue,

Sweetest note of seraph's song,

Sweetest carol ever sung,

Jesus! Blessed Jesus!"

Have you ever tried this? if not, test it to-day, and you will have come to you an experience which is only granted to those who live in Canaan. I do not know that there is a better explanation of the way we may enter into Canaan than that given by Dr. Scofield in his Northfield address, "Kadesh-barnea, and Beyond," from which I now quote:

"Now it would be a poor service to you for me to leave you here. If you are indeed at Kadeshbarnea. if there is in your heart a sincere longing to enter now into this Canaan experience you will ask of me how, practically this may be done. I believe there are four steps which must be taken by any who would know what it is habitually to have 'the days of heaven on earth,' in their Christian life.

"First, see in the Word of God that He has provided some better things for you than to wander in the wilderness of failure and discontent and doubt; that there is possible for you what has been realized in countless other lives -- a present enjoyment of victory over known sin, of the realization of all the great promises of the Bible, and of rest from disquieting doubt and anxiety and care. See that in the Word of God.

"Secondly, see that by efforts to keep the Law you can never enter this experience, that the utmost which the Law can do for a saint is to show him his need -- to place before him an ideal to which he has not attained, and in his own effort can never attain.

"Thirdly, see that there is power in Jesus Christ to give you this experience. It is your conversion over again, and in a very real sense. As a sinner you came to the Lord Jesus, because He alone had the Words of eternal life. There was none other who could possibly take away the guilt of your sin and give you eternal life. You could not gain it for yourself; you could not blot out your own transgressions; you were perfectly helpless. And the time came when you saw that, and trusted Him to do it all. Now, just as you came as a sinner to a crucified Christ, come as a weary saint to a risen and mighty Christ, and, remembering how you once knelt under the burden of your sins, kneel again under the burden of your failures as a Christian, of your doubts, of your anxieties, of your fears, of your defeats, of your weakness; and look to Him just as simply by faith to give you victory, and possession, and rest, as once you looked to Him by faith to give you pardon and peace. Cease utterly from any thought that you can by yourself, in

yourself, or of yourself, cross from Kadesh-barnea into the good land. Remember that Joshua only can lead you into that land and give 'you your inheritance in it; and cast yourself just as utterly upon Jesus for this blessedness as you did in the first coming to Him cast yourself upon Him for forgiveness.

"And fourthly, when you have done that, then say by faith, 'Now I am in the land. He has given me my possession.' Just here is the point of failure, I am persuaded, in countless earnest efforts to have the life more abundant. So many take the first three steps of which I have spoken; they see in the Word the promise of a better experience, they learn by bitter failure that the Law can never make them perfect, and they believe that Jesus Christ can, as a gift of His power, bestow that which they desire; but they never take the fourth step, and say, 'I now, by faith, take this life of victory, this place of rest, and possession, and joy, and fruitfulness.'

"Will you not take these four steps to-day, if you have not already done so? For some of you are seeing in Jesus a full answer to all your need in this respect. Will you not now, in simplicity of faith, and without waiting for any feeling whatever, simply say, 'Lord Jesus, as I once took Thee as my Savior from the guilt of sin, I now take Thee as my Deliverer from the power of sin, and enter into the possession of my inheritance in Thee'? And just as surely as the joy of salvation followed that decision of yours, when as a sinner you came to Christ, just so the experiences proper to the new life of victory will, moment by moment, be yours if you take this second step of faith."

There are certain reasons why it would be best for us all to-day to enter in. This may be God's last call to you to enter upon the enjoyment of this life of privilege. This was true of all the children of Israel beyond a certain age, for when they realized what they had missed in failing to take advantage of God's opportunity, we find them saying to Moses (Deuteronomy 1:41-46):

"Then ye answered and said unto me, We have sinned against the LORD, we will go up and fight, according to all that the LORD our God commanded us. And when ye had girded on every man his weapons of war, ye were ready to go up into the hill. And the LORD said unto me, Say unto them, Go not up, neither fight; for I am not among you; lest ye be smitten before your enemies. So I spake unto you; and ye would not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the LORD, and went presumptuously up into the hill. And the Amorites, which dwelt in that mountain, came out against you, and chased you, as bees do, and destroyed you in Seir, even unto Hormah. And ye returned and wept before the LORD; but the LORD would not hearken to your voice, nor give ear unto you. So ye abode in Kadesh many days, according unto the days that ye abode there."

Some one will read this book only to say: "I am very sure there is such a life of blessing. I am quite sure that I have not entered upon it. I am perfectly confident that God intends that I should do so, and I am fully determined some day to do it -- but not now"; and you may turn away for the last time. It is not a question of life with you, but a question of blessing. You will remember how Moses came to Pisgah (Deuteronomy 32:49-52):

"Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession: And die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people; as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people: Because ye trespassed against Me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah-Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because ye sanctified Me not in the midst of the children of Israel. Yet thou shalt see the land before thee; but thou shalt not go thither unto the land

which I give the children of Israel."

It would be best for us to enter in to-day because if we fail to do so we may be keeping some one else out who has a right to go in. Caleb and Joshua had a perfect right to enter into Canaan directly from Kadesh-barnea, but the failure of the children of Israel put a barrier in their way. If I fail to go in, I may keep out the members of my family or the people in my church, and the responsibility of their failure may rest heavily upon me. It has been said in the pages that precede this, that there may be four steps into Canaan, but in reality the whole question is so easy of settlement that we have just to take one step, and that is to surrender the will. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land."

If you should find it impossible to submit your will to God in everything, then it may be that Mr. Meyer's very significant expression may prove a star of hope to you in your darkness and despair. If you are not willing to submit everything, then (he has said) offer this prayer, "Lord, I am willing to be made willing about everything"; and the victory will be yours.

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