

Psalm 106 Commentary

NOTE: This Verse by Verse Commentary page is part of an ongoing project to add notes to each verse of the Bible. Therefore many verses do not yet have notes, but if the Lord tarries and gives me breath, additions will follow in the future. The goal is to edify and equip you for the work of service (Eph 4:12-13-[note](#)) that the Lord God might be glorified in your life and in His Church. Amen (Isa 61:3b, Mt 5:16-[note](#))

Psalm 106:28 They joined themselves also to Baal-peor, And ate sacrifices offered to the dead.

- **joined (KJV):** Nu 25:1-3,5 31:16 De 4:3 32:17 Jos 22:17 Ho 9:10 Rev 2:14
- **of the dead (KJV):** Ps 115:4-8 Jer 10:8-10 1Co 10:19,20

Greek (Septuagint) kai etelesthe (3SAPI:teleo: completing someth. bring to an end, conclude, complete Mt 7.28; fulfill, perform Lu 2.39) Israel to Beelphegor kai orgisthe (3SAPI: Mt 5:22) thumo kurios to Israel

CSB They aligned themselves with Baal of Peor and ate sacrifices offered to lifeless gods.

ESV Then they yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor, and ate sacrifices offered to the dead;

KJV They joined themselves also unto Baalpeor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead.

NET They worshiped Baal of Peor, and ate sacrifices offered to the dead.

NIV They yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor and ate sacrifices offered to lifeless gods;

NLT Then our ancestors joined in the worship of Baal at Peor; they even ate sacrifices offered to the dead!

YLT And they are coupled to Baal-Peor, And eat the sacrifices of the dead,

ISRAEL'S LOATHSOME LIVING: THEIR APOSTASY IN MOAB

One might subtitle this section "A tragic detour on the Way to Canaan." While en route to the Promised Land, the people were seduced into idolatry, probably a fertility cult, by Midianite women (Nu. 25:1–3). God judged the nation by sending a plague, which righteous Phinehas stopped by impaling a Midianite woman and an Israelite man with a javelin (Nu 25:6–8).

See summary in notes on Ps 106:31

Eric Lane summarizes Ps 106:28-31 - Forty years later they had reached Moab. They had overcome several enemies and taken possession of their lands and now stood on the brink of entering Canaan. But right on the point of victory they commit the worst sin of all—apostasy. Numbers 25 records how, where Balaam had failed to persuade God to curse them, the Moabite women succeeded in luring them into immorality and idolatry. Here it was not a god of their own making, a representation of the Lord, whom they worshiped, but the Baal of Peor, a heathen idol, whose worship involved sacrifices, possibly even human ones, and certainly fornication with cult prostitutes. (Psalms 90-150: The Lord Reigns)

UNEQUALLY YOKED

Albert Barnes - They joined in their devotions, or, they shared in the rites of idolatrous worship. This occurred when they were in the regions of [Moab](#), and on the very borders of the promised land. Numbers 25:1-3. Baal was the name of the idol; Peor was the name of a mountain in [Moab](#), where the idol was worshiped. ([Commentary](#))

Joined ([06775](#))(**tsamad**) means coupled, paired, yoked, referring to two animals yoked together. Like a beast of burden they were yoked with idolatry in their worship of foreign gods, behind which are the **demons**! (cp 1 Cor 10:20-21 - Morris comments "Even though the physical images worshiped by idolaters are nothing but vanity, they do represent a dangerous reality, for demons actually lurk in and around such idols. These demonic spirits are able in certain limited ways to cause temporal blessings or troubles to visit their adherents, thereby impressing them with the validity of their false religion, and binding them ever more securely in the spirit's grasp.)

The [Septuagint](#) uses a surprising verb to translate **tsamad** in Nu 25:3, 5, Ps 106:28, the verb [teleo](#), which means to bring to an end

or to [consummation](#). Brenton translates it as "consecrated to" to Baal of Peor! The use of the [perfect tense](#) (Nu 25:3,5) speaks of an abiding consecration. In short, the joining of the Israelites to the pagan deity was not a momentary lapse of ethical standards! The **NET Note** on **tsamad** says this "word is unusual, and may suggest the physical, ritual participation described below. It certainly shows that they acknowledge the reality of the local god. The evidence indicates that [Moab](#) was part of the very corrupt Canaanite world, a world that was given over to the fertility ritual of the times."

