

NUMBERS 31-33

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Numbers chapter 31 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

At this point the children of Israel have been out of their bondage in Egypt for almost 40 years. They are preparing to enter the Promise Land.

The old generation who refused to enter the Promise Land because of unbelief has all died off in the wilderness, except for Joshua and Caleb. And now Moses has instructed the next generation in what they need to do.

In fact, the book of Deuteronomy is Moses going over their history, kind of his last will and testament, his farewell address to the nation to prepare them to enter into the Promise Land.

As we have seen, Miriam, the sister of Moses has died. Aaron, the brother of Moses and Miriam has also died, and his son Eleazar is now the High Priest.

And for Moses, because he misrepresented God before the people at the waters of Meribah, he would not be allowed to enter the Promise Land. But God did allow him to see the land of promise before he died from a high mountain.

And just as with Aaron passing off the scene and a change of leadership in the priesthood, the same is true here with Moses. God raised up Joshua to bring the children of Israel into the Promise Land, he will shepherd the children of Israel as they walk by faith!

But, as we will see tonight, Moses is going to deal with the Midianites and tie up some loose ends before Joshua takes completely over and Moses passes off the scene.

Back in Numbers 27:18-23 we are told, **“And the Lord said to Moses: ‘Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and inaugurate him in their sight. And you shall give some of your authority to him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. He shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire before the Lord for him by the judgment of the Urim. At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, he and all the children of Israel with him - all the congregation.’ So Moses did as the Lord commanded him. He took Joshua and set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation. And he laid his hands on him and inaugurated him, just as the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses.”**

Until Moses died, he was still in charge but some of that authority was given to Joshua and Moses wanted the children of Israel to understand that.

And, like I said, before Moses died, he still had a few things to do, and his big farewell address you might say, some 34 chapters worth, called the book of Deuteronomy as well as dealing with these Midianites!

You might call this Moses’ last hurrah!

Many if not all of you have heard of Babe Ruth. You might say that his last hurrah occurred while he was playing for the Braves.

It was way back on May 25th, 1935, a game against Pittsburgh, that with his first time up to bat, in the first inning, Babe Ruth hit a home run. Not too bad!

Then, in the third inning he hit another home run!

But he was not done. In the fifth inning he singled!

And then, in the seventh inning he hit his third home run of the game! This time the ball sailed out of Forbes Field, the ballpark, and it landed in an adjacent street!

Then, a few days later in Philadelphia, Babe Ruth injured his knee, and he took himself out of the game in the first inning. That was the last game Babe Ruth ever played.

Like I have said, his last hurrah and that is what we will see here with Moses as he will gain victory over the Midianites and then go into a heavenly retirement you might say!

With that said, let's begin reading in Numbers chapter 31, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word this evening.

NUMBERS 31

VERSES 1-2

Why did God want the children of Israel to take vengeance against the Midianites?

If you remember, back in Numbers 25:1-2 we are told, **“Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.”**

In other words, Balaam the prophet, not a believer, told Balak the King of Moab to send in Moabite women to seduce the men of Israel and in doing so they will be joined to Baal of Peor.

You see, many of the pagan worship practices centered on sexual immorality and the men of Israel fell prey to this seduction. They joined themselves to Baal of Peor and God brought His judgment upon the camp of Israel as 24,000 died in this judgment!

Who are these Midianites?

According to Wenham, *“The Midianites were a large confederation of tribes, associated with various smaller groups . . . They roamed through the arid lands of the Sinai, the Negeb and Transjordan. Here it is those Midianites associated with Moab that are picked out for vengeance.”*

Thus, God was using the children of Israel as His instrument to bring judgment upon the Midianites!

After Moses completed this mission, we aren't sure how soon after this battle but sometime after this battle Moses would be gathered to his people, he would die.

I find that interesting because Moses was doing battle with the enemy until he was taken home.

I wonder how often we think that as we get older, as we come to the end of our life, walking with the Lord for many years, and we think now we can relax, there won't be any more battles with the enemy.

Folks, how wrong that is. The battle will continue until we go home to be with the Lord and that is the only time it will end!

