

Numbers 25

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[0 : 00] Numbers chapter 25. Of course, we get to Numbers chapter 25. In order to get to Numbers 25, you have to go through Numbers 23 and 24. Seems pretty obvious, but this is one of the portions in Scripture, especially, well, in the Old Testament we see it more than we do in the New Testament, where we are running upon things historically as they are happening, and we need to know why they are there and how we got there.

I will go ahead and tell you, with the events that happened in Numbers 25, you need to jump ahead a little bit more. I'm not going to do it so much tonight, but I'll just go ahead and tell you on the front end, that way you can do it later on, to Numbers 31 to get a little bit more clarity. I will highlight it and show it to you, but you can go there and read it a little bit more to get in more details.

Because Numbers 25 ends with instructions from the Lord to Moses, you'll see in just a moment, and those instructions are finally carried out. By the way, it is the last thing Moses does before he prepares the people to go into the Promised Land, which is essentially what happens in the book of Deuteronomy.

It's the second telling of the law, the re-instigation of the covenant, the numbering of the people, the counting of the people, and things of that nature. But the last act that Moses does is fulfill this command that God gives him at the end of Numbers 25, and that command is fulfilled in Numbers 31.

So it's kind of, you have to see these things as they're happening historically to get a full grasp about what's going on and take it in context. But to get it in context, Numbers 23 and 24 are very unique because we have Balak, one of the kings of Moab, of that region, who was really concerned because the nation of Israel has just went and defeated two great kings in the Transjordan area, that is, the eastern side of the Jordan, not necessarily in the Promised Land, but a portion of the land which God had promised to Abraham.

[1 : 55] They had defeated Sihon and Og, the Malachite kings. Now, these are some of the people whom God had pronounced cursed because of their wickedness, and therefore they were fulfilling God's plans and purposes.

Moab was not in danger of being attacked, but Balak did not know that. Now, you will remember that the reason Moab was not in danger is because the Moabites are the descendants of Lot. And Lot is a relative of Abraham. And therefore, they kind of had this divine protection, if you will. God said, leave them alone. Their family, right? Their kin.

Not necessarily what they should be, but their family. Leave them alone. Now, Balak didn't know that. He just saw, if you remember, the nation of Israel had come up from the southern portion. They had camped out in this region.

Then they traveled north. They defeated two very powerful kings and come back south. And now they're sitting here, really, at Mount Pisgah, waiting in the valley for the final instructions to cross the Jordan River.

[2 : 54] Balak looks out, and this number of people really just terrifies him. One thing you need to understand here in this region, you're looking at a lot of, like, city and state kings. So not like this real big, vast monarchy that you would think of, like, the Roman Empire, or even the Greek Empire during Alexander the Great and all those things.

These are just really city-state kings in these regions that were there. That's why when we read the Book of Judges, we see all these different kings there. It's kings of this region. But anyway, so we're sitting here, and Balak is concerned, and he wants to fight battle with them.

He wants to say, hey, I'm bigger than you. But he understands that he can't defeat them physically because they've already defeated kings bigger than him. So he calls in Balaam, the hireling, the sorcerer, the magician, the soothsayer, to come pronounce a cursing upon the nation of Israel before he engaged them in battle.

Because the mind says, if I can have them cursed in the heavenlies, then I will be able to defeat them in the earthly. But now we know the rest of the story that we read Numbers 23 and 24.

Try as he may, because Balaam was indeed trying because of the promise of riches. Try as he may. He could not curse the nation of Israel. God would only allow him to bless them.

[4 : 12] And some of the greatest blessings we have in the Old Testament come from the mouth of this false prophet, Balaam. And Balaam gets mad because he said, you've blessed them rather than cursed them. Go to your house. Go your way.

And we read in Numbers 24 that Balaam went his way or went home. Now, there's where we have to get what happens in connection with chapter 25. Because our mind will say, well, Balaam's out of the picture.

I'll go ahead and tell you he's not. And I'll show you why in just a moment. But let's read Numbers chapter 25. Read the 18 verses and we'll go from there. 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. So Israel joined themselves to Baal of Peor, and the Lord was angry against Israel. 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. 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.

[5 : 24] 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 of the sons of Israel was checked. Those who died by the plague were 24,000. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, was turned away or has turned away my wrath from the sons of Israel and that he was jealous with my jealousy among them so that I did not destroy the sons of Israel in my jealousy.

