

Numbers 25-30 Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

Outline

IX. THE WILDERNESS SOJOURN Chs. 20-25

I. A Tussel with Moab Chs. 22-25

1. Balak summons Balaam Chs. 22-24
2. Israel's sin Ch. 25

Pastor Charley covered the interesting story of Balaam in Chs. 22-24 last week. Israel is at the end of their 40 years of wandering the wilderness.

A new generation has risen that is ready to enter the Promised Land.

Their route has taken them up along the eastern side of Canaan, just across the Jordan River.

To the south of the camp lies the land of Moab.

The king of Moab, a guy named Balak, knew all about Israel, how they had brought low the mighty Egyptians in the plagues & at the Red Sea.

He'd heard reports of their more recent victory over 2 kingdoms of the Amorites; King Sihon & King Og who lived just north of Moab.

Balak panicked when he saw Israel parked on his border & sent for Balaam, a well-known prophet who lived far to the Northeast.

Balak had the faulty idea that because Balaam was a prophet, he could put a kind of hex on someone, & the person would be cursed.

Balaam tried his best to dis-abuse King Balak of this idea.

A prophet can only speak forth the mind, counsel, & plans of God.

The prophet doesn't tell God what to do!

Balak was slow to learn the lesson, & 3 times took Balaam to a high vantage point overlooking the camp of Israel & asked him to curse the people of God.

But all 3 times, Balaam could only speak forth blessing because that was God's intention toward Israel.

The story appears to end at v. 25 of ch. 24 . . .

So Balaam rose & departed & returned to his place; Balak also went his way.

That seems to be the end of the matter – but it isn't.

Before Balaam left for home, he gave a piece of advice to Balak which we'll learn about later.

For now, let's just continue with the narrative of Numbers 25 . . .

¹Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, & the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. ²They [the women of Moab] invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, & the people ate & bowed down to their gods. ³So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, & the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel.

The chief deity of many of the Canaanite kingdoms was named Baal, a word which means, "lord" or "possessor."

He was believed to control the powers of the sky; the rains, the lightning & thunder.

To ancient peoples, the most powerful thing they experienced was the thunderclap, so it was to be expected that they would attribute it to their chief deity.

But there wasn't just one Baal – there were many. Each kingdom had its own brand & flavor of Baal.

The Moabites worshiped Baal of Peor, as it says here in v. 3.

Peor was the central district of Moab.

So, as Israel was camped there in Acacia Grove, or *Shittim* as it's rendered in some Bibles, the women of Moab seduced the men of Israel & enticed them to begin worshiping their God.

This is precisely what Balaam had suggested Balak do!

In 2 Peter 2:15 we find Peter's strong criticism of false teachers & prophets when he says . . .

They have forsaken the right way & gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.

Balaam was a greedy man & when he saw the wealth promised him by Balak if only he would curse Israel, he began conniving to get around the structures God had placed on him so he could snag the reward.

He'd *tried* to curse Israel but couldn't because he could only speak forth the mind & counsel of God who'd purposed to bless Israel.

But Balaam knew that Israel's blessing by God was dependent on her obedience to Him. To be blessed, she needed to abide in the place of blessing.

If Israel strayed from the place of blessing into disobedience, then God's judgment would come upon them.

So, while he couldn't curse them *directly* he knew how to see them curse *themselves* & counseled King Balak on how to encourage Israel's slide into disobedience.

His counsel is spelled out for us in Rev. 2:14 where Jesus says to the church at Pergamos . . .

I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, & to commit sexual immorality.

Balaam's strategy was this – he told Balak to gather the prettiest women of both Moab & their allies the Midianites & have them enter the camp of Israel to seduce the men.

Once the men were hooked, the women would then suggest that they join them in the worship of Baal, a practice which was often sensual & licentious in itself.

Balaam knew when the people of Israel began to practice idolatry, God's judgment would be swift.

The plan worked as we see here in v. 3.

God's anger was stirred against the people, manifest as a plague which began to sweep through the camp.

There's an important lesson that is both encouraging & sobering to be gleaned from this story.

First – As Balaam well understood, it is God's heart to bless His people!

That is His settled & primary posture toward His own.

His powerful presence is among us, His gracious favor rests upon us.