Paul put it like this regarding his battle with the enemy, with his battle with the flesh. He tells us in I Corinthians 9:24-27, **“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”**

Also, in Galatians 5:16-18 Paul tells us, **“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.”**

Did you notice that it first says that the flesh will lust against the Spirit; it will war against the Spirit and because of that battle the Spirit must war, do battle against the flesh.

Thus, Paul reminds us in Romans 13:11-14, **“And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”**

Fill yourself up with the things of God, put on Christ!

VERSES 3-5

Here we see Moses organize the army of Israel who will strike God’s vengeance upon the Midianites.

A total of only 12,000 soldiers, 1,000 men from each of the 12 tribes of Israel excluding the tribe of Levi for they were not to go to war, except for Phinehas, he will lead them in this battle, and we will see that as we read on.

VERSES 6-11

Why was Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the High Priest, with the holy articles, maybe the Ark of the Covenant, allowed to go into this battle?

I thought the priests were not to go to war.

This was a spiritual battle here and the reason I say that is because, if you remember from our studies in Numbers, the Midianites got the children of Israel to join themselves to Baal of Peor.

Balaam, the prophet, told the King of Midian that he could not curse the children of Israel, but he had a plan for God to pour out his judgment upon them.

The plan was pretty ingenious. He told them to have the Midianite women come and seduce the men of Israel and get them to worship their gods and the plan worked beautifully!

And it was Phinehas who took a stand against a man named Zimri, from the tribe of Simeon, who brought one of these women right by Moses and the children of Israel who were mourning at the tent of meeting over the sin of the nation, and he brings her into his tent to have sex with her.

A ***“In your face God”*** move by Zimri!

And Phinehas took his sword and went into this man’s tent and thrust them both through, killing them and now he is leading this battle against this nation that brought this sin into the camp of Israel!

We are told that they killed the Midianite men, but they allowed the women to live. That was a common practice back then, but it was not the men that were the threat to Israel, it was the women, as we have seen. And these men are coming back from this victory with these Midianite women, and they must have been proud about their accomplishment.

But, as we will see in a few minutes, as we read on, Moses is not too happy with what they had done, who they brought back into camp with them!

Not only that, not only did the children of Israel kill all the Midianite males, but Balaam the prophet was also killed with the sword. It seems that this for-profit prophet hung around Midian and as he sold out God for a profit, his victory did not last long.

In Numbers 23:10 he said, “**... Let me die the death of the righteous, And let my end be like his!**”

In reality he died the death of the wicked amongst a wicked people!

You can sin, you can do whatever you want and enjoy the spoils of your victory you might say. But understand that there is a payday and God’s judgment will come. The victory, the fun you think you are having in sin will one day end and it is never good unless you repent and come to Jesus!

Remember, and this is important, it never pays to sell out your integrity, and betray God’s truth – not at any price.

Let me ask you this. How did the children of Israel defeat the Midianites and Balaam?

The sword killed them all.

I believe there is a great spiritual lesson here.

Paul, in Ephesians 6:17, as he speaks of our spiritual armor, tells us that we are to take up and keep ready at all times for use, “**the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.**”

Folk’s, God’s Word is our spiritual weapon to defeat the attacks of the enemy. But tragically today many in the church have negated God’s Word and they fall prey to the attacks of the enemy!

May we learn the lesson and cleave to God's Word, using it as our spiritual weapon against the enemies we face in our lives!

Now as these men of Israel come back to camp in victory, with these Midianite women, look at what happens.

VERSES 12-18

So as the children of Israel return with the spoils of their victory, they also brought back with them the Midianite women, as I have said.

As Moses sees this, he blows a gasket, he is very upset with what they have done, but why?

Because it was many of these very women who seduced the men of Israel into pagan worship and immorality. Thus, Moses calls for all those women who were not virgins to be put to death!

Let me ask you this because many have a hard time with what happened here, what God told them to do.

Why did Moses want the young males killed also?

Because they would grow up and, in that culture, they would avenge the death of their father's and try to perpetuate the Midianite culture.

Yes, it was harsh, but God's judgment is fair, it is always right, and we might not see it, but He sees what will happen down the road and He is going to deal with it now to protect the children of Israel.

Isn't this interesting. The children of Israel defeated the mighty army of Midian but were setting themselves up to fall prey to something they should have never got into in the first place, never let into the camp.

In fact, they should have learned the lesson that just happened and what God did with this sin, but it seems that they did not.

