

JOURNEY #8: PIERCED

Numbers 25:1-18

NUMBERS: IT'S NOT ABOUT THE NUMBERS

- Bemidbar = in the desert of
- The desert was God's classroom / lab for the training and preparation of Israel for a great adventure.

- Paul explains that the passage we are studying today was written for our benefit.
- *Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. ...Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come (1 Corinthians 10:8,11).*

- Israel is going to reap the whirlwind.
- What happened to them poignantly illustrates how God views a breach of command 1.
- Loving God all in promotes our good because God is all good.
- Rejecting God means rejecting the source of our good. It's suicide.

- The adverse effect on Israel was immediate – because this is God’s showcase for C1 failure.
- It will happen on a global scale in the future, but right now God is operating from patience.
- *The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).*

- The incident we are considering this morning is a reality check for a world that is bent on defying God.
- For now, there is still time. We can learn from Israel’s example that “blended devotion” is toxic.
- And we can help those around us to love God alone who is the source of all good.

OUTLINE

- I. Background – When Balaam’s “Plan A” Backfired (Num. 22-24)
- II. Background – When Balaam’s “Plan B” Succeeded (Num. 25:1-3; Rev. 2:14)
- III. God’s Proposed Remedy (Num. 25:4-5)
- IV. The Response of Phinehas (Num. 25:6-9)

OUTLINE

- V. God’s Declaration Concerning Phinehas (Num. 25:10-13 / Ps 106:28-31)
- VI. God’s Declaration Concerning the Midianites (Num. 25:16-18)

Background – When Balaam's "Plan A" Backfired
(Num. 22-24)

- Israel arrived at the plains of Moab opposite Jericho. Last stop before crossing the Jordan.
- Balak, king of Moab, saw the hand-writing on the wall: *"Now this horde will lick up all that is around us, as the ox licks up the grass of the field."*
- "Prophets for Hire" – Uber Prophet – Balaam!

Background – When Balaam's "Plan A" Backfired
(Num. 22-24)

- *So he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor, saying, "Behold, a people came out of Egypt; behold, they cover the surface of the land, and they are living opposite me. Now, therefore, please come, curse this people for me since they are too mighty for me; perhaps I may be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land"* (Numbers 22:5–6).

- *"Blessed is everyone who blesses you, And cursed is everyone who curses you." Then Balak's anger burned against Balaam, and he struck his hands together; and Balak said to Balaam, "I called you to curse my enemies, but behold, you have persisted in blessing them these three times! Therefore, flee to your place now. I said I would honor you greatly, but behold, the Lord has held you back from honor" (Numbers 24:9–11).*

- *"Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do anything contrary to the command of the Lord, either good or bad, of my own accord. What the Lord speaks, that I will speak?" (Numbers 24:13).*
- Bottom Line: Balak's plan to curse Israel utterly failed. Balaam pronounced only blessing! This did not bode well for the Moabites / Midianites.

When Balaam's "Plan B" Succeeded (Num. 25:1-3)

- *While Israel remained at Shittim, the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab. For they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods (Numbers 25:1-2).*
- At first glance, this seems like an unrelated development. But Balaam was the "idea man."

- *Behold, these caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation of the Lord (Numbers 31:16).*
- At first glance, this seems like an unrelated development. But Balaam was the "idea man" behind a completely different strategy.

- Balaam became a poster child for a certain kind of spiritual attack that is even now deployed against Jesus' church.
- *"But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality" (Rev. 2:14).*

- Plan A involved convincing God to reject His people. Fail!
- Plan B involves manipulating the people into rejecting God for another. Success!
- Balaam advocated for "liberating religion." Encourage them to abandon God for a better god. Then God will get mad at them and curse them for you.

- Plan B started with an invitation: Hey, we're having a celebration. Why don't you come join us?
- The celebration was a meal and time of worship for Baal Peor.
- Women of Moab encouraged the men of Israel to celebrate Baal Peor through sexual intimacy.

- This is an attractively packaged worship of a different god.
- They had pledged themselves to total and exclusive allegiance to God. Now they are adding another god. Think of this as "God plus."
- This is one of Satan's primary strategies – to move us from God alone to God plus.

- *But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3).*
- Satan manipulates our thinking to oppose the simplicity of devotion to God alone.
- This is the Moabite strategy. And it is working!

God's Proposed Remedy (Num. 25:4-5)

- *The Lord said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of the people and execute them in broad daylight before the Lord, so that the fierce anger of the Lord may turn away from Israel." So Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Each of you slay his men who have joined themselves to Baal of Peor" (Numbers 25:4-5).*

God's Proposed Remedy (Num. 25:4-5)

- Men from Israel have replaced the God who has done them nothing but good with a false god.
- *I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your forefathers as the earliest fruit on the fig tree in its first season. But they came to Baal-peor and devoted themselves to shame, And they became as detestable as that which they loved* (Hosea 9:10).