His blessing flows in a steady stream when we abide in Him, when our hearts are clinging to Him & we live in simple obedience to Him.

This is why obedience is so very important, because it safeguards God's blessing!

God does not give us His commands & His Word to place a heavy burden on us, but to free us from the crushing burden of guilt & the righteous judgment of God.

The Commands are like fences that mark out the territory of the blessed life.

An interesting study was done some years ago in which children were left to play on a playground without any fence.

They tended to huddle in the center of the field close to the school house.

The vast expanse of play-field around them was left unused because they didn't know where the boundary was & felt insecure.

Then, the school put in a fence around the perimeter of the field, & the next day when the children were released for recess, they scrambled all over the field, to the very edges.

The fence marked off the boundary of what was safe, & now the children were safe in the knowledge of where they could go.

This is what God's commands are – the fence, the boundary markers for what's safe, for what's proper, for what defines & describes life as God designed it to be lived.

Living by God's Word is not a narrow & limiting thing – it's a safe thing that protects & guards our freedom to enjoy all that God has for us.

Second – the other thing we can glean from this story is that while God desires to bless us & has marked off the territory of blessing with His Word, there is another who is frantic to see us cursed.

The devil is a spiritual Balak who has one aim, to see us destroyed.

He can't do anything himself, so what he does is seduce & tempt us to leave the play-ground of God.

He brings appealing & enticing images up along the fence-line & has them whistle at us & draw our attention to them.

They are bait, seductive & appealing phantoms that aim at causing us to forget about the blessing we are currently enjoying, the freedom in which we stand, & instead hold forth the promise of something better.

But if we cross the fence-line & depart from the realm of God's blessing, we enter the blighted ground of the curse.

Satan & the demons have thousands of years of experience in tempting human beings & have the art of seduction wired.

They know how to make their trap look really good.

They know how to play on human desire & ship it into lust.

They know how to appeal to a man's & woman's need for acceptance & love.

So they send some appealing piece of bait into our field of vision, into our ears,

into our minds.

Remember, they can do nothing themselves, nothing but lie – & to hope that we will make a choice, take a step out of obedience into disobedience; out of blessing into the curse.

It will help us immensely if we will remember it is God's heart & purpose to bless us & that His commands mark out the realm of blessing.

At the same time we must remember that it is the devil's desire to destroy us, & that temptation, while appearing to offer a blessing, actually aims as our ruin.

4Then the LORD said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of the people & hang the offenders before the LORD, out in the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel." 5So Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baal of Peor."

The command was given for the elders & leaders of the tribes to go back to their respective places in the camp & do an inquiry.

Anyone who'd been seduced & worshiped Baal was to be executed by hanging.

6And indeed, one of the children of Israel came & presented to his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses & in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

There were many in Israel who understood what was happening with Baal was a grave error & that the plague which was even then killing hundreds of people was the judgment of God.

They gathered with Moses at the tabernacle to repent & pray.

And right in the middle of their meeting – a man passed by with a woman who was obviously one of the hussies who'd been recruited by Balak.

She was a Midianite, one of the allies of Moab during this unique attack on Israel.

V. 6 says that this guy "presented" her to his brethren, meaning he made no secret of what he was doing.

He may have been so high-minded & defiant in his sin because Moses' command to hang the offenders was *not* being carried out by the leaders & this was a one more act of rebellion meant to undercut Moses' authority.

7Now when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw *it*, he rose from among the congregation & took a javelin in his hand; 8and he went after the man of Israel into the tent & thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, & the woman through her body. So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel. 9And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand.

Phinehas was the grandson of Aaron, the son of Eleazar, the current high priest.

He would have been one who was attending this time of corporate repentance & prayer.

When He saw this rebel act so defiantly against God, he decided that if the

other leaders would not do their job, he'd do it for them.
He grabbed a spear & followed the guy to his tent.
As the two were in the very act of physical passion, he stuck it to them.
With their death, the plague halted.
There are some great lessons for us to learn fro this story – so we'll save them
for this Sunday!