We do the same today as Christians. We fight against this cause and that cause and yet we allow into our camp things that will destroy us even though we have defeated other enemies.

One writer put it like this. He wrote, ***"The most lethal enemy to our Christianity is not the ACLU, or the liberal media, or the leftist politician, or the atheistic school board member – it's probably the link that pops up on the internet that can lead you astray, or your remote controller, or the wink from the girl in the office, or the so-called friend who wants to have fun. The obvious enemy is not always the most lethal. Guard the backdoor."***

How true that is! We, as the children of Israel need to destroy; put to death you might say those enemies.

Paul warns us in I Corinthians 10:12, **"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."**

Don't think you can handle it, play with it, allow it into your camp, for it will cause you to fall!

VERSES 19-20

They not only needed to purify themselves, but they also needed to purify the spoils from their victory. We looked at this in Numbers chapter 19 as the ashes of the red heifer were placed in water and sprinkled upon those that were unclean and the articles that were unclean.

But why did they need to do this? Didn't God call them into this battle?

As one writer put it, *“Over every war, however glorious its outcome from the victor’s point of view, hangs the shadow of death. These purification rules reminded Israel that the death of one’s fellow men was a catastrophic disruption of God’s creation, even though in some cases it was the Creator himself who demanded the execution of the sinner.”* (Wenham)

For us as Christians, we don't need the ashes of the red heifer to purify our lives.

First of all, and really the starting point for our faith is Jesus Christ who cleanses us of all our sins.

But that is not the end of it. You see, we need the washing of the water of the Word of God that cleanses us from the dirt of this world, that daily cleaning that we need. This is not needed for salvation but for our spiritual health, for our identification with Jesus as the dirt is removed and people can see Jesus in our lives!

It is as David said in Psalm 119:9-11, **“How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.”**

Also, Paul reminds us in Ephesians 5:26, **“that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word.”**

Thus, don't negate God's Word, but meditate upon it and allow God's Spirit to speak to your heart, to cleanse you and direct you!

VERSES 21-24

God also told them that besides the water of purification, some things would also need to go through the fire of purification.

We have looked at the water of purification and how that refers to God's Word in our lives.

But what does this fire of purification mean to us today?

I believe the fire of purification speaks of the trials we go through.

In Job 23:10 we see this as Job tells us, **“But He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.”**

You see, fire causes the impurities in our lives, like dross, to rise to the surface to be removed!

Let me sum it up like this as one writer tells us, *“Everything had to be purified either by fire or water . . . And the same is true for us . . . the fire is the Spirit - the water is the Word. We need the intense heat of the Holy Spirit to purge and purify our desires. We need the water of God's Word to wash our dirty minds and renew our thoughts. Everything needs to be purified by the fire and the water.”*

VERSES 25-47

Here we see the spoil of the victory divided up between the soldiers who went to war, the 12,000 men and the other half was divided up between the 12 tribes of Israel. For the men of war, 1 out of 500 of their spoils went to the Lord and for the rest of the nation they were to give out of their spoils 1 out of 50 to the Lord!

Now let's think about this for a minute. Keep in mind that out of all the men in Israel, only 12,000 went to battle against the Midianites or 1000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel.

That means that there were some 590,000 men who did not go to battle and yet, Moses said that everyone would share in the spoils of this victory. Those who went to war and those who stayed at home to protect the camp.

We see this same principle in I Samuel 30:23-25. Remember, after this battle some of the wicked men didn't want those who didn't go into battle to get any of the spoils of this victory and we see David tell them, "... 'My brethren, you shall not do so with what the Lord has given us, who has preserved us and delivered into our hand the troop that came against us. For who will heed you in this matter? But as his part is who goes down to the battle, so shall his part be who stays by the supplies; they shall share alike.' So it was, from that day forward; he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel to this day."

How does this apply to us today?

Many of us can't go and be missionaries but we can support those who do, and that principle applies to us. Both the men and women who go into the mission field and those who support them will receive the spoil, you might say!

VERSES 48-54

During this battle the children of Israel went in with 12,000 men and they ended the battle with 12,000 men, not one soldier was lost!

This blew them away so much that they gave the Lord an additional offering or some 420 pounds of gold!

