

## **“Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment.”**

**“They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead. Thus they provoked him to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them. THEN STOOD UP PHINEHAS, AND EXECUTED JUDGMENT: AND SO THE PLAGUE WAS STAYED. And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore.” (Psa. 106:28-30)**

The amazing story of Phinehas and Balaam has long been one of my favorites – ranking right up there with David & Goliath. The Jews had reached their last station and staging area in the wilderness, right on the borders of the land of Canaan, and just ready to enter into it, which was an aggravation of the sins they fell into in the matter of Baal-peor, Phinehas and Balaam.

After 400 years in Egyptian bondage and slavery; and after 40 odd years wandering in the wilderness; the glorious time had come to conquer Canaan and possess the Promised Land. **“And Israel abode in Shittim.” Num. 25:1.** The area of Shittim was named for shittim-wood which grew in great abundance in the plains of Moab, where Israel was now encamped, preparing to invade and conquer Canaan. But then a great tragedy struck, that threatened to destroy Israel before they ever even saw the Promised Land.

The purposes and promises of God – long ago made to Abraham and his natural seed on earth – were about to be defeated. The wrath of God was kindled against Israel. We read: **“The people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.” Num. 25:1(b).** Suddenly, on cue, as if rehearsed and directed by some grand, Satanic maestro – (we will soon see that the false-prophet Balaam, for lucre, was the maestro) – leading a splendid, talented, top-notch, professional symphony, – a strange thing happened; to wit: **“And they – (i.e., the whorish young daughters of the Moabites and the Midianites) – called the people – (i.e., the young, hot-blooded, testosterone-surging, lustful Jewish men) – unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor; and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.” Num. 25:2,3.**

This feast was a grand and sumptuous affair, and the whole thing was orchestrated by the false-prophet Balaam, for a fat fee, paid out of the treasuries of the governments of Moab and Midian. Balaam had tried repeatedly to curse Israel, but had failed miserably; and so, Balaam then concocted this Satanic scheme to destroy Israel by seducing them into a sinful orgy of fornication (including sodomy) and idolatry – guaranteed to bring down the wrath of God in terrible vengeance; to wit: **“Behold, these – (i.e., Moab & Midian) – caused the children of Israel, THROUGH THE COUNSEL OF BALAAM, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord. Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him.” Num. 31:16,17.**

Incidentally, when Balaam got word as to how well his counsel and advice had worked toward destroying Israel, – 24,000 Jews slain by orders from Moses! – he set out to go to the kings of Moab & Midian to get the balance of his exorbitant fee or exact additional fees – Balaam not

knowing that in the meantime Israel had defeated Moab & Midian in battle – and was captured and killed by the Jews; to wit: “*And they slew the five kings of Midian...Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword.*” Num. 31:8.

The false-prophet Balaam was only 34 years of age at the time of his death. His doom was sealed when Phinehas – seeing a young Jew and a Midianite blatantly fornicating right in the house of God – spontaneously “*rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; (a)nd he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.*” Num. 25:7-9.

When Israel, thereupon, in effect, got right with God, as it were; THAT cleared the way for God to speak unto Moses, “*saying, Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites (and, by implication, the Moabites): afterward shalt thou be gathered unto thy people.*” Num. 31:1,2. So you see, that what may be called, “The Battle of Baal-peor,” may be called also, “The Last Battle of Moses.” And at least four times in the New Testament, we are expressly warned against what may be called, “The Sin of Baal-peor,” or, “The Way of Balaam,” or, “The Error of Balaam,” or, “The Doctrine of Balaam.” It is New Testament church business! And, in 1 Cor. 10:8, we at Westboro Baptist Church are also expressly warned, as follows; to wit:

**“Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.” (1 Cor. 10:8)**

**“Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.” (1 Cor. 10:6)**

**“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. WHEREFORE LET HIM THAT THINKETH HE STANDETH, take heed lest he fall.” (1 Cor. 10:11-12)**

Beloved, in light of these solemn warnings, or cautionary declarations, – to the church! – about an incident that happened in the distant past, IS IT NOT OF THE UTMOST URGENCY & IMPORTANCE, that we understand – clearly and exactly – what happened at BAAL-PEOR? Baal is a general name for an idol; and, to distinguish this from other Baals or idols, it was called Peor. Gill says it was called Peor from its opening its mouth grotesquely as though pretending to prophesy, and from some obscene posture and action used in the worship of it, being the same with Priapus, (god of the sodomites). “*And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.*” Num. 25:3.