Before we move on, there's a slight problem we ought to deal with in our text here.
V. 9 says 24,000 died in the plague. Yet 1 Cor. 10:8 says 23,000 died. Is this a
contradiction? It would appear so, until we take a closer look.
1 Cor. 10:8 actually says that the plague killed 23,000 "in one day."
The *total* plague which lasted a bit *more* than a day saw another thousand
killed.

10Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: **11**"Phinehas the son of
Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from
the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among
them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal.

12Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace; **13**and it
shall be to him & his descendants after him a covenant of an
everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, & made
atonement for the children of Israel.'"

Because of Phinehas' zeal for God, the high priesthood would pass from his father
to him & his descendants forever.

14Now the name of the Israelite who was killed, who was killed with
the Midianite woman, was Zimri the son of Salu, a leader of a father's
house among the Simeonites. **15**And the name of the Midianite woman
who was killed was Cozbi the daughter of Zur; he was head of the
people of a father's house in Midian.

Zimri & Cozbi were each well known among their own people.

Zimri is called a leader of the tribe of Simeon, so he may very well have been
one of this who had received the original command from God to hang the
offenders.

Instead of obeying, he set himself to rebel & to do so in a way that was a public
& blatant defiance of God.

16Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: **17**"Harass the Midianites,
& attack them; **18**for they harassed you with their schemes by which
they seduced you in the matter of Peor & in the matter of Cozbi, the
daughter of a leader of Midian, their sister, who was killed in the day
of the plague because of Peor."

Because of the role the Midianites played in the incident at Peor, God tells Israel
they are to act as His instrument of judgment on them.

They are to attack & harass the Midianites until they are wiped out.

Israel does so in ch. 31.

X. SECOND CENSUS Ch. 26

1And it came to pass, after the plague, that the LORD spoke to Moses

& Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, saying: ²“Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel from twenty years old & above, by their fathers’ houses, all who are able to go to war in Israel.”

This is now the second census taken of the nation.

The first was nearly 40 year before & numbered all those who’d come out of slavery in Egypt.

This census will number those who enter into Canaan.

The Book of Numbers takes its name from these 2 censuses.

³So Moses & Eleazar the priest spoke with them in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho, saying: ⁴“Take a census of the people from twenty years old & above, just as the LORD commanded Moses & the children of Israel who came out of the land of Egypt.”

In vs. 5-50 we get the totals of each tribe.

Tribe	Numbers 1	Numbers 26	Difference
Reuben	46,500	43,730	2,770
Simeon	59,300	22,200	37,100
Gad	45,650	40,500	5,150
Judah	74,600	76,500	1,900
Issachar	54,400	64,300	9,900
Zebulun	57,400	60,500	3,100
Ephraim	40,500	32,500	8,000
Manasseh	32,200	52,700	20,500
Benjamin	35,400	45,600	10,200
Dan	62,700	64,400	1,700
Asher	41,500	53,400	11,900
Naphtali	53,400	45,400	8,000
Summary	603,550	601,730	1,820

Some tribes grew while others diminished.

The big gainer was Manasseh while the big loser was Simeon.

The tribe of Simeon lost 37,000 – that’s over half their total population.

Zimri of ch. 25 had been of the tribe of Simeon. It seems the Simeonites were a problem & bore the brunt of the judgments God set on Israel during their time in the wilderness.

You may remember from our study in chapter 2 that the camp of Israel was shaped like a cross.

The shape of the camp would now look much more like a sword.

The eastern side lengthened while the opposite side, the western side diminished by more than half, forming a kind of blade & handle.

The northern side shortened while the southern lengthened, forming something of a hilt guard.

This was fitting now as the nation was being numbered & prepared for war.

The sword is also a symbol of the Word of God as we see in Ephesians 6 & Hebrew 4.

The people of Israel were called to live by the Word of God, so the shape of their camp took on the form of a sword.

While we're not going to read the census in vs. 5-50, I do want to note something at the beginning here in the numbering of the tribe of Reuben.

In v. 9 we read . . .

⁹The sons of Eliab were Nemuel, Dathan, & Abiram. These are the Dathan & Abiram, representatives of the congregation, who contended against Moses & Aaron in the company of Korah, when they contended against the LORD; ¹⁰and the earth opened its mouth & swallowed them up together with Korah when that company died, when the fire devoured two hundred & fifty men; & they became a sign. ¹¹Nevertheless the children of Korah did not die.