It was a thanksgiving offering you might say, thanking the Lord for seeing them all home safely from battle.

Have you ever heard of a war where one side has not one casualty? Of course not, but God did it here and the children of Israel recognized it was the Lord and not them!

And in the New Testament, Jesus tells us, **“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. I and My Father are one.”**

John 10:27-30.

That should bring us great comfort and we should bring before the Lord our thanksgiving offerings!

And look at the spoils of this victory. Some 675,00 sheep, 72,000 cattle, 61,000 donkeys maybe even Balaam’s, or some 808,000 animals plus 32,000 virgin Midianite women. Not too bad!

Let me set the stage for what we will be looking at in Numbers chapter 32.

In Mark chapter 5 Jesus and His men have crossed over the Sea of Galilee and they come to the area of the Gadarenes. It is an area that had Jewish pig farmers, which was not kosher!

And it is here that Jesus encounters a demon-possessed man who was violent. And as Jesus approached this man the demons recognized Jesus and they asked Jesus to cast them into the herd of swine instead of being tormented before the time of judgment. And Jesus did just that, He cast them into these swine as He freed this man from his demon-possession!

Now you would think that the community would be excited about this, a man in bondage set free, but they are not. They are upset and they want Jesus to get out of town for destroying their pig industry, which was illegal for the Jew!

You see, once these demons were cast into these pigs, they ran off the cliff into the Sea of Galilee, killing themselves. And of course, this is the first reported case of deviled ham! Sorry.

Thus, they wanted Jesus out of town, to leave them alone.

Now, why was there this thriving pig industry on the edge of the Sea of Galilee, on the east side of the Jordan River?

Who were these Jewish people and what were they doing there?

I believe that we are told who they are in Numbers chapter 32.

NUMBERS 32

VERSES 1-5

Here we see Reuben, Gad and we will see that the half tribe of Manasseh want to remain on the east side of the Jordan River. They don't want to enter the Promise Land. And I believe it is their descendants, years later of course, who remain in this land on the east side of the Jordan River that were involved in this pig industry.

Now, why do they want to remain here and not enter into the Promise Land?

Because they were happy with the fertile land that was before them, and they were content to stay outside of the land that God had promised them.

Of this, Wenham wrote the following in regard to what they were requesting, ***“That any Israelite tribe should consider settling outside the land promised to Abraham showed a disturbing indifference to the divine word, the word on which Israel’s existence entirely depended.”***

How true that is! And yet, how many Christians today are satisfied in their Christian walk, not wanting to go any further, not wanting to grow, to walk by faith and instead live on the outskirts of the faith.

And keep in mind they were outside the Promise Land and thus, they were truly in the world, outside of God’s perfect will for their lives and in the end, they paid for it with their idolatry that they succumbed to and the enemy who defeated them!

Folks we should always be pressing forward in the will of God and always want to grow in the Lord.

Paul, that great man of God had this to say in Philippians 3:12-14, **“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”**

This spiritual giant was not satisfied in his spiritual life, and thus, he pressed on, he moved forward, he kept reaching for that upward calling in his life.

How about you?

VERSES 6-7

Keep in mind that Moses is preparing to die and look at these battles he is still facing.

Here we see that Moses is concerned that the action of these tribes who refused to enter into the Promise Land will discourage the rest of the nation from entering in.

In fact, Moses reminds them that there is still a battle ahead, in fact, many battles that they will face. And now these 2½ tribes were going to sit out, being content with where they were. Moses wants them to understand that this ungodly contentment did not negate them of their duties of going into battle with the rest of the nation.

But let's think about this. Maybe they felt, ***“We’ve fought enough and have suffered enough already. Let’s just settle down where we are.”***

No concern for their brethren, only themselves and many Christians live out their life that way. It is all about them and they refuse to extend themselves.

One writer put it like this. He wrote, ***“Let me say, Moses’ concern is certainly legitimate, and it applies to the church. I run into too many Christians with a “me first” attitude. As long as I am being blessed – as long as my family’s needs are being met . . . They have no sense of responsibility for other brothers and sisters in the family of God. Why fight somebody else’s battle – when the outcome won’t benefit me? Sadly, the church is full of east bank Christians. Why help in the nursery? My kids are grown. I’ve done my duty. Who cares about a Christian School? We don’t even have kids. Why should I pray for the marriages in the church? I’m single.”***

Be careful hanging around people like that because what they have is contagious, this apathy and contentment that is found in what they want and not what the Lord wants.