John Trapp says here, as follows: “*Israel separated himself to THAT SHAME (Hosea 9:10 – ‘But they went to Baal-peor, and separated themselves unto THAT SHAME; and their abominations were according as they loved.’) – that abominable and shameless service of Priapus, as Maachah the mother of Asa seems to have done, – (1 Kings 15:13, – ‘And he took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made. And also Maachah his mother, even her he removed from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove; and Asa destroyed her idol, and burnt it by the brook Kidron.’), and other filthy persons, whose fashion*

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(custom) was, as soon as their sacrifice was ended, to step aside into the grove of their god, and there, like brute beasts, promiscuously to satisfy their lusts."

Fausset says, "‘Peor’ derived from a verb signifying, ‘to uncover’, with reference to the abominable PRIAPISM which was the favorite worship in that temple." Acts of sodomy were committed in connection with that so-called worship. When it is written as follows: "**and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab; and they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods,**" there is no question that a humongous big shindig is meant. Those religious festivals held periodically by the Moabites and the Midianites were enormous affairs, attended routinely and normally by many thousands of people. Think, Texas political bar-BQ times a thousand. Many thousands of cattle, sheep and other animals were slaughtered to generously feed the multitudes who came to worship the idols and fornicate. Indeed, fornicating was an integral part of the worship services. As I say, such festivals were routinely held.

## **LIKELY KNOWN AS THE FESTIVAL OF PRIAPUS**

Gill says that great numbers were invited, and that they were always "observed with all the circumstances of joy and pleasure imaginable, and which was very ensnaring, especially to young people: and the children of Israel being so much enamoured with the beauty of the Moabitish women, and so strong were their lusts and passions, that they could not refuse the invitation: and the people did eat of the things sacrificed to idols, and so became guilty of idolatry; even by so doing; and then when they had eaten and drank, and were merry, they were led on to other acts of idolatry; and bowed down to their gods; which was a plain and open act of idolatry, whereby they testified their faith in their divinity, their reverence of them, and their homage and obedience to them. Jarchi says, 'when the evil concupiscence or lust was strong in them, and they solicited the daughters of Moab to hearken to them, and comply with them, they used to take the image of Peor out of their bosom, and said, worship this, signifying that on that condition they would gratify them; and thus whoredom led them on to idolatry, and they committed the one for the sake of being indulged in the other.'

As it is written; to wit: "**Behold, these – (i.e., these Moabitish women) – caused the children of Israel, THROUGH THE COUNSEL OF BALAAM, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord.**" Num. 31:16. For this reason, the Lord our God ordered Balaam and all those women slain, as well as 24,000 Israelites. It was a bloody business. And, Beloved, Westboro Baptist Church – could be in danger of the same plague, just as the church at Pergamus, even though otherwise that church was a wonderful place and the home of Antipas the Lord's faithful martyr; to wit:

**"But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." (Rev. 2:14)**

Do we have any in our church who hold the doctrine of Balaam? Balaam was a free-willer – an Arminian – who believed he could get God to change His mind. He was a young Billy Graham, with lots of “juice” as they say. There are hundreds of thousands of preachers just like him today. Balaam did not believe in election, reprobation, and predestination.

He thought that he could get God to curse those whom He had everlastingly blessed – to wit: GOD'S ELECT. When prayers didn't work, Balaam devised a dastardly scheme; to wit: BAAL-PEOR. After arguing with his ass – i.e., his jackass, his donkey – Balaam presented himself to Balak king of Moab, who had given him big bucks to curse Israel; to wit: *"And he took up this parable, and said: Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel.* (But this mighty man found out shortly that it is impossible to get God to curse God's Elect. *'The answer of the tongue is from the Lord.'* Prov. 16:1)

***"How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him; lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" (Num. 23:7-10)***

Well my dear. Balak threw a royal fit. *"And Balak said unto Balaam, What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them altogether."* Num. 23:11. Try again. This time from the top of Mount Pisgah. This time with the princes of Moab with him.

## **HIGH DRAMA ON THE HIGH PLAINS OF MOAB**

*"And Balak said unto him, What hath the Lord spoken? And he took up his parable, and said, Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor: God – (let me digress a bit here, to say, Beloved, that the pronouncements of God through the mouth of this false prophet Balaam are some of the best declarations of Gospel truth and statements of divine faith ever uttered – now back to Balaam's involuntary Calvinistic preaching) – God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless; and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel; according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and Israel, What hath God wrought! Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion; he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain."* Num. 23:19-24.

