

IX. THE CRISIS AT KADESH-BARNEA. xiii. 1-xiv.45

This section describes the great turning point of the entire wilderness journey. Here Israel proved its unreadiness to enter the Promised Land, and a whole generation was doomed to die in the wilderness. Moses' expectation of soon entering Canaan was rudely shattered, and the prospect of forty years of wilderness life was substituted. It is one of the most dramatic sections of the Scriptures, and one of the richest in spiritual lessons.

Before examining the section in detail, we must consider the critical view which claims that Nu.xiii and xiv can be broken up into two distinct accounts, each complete in itself, but contradicting the other at various points. It should be noted that in the narrative as it stands the progress of events is quite natural and easy to follow. It is true that a number of ideas are stated more than once. This, however, is frequently due to repetition for emphasis, which is common in most parts of the Bible, and in most other literature as well, particularly when, as here, the situation involves the presentation of the differing opinions of various people. In all such situations, vital ideas commonly find expression more than once. Thus stress is laid on the strength of the Canaanites in xiii.28,31, 32,33,xiv.3,43 and 45. The goodness of the land is emphasized in xiii.27,xiv.7 and 8. The Lord's decision that all of that generation must die in the wilderness is stressed in xiv.23,29,30,33 and 35. It is easy to assign one occurrence of an idea to one alleged source, and another occurrence to the other; but after this is done it is frequently the case that there are still two or more repetitions of certain ideas in one or in both of the alleged separate accounts. A second cause of repetition is the common Hebrew practice of summarizing an event before describing it in detail. This is very frequent in the Bible (as well as in modern newspapers).

Proof that there is actually a composite account requires evidence not only that repetitions occur, since they are found in almost every writing, but that the