

## **Day 177 - MONDAY: June 12th**

### Numbers 31

Numbers 31:1-54 NKJV

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Take vengeance on the Midianites for the children of Israel. Afterward you shall be gathered to your people." So Moses spoke to the people, saying, "Arm some of yourselves for war, and let them go against the Midianites to take vengeance for the LORD on Midian. A thousand from each tribe of all the tribes of Israel you shall send to the war." So there were recruited from the divisions of Israel one thousand from each tribe, twelve thousand armed for war. Then Moses sent them to the war, one thousand from each tribe; he sent them to the war with Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, with the holy articles and the signal trumpets in his hand. And they warred against the Midianites, just as the LORD commanded Moses, and they killed all the males. They killed the kings of Midian with the rest of those who were killed—Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. Balaam the son of Beor they also killed with the sword. And the children of Israel took the women of Midian captive, with their little ones, and took as spoil all their cattle, all their flocks, and all their goods. They also burned with fire all the cities where they dwelt, and all their forts. And they took all the spoil and all the booty—of man and beast. Then they brought the captives, the booty, and the spoil to Moses, to Eleazar the priest, and to the congregation of the children of Israel, to the camp in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho. And Moses, Eleazar the priest, and all the leaders of the congregation, went to meet them outside the camp. But Moses was angry with the officers of the army, with the captains over thousands and

captains over hundreds, who had come from the battle. And Moses said to them: "Have you kept all the women alive? Look, these 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. Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known a man intimately. But keep alive for yourselves all the young girls who have not known a man intimately. And as for you, remain outside the camp seven days; whoever has killed any person, and whoever has touched any slain, purify yourselves and your captives on the third day and on the seventh day. Purify every garment, everything made of leather, everything woven of goats' hair, and everything made of wood." Then Eleazar the priest said to the men of war who had gone to the battle, "This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD commanded Moses: "Only the gold, the silver, the bronze, the iron, the tin, and the lead, everything that can endure fire, you shall put through the fire, and it shall be clean; and it shall be purified with the water of purification. But all that cannot endure fire you shall put through water. And you shall wash your clothes on the seventh day and be clean, and afterward you may come into the camp." Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Count up the plunder that was taken—of man and beast—you and Eleazar the priest and the chief fathers of the congregation; and divide the plunder into two parts, between those who took part in the war, who went out to battle, and all the congregation. And levy a tribute for the LORD on the men of war who went out to battle: one of every five hundred of the persons, the cattle, the donkeys, and the sheep; take it from their half, and give it to Eleazar the priest as a heave offering to the LORD. And from the children of Israel's half you shall take one of every fifty, drawn from the persons, the cattle, the donkeys, and the sheep, from all the livestock, and give them to the Levites who keep charge of the tabernacle of the

LORD." So Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the LORD commanded Moses. The booty remaining from the plunder, which the men of war had taken, was six hundred and seventy-five thousand sheep, seventy-two thousand cattle, sixty-one thousand donkeys, and thirty-two thousand persons in all, of women who had not known a man intimately. And the half, the portion for those who had gone out to war, was in number three hundred and thirty-seven thousand five hundred sheep; and the LORD's tribute of the sheep was six hundred and seventy-five. The cattle were thirty-six thousand, of which the LORD's tribute was seventy-two. The donkeys were thirty thousand five hundred, of which the LORD's tribute was sixty-one. The persons were sixteen thousand, of which the LORD's tribute was thirty-two persons. So Moses gave the tribute which was the LORD's heave offering to Eleazar the priest, as the LORD commanded Moses. And from the children of Israel's half, which Moses separated from the men who fought— now the half belonging to the congregation was three hundred and thirty-seven thousand five hundred sheep, thirty-six thousand cattle, thirty thousand five hundred donkeys, and sixteen thousand persons— and from the children of Israel's half Moses took one of every fifty, drawn from man and beast, and gave them to the Levites, who kept charge of the tabernacle of the LORD, as the LORD commanded Moses. Then the officers who were over thousands of the army, the captains of thousands and captains of hundreds, came near to Moses; and they said to Moses, "Your servants have taken a count of the men of war who are under our command, and not a man of us is missing. Therefore we have brought an offering for the LORD, what every man found of ornaments of gold: armlets and bracelets and signet rings and earrings and necklaces, to make atonement for ourselves before the LORD." So Moses and Eleazar the priest received the gold from them, all the fashioned ornaments. And all the gold of the offering that they offered to the LORD, from the captains of