Tsamad - 5v in OT - fastened(1), frames(1), joined(3).

Numbers 25:3 So Israel **joined** themselves to Baal of Peor, and the LORD was angry against Israel.

5 So Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Each of you slay his men who have **joined** themselves to Baal of Peor."

2 Samuel 20:8 When they were at the large stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them. Now Joab was dressed in his military attire, and over it was a belt with a sword in its sheath **fastened** at his waist; and as he went forward, it fell out.

Psalms 50:19 "You let your mouth loose in evil And your tongue **frames** deceit.

Psalms 106:28 They **joined** themselves also to Baal-peor, And ate sacrifices offered to the dead.

Brown-Driver-Briggs Expanded Definition - [צמד] **verb bind, join** (Arabic **ضمّد** *bind, wind*, specifically of girl with two lovers We ^{GN 1893,470}, *fasten* (cattle) to yoke Dozy, **يضمّد** *yoke, Id.*; Assyrian *fmâdu, bind, harness*, so Ethiopic **መጠድ** and III. *be attached, attach oneself*, specifically *be* (religiously) *devoted*; Aramaic **צמד**, **ܥܡܕ**, *bind*); —

Niph'al Imperfect 3 masculine singular **צמד** Numbers 25:3; 3 masculine plural **צמדו** Psalms 106:28; **Participle** plural **נעצמדי** Numbers 25:5; *join, attach, oneself* to (ל) Baal Peor, i.e. adopt his worship Numbers 25:3,5 (JE), whence Psalms 106:28.

Pu'al Participle feminine 2 **צמדת** Samuel 20:8 a sword *bound* upon (על) his loins.

Hiph'il Imperfect 3 feminine singular **תצמיד** Psalms 50:19 *thy tongue combineth* (fitteth together, frameth) *deceit* (> denominative from **צמד** Gerber¹⁷⁰).

Gesenius Definition - **צמד** not used in Kal, Arab. **ضمّد** Syr. **ܥܡܕ** to bind, to fasten, kindred to the root **צמד** (compare **עמד** and **עמם**).

Niph'al, to be fastened, i.e. to adhere; in this phrase **נצמד לבעל-פער** "he adhered to Baal-Peor," devoted himself to his worship, Numbers 25:3, Numbers 25:5; Psalms 106:28.

Pual, to be fastened, 2 Samuel 20:8.

Hiphil, with the addition of **מרה** to frame deceit, Psalms 50:19.

The people sacrificed to their gods, ate, worshiped, and participated in cult prostitution. The entire activity is powerfully described as yoking oneself to Baal-Peor. Perhaps the verb indicates that the people even bound themselves to this false worship in covenant but at the very least they broke the Mosaic Covenant with Jehovah. This verb connotes how flagrantly obstinate their rebellion against Yahweh was.

The very thing God had done in delivering Israel from the **YOKE** of EGYPTIAN bondage, (Lev 26:13) they now quickly reverted to the lust of their flesh. Don't be too quick to condemn Israel for we must always remember that Israel is a picture of our old flesh nature that flees from God and His righteousness and seeks to be pampered with the passing pleasures of sin. Their disobedience resulted in immediate capital punishment for all who became involved in this way. Balaam himself was later slain because of this counsel (Nu 31:8,16).

Paul warns the saints at Corinth

Do not be ([present imperative with a negative](#) = Stop what has already begun or Don't let this begin) bound together with (heterozugeo = heteros - different + zugos - yoke = literally "yoked up differently" or unequally yoked to) unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? (2 Cor 6:14)

A DEVILISH UNION AND COMMUNION

John Wesley on joined (yoked) - They had communion with him (a dead god), as God's people have with God in acts of his

worship. (**Ed:** They eschewed holy worship of the living God for perverted worship of a dead god! If you don't believe in the Depravity of Man, this section of Scripture stands as testimony to that horrible truth about all of us when the flesh dominates our persona!)

John Calvin - The prophet tells us that the Jews, after they had been threatened with very awful punishment, very soon fell into a new species of apostasy. Some think, that they are indirectly accused of falling away to the superstitions of the Midianites, in consequence of having been imposed upon by female intrigue. This, it is well known, was the design of Balaam, as soon as he knew that he was forbidden by God to curse the people. His counsel to king Balak was to set the daughters of Moab before the people, to entice them by their allurements to the practice of idolatry,

Numbers 31:15-16 And Moses said to them, "Have you spared all the women?" Behold, these caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation of the LORD.

