

Numbers 25

Verses 1 – 5

While Israel remained at Shittim, the people began to commit infidelity with the daughters of Moab. ² For they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. ³ So Israel became followers of Baal of Peor, and the Lord was angry with Israel. ⁴ And 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.” ⁵ So Moses said to the judges of Israel, “Each of you kill his men who have become followers of Baal of Peor.”

While Israel remained at Shittim

See Map 2505



This name means Acacia Trees

See Pics 2510



This was the last stopping place for Israel prior to crossing the Jordan

The people began to commit infidelity with the daughters of Moab

These pagan gods were worshipped with ceremonies in which the people acted out the mating of their fertility gods

Do you think those who participated in this “worship” really believed that this would lead to abundant crops?

Isn't it strange how temptation can cause people to believe things that are totally devoid of reason and/or common sense?

For they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods

The pagan world worshiped their gods by sacrificing animals and participating in a fellowship meal. They also indulged in the activity mentioned above.

The people ate and bowed down to their gods

Their worship included a number of gods.

The Israelites that participated in this were guilty of forsaking the Lord

So Israel became followers of Baal of Peor

This was the purpose of the Midian-Moab conspiracy.

Since Edom could not stop Israel by the use of force, they concocted a plan that would separate Israel from their God and lead to their destruction.

And 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.”⁵ So Moses said to the judges of Israel, “Each of you kill his men who have become followers of Baal of Peor

Two things were to take place here

1. All the leaders were to be executed so all would see it.
2. All that followed Baal were to be killed

Why would all the leaders be executed?

Because they did not try to stop this rebellion against God

The reason all of those who followed Baal were to be killed is obvious.

The pagan world had many gods and goddesses and much of their appeal was founded in the immoral behavior of their worship.

This was a direct challenge to the strict moral code of the Law

See 1 Cor. 10:1-8

Verses 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 the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, while they were weeping at the entrance of the tent of meeting.⁷ When Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from the midst of the congregation and took a spear in his hand,⁸ and he went after the man of Israel into the inner room of the tent and pierced both of them, the man of Israel and the woman, through the abdomen. So the plague on the sons of Israel was brought to a halt.⁹ But those who died from the plague were twenty-four thousand *in number*.

Then behold, one of the sons of Israel brought a Midianite woman, in the sight of Moses and in the sight of the whole congregation, while they were weeping at the entrance of the tent of meeting.

The people had just witnessed the execution of many leaders and thousands of men who had followed Baal.

The Israelites were weeping at the entrance of the tent of meeting because of this.

And here comes this Israelite man with a Midianite woman.

When Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he took a spear in his hand, ⁸ and he pierced both of them, through the abdomen

God had given a command for such men to be killed and Phinehas wasted no time in executing him.

So the plague on the sons of Israel was brought to a halt. ⁹ But those who died from the plague were twenty-four thousand *in number*.

The Lord told Moses to execute all the leaders.

Then Moses tells the judges to kill all their men who have become followers of Baal

But this verse says that the Lord used a plague to killed 24,000.

So what's going on here?

A plague is not limited to an epidemic (an out of control disease)

In the O.T this term was used for a broad range of punishments.

The 10 plagues that God used to humble Egypt were quite varied.

In the case of the 10 plagues it was a series of physical disasters.

In this case, God had the men of Israel kill their fellow Israelites.

Before we leave this verse there is one more issue to address.

Paul says that 23,000 fell in one day

See 1 Cor. 10:8

The obvious explanation for this is that 1,000 leaders were executed on the first day.

Then the people of Israel killed the 23,000 common people on the second day.

What Paul said is accurate and so is this account.