thousands and captains of hundreds, was sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels. (The men of war had taken spoil, every man for himself.) And Moses and Eleazar the priest received the gold from the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and brought it into the tabernacle of meeting as a memorial for the children of Israel before the LORD.

### **Daily Deep Dive:**

The UCG reading programs brings out a number of interesting points to ponder as we begin today's reading: "As the last task to perform before Moses' death, God commands him to take vengeance on the Midianites because they, with the Moabites, deliberately set out to destroy the Israelites through their idolatrous religious practices. Furthermore, making a stark example of the Midianites in destroying them would serve as a deterrent to future apostasy. Incredibly, not a single Israelite dies in the war, moving their leaders to make a special offering. The officers over thousands, etc., come to Moses to make a voluntary offering to God to cover everything, an atonement offering (verses 48–50). God is with Israel in this righteous battle—signified by the fact that Phinehas also goes to war with the Ark of the Covenant and the two silver trumpets. It is God who gives them the victory.

Interestingly, verse 8 mentions that one of the men who was slain in the war was Zur. This Zur was apparently one of the instigators of the plot to bring false worship to Israel. Indeed, it was his daughter, Cozbi, that Zimri had brazenly paraded before the congregation of Israel before they were both slain by Phinehas (Numbers 25:14–15). In verse 9, we see the women of Midian taken captive in the wake of the battle. Moses, however, is incensed at this, as these are the same women who led Israel astray with the Moabites—and he commands that all but the virgins among them be put to death (verses 14–18). Besides their idolatrous practices, it is also possible that the promiscuous Midianites had sexually transmissible diseases that God wanted to keep out of Israel as well.

Verse 16 is the verse that actually explains what happened in the incident of Baal Peor. We learn that it was the "counsel of Balaam" that the Midianite women followed when they caused the children of Israel to sin against God, resulting in the plague that cost 24,000 lives. Without this explanation, readers of chapters 22–24 might give Balaam the benefit of the doubt, assuming him to have been a prophet who was following God's will. But note this: Balaam did not "die the death of the righteous," as he had so

eloquently prayed (Numbers 23:10). Rather, he died by the edge of the sword—being justly put to death along with the Midianites by the Israelites at God's command (verse 8). So just what lesson can we learn from Balaam? Notice this from the article on him in *The Complete Who's Who in the Bible*: “2 Peter 2:15, Jude 1:11 and Revelation 2:14 warn the NT people of God against allowing a smooth-talking pagan to capitalize on his knowledge in the form of religiosity and twist it to his own deadly end. A veneer of piety disguises the shallow convictions which can be bought for a price (Numbers 22:17) and superficial repentance (v. 34) which is short-lived. 2 Peter 2:15–16 views Balaam as a man of prophetic talent but with a desire to use the gifts of God to further his own ends. So, Peter warned of the danger of 'empty' words because they act as a cover for evil desires. The Christian must appreciate that such emptiness of heart will be exposed on judgment day (Jude 1:11). For the apostle John writing to the compromising church in Pergamum the worse sin is not actually that of self-deception, because that in the end will be exposed. Rather, Balaam's leading of Balak [and thus Israel] into further spiritual adultery is far worse. And so, the worst of judgments is saved for those who knowingly deceive

others. Like Balaam their sin eventually catches up with them (see Numbers 31:8, Joshua 13:22)" (Paul D. Gardner, ed., 1995)." [END]

Verse 20 – Things that could not be purified through fire, were purified through washing.

If you are struggling at all with this chapter, you may find reading verses 26 – 54 easier to read in either the NLT or ERV.