John Gill - To this idol the Israelites joined or "**yoked**" themselves, as the word signifies: they withdrew themselves from the yoke of the true God, whose yoke is easy, and put their necks under the yoke of an idol; which was to be unequally yoked: or they were tempted unto it; they committed spiritual whoredom with it, which is idolatry; they left their first and lawful husband, to whom they were married, and joined themselves to an idol, and cleaved to it. The phrase is expressive of their fellowship with it, and with the idolatrous worshippers of it; they devoted and gave up themselves to the worship of it; just as the true worshippers of God are said to join themselves to him, Jeremiah 50:6, they were, as the Septuagint renders it, initiated into the rites and mysteries of this idol. ([Ref](#))

No one knows the exact nature of the idolatry involving Baal of Peor (Nu 25:3). However, it may have been a fertility cult. We know Baal was the male god of fertility. Canaanite religion in general involved rites intended to persuade the gods to help women reproduce and make lands fertile. Prostitution played a major role in the worship and was unspeakably heinous and abominable. (cp Lev 18:24-30).

In light of this fact, it is interesting that women were used to entice the Hebrews to attend Baal worship and engage in "harlotry" or sexual immorality (Nu 25:1,2; 31:15,16). Consequently Moses ordered the execution of all women in Midian "who had known a man intimately" (Nu 31:17).

See **Immorality** ([4202](#)) **porneia**

See immorality in Paul's "vice list" in Galatians 5:19-21

CAANANITE ABOMINATIONS (Lev 18:24-30)

Recent years have seen an increase in occult practices and Satanic rituals. But these things are nothing new. Somewhat similar rites were taking place in Canaan at the time when Israel left Egypt. God referred to the Canaanite practices as "abominations" for which "the land vomits out its inhabitants" (Lev 18:25,26). The historical context of Lev 18 shows that God's concern had to do with religious as well as sexual purity. The chapter opens and closes with warnings to avoid the ways of the Canaanites (Lev 18:3, 30). The practices mentioned—incest, adultery, fornication, intercourse during a woman's menstrual flow, child sacrifice, sodomy, bestiality—were all acts committed as part of the Canaanite religion. That religion was essentially a fertility cult. Worshipers appealed to their gods to help their women reproduce and to make their lands fertile. Thus sexual intercourse played a major role in the worship. There were other "abominations" involved, such as idolatry and the use of mediums and witchcraft. For all of these things, the Lord promised to VOMIT the Canaanites out of the land. In their place He planned to install His people living according to His ways and worshiping according to His holy practices. The Canaanites worshiped more than seventy deities. Learn more about some of the principal gods in "The Gods of the Canaanites" at Dt 32:39.

BAAL-PEOR: BAAL = lord, owner, possessor, husband a proper noun referring to the supreme "god" of the Canaanites. Tragically Israel played the harlot yoking themselves with the wrong master or lord and committing spiritual adultery. In short, they forgot and forsook God their Husband (Jer 31:32, Isa 54:5).

Jeremiah 31:32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although **I was a husband to them,**" declares the LORD.

Isaiah 54:5 "For **your husband is your Maker**, Whose name is the LORD of hosts; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, Who is called the God of all the earth.

This refers to the local pagan god Baal worshiped at Peor. Their spiritual harlotry led to physical harlotry (cf. Nu 25:1) as part of their perverted worship of Baal at Peor! Beloved, what we **BELIEVE** will determine/influence how we **BEHAVE**. They did not believe God. They had clearly lost a healthy (reverential) fear of God when they camped at Peor. Peter gives us all an excellent commandment (especially in view of the rising tide of overt wickedness and godlessness that is flooding American culture!)

1 Peter 1:17-[note](#) And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct (- Do this now! Do it with a sense of urgency! But beloved, do not try to obey this command in your natural strength or you will fail and be frustrated, not to mention that you are subtly placing yourself under the law ["do this", "don't do this"]. We need to jettison self dependence and depend wholly on the Holy Spirit Who Alone can give us the desire and the power to conduct ourselves in fear! cp Php 2:13NLT-[note](#)) yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth;

SACRIFICES TO THE DEAD - Most commentators think this refers to idols for they are "dead!"