Therefore, say, behold, I give him my covenant of peace and it shall be for him and his descendants after him a covenant of perpetual priesthood because he was jealous for his God and made atonement for the sons of Israel.

Now, the name of the slain man of Israel who was slain with the Midianite woman was Zimri, the son of Selu. A leader of a father's household among the Simeonites. The name of the Midianite woman who was slain was Cosby, the daughter of Zer, who was head of the people of the father's household in Midian.

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 the affair of Cosby, the daughter of the leader of Midian, their sister who was slain on the day of the plague because of Peor.

[6 : 48] Numbers chapter 25. Now, I've got a couple of little side references I want you to have a hold of so that when you're reading the rest of Scripture, you do not think that it contradicts itself. You will open up the New Testament at some point and you will be reading the writings of Paul.

And Paul will allude to this event. And Paul will make the statement. Paul will say that that statement or that sin with Baal of Peor in which 23,000 men fell in one day.

And then you will cross-reference that and open up the book of Numbers chapter 25 and you will see what it says, the number 24,000. The clarity there is, Paul says, 23,000 of the 24,000 died in one day.

That's how serious this was. Another thousand died after that first initial day. Okay? So we're looking at a very grievous, serious sin of the nation of Israel.

And I want you to see, I want you to see tonight from the text we have before us and really through application throughout history, the terrible habit of self-destruction. The terrible habit of self-destruction.

[7 : 48] Because there is something amazing going on here. This is directly connected to the events which has happened in Numbers 23 and 24. As a matter of fact, at this portion of the book of Numbers, we are reading things in consecutive order.

Now that doesn't seem like we ought to say much about that because in our day and time, in our reasoning, in the American way or the Western way of thinking, that seems to make literal sense. We see things linear.

We see things in order and one thing happens, then the next thing, and then the next thing. During this time in the Middle East and in that Asian province, that wasn't necessarily the case. They saw major events and they were perfectly comfortable with putting them anywhere in the writing at any time.

When you open up the Gospels, you're not necessarily reading what Jesus did successively, right? You're not saying, he didn't do this and do this and do this. That's why I think that when we get to John chapter 13, John 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17, we need to pause and pay attention because those things are the things that happened successively.

It happened just like it read. So this is something that the author of John wants us to see how it happened. But in the book of Numbers, when we get to this point, these things are happening one right after another, one right after another, one right after another.

[9:00] So we put ourselves in this setting. The nation of Israel has just won these two great battles. They're down here. They're victorious. As a matter of fact, they have inhabited a large portion of land, enough that two and a half tribes of the people will stay there.

It was a land that was fit for livestock. It was a land that was luscious and green and well provided for. And they had all these cities that they were building. But yet they're camped out in this valley. And the whole time they're camped out and they're waiting, there is a spiritual battle raging which they know nothing of.

There's a spiritual battle going on on the mountaintop. That is, Balaam is attempting to curse the nation of Israel through gaining power through worship to Baal, the god of that land.

I hope you notice that this is Baal of Peor. Peor is the region. So this is the god Baal that is located in that region. And that's something that I said we pay attention to in the Old Testament because most people that day thought that God was confined to a locale or to a region or to a city.

And this was that Baal. Okay? The god Baal is a very, very wicked god. Actually, he's not a very wicked god because he's not a god at all. He's a false god. He's an idolatrous god.

[10:10] But the practice of worshiping is extremely wicked. It is extremely horrifying. It was the offering of your own children. It was sacrificial offering, child sacrifice.

They would make these bulls that were furnaces, fiery furnaces, and they would build a fire inside of them and then put their children inside of them as a way of worshiping their god.

Baal was a fertility god and the god of rain. And just as a side note, this is the very first reference we have of the nation of Israel worshiping Baal. It will not be the last because every time they enter into a drought season in the nation of Israel, every time they enter into the promised land, rather than seeking the Lord their god, they turn to the god of that land, which is Baal.

Okay? So it's here that we're introduced to that for the first time. Now, I know that's a lot of historical things for you, but I want you to see this dangerous and terrible habit of self-destruction. First and foremost, we need to understand the relentless pursuit of our enemy.

The relentless pursuit of our enemy. It says, 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.