Hang around those who will spur you on, encourage you to press on because that too is contagious and that is a good thing!

VERSES 8-15

Remember what I said. That this kind of attitude is contagious.

And here is why Moses is so concerned. Some 38 years or so earlier 10 spies brought back a bad report regarding the Promise Land, and it discouraged the entire nation from entering in.

And because of their unbelief, that generation all died in the wilderness.

Now Moses sees this happening all over again and it is even worse because it is not just 10 people but 2½ tribes that would discourage the people this time.

And if this happens then God will destroy this generation and maybe another 40 years before the next generation can enter in!

And yes, these tribes made a bad decision that would affect them, but now their actions were going to affect the entire nation and Moses is stepping in to stop it.

Folks, you can't force people to grow in the Lord, but you can prevent them from affecting others to become stagnant in their walk!

VERSES 16-19

These tribes said that they would go and fight with their brethren and when the battle is over, then they will return home on the east side of the Jordan River.

But notice that their children will be in “**fortified cities because of the inhabitants of the land.**”

In other words, there was no protection from the enemy except inside these walls and they were preventing their children from going forward in the Lord! Again, they did not enter into the Promise Land!

VERSES 20-24

As Moses hears what they have to say he agrees to their request as long as what they promised, they fulfill.

That promise was that they would go to war with their brethren and fight with them, which would encourage the rest of the nation.

If they don't, then their sin will find them out. In fact, we will read that if they don't help, they will be required to leave this land and enter the Promise Land!

Make no mistake about it, your sin will find you out!

Maybe you heard the story of the mom who went to visit her single son.

As she got there, to her surprise, John's new roommate was a girl named Julie!

Now John assured his mom that they were just friends. They were not sleeping together, there was nothing immoral going on between them.

Several weeks after this visit by John's mom, Julie mentioned to John one day, ***“Ever since your mom visited, I've been missing the silver gravy ladle we use to serve dinner. Do you think your mom took it?”***

John said he didn't think so, but he'd ask.

John wrote a letter, ***“Dear Mom, I'm not saying you 'did' take the gravy ladle from my house, and I'm not saying you 'did not' take the gravy ladle. But the fact remains that one has been missing ever since you were here for dinner.”***

Several days later, John received a reply from his mom, *“Dear Son, I’m not saying you ‘do’ sleep with Julie, and I’m not saying you ‘do not’ sleep with Julie. But the fact remains, if she was sleeping in her own bed, she would have found the gravy ladle by now.”*

How true Moses was when he said, **“be sure your sin will find you out.”**

VERSES 25-27

So only the men of war from these 2½ tribes will go to war with the children of Israel.

Their families, their children will remain on the east side of the Jordan River.

Folks, if you want your family, your children to do well, take them with you, don’t leave them on the outskirts of the Promise Land!

VERSES 28-42

These 2½ tribes that remained on the east side of the Jordan River, outside the Promise Land, were the first tribes taken into captivity years later because they did not have the defense of the Jordan River or the help of the other 9½ tribes plus the Levites.

Let me say this. I have been in ministry a long time and I have seen this play out in people’s lives over and over again.

There are those Christians who live by themselves, not plugged into a church, no body of believers to be around and they will find themselves in captivity.

God’s desire is that you are part of a body of believers, part of the body of Christ. And it is interesting because when you ask these people, *“How are you doing? How’s your walk?”*

Most every time they will say, *“It’s great! Everything is fine!”* Liar!

First of all, Paul tells us in Hebrews 10:24-25, **“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”**

You see, you are not to forsake the assembling together of a body of believers; you are to be part of the local church.

Secondly, you are not using your gifts that God has given you to edify, build up the body of Christ.

So those are just two areas you are being disobedient to God and thus, your walk is not right!

And, you have placed yourself outside the protection of the body of Christ, of fellowship. How important that is for us to understand!

NUMBERS 33

VERSES 1-2

Here in Numbers chapter 33 we have this amazing record of the Journey of the children of Israel from Egypt to the threshold of the Promise Land.

