

Numbers 25-30 • Chapter Study

INTRO

A Tussle with Moab Chs. 22-25

Pastor Jeff covered the interesting story of Balaam in chs 22-24 last Wed. then went a bit deeper into it Sunday in select vs of ch 25.

So we'll pick it up there tonight . . .

Israel is at the end of their 40 yrs in the wilderness.

A new generation has risen that's ready to enter the PL.

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

To their S lies the region of Moab.

Balak, the Moabite king, knew Israel's God had brought the Egyptians, who'd dominated the area for a long time, low.

And more recently Israel had defeated his 2 N'n neighbors, Amorites who themselves defeated Moab & stolen their land.

So Israel had beaten people who'd beaten them.

Balak panicked, assuming Moab was next on the Israelite conquer- list, even though they'd made it clear they were just passing thru.

So he sent for a what we might call a sorcerer named Balaam who lived nearby.

Balak thought Balaam could whip up some incantation that would remove Israel's spiritual-mojo; some hex that would curse them.

As Jeff shared, ***Balaam is one of the Bible's most interesting & mysterious characters*** because he understands the true nature of prophecy & Israel's unique status as people in covenant with God and all that means.

Balak has promised Balaam a rich reward if he'll come to curse Israel.

Balaam tells him it doesn't work that way.

Prophecy doesn't ***make*** reality; it only ***expresses*** it. And Israel is blessed by God.

But like many rulers who think just wanting something makes it happen, Balak tells Balaam to go ahead and do his thing.

3 times, Balaam ends up pronouncing a blessing over Israel, which infuriates Balak to no end.

The story appears to end at v25 of ch 24 . . .

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

That seems the end of the matter, but it isn't.

Before Balaam left, he gave Balak some advice we'll learn about later.

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

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

Ba'al was the chief deity of several Canaanite kingdoms.

His name means "lord // possessor" – as in the one who holds the rein & controls.

Ba'al was the sky-god who controlled the rain, lightning & thunder.

For the ancients, a thunderclap was by far the most powerful thing they experienced.

It's inevitable that lightning would be attributed to their chief deity.

Because human beings occupy a location, the ancients assumed their gods did so as well.

Moab said Ba'al dwelt at ***Peor***, a peak in Moab where they'd built a shrine to him.

So, as Israel was camped there in Acacia Grove, the women of Moab seduced the men of Israel & enticed them to worship Ba'al.

AND THAT Was all the doing of Balaam. //

We know it was because of what Jesus said to the church at Pergamos in Rev. 2:14

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 was greedy; he wanted the rich reward Balak promised if he'd curse Israel.

But when Balaam was stymied because he knew he couldn't curse what God blessed, he started thinking of a way around it all.

Israel was in covenant with YHWH; like a marriage.

As long as Israel was faithful, God's blessing and protection was on them.

But if Israel was *unfaithful* & committed *spiritual adultery*, they'd know God's *judgment*.

There's a good chance some of the reward Balak offered Balaam included some, what shall we call them? "Professional Ladies."

Balaam knew how appealing they were. So he devised a plan . . .

Get some of the lookers to dress up in seductive apparel, then head out where the Israelite men could get a good look.

Seduce them! Saying, "How'd you like to see how WE worship our god?"

Which, besides the obligatory sacrifice, included sex in front of an image of Ba'al.

It was idolatry!

They were forsaking YHWH in favor of Ba'al.

They were *literally joining with Ba'al of Peor*.

Balaam knew that would shift God's blessing to judgment.

The plan worked & a plague began to sweep thru the camp.

Balaam understood God wants to bless His people!

That's His *main* posture toward us; His default setting.

As we abide in Him, blessing flows in a steady stream.

Obedience to God is important because it safeguards God's blessing.

God's commands aren't a heavy burden meant to make life hard.

They're a fence marking out a blessed life.

A study some time back set children loose on a playground without any fence.

They huddled 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 children felt safe in the knowledge of where they *could* go, not where they couldn't.

God's commands are a fence, the boundary marker for what's safe, proper, for what allows us all to flourish.

Why do we so often find ourselves plastered against the fence, looking thru its links at what lies beyond, scheming how to get thru the fence?

Why do we rail at the fence maker for being so unfair for making the fence, instead of running around enjoying all the green grass, playground, swings set, ball fields?

Why is Eve parked at the base of a single tree, staring at its fruit while a voice tells her to go ahead and give it a try, when she lives in an orchard & vineyard with dozens of other trees to satisfy her every need?

Obedience to the God Who made, loves, and wants the best for us isn't narrow & limiting.

It's the *ONLY SANE* thing to do.

Obedience isn't bondage; it's the surest route to maintaining our freedom.

