

Day 172 - WEDNESDAY: June 7th

Numbers 25

Numbers 25:1-18 NKJV

Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel. Then the LORD said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of the people and hang the offenders before the LORD, out in the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel." So Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baal of Peor." And indeed, one of the children of Israel came and presented to his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Now when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand; and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her body. So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel. And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand. Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal. Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace; and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.'" Now the name of the Israelite

who was killed, who was killed with the Midianite woman, was Zimri the son of Salu, a leader of a father's house among the Simeonites. And the name of the Midianite woman who was killed was Cozbi the daughter of Zur; he was head of the people of a father's house in Midian. Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Harass the Midianites, and attack them; for they harassed you with their schemes by which they seduced you in the matter of Peor and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a leader of Midian, their sister, who was killed in the day of the plague because of Peor."

Daily Deep Dive:

Here is the UCG reading plan for this chapter: "Israel's journey is basically over. They stand at Acacia Grove in Moab (Numbers 25:1), just across the Jordan River from the city of Jericho (Numbers 26:63). But what happens? Chapter 25 describes one of the most horrible episodes in the book of Numbers. How Israel here plunged headlong into such idolatry and sinfulness is almost inexplicable without looking elsewhere in the Scriptures. But when we do look elsewhere, we find that Balaam advised Balak to set a trap of sin for the Israelites so that God would curse His people: "Balaam...taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality" (Revelation 2:14). And just how was this accomplished? In Numbers 31, we will see more of the advice that Balaam gave to Balak: "Look, these [Midianite] women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the Lord in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord" (Numbers 31:15-16).

Balaam's plan worked. The women of Moab and its Midianite allies sexually enticed many of the Israelites to join with them in their sexually immoral idolatrous practices. This was likely presented as an offer of

national friendship and perhaps even a new way to worship God. Yet it was, in fact, flagrant rebellion against the true God. No doubt, temple prostitutes seduced Israelite men into sexual rites linked with their religious sacrifices to Baal or Chemosh, also known as Molech. Such worship often included human sacrifice—the word "cannibal" actually being derived from *Cahna-Bal*, meaning "the priest of Baal" (Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, 1959, p. 232). Thus, when the Israelites ate of the Moabite sacrifices (Numbers 25:2), they may have been participating in this ghastly practice. Psalm 106:28 says they ate "sacrifices offered to the dead," but the original King James is more literal in rendering this "sacrifices of the dead"—which, again, may imply human sacrifices. In any event, "this was not just another time of trouble, this was the most serious challenge yet. The people had been seduced into joining the worship of Baal. And it was Baal worship that they had been sent to Canaan to eliminate!" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on Numbers 25:4-5). God was infuriated, ordering Moses to execute every offender by hanging them in the sun till sunset (verse 4; Deuteronomy 21:23).

Zimri, an Israelite prince of Simeon, brazenly presented a princess of Midian, Cozbi, who was probably a temple prostitute, before Moses and the whole congregation. Although it is not entirely clear, it appears that they may have been performing their lewd rites in an open tent in full view of those at the door of the tabernacle of meeting! Aaron's grandson Phinehas, in impassioned zeal for God and righteous indignation, took a spear and drove it through the two. Shamefully, the idolatrous worship must have been rather widespread as the plague was stopped only after 24,000 people died. In terms of the death toll, this was an even worse disaster than the rebellion of Korah, wherein 14,700 died. God was pleased with the zealousness of Phinehas in executing judgment

(Numbers 25:11; Psalm 106:30) and gave the line of the priesthood to his descendants as an everlasting covenant of peace (verses 12-13). Following this terrible incident, God gives Moses instructions to "harass" the Midianites, that is, to engage them in battle as His vengeance on them. And this battle, which will be Moses' last, will be fought shortly—though it is not reported until chapter 31." [END]
Verse 3 – This is adultery against God.

Verse 18 – It's important that we learn from this chapter that both Satan and others want to see us fail and sin. Sometimes in this life, intentional traps and stumbling blocks are set before us hoping we fail. This life is hard enough, without others working against us, but this is the reality we face. Thankfully we have God's Holy Spirit to help us both discern and overcome. We should keep in mind that even though Israel was seduced by schemes, they were punished non the less. There are so many various schemes and traps laid out for us in this world and we must be constantly vigilant to identify and avoid them.