

# Joshua 14-15:19 • Caleb the Overcomer

## Introduction

This study is organized differently in that it's really a character study of Caleb and the type of believer he represents. He is one of the true role models of faith in that it's mentioned six times in Scripture that he "wholly followed the LORD" (Num. 14:24; 32:12; Dt. 1:36; Joshua 14:8-9, 14) Caleb fully meets the apostle John's definition of an "overcomer":

*For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.*

1 John 5:4

*Caleb is an example of someone wholly surrendered to the Lord and in full obedience to His Word whose spiritual history serves as a model for our own journey of sanctification.*

<sup>1</sup>Now these are the territories which the sons of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the households of the tribes of the sons of Israel apportioned to them for an inheritance, <sup>2</sup>by the lot of their inheritance, as the LORD commanded through Moses, for the nine tribes and the half-tribe. <sup>3</sup>For Moses had given the inheritance of the two tribes and the half-tribe beyond the Jordan; but he did not give an inheritance to the Levites among them. <sup>4</sup>For the sons of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim, and they did not give a portion to the Levites in the land, except cities to live in, with their pasture lands for their livestock and for their property. <sup>5</sup>Thus the sons of Israel did just as the LORD had commanded Moses, and they divided the land.

<sup>6</sup>Then the sons of Judah drew near to Joshua in Gilgal, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, "You know the word which the LORD spoke to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh-barnea. <sup>7</sup>I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land, and I brought word back to him as it was in my heart. <sup>8</sup>Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt with fear; but I followed the LORD my God fully. <sup>9</sup>So Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land on which your foot has trodden will be an inheritance to you and to your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God fully.'

<sup>10</sup>"Now behold, the LORD has let me live, just as He spoke, these forty-five

## [Read 14-15:19]

### Stage One: Caleb the Sufferer

#### Q: When and where was Caleb born?

A: Caleb would have been born in Egypt while Israel was still slaves in captivity.

#### Q: Why do some scholars believe Caleb might have been of mixed parentage?

A: The name "Caleb" literally means "dog", which is a sometimes a term used derogatorily to refer to Gentiles. Furthermore, the fact that he's referred to as a "Kenezite" might indicate he had a Gentile father and a Jewish mother.

#### Q: What will be ironic about his ultimate influence on the bloodlines of not just Israel in general, but the tribe of Judah specifically?

A: According to the genealogy in 1 Chronicles 2, Caleb will be a direct ancestor of Christ the Messiah Himself.

**Point:** Like Caleb we all began life in slavery and with a heritage undeserving of any earthly blessing. God's working through Caleb represents the dual picture of God's grace and salvation for whoever repents and responds to God's Word.

#### Q: How was Caleb redeemed by God?

A: As an Israelite freed from Egypt, Caleb was redeemed by the blood of the Passover lamb (a shadow of the work of the cross to come), delivered from Egypt (a picture of being saved from the old life), and provided an inheritance in Canaan (representing the promise to every believer).

**Point:** Caleb would not have received an inheritance under Joshua if he had not first experienced redemption under Moses.

### Stage Two: Caleb the Defender

#### Q: In which of Israel's post-Egypt rebellions is Caleb prominently mentioned?

A: The rebellion at Kadesh-Barnea documented in Numbers 13-14.

years, from the time that the LORD spoke this word to Moses, when Israel walked in the wilderness; and now behold, I am eighty-five years old today <sup>11</sup>I am still as strong today as I was in the day Moses sent me; as my strength was then, so my strength is now, for war and for going out and coming in. <sup>12</sup>Now then, give me this hill country about which the LORD spoke on that day, for you heard on that day that Anakim were there, with great fortified cities; perhaps the LORD will be with me, and I will drive them out as the LORD has spoken.”

<sup>13</sup>So Joshua blessed him and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for an inheritance. <sup>14</sup>Therefore, Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite until this day, because he followed the LORD God of Israel fully.

<sup>15</sup>Now the name of Hebron was formerly Kiriath-arba; for Arba was the greatest man among the Anakim. Then the land had rest from war.

<sup>1</sup>Now the lot for the tribe of the sons of Judah according to their families reached the border of Edom, southward to the wilderness of Zin at the extreme south. <sup>2</sup>Their south border was from the lower end of the Salt Sea, from the bay that turns to the south. <sup>3</sup>Then it proceeded southward to the ascent of Akkrabbim and continued to Zin, then went up by the south of Kadesh-barnea and continued to Hezron, and went up to Addar and turned about to Karka. <sup>4</sup>It continued to Azmon and proceeded to the brook of Egypt, and the border ended at the sea. This shall be your south border.