Sacrifices ([02077](#))([zebah](#) from **zabab** - to slaughter for sacrifice) refers to an offering killed and presented by the worshiper to God (but in the present context to gods that are not really God!) as an act of devotion (to fill a special vow - Nu 15:3), thanksgiving (Lev 22:29, Ps 107:22, 116:17) or to meet the need for forgiveness (expiation, propitiation). The first specific mention of an animal sacrifice in Ge 4:4 (although it does not use the word zebah). The first use of **zebah** in Genesis describe sacrifices by Jacob (Israel) (Ge 31:54 - associated with the covenant between Jacob and Laban, Ge 46:1).

TSK note - "dead (KJV): The word {maithim} signifies dead men; for the idols of the heathen were generally men,--warriors, kings, or lawgivers,-- who had been deified after their death; though many of them had been execrated during their life."

John Calvin - In saying that they *ate the sacrifices of the dead*, (260) he points out the greater baseness of their offense. By the sacrifices of idols, he means that they ate things that were offered to idols, as they had been wont to partake of those sacrifices which bound them to the true God, the inexhaustible fountain of life. Hence their conduct was the more detestable, when they wilfully gave themselves over to death by perpetrating such a heinous crime. And we know, that banqueting was to some extent connected with their worship. The result of this was, that, renouncing the true God, they joined themselves in marriage with the dead; and thus the prophet charges them with acting a very disgraceful part, in not only bowing the knee to Baal, and offering sacrifices to him, but also in feasting upon these sacrifices.

C H Spurgeon - Treasury of David - Ps 106:28. "They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor." Ritualism led on to the adoration of false gods. If we choose a false way of worship we shall, ere long, choose to worship a false god. This abomination of the Moabites was an idol in whose worship women gave up their bodies to the most shameless lust. Think of the people of a holy God coming down to this. "And ate the sacrifices of the dead." In the orgies with which the Baalites celebrated their detestable worship Israel Joined, partaking even in their sacrifices as earnest inner-court worshippers, though the gods were but dead idols. Perhaps they assisted in necromantic rites which were intended to open a correspondence with departed spirits, thus endeavouring to break the seal of God's providence, and burst into the secret chambers which God has shut up. Those who are weary of seeking the living God have often shown a hankering after dark sciences, and have sought after fellowship with demons and spirits. To what strong delusions those are often given up who cast off the fear of God! This remark is as much needed now as in days gone by.

Psalms 106:29 Thus they provoked Him to anger with their deeds; And the plague broke out among them.

- **with their** (KJV): Ps 106:39 99:8 Dt 32:16-21 Ec 7:29 Ro 1:21-24
- **the plague** (KJV): Nu 25:9 1Co 10:8

CSB They provoked the LORD with their deeds, and a plague broke out against them.

ESV they provoked the LORD to anger with their deeds, and a plague broke out among them.

KJV Thus they provoked him to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them.

NET They made the LORD angry by their actions, and a plague broke out among them.

NIV they provoked the LORD to anger by their wicked deeds, and a plague broke out among them.

NLT They angered the LORD with all these things, so a plague broke out among them.

YLT And they provoke to anger by their actions, And a plague breaketh forth upon them,

A PLAGUE

PROVOKED

Moses records "And those who died by the plague were 24,000." (Nu 25:

Paul records "Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day." (1 Cor 10:8)

Comment - Spiritual defection always leads to moral defection. Allowing immorality to persist in their assembly, they were no different from their neighbors who worshiped at the temple of Venus. (so too if not eradicated from the Israelites prior to crossing over from Moab to Canaan, the leaven would have been taken in with Joshua & that generation...so the treatment was radical in Nu 25:4)

Note the connection between idolatry and immorality (fornication) is very close (see Baal-Peor Nu 25:1-9) It was true of Corinth where prostitution was part of the worship of [Aphrodite](#) (Aphrodite had 1000 ritual prostitutes). Lasciviousness was habitually associated with idol-worship. The two are combined, [Ac15:29]. A thousand priests ministered at the licentious rites of the temple of Venus at Corinth.

Immorality is to be fled, not flirted with. (1 Cor 6:18) Internal spiritual sensitivity is wrecked by this sin. Because sexual intimacy is the deepest uniting of two persons, its misuse corrupts on the deepest human level. That is not a psychological analysis but a divinely revealed fact. Sexual immorality is far more destructive than alcohol, far more destructive than drugs, far more destructive than crime.