In Numbers 16 we read about the rebellion of Korah.

Dathan & Abiram were con-conspirators with him.

While Korah was a Levite, Dathan & Abiram were from the tribe of Reuben. They probably felt they deserved a greater role in leading the nation because they were of the firstborn tribe.

When the judgment of God came on them we read that the ground opened up & swallowed them & their entire families.

But here in v. 11 we're told that the children of Korah escaped.

The difference between Korah's kids & those of Dathan & Abiram is that Korah's sons & daughters knew their dad was whacked & they refused to stand with him. Dathan's & Abiram's sons supported their fathers' rebellion & hoped to gain from their power-play.

What's doubly interesting is discovering that the sons of Korah ended up becoming one of the 3 major divisions of worship leaders in the temple.

Several of the Psalms David wrote were dedicated to the sons of Korah. (42; 44-49; 84-85; 87-88)

They were also given the task of serving as gate-keepers, a trusted & important position in the ancient world.

So, the children of Korah distanced themselves from the terrible error of their father & ended up being mightily used in the service of God.

There's much talk today about the role that parents play in the development of their children. & indeed, parents do make a huge mark on their children.

But we must also recognize the fact that children are not *destined* to bear the errors & vices, nor the successes & virtues of their mother & father.

When Korah's children matured a bit, they realized that their father was a vain, proud, rebel & made a decision to not walk in his ways.

When his pride & rebellion manifested themselves in the conspiracy against Moses, they made sure to distance themselves from him, both relationally & physically.

Maybe you had a Korah for a father; a man who was vain, proud, sinful.

Maybe your mother was like the Midianite, Cozbi – a morally loose pagan.

It might be because of that your childhood was less than optimum.

Okay, great – make a decision to not repeat the errors of your parents.

Use their example as what *not* to be & do.

And don't think that because you come from a highly dysfunctional & messed up family you can't be used by God.

Korah's descendants became the worship leaders & gate-keepers of Israel.

51 These are those who were numbered of the children of Israel: six hundred & one thousand seven hundred & thirty.

52 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ⁵³“To these the land shall be divided as an inheritance, according to the number of names. ⁵⁴To a large *tribe* you shall give a larger inheritance, & to a small *tribe* you shall give a smaller inheritance. Each shall be given its inheritance according to those who were numbered of them. ⁵⁵But the land shall be divided by lot; they shall inherit according to the names of the tribes of their fathers. ⁵⁶According to the lot their inheritance shall be divided between the larger & the smaller.”

Canaan was to be divided into regions along borders that would later be described.

Then, the tribes would be assigned to their regions based on their size.

The larger tribes would receive the larger regions while the smaller tribes would take the smaller.

Which precise region each tribe received would be determined by casting lots, which the people believed would be directed by God.

In vs. 57-62 we get the census of the tribe of Levi – 23,000 males a month or older.

63 These are those who were numbered by Moses & Eleazar the priest, who numbered the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho. ⁶⁴But among these there was not a man of those who were numbered by Moses & Aaron the priest when they numbered the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Sinai. ⁶⁵For the LORD had said of them, “They shall surely die in the wilderness.” So there was not left a man of them, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh & Joshua the son of Nun.

The only ones left of the first census of those men 20 & older in Israel were Moses, Joshua & Caleb.

XI. ADDITIONAL LAWS Chs. 27-30

A. Zelophehad's Daughters 27:1-11

1 Then came the daughters of Zelophehad the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, from the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph; & these were the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, & Tirzah. **2** And they stood before Moses, before Eleazar the priest, & before the leaders & all the congregation, by the doorway of the tabernacle of meeting, saying:

3 “Our father died in the wilderness; but he was not in the company of those who gathered together against the LORD, in company with Korah, but he died in his own sin; & he had no sons. **4** Why should the name of our father be removed from among his family because he had no son? Give us a possession among our father's brothers.”

Zelophehad was one of those who'd been part of the original exodus from Egypt 40 years before.

As part of the banned generation he'd died of old age in the wilderness. He was the only male of that branch of the family of Hephher in the tribe of Manasseh.

Since he had 5 daughters but no sons, when the people crossed over into Canaan & the land was divvied up, his family would not be getting an allotment because it was naturally assumed all the daughters would marry into other families.