Moses is now recounting their 40-year journey from Egypt to the boarder of the Promise Land, waiting to enter in.

And Moses records for us 42 different place names, starting with Rameses of Egypt and ending with them in the plains of Moab.

VERSES 3-4

On that first Passover the Angel of death came upon the land of Egypt destroying all the firstborn in the land. Only those who sacrificed the lamb and applied the blood to the door of their home were spared from this plague.

And as the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, the children of Israel were set free from their bondage in Egypt and they left with great spoils, the Egyptians just wanted them to go.

They began their journey on the 15th day of Nisan.

Yes, the plagues came upon the Egyptians, ten of them because they refused to let the children of Israel go and God brought judgment upon them.

And He also brought judgment upon the gods they worshiped in each plague!

You can check out our Exodus study on the plagues and see this played out.

The point that God is making is that there is no God like Him!

VERSES 5-15

Moses now tells us that they journeyed from Egypt through the Red Sea to Mount Sinai.

They spent about 1 year at Mount Sinai before they moved on and there at this location God gave to Moses the Law and other instructions for the children of Israel including the building of this portable worship structure, the Tabernacle and the sacrifices as well as other things that they needed to be aware of on their journey!

VERSES 16-49

Here we see Moses speak of all the places they went to from Mount Sinai to the shores of the Jordan River.

This part of their journey took some 38 years, and it was not that the journey was long, or the distance was long, but it was because of unbelief they wandered for all those years!

We are also told that on Mount Hor Aaron the High Priest died at the age of one hundred and twenty-three years old!

VERSES 50-53

This once again seems like a cruel act by God, to destroy the Canaanites, to remove these pagan practices from the land. Keep in mind that back in Genesis 15:14 God gave these people 400 years to repent, to turn from their wicked ways and they kept going down this path that was leading to destruction.

And now the judgment of God was upon them and if you study the history of the Canaanites, not from the Bible but secular sources, you will see their wickedness. They were involved in demonic worship, the sacrificing of their children to these gods, sexual immorality and-so-on. They were truly ripe for God's judgment; their iniquity was now complete!

Make no mistake about it, Israel was not to tolerate a co-existence with the depraved idolatry and immorality of the Canaanites, which included, like I have said, even human sacrifice. One writer put it like this. He wrote, ***“No false pity or selfish motive was to operate in such fashion as to leave any corrupting influence behind. The unequivocal command to drive out all, was based on the tenderest regard of God for the well-being of the chosen people, and through them, the whole [human] race.”*** (Morgan)

And we can read the book of Judges and see that their disobedience to what the Lord told them brought them down. They were as wicked as the people they were to drive out and the reason being is that these pagan people influenced them!

And as we read on, we will see Moses give them that very warning if they don't drive out the enemy, what it will cost them!

VERSES 54-56

God warns the children of Israel to destroy these people. If they refuse to obey the Lord, the Lord warns them that they will infect you with their poison.

Think of the Canaanites as rabid dogs. You don't let the dog in your house, you don't let that dog play with your children, the dog is sick, and he will infect anyone who comes in contact with him.

The only solution to protect you is to destroy that dog and the same was true here with the Canaanites! And for Israel, they did not fully obey the Lord but allowed them to live in the land and they were affected and infected with their poison. So much so that God removed the children of Israel from the land in judgment for a time, bringing them into captivity because of their idolatry that was picked up from the Canaanites!

David Guzik put it like this. He wrote, *“The abiding spiritual principle teaches us that it is of no use for the church to succeed in the eyes of man – as Israel had succeeded when they occupied the land and became a legitimate nation, instead of an enslaved people – if it merely allows the corrupt practices and attitudes of the Canaanites to take root among God’s people. If, spiritually speaking, a similar thing happens among God’s people today, they should expect to be eventually driven from their place of apparent success or influence.”*

How true!

We need to be careful we don’t allow corrupt practices to come into our lives or into the church because it will affect and infect us with its poison and bring us into captivity just as it did the nation of Israel.

God warns us and then it is up to us to listen and obey. If you don’t, like the Lord said to the children of Israel, these things will be a thorn in your life!

I will close with this. Paul said in Romans 6:6-7, **“knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.”**

Don’t allow that garbage to be resurrected in your life, be free in Christ!