<sup>5</sup>The east border was the Salt Sea, as far as the mouth of the Jordan.

And the border of the north side was from the bay of the sea at the mouth of the Jordan. <sup>6</sup>Then the border went up to Beth-hoglah, and continued on the north of Beth-arabah, and the border went up to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben. <sup>7</sup>The border went up to Debir from the valley of Achor, and turned northward toward Gilgal which is opposite the ascent of Adummim, which is on the south of the valley; and the border continued to the waters of En-shemesh and it ended at En-rogel. <sup>8</sup>Then the border went up the valley of Ben-hinnom to the slope of the Jebusite on the south (that is,

**Q: How would you summarize the problem at Kadesh-Barnea?**

A: Israel had been out of Egypt about 2 years when it arrived at the entrance to Canaan where, instead of taking God at His Word and proceeding to possess their inheritance, they instead asked for a report from twelve spies. (Dt. 1:2) Instead of receiving the good report from Caleb and Joshua, Israel choose instead to accept the bad report of the other ten spies and allowed fear to overcome their faith.

**Q: How would you contrast Caleb and Joshua at Kadesh-Barnea with the others?**

1. The ten spies despised the land (Num. 14:36); Caleb and Joshua delighted in the land.
2. The nation wanted to go back; the two wanted to go ahead.
3. The majority was walking by sight; the minority was walking by faith.
4. The rebellious saw only the obstacles and problems; the faithful saw the opportunities and prospects.
5. Others?

**Q: What did these difference ultimately result in?**

A: The unbelieving generation died in the wilderness, but Caleb and Joshua lived to enter and possess their inheritance in the Promised Land.

*For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.*

*Romans 8:5*

**Application:** While it's true that at times in life Christians will have to make a stand against the world and the evil workings of Satan its master, there may be times when they have to stand in their faith against the majority **WITHIN** the church, to stand for God even among those claiming to believe in Him.

**Stage Three: Caleb the Wanderer**

**Q: What was Caleb's situation now that Israel failed the test of faith at Kadesh-Barnea?**

A: Although Caleb did not die in the wilderness, he still had to go through the 40 years of suffering and wandering experienced by the whole nation during that time.

**Q: What might it have been like during those 40 years for a man of faith? What would he had to have endured?**

1. Every day he witnessed the death of those who, because of their unfaithfulness, would miss out on their inheritance.
2. He had to endure their continued grumbling and complaining, compounded by the fact that they had not learned the right lessons from their disobedience.
3. As a man of faith he had to endure people with a complete lack of faith.
4. As a supporter of Moses he had to endure all those who opposed Moses.
5. Others?

**Q: So how do you suppose Caleb was able to maintain the quality of his spiritual walk when surrounded by so much worldly unbelief and faithlessness?**

A: As stated in Joshua 14:9-12, Caleb had been given the promise of a wonderful inheritance by God.

Jerusalem); and the border went up to the top of the mountain which is before the valley of Hinnom to the west, which is at the end of the valley of Rephaim toward the north. <sup>9</sup>From the top of the mountain the border curved to the spring of the waters of Nephtoah and proceeded to the cities of Mount Ephron, then the border curved to Baalah (that is, Kiriath-jearim).

<sup>10</sup>The border turned about from Baalah westward to Mount Seir, and continued to the slope of Mount Jearim on the north (that is, Chesalon), and went down to Beth-shemesh and continued through Timnah. <sup>11</sup>The border proceeded to the side of Ekron northward. Then the border curved to Shikkeron and continued to Mount Baalah and proceeded to Jabneel, and the border ended at the sea. <sup>12</sup>The west border was at the Great Sea, even its coastline. This is the border around the sons of Judah according to their families.

<sup>13</sup>Now he gave to Caleb the son of Jephunneh a portion among the sons of Judah, according to the command of the Lord to Joshua, namely, Kiriath-arba, Arba being the father of Anak (that is, Hebron). <sup>14</sup>Caleb drove out from there the three sons of Anak: Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmai, the children of Anak. <sup>15</sup>Then he went up from there against the inhabitants of Debir; now the name of Debir formerly was Kiriath-sepher. <sup>16</sup>And Caleb said, "The one who attacks Kiriath-sepher and captures it, I will give him Achsah my daughter as a wife." <sup>17</sup>Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, captured it; so he gave him Achsah his daughter as a wife.