Their family name would be lost to the nation, & these 5 women had come to understand something about the purposes of the Lord.

They knew God wanted the nation to grow & prosper, not diminish.

So they went to Moses with their concern. How could they ensure their family name did not die out of the life of Israel?

⁵So Moses brought their case before the LORD.

⁶And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ⁷“The daughters of Zelophehad speak *what is* right; you shall surely give them a possession of inheritance among their father’s brothers, & cause the inheritance of their father to pass to them. ⁸And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘If a man dies & has no son, then you shall cause his inheritance to pass to his daughter. ⁹If he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers. ¹⁰If he has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father’s brothers. ¹¹And if his father has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to the relative closest to him in his family, & he shall possess it.’” & it shall be to the children of Israel a statute of judgment, just as the LORD commanded Moses.

While this is a rather complicated passage, what God is saying is that they must work to ensure that a family’s name & possession of land does not die out of the life of Israel.

Rather, they must seek the nearest of kin & that person is to hold it in the name of the family until a new generation rises in that family name.

This is where the issue of surrogacy came in to play in the nation of Israel.

It factors into several stories in the Bible, most notably, the story of Ruth & the ancestry of King David.

It also provides a great type of the redemption Christ brings.

God gave dominion of Earth to Man, but Adam forfeited that dominion & fell into bondage to sin & death.

Man’s next of kin, Jesus Christ, came to reclaim Earth for Man & to raise up a new humanity who could take possession of Earth once more.

You & I are that new humanity – & one day, this Earth will be finally liberated from the curse of sin into the glorious liberty of the Children of God, just as it says in Romans 8:20-21.

B. God Tells Moses His End Is Near 27:12-23

1. The command to end on Mt. Abarim (Nebo) 12-14

12Now the LORD said to Moses: “Go up into this Mount Abarim, & see the land which I have given to the children of Israel. **13**And when you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother was gathered. **14**For in the Wilderness of Zin, during the strife of the congregation, you rebelled against My command to hallow Me at the waters before their eyes.” (These are the waters of Meribah, at Kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin.)

If you're a mature Bible student, the mention of Mt. Abarim in v. 12 may be troubling – “Didn't Moses die on Mt. Nebo,” you ask?

Yes. Abarim is the name of the range of hills on the eastern side of the Jordan.

Since Nebo is the highest of them it is often just referred to as Abarim.

It's also called Pisgah, another title given it by one of the peoples who lived in that region.

The time has now come for Moses to retire his position.

God will let Moses *see* the Promised Land, but he cannot enter it.

This is his judgment for having so badly misrepresented God at the waters of Meribah in Kadesh, which we looked at in ch. 20.

2. A new leader is provided 15-23

15Then Moses spoke to the LORD, saying: **16**“Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, **17**who may go out before them & go in before them, who may lead them out & bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be like sheep which have no shepherd.”

This is remarkable!

Moses has just been told that he's going to end it in just a few days, & his chief concern is for the people.

If he's taken from the leadership of the nation, then who's going to lead them – that seems to be his only concern!

What a great servant's heart this is!

In Jim Collin's current best-selling book on business, *Good to Great*, he identifies several factors that have been common to all businesses which make the transition from merely good companies to *great* companies.

The first factor common to all those who make the break-through is that they are led by chief executives who are humble & selfless.

They are not the super-star egotistical celebrities who use the company as a means of self-promotion.

No, they are humble & self-effacing leaders who refuse to take the credit for the success.

Instead, they attribute the success to the rest of their management team & workers.

Every single one of them were far more concerned with the overall success of the company & well-being of the entire staff than they were their own position & comfort.

When they left their position of leadership as chief executive officer, they left

behind capable leaders who could carry on in the same tradition of excellence they had led in.

They understood that a great leader not only leads, he prepares the leadership after him to be great too.

That is totally Moses' heart here – he'd done a great job leading the people.

But now as he hears it's time to move on, he doesn't just sort of wash his hands of the responsibilities of leadership.

He pleads with God to raise up an even greater leader than he'd been.

Another thing to glean here is from the way Moses addresses God – as “Yahweh, the God of the spirits of all flesh.”