[11:24] So what we see here first is the relentless pursuit of our enemy. It says that the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab. Now, evidently, it was the Moabites and the Midianites.

Okay? We see it intermingled in the text, and they dwelt in the same region together. But what I want you to notice also says, For they invited them. This is something that we don't get in the English language, but the they there is feminine, which means that the women invited them to come to the feast.

Okay? The daughters of Moab, and evidently the daughters of Midian, invited them to come to their worshiping celebration. Part of that worship included male and female prostitution.

Part of that worship included a great feast. Now, think about this just for a moment. These people have been living 40 years on manna. And now, all of a sudden, they're being invited to come eat a spread.

Like they have never seen. They had been enslaved to Egypt. They've been bound to the wilderness for 40 years. And they're being invited to the biggest cookout in the area.

[12 : 39] But the question remains, how did that happen? When you open up Numbers chapter 31, when Moses is finally doing what God, or not finally, but when Moses is bringing to completion what God commanded him here, and that is to destroy the Midianites.

Okay? When Moses commissions his people, and he tells them to go out and wreak havoc upon the Midianites, the Midianites come back. Some of the nation of Israel comes back with Midianite women. And Moses gets upset at them when they come back.

And this is Numbers 31. And Moses makes this statement, Numbers 31, verse 16, says that these caused the nation to sin in regard to Baal of Peor at the council of Balaam.

Balaam was killed in that battle. And Balaam died because of the counsel he gave to get the ladies to go invite them to come to the feast.

So here's what I want you to see. The relentless pursuit of the enemy. While Balaam could not curse them in the heavenlies, he sure knew how to tempt them in the flesh.

[13 : 51] And while Balaam could do nothing against them in spiritual matters, he sure knew how to get to them in physical matters. And while he could not gain access to them through the spiritual realm, he knew exactly how to lead them into temptation in which they would self-destruct.

24,000 people died. Three times in the New Testament, we have Balaam referenced. The teaching of Balaam, the way of Balaam, and again, the way of Balaam.

And it is this. Thinking that we could do whatever we want to in the flesh, even though it may not align with the spiritual. We can live as if we want to.

It is, in a nutshell, it is an excuse to sin because God has already blessed. And what we see is that when, Numbers 24, Balaam went home, he didn't go back home.

He probably went to the house he was staying in because he was still in that region in Numbers 31 when he dies. He dies the death of the wicked. And he told Balak, evidently, because Scripture testifies this, while I can't curse them on the mountaintop, I can tell you how you can tempt them in the valley.

[15 : 10] And we see this. We understand this one great truth that we must acknowledge. It is not Balaam that is the enemy that is pursuing.

Balaam is a representation or a representative more of the spiritual dark forces. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the powers and principalities of air and the spiritual force of darkness.

And Balaam was very much in tune with those spiritual forces of darkness. We need to understand this truth. Satan will never gain a foothold over us in the spiritual realm because we are secure in Christ.

And whom he has pronounced blessed is blessed. Satan does not throw his darts in the spiritual realm. He comes down to the valley and he deals in the physical realm.

And I've told people this over and over again in personal counseling. I've told this in messages that the greatest harm the enemy can ever do to a believer is not to eternally destroy him, but to mandate or really to lead him to become useless for the sake of the kingdom in the here and now.

[16 : 25] It is to render them useless by self-destruction. To cause them to lose testimony. To cause them to lose witness. To cause them to lose opportunity.

Because they become more like the world and operate as the world is operating rather than being distinct from the world. And we see this relentless pursuit.

Just because Satan cannot get to us one way it does not mean he will ever, ever, ever leave us alone. It is the relentless pursuit of the enemy. The second thing I want you to see is the relaxed position of the people.

The relaxed position of the people because it says while Israel remained essentially all we have them doing is waiting. And I'm not necessarily against that because I know there is a time where we must be still and know that he is God.

I understand those truths. But I want you to understand the relaxed position here. And we kind of get a thought from this at least from context as we read the passage because they weren't on the battlefield. Right?

[17 : 23] When it came to Sihon and Og they had no problem whatsoever arising victorious because they knew the Lord was leading them. But here they are in a position of waiting. Here they are in a position of anticipating. Here they are in a position of unpreparedness.