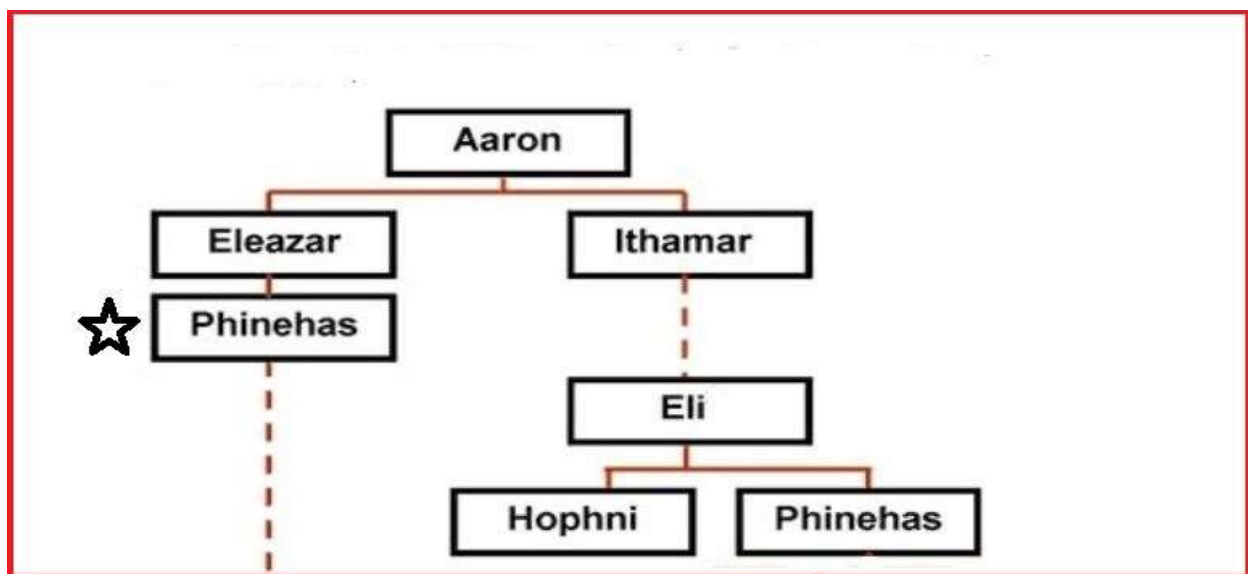
It's not uncommon to learn new details about O.T. events from N.T. writers

Verses 10 - 13

¹⁰ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ¹¹ “Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has averted 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. ¹² Therefore say, ‘Behold, I am giving him My covenant of peace; ¹³ and it shall be for him and for his descendants after him, a covenant of a permanent priesthood, because he was jealous for his God and made atonement for the sons of Israel.’”

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, I am giving him a permanent priesthood, because he was jealous for his God and made atonement for the sons of Israel

See Pics 2515



Aaron had already been promised that he was given a permanent priesthood and Phinehas was a grandson of Aaron.

So what exactly is this promise that God is giving to Phinehas.

Well, not every priest was guaranteed that his line would continue.

Some priests may have remained single, and others that did marry might have had children but no sons. Also a priest may have had a son but the son died before he had any children. In all of these cases the family line ended as far as the priesthood was concerned.

It seems that God is promising Phinehas that his family line would never ended.

How many people have been blessed with that assurance?

Verses 14 -15

¹⁴ Now the name of the dead man of Israel who was killed with the Midianite woman, was Zimri the son of Salu, a leader of a father's household among the Simeonites. ¹⁵ And the name of the Midianite woman who was killed was Cozbi the daughter of Zur, who was head of the people of a father's household in Midian.

Zimri, a leader of a father's household among the Simeonites and Cozbi, head of a father's household in Midian

Zimri and Cozbi were leaders in their respective tribes.

He was bringing her home to meet his relatives, which suggests that they may have made plans to get married or it was their wedding Day.

This would link Israel with Midian and suggest that it was fine for the two nations to intermarry.

However, this evil plan of the Midianites was not going to succeed.

The Midianites along with the Edomites had just caused the death of 24,000 Israelites and Phineas was not about to let this marriage take place.

His action was quick and decisive and the rest of Israel heard the message loud and clear.

Marry a Midianite and you will be put to death quickly.

Verses 16 - 18

¹⁶ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁷ “Be hostile to the Midianites and attack them; ¹⁸ for they have been hostile to you with their tricks, with which they have deceived you in the matter of Peor and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of the leader of Midian, their sister who was killed on the day of the plague because of Peor.”

Be hostile to the Midianites and attack them; ¹⁸ for they have been hostile to you with their tricks, with which they have deceived you in the matter of Peor and in the matter of Cozbi

This was a well-planned and skillfully-coordinated coup.

1. The Midianites instructed the Moabite women to entice the Israelite men.
2. And the Midianites employed the services of Cozbi to ensnare Zimri.

Both of these events were an attempt to lead Israel into idolatry so God would reject Israel and leave them defenseless.

Evil men have always been clever, more so than the sons of God.