Friends, keep in mind that Moses lived in a world which thought of a god as being regional, territorial, & limited to just one place & group of people.

Moses has come to understand Yahweh as TOTALLY UNLIKE any of the gods worshipped by the rest of the world!

He is **THE** God, Who rules in the heavens over the entire realm of creation.

Though Moses addresses Him here by His covenant name – Yahweh, a name that was special to the nation of Israel alone – In fact, He was not just the God of Israel.

He's the God of all humanity! & He wants to be in covenant with all who will come to Him by faith.

18 And the LORD said to Moses: “Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom *is* the Spirit, & lay your hand on him; **19** set him before Eleazar the priest & before all the congregation, & inaugurate him in their sight. **20** And you shall give some of your authority to him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. **21** 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, & at his word they shall come in, he & all the children of Israel with him—all the congregation.”

God's answer to Moses' request for a new leader for Israel is Joshua, a man who'd already demonstrated his faithfulness to the Lord & his humble service of Moses. (Num. 11, 14)

V. 18 makes it clear that God had already put His Spirit on Joshua & was grooming him to take over for Moses.

The final step would be for Moses to make a public ceremony of officially handing Joshua the baton.

But Joshua's leadership would take a different form from Moses'.

Whereas God has spoken directly to Moses, Joshua would take his direction from the high priest, Eleazar.

Joshua would ask a question of God in the form of a yes/no query.

Eleazar would then consult the Urim & Thummim, those two stones kept in the pocket behind the breastplate of the high priest's uniform.

If the high priest drew out the Urim, the “YES” stone, then they would take that as the release, or loosing of the Lord to proceed.

The Thummim would be a “NO” from God.

22 So Moses did as the LORD commanded him. He took Joshua & set him before Eleazar the priest & before all the congregation. **23** And he laid his hands on him & inaugurated him, just as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses.

C. The Offerings Reviewed 28-29

In Chs. 28 & 29 we get a review of the offerings that were to be made to the Lord at different times.

These instructions were given to a new generation which had not heard the original commands regarding these things in the book of Leviticus 40 years before.

But since we did study them in depth a few months ago, we'll just summarize them tonight.

- 1. 28:1-8 – The daily offerings (morning & evening)**
- 2. 28:9-10 – Sabbath offerings**
- 3. 28:11-15 – Monthly offerings**
- 4. 28:16-25 – Passover offerings**
- 5. 28:26-31 – Pentecost offerings**
- 6. 29:1-6 – New Year/ Trumpets offerings**
- 7. 29:7-11 – Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement offerings**
- 8. 29:12-38 – Feast of Tabernacles offerings**

In v. 39 it ends . . .

39 These you shall present to the LORD at your appointed feasts (besides your vowed offerings & your freewill offerings) as your burnt offerings & your grain offerings, as your drink offerings & your peace offerings.” **40** So Moses told the children of Israel everything, just as the LORD commanded Moses.

D. Rules Concerning Vows 30

1 Then Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes concerning the children of Israel, saying, “This is the thing which the LORD has commanded:

This was a gathering of the leaders of the people.

Moses knew his time was short & wanted to pass on to them principles he knew were crucial about what it means to walk with God in integrity.

God had revealed His heart to Moses about these things, & now Moses is faithfully repeating it to them.

2 If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.

God's people must keep their promises, specially the oaths & vows they take that invoke the name of God.

Even if keeping that vow means investing & spending time & resources which were not known when the promise was originally made.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Mat. 5:34-37, Jesus said that His disciples ought not make vows at all.

The reason why is because they ought to be people of such honesty & integrity, a vow would be superfluous.

What does a vow imply? It implies that we are basically *untrust-worthy*.

It assumes others have reason to not believe us when we say a thing & the vow is a protest that we really mean what we say.

If deceit & dishonesty were simply not a part of our character, vows & oaths would be totally unnecessary.

The vows God is referring to in this ch. are promises of devotion & religious service people make to God.

It might be the promise of a future offering, a double or triple tithe, a special gift, a time of special service; it could be anything a person makes in good faith to the Lord.

But then as time passes, the cost of fulfilling the promise becomes more pressing, & the motivation behind it weakens, the person begins to falter in their determination to keep it.