Another lesson to glean from all this is that while God desires to bless us & has marked off the territory of blessing with His Word, there's *another* who's frantic to see us cursed.

Satan is a spiritual Balak with one aim: To destroy us.

He can't *do* anything himself, so he seduces & tempts us to leave God's playground.

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

They're bait; seductive & appealing phantoms that aim at causing us to forget about the blessing we're enjoying, the freedom we stand in, & 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 yrs experience in tempting human beings.

They're masters of the art of seduction.

They know how to make their trap look **really good**.

They know how to play on our desires & ship them into lust.

They know how to appeal to our need for acceptance & love.

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

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

It helps immensely to remember **only w/God** lies blessing.

The devil aims to do naught but steal, kill, destroy.

⁴ Then 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." ⁵ So Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baal of Peor."

The tribal leaders were to conduct an inquiry.

Anyone who'd worshiped Baal was to be executed.

Before we read v6, we need a clear idea of what's going on

Not **all** the men of Israel were hooking up with these Moabite babes & worshipping Ba'al.

Many of the Israelites understood the plague killing off so many was God's judgment.

They gathered at the tabernacle to pray.

There they are, weeping and crying out when

⁶ And 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.

The command's already been issued to the tribal leaders to execute idolaters.

The source of the plague's been identified as God's judgment on **JUST THIS KIND OF SIN**.

But this guy makes a public show of his defiance & rebellion.

He doesn't sneak this woman into his tent to see his baseball card collection.

He parades her in front of everyone, making it clear what he intends to do with her.

She's a Midianite; E'n allies of Moab in this campaign against Israel.

To catch the outrageous audacity of this guy, imagine this . . .

Let's say there's a rash of overdoses and deaths due to drugs in our community.

Neighbors and friends are dropping left & right.

Many individuals & families in our church are impacted and in grief.

So we have a night of prayer; pleading for God to show mercy.

And right in the middle of it, a guy walks in, sets up a water pipe up here and starts smoking a bowl of hooch.

And the whole time he's alternately mad-dogging the security team, & smiling at others, inviting them to come smoke a bowl with him.

THAT's a **mild version** of what's going on here in Num 25.

What happens next in our text is NOT what we'd want someone on the security team to do.

⁷ Now 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; ⁸ and 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. ⁹ And those who died in the plague were 24,000.

Phinehas was the high priest Aaron's grandson.

So he's there **at** the tabernacle prayer meeting.

They rebel's defiance grated on him.

He wasn't just sinning, his **boldness** would encourage others to the same rebellion if it wasn't dramatically stopped.

So he grabbed a spear & went to the guy's tent.

As they were in the act of intercourse, he stuck it to them.

With their death, the plague halted.

Obviously, that's not the way we deal with sin today. We don't execute idolaters.

At least not literally, physically.

But note carefully what God did in response to Phinehas's zeal: He stopped the plague.

While weren't not to slay sinners, we **ought to have** the kind of zeal Phineas had toward dealing with sin and rebellion **within ourselves**.

Look at what God says about Phineas . . .

¹⁰ Then 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. ¹² Therefore 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.'"

Phinehas' zeal for God marked him & his descendants as worthy of the high priesthood.

¹⁴ Now 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 well known because they were leaders.

¹⁶ Then 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 told Israel they were to be His instrument of judgment on them.

Israel was to attack the Midianites until they were wiped out. They do so in ch31.

The SECOND CENSUS • Ch26

¹ And 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 20 yrs old & above, by their fathers' houses, all who are able to go to war in Israel."

This is the 2nd census.

It comes some 38 yrs after the 1st at the beginning of the book.

That numbered all the men 20 & older who'd come out of Egypt.

Most of them have died off. These are now those who've been born and raised in the wilderness.

³ So 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 20 yrs old & above, just as the Lord commanded Moses & the children of Israel who came out of the land of Egypt."

In vs5-50 we get the totals of each tribe.

Tribe	1 st #ing - Ch 1	2 nd #ing - Ch 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
Total	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; **over half their total population**.

Zimri was a Simeonite.

His rebellious defiance may have been indicative of other Simeonites who bore the brunt of the judgments God sent.

You may remember from our study in ch2 looking from above, the camp of Israel was shaped like a cross. That now looked more like a sword.

The E'n side lengthened while the W'n diminished by more than half.

The N'n shortened while the S'n lengthened, forming 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 Eph 6 & Heb 4.

Israel was called to live by God's Word, so the shape of their camp took the form of a sword.

While we're not going to read the 46 vs of the census, we should note something in the count of Reuben. v9 . . .

⁹ The 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; ¹⁰ & the earth opened its mouth & swallowed them up together w/Korah when that company died, when the fire devoured 250 men; & they became a sign. ¹¹ Nevertheless the children of Korah did not die. We read about Korah's rebellion in ch16.