<sup>18</sup>It came about that when she came to him, she persuaded him to ask her father for a field. So she alighted from the donkey, and Caleb said to her, "What do you want?"

<sup>19</sup>Then she said, "Give me a blessing; since you have given me the land of the Negev, give me also springs of water." So he gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

**Point:** *Although his body was in the wilderness, so to speak, his heart and mind and soul were in Canaan. Caleb is a perfect illustration of Paul's teaching in Colossians 3:1-4...*

*Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.*

*We might even say that Caleb possessed what Paul refers to in Romans 8:6 as "the spiritual mind"...*

*For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,*

**Q: So how might we summarize the source of Caleb's faith?**

1. Caleb knew that regardless of the circumstances in the wilderness, he did not have to fear death.
2. Caleb's attention was forward-focused on the promised inheritance to come.
3. Caleb trusted that God would not fail him.

**Application:** *The argument could easily be made that as New Testament Christians we have even more in Christ than Caleb as an Old Testament believer had, and therefore have even **LESS** of an excuse to live by faith*

## **Stage Four: Caleb the Conqueror**

**Q: So what is Joshua actually doing in chapters 14-15?**

A: He's giving each tribe their special inheritance.

**Q: And how does Caleb claim his share of the inheritance?**

A: Caleb reminds Joshua of God's promise. (14:6-9)

**Point:** *It is only on the basis of God's Word that we can claim our blessings.*

**Q: What testimony does Caleb give in support of his reminder to Joshua?**

A: In 14:10-11 Caleb testifies of the physical strength and conditioning God has provided. It's an allusion to the equally powerful spiritual strength which faith has produced.

**Point:** *The person of true "strength" is actually the person with biblical faith.*

**Q: Why should Caleb serve as an example that we are all fit and able to serve the Lord regardless of our age?**

A: At this time Caleb would have been 85 years old. It's a teaching that spiritual age is always much more important than chronological age and no excuse for shrinking from engaging in the work of the kingdom.

**Q: So why was Caleb ultimately successful?**

A: His physical capabilities mirrored his spiritual condition. Caleb had faith that what God promised, God was able to deliver.

*yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.*

*Romans 4:20-21*

**Q: What is particularly ironic about Caleb's victory in the Promised Land?**

A: Caleb overcame the very giants which frightened away the majority of Israelites in the first place.

**Point:** *Unbelief looks at the giants; faith looks to God. Faith is often the suspension of man's "common sense" in favor of wholly resting on God's Word alone.*

**Q: What is historically significant about Caleb's nephew Othniel?**

A: Exhibiting the same spirit of faith as Caleb, Othniel will eventually become Israel's first judge (Judges 3:9) and carry on the family tradition of faith and leadership.

**Q: What do you suppose is the underlying spiritual representation of Caleb's daughter's request of an additional blessing?**

A: A dry, arid land without water would not be a very useful or productive inheritance. The underlying principle is that we need to continually come in faith to God who will provide everything necessary to complete the work of faith in our life. As water in Scripture typifies the work of the Holy Spirit by the washing of the Word, this is an illustration of faith continuing to work according to God's Word and ways.

## **Epilogue**

*What a difference it makes when a believer "wholly follows the Lord" and exercise their faith in God's Word. In Caleb's life...*

- *He was redeemed by the blood of the lamb and overcame the old life in Egypt.*
- *He took God at His Word and overcame the unbelief of the majority in the wilderness.*
- *He acted on faith and overcame the enemy to not only obtain an inheritance for himself but for his heirs to come.*

*Caleb conquered with physical weapons to claim a physical inheritance; we conquer with spiritual weapons to claim a spiritual inheritance in Christ.*

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,*

*Ephesians 1:3*

*As New Testament believers...*

- *We are to overcome the world. (1 John 5:5)*
- *We are to overcome false doctrines. (1 John 4:1-4)*
- *We are to overcome the wicked one. (1 John 2:13-14)*

*Christ has already overcome Satan (Lk. 11:21-22) and the world (Jn. 16:33), so we need only to claim His victory by faith. The final message of Christ to believers in the church age is a series of promises to those who overcome in His*

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letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3. In fact, near the end of Revelation we are reminded...

*“He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.*

*Revelation 21:7*

*In order to overcome as Caleb did...*

- *We must be wholly yielded to the Lord.*
- *We must know and believe God’s promises.*
- *We must keep our heart and mind fixed on our inheritance.*
- *We must depend on God to give the victory.*