God says – “Keep you vow. Fulfill what you promised to Me.”

Have you ever done that – felt stirred to make some promise to God?

Maybe you were at a retreat & the Lord was oh, so close!

Or maybe you were alone in a time of personal worship & devotion & the Spirit just came on you so powerfully.

Your heart was caught up in rapturous praise to God & you made a vow to give Him something.

Then you came home from the retreat, you left your private place of prayer – & the vow went into the void of just one more neglected promise.

As the Lord reminds you of that thing, do it! & do it without question or hesitation!

Before we can deal honestly with one another, we have to be men & women of integrity before our God.

3“Or if a woman makes a vow to the LORD, & binds herself by some agreement while in her father’s house in her youth, 4and her father hears her vow & the agreement by which she has bound herself, & her father holds his peace, then all her vows shall stand, & every agreement with which she has bound herself shall stand. 5But if her father overrules her on the day that he hears, then none of her vows nor her agreements by which she has bound herself shall stand; & the LORD will release her, because her father overruled her.

6“If indeed she takes a husband, while bound by her vows or by a rash utterance from her lips by which she bound herself, 7and her husband hears it, & makes no response to her on the day that he hears, then her vows shall stand, & her agreements by which she bound herself shall stand. 8But if her husband overrules her on the

day that he hears *it*, he shall make void her vow which she took & what she uttered with her lips, by which she bound herself, & the LORD will release her.

This might seem like a terrible double standard that's applied to women, but really, it was a *protection* of them.

Because in that culture & time women were completely under the dominion of men, their lives narrowly defined by the rules their fathers or husband's place on them, the vast majority of women were not trained to think critically as women in the Western world are today.

Their lives were ordered by the rule of the male authorities in their lives.

So, it could be that if a young woman or wife made a vow to the Lord, it might very well end up being countermanded by her father or husband – & this would put her in the hard place of being bound by an oath to God while at the same time having to comply with her father or husband.

The relief valve for this tension was that on the day that a father or husband learned of his daughter's or wife's vow, he could disavow it, negate it, make it null & void & the woman would be released from it.

If, however, he failed to nullify it on the same day in which he first heard about it, then it was HE, not the woman who would be bound by it's terms!

In other words, he had to do everything he could to make sure his daughter or wife kept the vow, & if not, then he was guilty for breaking it.

9“Also any vow of a widow or a divorced woman, by which she has bound herself, shall stand against her.

Because there was no man who could disavow her promise.

10“If she vowed in her husband's house, or bound herself by an agreement with an oath, ¹¹and her husband heard *it*, & made no response to her & did not overrule her, then all her vows shall stand, & every agreement by which she bound herself shall stand. ¹²But if her husband truly made them void on the day he heard *them*, then whatever proceeded from her lips concerning her vows or concerning the agreement binding her, it shall not stand; her husband has made them void, & the LORD will release her. ¹³Every vow & every binding oath to afflict her soul, her husband may confirm it, or her husband may make it void. ¹⁴Now if her husband makes no response whatever to her from day to day, then he confirms all her vows or all the agreements that bind her; he confirms them, because he made no response to her on the day that he heard *them*. ¹⁵But if he does make them void after he has heard *them*, then he shall bear her guilt.”

There it is. If the husband affirms his wife's oath by not nullifying it, but then doesn't give her the means by which she can fulfill her vow, he bears the guilt.

16These *are* the statutes which the LORD commanded Moses, between a man & his wife, & between a father & his daughter in her youth in her father's house.

There's a comforting picture in this of our relationship to Jesus as our heavenly

Groom.

We don't know what the future holds. We don't have a clue what's going to happen tomorrow that makes the promise we make to the Lord today impossible – but Jesus knows.

We don't know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future.
& Jesus knows how the best of our intentions today often turn into the forgotten promises of tomorrow because our hearts are fickle.

It's been oft said that it's a woman's prerogative to change her mind.

& how often that seems to be the case with us, the Bride of Christ.

So Jesus, our heavenly Groom, intercedes before the throne of God on our behalf.

He intercepts our prayers, our promises, vows, & best intentions, & rewords them according to the perfect will of the Father.

Hebrews 7:25 says that Jesus makes un-ceasing intercession for us before the Father.