Well, my dear. King Balak was fit to be tied. Try again. This is high drama in the history of the world that we are looking at. Every word is precious. *"And when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness."* Num. 24:1.

Gill says "*to seek for enchantments*" were better rendered, "to meet serpents," and use them in his divinations, make observations on them, and predictions from them; one sort of divination is called ophiomancy, or divining of serpents. How serpents twist, and turn, and slither, and strike tells things and gives readings to men like Balaam, who invoke Satan for help in the matter.

***“And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes; and the spirit of God came upon him. And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: He hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open: How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river’s side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters. He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn; he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows. He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion; who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.” (Num. 24:2-9)***

Of course, king Balak was furious. He railed on Balaam. “*And Balaam rose up, and went and returned to his place; and Balak also went his way.*” Num. 24:25. At some point after this fiasco, – (presumably either to earn his exorbitant fees already paid him, or to earn more) – Balaam concocted the deadly Baal-peor scheme, involving the corruption of Israel’s young men by the whores and sodomites of Moab and Midian.

Moses later referred to the scheme in his oration in Deuteronomy; to wit: “*These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel on this side Jordan in the wilderness...Your eyes have seen what the Lord did because of Baal-peor; for all the men that followed Baal-peor, the Lord thy God hath destroyed them from among you. But ye that did cleave unto the Lord your God are alive every one of you this day.*” Deut. 1:1 and 4:3,4.

Moab incurred the additional disapprobation of God in that he was forbidden to “*enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever: Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; AND, because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee. Nevertheless the Lord thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the Lord thy God loved thee.*” Deut. 23:3-5.

What distinct lessons are we to learn from the story of Baal-peor? We have looked at a few of them today; but we have hardly scratched the surface. It was clearly a time of great crises – such a time as divides the wheat from the tares. A time when heroes are identified – when “*ye that did cleave unto the Lord*” are singled out for praise by Moses. But the real hero – or better said, the hero of heroes in the opinion of Heaven – was Phinehas.

We ought to study and consider all such at great length and in great detail and aspire to have their qualities of soul. I tell you, Beloved, I love the sound of it: “*Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment; and so the plague was stayed. And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore.*” Psa. 106:30,31.

The extremity to which all Israel was reduced is seen in these words; to wit: “*And the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people (i.e., all the chieftains), and hang them up before*

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*the Lord against the sun (high noon, so all could see), that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel. (About 1000 chieftains hung that day, which accounts for the difference between 24,000 here and 23,000 at 1 Cor. 10:8). And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal-peor.” Num. 25:4,5.*

In that scene of slaughter and pandemonium, walked a Jew prince named Zimri and a Midianite princess named Cozbi, bent on some scandalous, God-defying, public fornication – the very same conduct that had brought down the wrath of God for which 24,000 people were dying in public executions AT THAT VERY TIME. Here's how the Holy Ghost describes the event; to wit:

***“And, Behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.” (Num. 25:6)***

At which time, in response to such outrageous affrontery to God and man, Phinehas sprang into holy action; to wit:

***“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 javelin in his hand; And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel...And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace. And he shall have it.” (Num. 25:7-13)***

## **LET US PRAY THE ZEAL OF PHINEHAS MAY BE OUR ZEAL**

Maybe, Beloved, we could adopt that language the Lord spoke about Phinehas as another slogan for our church; to wit: “Westboro Baptist Church was zealous for my sake among them.” How wonderful it is to just think of that great cloud of witnesses that no man can number, the spirits of just men made perfect, and the innumerable company of angels – in short, all the current inhabitants of Heaven – all rejoicing at our zeal! as they look on from their blessed vantage point.

Nothing is so pleasing to Christ, whose own zeal was demonstrated when He made a scourge of small cords and drove the peddlers, the money changers, and even the animals from the temple, *“And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.” John 2:16,17.*

And it was written at **Psa. 69:9**, where, in a few words, zeal for God was inextricably linked to suffering reproaches for Him and His house; to wit: *“For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.” Psa. 69:9.*

The word “zeal”, as used throughout Scripture, carries with it the connotation of jealousy, heat and indignation; which comports very well with our experience. And all of which provides us with further proof – powerful, objective proof – that our *“calling and election is sure.” 2 Pet. 1:10. “Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed.”* Amen.