And here they are in a position of being relaxed. And in their relaxed state they were a lot more vulnerable because the danger happens here. They were unaware of what was going on in the spiritual realm so they were unprepared for what was about to confront them in the physical. When we lose sight of the spiritual battle that each and every one of us are a part of we will not be prepared to face the attack that comes against us physically. If we are not completely cognizant of the fact that we have an enemy who is seeking to seek and devour and destroy then we will not be at least prepared for what confronts us in the here and now.

When we don't know what's going on in the mountaintop we leave ourselves vulnerable in the valley. And they were unaware of that. I love when commentators said and I paraphrase him in this he said just because we're victorious in one aspect does not mean that we will be victorious in all aspects.

They had won a couple battles but that does not mean they were going to be victorious in every aspect of their lives. They become relaxed. You never ever assume a relaxed position while living in enemy territory.

[18:48] Where were they at? They weren't in the promised land right? They weren't on the other side of the Jordan yet. They weren't where God was leading them. They were still in the wilderness. And yet they were just waiting and they were there and they were easily distracted because of an invitation given to them extended to them through some ladies of a foreign land in which God had very clearly told them not to do anything about.

And in their relaxed position they failed in a number of ways. They failed ethically. They failed morally. They failed spiritually. They failed physically. I mean they ate things they shouldn't have been eaten. They did things they shouldn't have been done.

And they were at places they should have never been. And that's exactly what happens when we forget that this is our wilderness.

Right? We're not yet where we should be. This is our place of sanctification and preparation for where we will be. But this is not where we yet should be. This is where he has placed us now.

That is exactly where God told them to be. Sure. But they were assuming a position of being relaxed and comfortable while hanging out there. We see this repeated over and over and over again.

[19:53] One of the things that we see that just amazes me so much is when when Isaac or Israel ends up we call him his name has changed to Israel by this time is coming back from with his wives and his family and all this stuff and he has all his clan with him.

Remember that? When he's coming back and he's already met his brother and he's limping because his hip has kind of been dislocated he's wrestled with the Lord and Israel is now coming back the man not the nation right?

And he's coming and it says he came to a certain place and he stopped. And it says he built houses he wasn't yet where God told him to go you can read it in the book of Genesis it wasn't yet but he got relaxed and got comfortable and then all of a sudden one of his daughters ends up getting taken advantage of and then his sons go in and just really wreak havoc and their trouble breaks out why?

Because he made himself at home somewhere he should have never been. When God's people assume a relaxed position in enemy land they open themselves up to the terrible habit of self-destruction.

This is exactly what's going on here. The third thing we see is the required penalty for sin. We know it we understand it but does it not shock us when we see it in scripture?

[21:05] Because we know the sin they committed I mean idolatry is just one of the sins idolatry gluttony adultery fornication lust I mean we could go down throughout the list right here right?

Every one of them every ten commandments more than likely they broke at one festival and it reads exactly like the golden calf thing does it not the people ate and bowed down to their gods because it says during the golden calf they ate they sat down and then they rose up to play right?

Same thing it all revolved around this food ordeal and they were having this great party and they were being merry and all these things and yet all of a sudden it says and the Lord was very angry with them the Lord was very angry with them now he had still considered them blessed that's what amazes me is when we read the prophecies of Balaam it says that the Lord saw no fault in the nation of Israel he saw them as being his people right?

and now all of a sudden he sees them with his judgment resting upon them we'll kind of get to that a little bit as the Lord allows us to tarry and leaves us here to we're at that great point in the book of Hebrews which we've spent a long time Hebrews 7 to first half of Hebrews 10 building the foundation for what happens in Hebrews 10 19 when it says therefore and he leads into since all these things are true and who God is and who Christ is and what he has done therefore these things should look be evident in our lives and if they're not we stand under the judging hand of God and it's exactly where the people see themselves right here right they know who they should have been they've seen God deliver them they've been victorious and all of a sudden they have failed and it says and the Lord their God was angry with them and then it shocks us because then God says take the leaders tell the leaders is man in broad daylight why because they have sinned openly and God's justice would be rendered openly I've said it and I can't be the one who says that it originates with me

