

**Second Baptist Church of Doylestown**  
**Bible Study Notes**  
**3-2-22**  
**Numbers 31**

**Vengeance on the Midianites – Verses 1-2**

**<sup>1</sup> The LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup>“Take vengeance on the Midianites for the Israelites. After that, you will be gathered to your people.”**

**31:1-2** The Midianites were a nomadic people who descended from Abraham and his second wife, Keturah. The land of Midian lay far to the south of Canaan, but large bands of Midianites roamed many miles from their homeland, searching for grazing areas for their flocks. Such a group was near the Promised Land when the Israelites arrived. When Moses fled from Egypt (Exodus 2), he took refuge in the land of Midian. His wife and father-in-law were Midianites. Despite this alliance, the Israelites and Midianites were always bitter enemies.

**Moses Organizes The Army To Battle Midian – Verses 3-6**

**<sup>3</sup> So Moses said to the people, “Arm some of your men to go to war against the Midianites so that they may carry out the LORD’s vengeance on them. <sup>4</sup> Send into battle a thousand men from each of the tribes of Israel.” <sup>5</sup> So twelve thousand men armed for battle, a thousand from each tribe, were supplied from the clans of Israel. <sup>6</sup> Moses sent them into battle, a thousand from each tribe, along with Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, who took with him articles from the sanctuary and the trumpets for signaling.**

**31:3-6** He sent them to war with Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, with the holy articles and the signal trumpets in his hand: Significantly, the priests went with the nation into this battle, and the priests went with the holy articles.

**The Battle Fought, Midian Defeated, And Spoil Take – Verses 7-11**

**<sup>7</sup> They fought against Midian, as the LORD commanded Moses, and killed every man. <sup>8</sup> Among their victims were Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur and Reba—the five kings of Midian. They also killed Balaam son of Beor with the sword. <sup>9</sup> The Israelites captured the Midianite women and children and took all the Midianite herds, flocks and goods as plunder. <sup>10</sup> They burned all the towns where the Midianites had settled, as well as all their camps. <sup>11</sup> They took all the plunder and spoils, including the people and animals, <sup>12</sup> and brought the captives, spoils and plunder to Moses and Eleazar the priest and the Israelite assembly at their camp on the plains of Moab, by the Jordan across from Jericho.**

**31:7** And they warred against the Midianites: According to the custom of the day, all the males were killed and the women and children were taken as servants, with all the possessions being taken as spoil.

**31:8-11** Balaam the son of Beor they also killed with the sword: Balaam, who had masterminded the strategy by which Israel would be seduced into sexual immorality and idolatry, and who did it all for money, was now dead. He was judged by the vengeance of God, and his money did him no good.

## **Moses Is Angry When Israel Keeps The Women Of Midian Following The Attack Against Midian – Verses 13-20**

<sup>13</sup> Moses, Eleazar the priest and all the leaders of the community went to meet them outside the camp. <sup>14</sup> Moses was angry with the officers of the army—the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds—who returned from the battle. <sup>15</sup> “Have you allowed all the women to live?” he asked them. <sup>16</sup> “They were the ones who followed Balaam’s advice and enticed the Israelites to be unfaithful to the LORD in the Peor incident, so that a plague struck the LORD’s people. <sup>17</sup> Now kill all the boys. And kill every woman who has slept with a man, <sup>18</sup> but save for yourselves every girl who has never slept with a man. <sup>19</sup> “Anyone who has killed someone or touched someone who was killed must stay outside the camp seven days. On the third and seventh days you must purify yourselves and your captives. <sup>20</sup> Purify every garment as well as everything made of leather, goat hair or wood.”

**31:14-16** Because Midianites were responsible for enticing Israel into Baal worship, God commanded Israel to destroy them (25:16-18). But Israel took the women as captives, rather than killing them, probably because of the tempting enticements of the Midianites’ sinful lifestyle. When we discover sin in our lives, we must deal with it completely. When the Israelites later entered the Promised Land, it was their indifferent attitude to sin that eventually ruined them. Moses dealt with the sin promptly and completely. When God points out sin, move quickly to remove it from your life.

**31:16** Balaam’s story (22:1–24:25), taken alone, would lead us to believe that Balaam was an honest and God-fearing man. But here is the first of much biblical evidence that Balaam was not the good man he might appear to be. For more on Balaam, see the notes on 22:9 and 25:1-3 and Balaam’s profile.