Here we learn while Dathan & Abiram's **entire families** were doomed, **Korah's kids escaped**.

As they matured, they realized dad was a vain, proud, rebel & distanced themselves from him; **literally!** So when the earth opened, they weren't there; whereas Dathan's & Abiram's kids **were**; they supported the rebellion.

The sons of Korah became 1 of the major divisions of worship leaders in the temple.

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

They served as gate-keepers of the temple; an important position in the ancient world.

There's much talk today about the role parents play in the development of their children.

And indeed, parents **do** make a huge mark on their children.

But we must recognize that children aren't **doomed** to bear the errors & vices, nor **destined for** the successes & virtues of mom & dad.

Maybe you had a Korah-father; a vain, proud, sinful wretch.

Maybe you had a Cozbi-mom; selfish & immoral.

Your childhood may have been less than optimum.

Make a decision to not repeat the errors of your parents.

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

Don't assume because you come from a dysfunctional & messed up family you can't be used by God.

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

After 46 vs giving the count of the tribes

⁵¹ These *are* those who were numbered of the children of Israel: 601,730. 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. ⁵⁴ To 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. ⁵⁵ But the land shall be divided by lot; they shall inherit according to the names of the tribes of their fathers. ⁵⁶ According to the lot their inheritance shall be divided btwn the larger & the smaller."

Once they crossed over into Canaan, the land was to be divided into regions along borders later described.

Larger tribes got more land.

The **basic** areas they'd take would be assigned by casting lots.

Vs57-62 are the census of the tribe of Levi.

Whereas in the general census it was men 20 yrs and up who were 3'd; with Levi, it's males a month and up.

There were 23,000.

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. ⁶⁴ But 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. ⁶⁵ For 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 survivors from the 1st census 20 & older were Moses, Joshua & Caleb.

ADDITIONAL LAWS • Chs. 27-30

Chs 27-30 are some additional laws with some interesting tidbits thrown in.

Zelophehad’s Daughters • 27:1-11

The first is an interlude that pops up because of a question regarding the inheritance of land.

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 had been a slave in Egypt who’d been part of the original exodus 40 yrs before.

Like the rest of his peers, he’d died of old age in the wilderness.

He was the ***last male*** of a family in the tribe of Manasseh named Hopher.

If he’d had a son, when they arrived in Canaan, he’d have been given a plot of land that would have been theirs forever.

But all he had was 5 daughters; who’d in all likelihood marry & become part of their husband’s family & name.

So Hopher’s portion & name would be ***erased; lost***.

These women had been paying attention & understand something about the purposes of God for Israel.

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

So they took their concern to Moses.

How could they ensure their family name wasn’t lost?

⁵ So Moses brought their case before the Lord. ⁶ And 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. ⁸ And 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. ⁹ If he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers. ¹⁰ If he has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father’s brothers. ¹¹ And 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.

God says they must ensure a family’s name doesn’t die out of the life of Israel.

So, if there’s no son, daughters can inherit the land.

This was a pretty serious departure from the practice of all other ancient cultures where women typically had little to no legal standing & could NOT inherit land.

If there were no daughters, then the land was to be given to the nearest male relative.

But there’s a problem: If a daughter inherits, what happens when she marries?

Her land would then become the possession of her husband & pass into the holdings of another family.

Ch36 deals with that.

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

¹² Now 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.)

Abarim is a range of hills on the E side of the Jordan. Mt. Nebo is its highest peak.

It’s a couple months yet before Moses passes, but God starts him thinking about it & the changes that need to be made in his role as leader of Israel.

Moe will get to **see** the PL, but he can’t enter it because of his grievous misstep at Meribah in Kadesh back in ch20 when he struck the rock in anger and misrepresented God before the people.

¹⁵ Then 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!

Moe’s just been told his 40 yr long assignment is wrapping up.

But instead of being consumed with self-pity, he’s concerned for the people. **Who’ll lead them?**

What a **servant’s heart** this is!

In Jim Collin’s best-seller, **Good to Great**, he identifies several factors that have been common to organizations that make the transition from merely good to **great**.

The 1st factor common to them all is that they’re led by **chief executives** who are **humble & selfless**.

They eschew being turned into super-star celebrities who use the company as a means of self-promotion.

They’re self-effacing leaders who attribute their success to their team.

Their concern was the success of the organization & well-being of the staff, rather than their own comfort.

And to that end, when they eventually ended their role as chief executive, they left behind capable leaders who carried on in the same tradition of excellence they had led in.

They understood a great leader not only leads, he/she prepares great leadership.

That’s Moses’ heart here. He’d done a great job leading the people.

As God tells him his term’s ending, he doesn’t say “good riddance!”

He **pleads** with God to raise up **an even greater leader** for Israel.