I can't remember who originally said it I don't even know where I read it okay so it's not like I'm trying to say things and not give someone credit for it but one of the things that has stuck with me is that and I've said it before and I've heard it before that men like to sin in retail and confess in wholesale right we sin specifically we confess generally God said you did it openly so my judgment is going to be open and here is the required penalty for sin he says do it in broad daylight because he wanted everyone to know including the nations watching this is the consequence for breaking the standard now it shocks us and it kind of rocks us to our core but it's the reality right we need to see these truths in the old testament why because if God says if you break the commandment if you break the standard this is the penalty this is exactly what will happen these were leaders of the nation and he said kill them in broad daylight just like at the golden calf where each man went to his camp wielding his sword slaying his brother this was the price for their sin but the reality is this is the price for our sin and if it wasn't for these shocking testimonies in the old testament we would take our sin lightly we would take those moments of self destructive habits lightly but let us not because this is the exact price of sin and we will see it again in

[24 : 30] Hebrews chapter 10 this is what God requires he says someone will die for the wages of sin is death the book of James says that each man sins when he is taken over by the lust of his eyes and the last thing that sin gives birth to is death it is a wicked desperate horrible death death this is it this is the relentless pursuit of the enemy!

this is the relaxed position of the people this is the requirement for their relaxed position and not being prepared for the temptation that was coming their way and we've got this fourth one and I know I used the word pursuit again and I think I did it intentionally we see the radical pursuit of holiness because this is reality this is where I think it all comes back our enemy is relentlessly pursuing us run somewhere Satan will never run and that is into the presence of the holy one he stops there he won't chase you there and we meet this man Phineas and again what Phineas does it kind of shocked us right because as God has called Moses and Moses is telling this to the leaders they're at the tent of meeting let us never forget that and they're gathered around the tent of meeting and they're weeping and they're broken they're being broken all of them are broken over the fact that so many people are dying 23,000 people die in one day 24,000 total die and they're weeping here and all of a sudden here comes in a

Israelite man one of the sons of Israel came and came to his and! the woman said in the sight! the son Israel but he wasn't just one of them did you notice this the slain man he was the leader of the house among the semanites so he was a prince he was a leader and the woman her father was a leader so this could have possibly been maybe we're trying to make an agreement here right maybe two friends and our princess two nations!

he comes in from daylight goes into the tent and it says penis gets up and takes the spirit and again we read this I don't know if you're following along the Bible reading pen and you already read about the tent take to the temple and nails the ground and you're just like well that I threw some but that's part of it right but we see this and all of the he he gets the spirit he goes in and he handles both of them and he says that act stopped God's flesh more with that because look at what it says it says there verse 8 he went after the man of Israel to the man of the woman through the body so the plague of the sons of Israel was checked and stopped and those who died in the place of 24,000 then the priest has turned my wrath from the sons of

Israel and he was jealous with my jealousy among them so that I did not destroy the sons of Israel in my jealousy therefore say I give him my covenant of peace and it shall be for him and his

descendants after him a covenant of perpetual priesthood because he was jealous for his God and made a covenant for the sons of Israel you know he did something wrong that wasn't very possible his man is a prince of the lamb being a spear and a princess in way of the spirit of fruit at that point what the testimony said he is the care less than everybody else saw his only ambition was jealous for the name and holiness of the Lord and in this jealousy for God's holiness he checked the place see what this world really needs is not the people of

[29 : 01] God to look beyond their actions or their joy in with their actions really what the people of the world need is for someone to radically pursue holiness and to be more jealous in the name of the Lord their God than the people of man one of things that you find in church history and I know it doesn't make sense but it is absolutely accurate is that the believers who expected the most from one another usually the best fastest going to because if they radically sued the Lord their God God blessed them because the blessing rest of all things it says if not favor them shall rest of them he he was going to kill his own he went to battle he fought against the man he ended up becoming the guard of the temple of the

Lord and what better way! man knows how he is the spirit of his promise a perpetual descendant of the priesthood because of his jealousy for God's holy standard and see we can rest in one of two places either we can get kind of comfortable and relaxed and be caught off guard when the enemy pursues us or we can be those who are prepared to pursue God's pullings and therefore catch Satan off God I don't know but it's terrible when you look at the habit of self destruction and it visible on people because what they did not do the spiritual wrath the people did themselves in physical now unfortunately that has been a testimony over and over and over again among times if we're not careful what

Satan will never go to a critical where we will go to once for all in physical numbers chapter 25 terrible habit itself so I Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.