### **The Purification Of The Spoil – Verses 21-24**

<sup>21</sup> Then Eleazar the priest said to the soldiers who had gone into battle, “This is what is required by the law that the LORD gave Moses: <sup>22</sup> Gold, silver, bronze, iron, tin, lead <sup>23</sup> and anything else that can withstand fire must be put through the fire, and then it will be clean. But it must also be purified with the water of cleansing. And whatever cannot withstand fire must be put through that water. <sup>24</sup> On the seventh day wash your clothes and you will be clean. Then you may come into the camp.”

**31:21-22** Everything that can endure fire, you shall put through the fire, and it shall be clean: All the material spoil had to either be purified by fire or cleansed with water. Only then was it fit for use by God among the people of God.

**31:22** Fire and it shall be purified with the water of purification: God uses the same means to purify believers today - the fire of trials and the water of washing. When God wants to wash us clean, He not only uses the waters of baptism, but also the ministry of the Word as described in [Ephesians 5:26](#): That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word.

### **The Spoil Is Divided Among The Soldiers And The Nation At Large – Verses 25 - 31**

<sup>25</sup>The LORD said to Moses, <sup>26</sup> “You and Eleazar the priest and the family heads of the community are to count all the people and animals that were captured. <sup>27</sup> Divide the spoils equally between the soldiers who took part in the battle and the rest of the community. <sup>28</sup> From the soldiers who fought in the battle, set apart as tribute for the LORD one out of every five hundred, whether people, cattle, donkeys or sheep. <sup>29</sup> Take this tribute from their half share and give it to Eleazar the priest as the LORD’s part. <sup>30</sup> From the Israelites’ half, select one out of every fifty, whether people, cattle, donkeys, sheep or other animals. Give them to the Levites, who are responsible

for the care of the LORD's tabernacle." <sup>31</sup> So Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the LORD commanded Moses.

**31:25-30** Moses told the Israelites to give a portion of the war spoils to God. Another portion was to go to the people who remained behind. Similarly, the money we earn is not ours alone. Everything we possess comes directly or indirectly from God and ultimately belongs to him. We should return a portion to him (a "tribute") and also share a portion with those in need.

#### **The Spoil Is Divided Among The Soldiers And The Nation At Large – Verses 32 - 50**

<sup>32</sup> The plunder remaining from the spoils that the soldiers took was 675,000 sheep, <sup>33</sup> 72,000 cattle, <sup>34</sup> 61,000 donkeys <sup>35</sup> and 32,000 women who had never slept with a man. <sup>36</sup> The half share of those who fought in the battle was: 337,500 sheep, <sup>37</sup> of which the tribute for the LORD was 675; <sup>38</sup> 36,000 cattle, of which the tribute for the LORD was 72; <sup>39</sup> 30,500 donkeys, of which the tribute for the LORD was 61; <sup>40</sup> 16,000 people, of whom the tribute for the LORD was 32. <sup>41</sup> Moses gave the tribute to Eleazar the priest as the LORD's part, as the LORD commanded Moses. <sup>42</sup> The half belonging to the Israelites, which Moses set apart from that of the fighting men— <sup>43</sup> the community's half—was 337,500 sheep, <sup>44</sup> 36,000 cattle, <sup>45</sup> 30,500 donkeys <sup>46</sup> and 16,000 people. <sup>47</sup> From the Israelites' half, Moses selected one out of every fifty people and animals, as the LORD commanded him, and gave them to the Levites, who were responsible for the care of the LORD's tabernacle. <sup>48</sup> Then the officers who were over the units of the army—the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds—went to Moses <sup>49</sup> and said to him, "Your servants have counted the soldiers under our command, and not one is missing. <sup>50</sup> So we have brought as an offering to the LORD the gold articles each of us acquired—armlets, bracelets, signet rings, earrings and necklaces—to make atonement for ourselves before the LORD."

**31:48-50** After carefully accounting for all their men, the officers discovered that not one soldier had been lost in battle. At once they thanked God. After going through tough times, we should be quick to thank God for delivering us and protecting us from severe loss.

#### **The Spoil Is Divided Among The Soldiers And The Nation At Large – Verses 51 - 54**

<sup>51</sup> Moses and Eleazar the priest accepted from them the gold—all the crafted articles. <sup>52</sup> All the gold from the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds that Moses and Eleazar presented as a gift to the LORD weighed 16,750 shekels. <sup>53</sup> Each soldier had taken plunder for himself. <sup>54</sup> Moses and Eleazar the priest accepted the gold from the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds and brought it into the tent of meeting as a memorial for the Israelites before the LORD.

**31:48-50** All the gold of the offering they offered to the Lord: A portion of the spoil also was to be given to the LORD. Even with the spoils of war, God wanted Israel to have the heart of givers.