Some leaders want it to be all about them.

They want the best days to be the days they led.

They don’t want any later leader to outshine or out-perform them.

THAT is not a servant and it’s not great leadership in God’s Kingdom.

The **great** leader isn’t the summit & height of success; she/he is simply the shoulders for others to stand on.

On another note: Check out how Moses addresses God in v16: “Yahweh, **the God of the spirits of all flesh**.”

This is the 15th C BC; a world that believed gods were territorial & limited to just 1 place & group.

Moses knows Yahweh as something completely different.

He’s **THE** God **Who rules over all creation**.

He’s “**Yahweh**” the **covenant** God of Israel. But He’s in truth the God of ALL PEOPLE.

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 answers Moses’ request for a new leader by appointing **Joshua**.

Joshua had a demonstrated faithfulness to God & loyalty to Moses.

V18 says God **had already** put His Spirit on Joshua.

That means it’s likely he was one of those 70 men God picked to be a judge in ch11 & help lead Israel.

The final step in Joshua’s preparation to take over for Moses was a public ceremony where he’d officially hand Joshua the baton.

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

Whereas God spoke 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 stones kept in the pocket behind the breastplate of the high priest's uniform.

If the high priest drew out the Urim, = "YES." // The Thummim = "NO."

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.

The Offerings Reviewed 28-29

Chs 28 & 29 are a **review** of the offerings to be made at different times.

They're given here because this is a new gen from the one that had heard these things nearly 4 decades before.

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

29:39 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.

Rules Concerning Vows Ch. 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:

Knowing his time was wrapping up, Moses gathers the tribal leaders.

It's a classic case of, "I've only got a few days left & there's some stuff I gotta' say b4 I'm not here to say it."

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.

Israel is **in covenant WITH** God; they are **HIS PEOPLE**. That's to **mean** something!

It's to mean they become more and more LIKE Him.

Have you noticed about older couples how they often look like each other?

Not all, of course, but those who love each other and have truly "done life together."

One may be tall the other short; skinny & wide; but they simply belong together!

They **complement** each other; **fit** together.

They complete each other's sentences.

They still talk with one another, but don't need to because they know each other so well they know what the other's thinking and will say.

They know how many times the other will sneeze.

What their snoring sounds like; how they squeeze the toothpaste.

God's people ought to become so like Him as they walk and live with Him, that they become like Him.

Since He keeps His promises, they ought to keep theirs.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said His disciples ought not make vows at all.

We ought to be people of such integrity, a vow is superfluous.

Think about it: A vow implies a **lack** of integrity.

It assumes others have reason to believe the person making the vow is dishonest; untrustworthy.

It's a protest against the assumption the person hears a promise and assumes they maker won't keep it. If I'm a person of integrity who will keep my promise, why do I need to make a vow?

The vows referred to here are promises of devotion & service to God.

It might be a future offering, a double tithe, a special gift, a time of special service; anything someone makes in good faith to God.

But as time passes, the **cost** of keeping the vow becomes real; the motivation behind it dims.

God says, "Keep your vow. Fulfill what you promised."

Have you ever done that; been stirred to make some promise to God?

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

You were alone in a time of worship & the Spirit just came on you so powerfully.

You made a vow to give God something.

But the retreat ended and you came home.

That blessed time with God morphed into your 9-5'er.

And that vow, that promise that was **so earnest & fervent**, cooled off like left over taco.

As the Spirit reminds you of that, do it! Without question or hesitation.

How can we deal honestly with 1 another, if we haven't' with God?

Having mentioned vows, in vs3-16, God gives specific instructions regarding vows made by women

Young women who are daughters in their father's home, wives, & widows.

Crucial to understanding what's going on in these vs is to remember in that culture, women were completely under the dominion of men.

Their lives were confined & proscribed by the rules a father or husband place on them.

So, a daughter or wife might make a vow to God her father or husband refused to go along with.

That put her in the awkward position of having to either disobey God or her husband.

God provided a relief valve for this tension by saying a father or husband could veto his daughter or wife's vow if he did so on the same day he learned of it.

If he didn't the vow stood & had to be kept.

Either way, the man became **ultimately responsible** for the vow.

If he vetoed it, he had to have a good reason for doing so, or he'd come off as less devoted to God than his wife.

So these guidelines for vows made by women weren't demeaning to women; they **protected** them.

¹⁶ These *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.

Repeatedly in the NT, the Church is called The Bride of Christ.

He is our Heavenly Groom.

And as Heb 7 says, He ever lives to make intercession for us with the Father.

What a comfort to realize Jesus, as our divine husband, intercepts our prayers, vows, promises—edits them and passes them on to the Father according to the divine will.

We don't know what the future holds. But we know Who holds the future.