God's Proposed Remedy (Num. 25:4-5)

- A plague broke out that killed 23,000.
- *Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day* (1 Corinthians 10:8).
- God's prescribed remedy for the plague involves atonement through death.

God's Proposed Remedy (Num. 25:4-5)

- Although all Israel was complicit, leadership failure was a contributing cause.
- So Israel is instructed to administer capital punishment upon complicit leadership.
- This forced the men of Israel to declare themselves, to choose a side. They were weeping!

The Response of Phinehas (Num. 25:6-9)

- *Then behold, one of the sons of Israel came and brought to his relatives a Midianite woman, in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the sons of Israel, while they were weeping at the doorway of the tent of meeting.*

The Response of Phinehas (Num. 25:6-9)

- *When Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he arose from the midst of the congregation and took a spear in his hand, and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and pierced both of them through, the man of Israel and the woman, through the body. So the plague on the sons of Israel was checked. Those who died by the plague were 24,000” (Numbers 25:6–9).*

The Response of Phinehas (Num. 25:6-9)

- Many are crying (presumably) because of the challenge of what has been asked them.
- God has told them the plague won't stop until atonement is made through the death of the perpetrators at their hands.
- The people are gathered at the “tent of meeting.”

The Response of Phinehas (Num. 25:6-9)

- In view of all, Zimri (from Israel) and Cozbi (from Midian) walk boldly to a nearby tent where they intend to worship Baal-Peor with their joined bodies.
- Up to this point, Israel's dalliances have been outside the camp.
- Zimri & Cozbi have brought idolatry home.

The Response of Phinehas (Num. 25:6-9)

- Phinehas saw the reality: This is about telling God to bug off and the minute we do that we are committing suicide! All Israel is at risk.
- So he sprang into action to comply with what God had told Israel to do.
- Language suggests they were pierced by the spear in the very act.

The Response of Phinehas (Num. 25:6-9)

- Phinehas was motivated by zeal for God.
- “God deserves better. We dare not hesitate to make sure He knows our hearts belong to Him alone.”
- And he instantly followed through with God’s command to execute the perpetrators of the worship of Baal-Peor.

The Response of Phinehas (Num. 25:6-9)

- The plague was checked!
- *The wicked flee when no one is pursuing, But the righteous are bold as a lion (Proverbs 28:1).*
- God found in one man with one heart for God alone the zeal that can stop a plague.

God’s Declaration Concerning Phinehas (Num. 25:10-13)

- *Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned away My wrath from the sons of Israel in that he was jealous with My jealousy among them, so that I did not destroy the sons of Israel in My jealousy.*

God’s Declaration Concerning Phinehas (Num. 25:10-13)

- *Therefore say, ‘Behold, I give him My covenant of peace; and it shall be for him and his descendants after him, a covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he was jealous for his God and made atonement for the sons of Israel!’” (Numbers 25:10–13).*

God's Declaration Concerning Phinehas (Num. 25:10-13)

- God is looking for people of zeal, people with shock and awe devotion to Him, people who are not just drifting with the prevailing winds, settling for compromise.
- He wants men and women who know how to put feet on their faith and take bold action.

God's Declaration Concerning Phinehas (Num. 25:10-13)

- *They joined themselves also to Baal-peor, And ate sacrifices offered to the dead. Thus they provoked Him to anger with their deeds, And the plague broke out among them. Then Phinehas stood up and interposed, And so the plague was stayed. And it was reckoned to him for righteousness, To all generations forever (Psalm 106:26–31).*

God's Declaration Concerning Phinehas (Num. 25:10-13)

- Right now, He is looking in this room for a Phineas.
- *“For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His” (2 Chronicles 16:9).*

God's Declaration Concerning Phinehas (Num. 25:10-13)

- Principle: All in for God = God with you.
- Who might God rescue through you?
- So what is God's competition in your life?
- Good opinion of others?
- Pleasing yourself?

**God's Declaration Concerning the Midianites
(Num. 25:16-18)**

- *Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Be hostile to the Midianites and strike them; for they have been hostile to you with their tricks, with which they have deceived you in the affair of Peor and in the affair of Cozbi, the daughter of the leader of Midian, their sister who was slain on the day of the plague because of Peor" (Numbers 25:16–18).*

**God's Declaration Concerning the Midianites
(Num. 25:16-18)**

- The Midianites are not your friends.
- They have been using a friendship strategy to work your harm. They have been using deceitful kisses.
- Teens: Are your friends drawing you closer to God? If not, they are not your friends.