

## Exegetical Notes, Numbers 25:1-17

### "The Seduction"

Prepared by Charles H. Jensen, Pastor, Cornerstone Fellowship

101 Kylies Road, Coatesville, PA 19320

610-384-1375

charleshjensen@aol.com

## Numbers 25:1-17

### Verses 1-3

*While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women,<sup>2</sup> who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate the sacrificial meal and bowed down before these gods.<sup>3</sup> So Israel yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor. And the LORD's anger burned against them.*

- During the time that Balaam, the sorcerer, was trying to curse Israel and was prevented by God from doing so, he was working an undercover plan to bring Israel down. He convinced the men of Moab to send their women into the Hebrew camp. These women flirted with the Hebrew soldiers and invited them to come to church with them. The men of Israel went with the Moabite women. They participated in the worship of the god, Baal, of Peor. They ate the sacrificial food offered to this god and participated in the sexual acts that were part of worshipping him. Thus, they ate forbidden food, bowed down to a false god, and "yoked" themselves to that god. That this was Balaam's plan to curse Israel is made clear in Numbers 31:16.
- Though Balaam's plan did not please the King of Moab, Israel's participation in it angered YHWH.

### Verse 4

*The LORD said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of these people, kill them and expose them in broad daylight before the LORD, so that the LORD's fierce anger may turn away from Israel."*

- God held the elders of the community responsible for the sins of the people because they did not provide sound leadership at this crucial moment. The elders whose men participated in the worship of Baal were to be executed publically for their failure to provide sound leadership.

## Verse 5

*So Moses said to Israel's judges, "Each of you must put to death those of your people who have yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor."*

- Also the men who had worshipped Baal were to be executed for their crime.

## Verses 6-9

*Then an Israelite man brought into the camp a Midianite woman right before the eyes of Moses and the whole assembly of Israel while they were weeping at the entrance to the tent of meeting.<sup>7</sup> When Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, saw this, he left the assembly, took a spear in his hand<sup>8</sup> and followed the Israelite into the tent. He drove the spear into both of them, right through the Israelite man and into the woman's stomach. Then the plague against the Israelites was stopped;<sup>9</sup> but those who died in the plague numbered 24,000.*

- While the community was mourning the deaths of those executed for joining the Moabite women in worshipping Baal, another man came into the camp with a Midianite woman whom he intended to take as his wife. He did this, openly defying the word of God and the instructions of Moses regarding intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews. Given the moment and considering the events which had just happened, this man was being exceptionally defiant of the mood in the camp and the authority of God.
- Phinehas, one of the priests who was son of the High Priest, saw what the man did. Phinehas took a spear and followed the couple into the man's tent where they intended to consummate their union. While they were engaged in sexual intercourse, Phinehas drove his spear through the man and the woman, killing both.
- Although no mention of it was made before, a plague had broken out in the Hebrew camp. This plague stopped when Phinehas killed the couple. But 24,000 Hebrews died before it was ended.

## Verses 10-12

*The LORD said to Moses,<sup>11</sup> "Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, has turned my anger away from the Israelites. Since he was as zealous for my honor among them as I am, I did not put an end to them in my zeal.*

*<sup>12</sup> Therefore tell him I am making my covenant of peace with him.<sup>13</sup> He and his descendants will have a covenant of a lasting priesthood, because he was zealous for the honor of his God and made atonement for the Israelites."*

- Eleazar was blessed by God because his zeal for the honor of God matched that of God himself. God made a covenant, a contract, with Eleazar

promising to make Eleazar and his descendants priests forever and to give him peace.

### **Verses 14-17**

***The name of the Israelite who was killed with the Midianite woman was Zimri son of Salu, the leader of a Simeonite family.<sup>15</sup> And the name of the Midianite woman who was put to death was Kozbi daughter of Zur, a tribal chief of a Midianite family.***

***<sup>16</sup> The LORD said to Moses,<sup>17</sup> “Treat the Midianites as enemies and kill them,...***

- Both the Hebrew man and the Midianite woman who were killed by Eleazar came from prominent families. Their names are given so that everyone may know that YHWH does not show favoritism to persons of rank within the community.
- Because the Midianites joined with the enemies of Israel and treated Israel without respect, they are to be regarded as among Israel's enemies and treated as such.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *The Seduction*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)