



Lesson 45 – Apostasy at the Jordan

based on Numbers 25.

With joyful hearts and renewed faith in God, the victorious armies of Israel had returned from Bashan. They had already gained possession of a valuable territory, and they were confident of the immediate conquest of Canaan. Only the river Jordan lay between them and the Promised.

They were oblivious to the fact that they had just been blessed mightily in an attempt to curse them from Balaam and Balak, king of Moab.

- 1) Where were the Israelites camped at this point in their journey?

Numbers 25:1 And Israel abode in _____...

It was here that the Israelites encamped, and in the acacia groves by the riverside they found an agreeable retreat. But amid these attractive surroundings they were to encounter an evil more deadly than mighty hosts of armed men or the wild beasts of the wilderness. That country, so rich in natural advantages, had been defiled by the inhabitants. In the public worship of Baal, the leading deity, the most degrading and iniquitous scenes were constantly enacted. On every side were places noted for idolatry and licentiousness, the very names being suggestive of the vileness and corruption of the people.

During the time of their encampment beside Jordan, Moses was preparing for the occupation of Canaan. In this work the great leader was fully employed; but to the people this time of suspense and expectation was most trying, and before many weeks had elapsed their history was marred by the most frightful departures from virtue and integrity.

- 2) What started to happen with Israel?

Numbers 25:1 ...and the people began to commit _____ with the daughters of Moab.

after a time Midianitish women began to steal into the camp. Their appearance excited no alarm, and so quietly were their plans conducted that the attention of Moses was not called to the matter. It was the object of these women, in their association with the Hebrews, to seduce them into transgression of the law of God, to draw their attention to heathen rites and customs, and lead them into idolatry. These motives were studiously concealed under the garb of friendship, so that they were not suspected, even by the guardians of the people.

- 3) Who was the mastermind of this debauchery?

Numbers 24:25 And Balaam rose up, and went and returned to his place: and Balak also went his way.

Balak and Balaam failed to curse the Israelites. Balaam knew that the only way to hurt Israel was to have them leave God's presence of their own accord. Hence, the plan was concocted to dazzle them with hedonistic pleasure.

- 4) What happened?

Numbers 25:2-3 And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their _____: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel _____ himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.



Balaam was regarded by them as a prophet of God and hence had little difficulty in accomplishing his purpose. Great numbers of the people joined him in witnessing the festivities. They ventured upon the forbidden ground and were entangled in the snare of Satan. Beguiled with music and dancing, and allured by the beauty of heathen vestals, they cast off their fealty to Jehovah. As they united in mirth and feasting, indulgence in wine beclouded their senses and broke down the barriers of self-control.

Those who would have conquered their enemies in battle were overcome by the wiles of heathen women. The people seemed to be infatuated. The rulers and the leading men were among the first to transgress, and so many of the people were guilty that the apostasy became national.

5) At God's leading what did Moses command?

Numbers 25:5 And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, _____ ye every one his men that were joined unto Baalpeor.

A terrible pestilence broke out in the camp, to which tens of thousands speedily fell a prey. God commanded that the leaders in this apostasy be put to death by the magistrates. This order was promptly obeyed. The offenders were slain, then their bodies were hung up in sight of all Israel that the congregation, seeing the leaders so severely dealt with, might have a deep sense of God's abhorrence of their sin and the terror of His wrath against them.

6) What foolish and bold move did one sinner do?

Numbers 25:6 And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish _____ in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

Zimri, one of the nobles of Israel, came boldly into the camp, accompanied by a Midianitish harlot, a princess ***"of a chief house in Midian,"*** whom he escorted to his tent. Never was vice bolder or more stubborn. Inflamed with wine, Zimri declared his ***"sin as Sodom,"*** and gloried in his shame. The priests and leaders had prostrated themselves in grief and humiliation, ***weeping "between the porch and the altar,"*** and entreating the Lord to spare His people, and give not His heritage to reproach, then this prince in Israel flaunted his sin in the sight of the congregation, as if to defy the vengeance of God and mock the judges of the nation.

7) How was he dealt with?

Numbers 25:7-8 And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a _____ in his hand; And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and _____ both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.

8) How did God feel about Phinehas' action?

Numbers 25:12-13 Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of _____: And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was _____ for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.



- 9) What did God ask for after the plague was stayed?

Numbers 26:2 Take the _____ of all the congregation of the children of Israel, from twenty years old and upward, throughout their fathers' house, all that are able to go to war in Israel.

- 10) What was the outcome?

Numbers 26:64-65 But among these there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron the priest numbered, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of _____. For the LORD had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness. And there was not left a man of them, save _____ the son of Jephunneh, and _____ the son of Nun.

The judgments visited upon Israel for their sin at Shittim, destroyed the survivors of that vast company, who, nearly forty years before, had incurred the sentence, ***“They shall surely die in the wilderness.”***

- 11) What would God tell Moses in just a short time after this?

Numbers 31:2 Avenge the children of Israel of the _____: afterward shalt thou be gathered unto thy people.

One thousand men were chosen from each of the tribes and sent out under the leadership of Phinehas. ***“And they warred against the Midianites, as the Lord commanded Moses.... And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain; ... five kings of Midian: Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword.”*** The women also, who had been made captives by the attacking army, were put to death at the command of Moses, as the most guilty and most dangerous of the foes of Israel.

- 12) What do most people do to themselves?

Psalms 9:15 The heathen are sunk down in the pit that _____ made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken.

- 13) What about those that listen to and follow God?

Psalms 94:14-15 For the LORD will not _____ his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance. But judgment shall return unto righteousness: and all the _____ in heart shall follow it.

Psalms 94:22 But the LORD is my defence; and my God is the rock of my _____.

- 14) What did Balaam say about Israel when he first went to curse them?

Numbers 23:21 He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen _____ in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them.

If those who profess to be the depositaries of God's law become transgressors of its precepts, they separate themselves from God, and they will be unable to stand before their enemies.

Satan well knows the material with which he has to deal in the human heart. He knows—for he has studied with fiendish intensity for thousands of years, the points most easily assailed in every character; and through successive generations he has wrought to overthrow the strongest men, princes in Israel, by the same temptations that were so successful at Baalpeor. All along through the ages there are strewn wrecks of character that have been stranded upon the rocks of sensual indulgence. As we approach the close of time, as the people of God stand upon the borders of the heavenly Canaan, Satan will, as of old, redouble his efforts to prevent them from entering the goodly land.



15) What is God calling for today?

2 Corinthians 6:17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye _____, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

God requires of His people now as great a distinction from the world, in customs, habits, and principles, as He required of Israel anciently. If they faithfully follow the teachings of His word, this distinction will exist; it cannot be otherwise.

16) What did the Apostle John have to say about it?

1 John 2:15 Love not the _____, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

17) ...And James?

James 4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the _____ of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

It was the traitors within the walls that overthrew the strongholds of principle and betrayed Israel into the power of Satan. It is thus that Satan still seeks to compass the ruin of the soul. A long preparatory process, unknown to the world, goes on in the heart before the Christian commits open sin. The mind does not come down at once from purity and holiness to depravity, corruption, and crime. It takes time to degrade those formed in the image of God to the brutal or the satanic. By beholding we become changed. By the indulgence of impure thoughts man can so educate his mind that sin which he once loathed will become pleasant to him.

Psalms 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

Can you see what a cherished sin can do?

Would you like to be at peace with the LORD?

When is it time to humbly seek God's will?