Thinking they could live carelessly around corruption without being corrupted, they first were tempted and then gave in to temptation. This statement is [axiomatic](#)!

Paul was warning the saints at Corinth that just as God had brought death to the immoral among the Israelites (Nu 25:4-9), He could do in Corinth (1 Co 5:5), which should have been a sobering thought for the libertines who said, "Everything is permissible" after all this is Corinth (1 Cor 6:12; 10:23).

Henry Morris - 1 Corinthians 10:8 states 23,000 fell "in one day." Evidently another thousand died a day or so later.

Charles Ryrie - See note on 1 Cor. 10:8 concerning the number 24,000 = twenty-three thousand was the number killed in one day. Nu 25:9 indicates that there were additional deaths afterward.

C H Spurgeon - Treasury of David - Ps 106:29. "Thus they provoked him to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them." Open licentiousness and avowed idolatry were too gross to be winked at. This time the offences clamoured for judgment, and the judgment came at once. Twenty-four thousand persons fell before a sudden and deadly disease which threatened to run through the whole camp. Their new sins brought on them a disease new to their tribes. When men invent sins God will not be slow to invent punishments. Their vices were a moral pest, and they were visited with a bodily pest: so the Lord meets like with its like..

Broke ([06555](#))([parats](#)) means to break through; burst out (qal); to spread abroad (niph'al); to be broken down (pual); break loose (hitpa'el). **MacKay** "The word (parats) could be used for **breaking down** the wall of a captured city (2Kings 14:13). It was also used of divine anger **breaking out** against those who have offended God (Ex 19:22). It can also mean **tourge** someone to a particular course of action (1Sam. 28:23). It (parats) is a word which speaks of power that sweeps all obstacles before it, effectively undermining and demolishing all that would resist it. It is a presentation of the LORD as a warrior overthrowing His enemies (Isa. 42:13; Jer. 9:16-19)."

Psalm 106:30 Then Phinehas stood up and interposed; And so the plague was stayed.

- Nu 25:6-8,14,15 De 13:9-11,15-17 Jos 7:12 1Ki 18:40,41 Jon 1:12-15

CSB But Phinehas stood up and intervened, and the plague was stopped.

ESV Then Phinehas stood up and intervened, and the plague was stayed.

KJV Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed.

NET Phinehas took a stand and intervened, and the plague subsided.

NIV But Phinehas stood up and intervened, and the plague was checked.

NLT But Phinehas had the courage to intervene, and the plague was stopped.

PLAGUE PAUSED

The plague was stayed - Nu 25:7–11

Spurgeon (The Interpreter: Spurgeon's Devotional Bible) - Phinehas showed a holy zeal for God, and slew a bold blasphemer, who dared pollute the camp of Israel. Zeal for God, and indignation against sin are highly acceptable to the Lord. On account of the thorough decision of one single individual the plague was withdrawn; this teaches us the great value of holy and fervent spirits in the church.

C H Spurgeon - Treasury of David - Ps 106:30. "Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed." God has his champions left in the worst times, and they will stand up when the time comes for them to come forth to battle. His righteous indignation moved him to a quick execution of two open offenders. His honest spirit could not endure that lewdness should be publicly practised at a time when a fast had been proclaimed. Such daring defiance of God and of all law he could not brook, and so with his sharp javelin he transfixes the two guilty ones in the very act. It was a holy passion which inflamed him, and no enmity to either of the persons whom he slew. The circumstances were so remarkable and the sin so flagrant that it would have involved great sin in a public man to have stood still and seen God thus defied, and Israel thus polluted. Phinehas was not of this mind, he was no trimmer, or palliator of sin, his heart was sound in God's statutes, and his whole nature was ablaze with zeal for God's glory, and therefore, though a priest, and therefore not obliged to be an executioner, he undertook the unwelcome task, and though both transgressors were of princely stock he had no respect of persons, but dealt justice upon them as if they had been the lowest of the people. This brave and decided deed was so acceptable to God as a proof that there were some sincere souls in Israel that the deadly visitation went no further. Two deaths had sufficed to save the lives of the multitude.

An Example of Holy Service

John Butler

Psalm 106:30 "Then stood up Phinehas and executed judgment; and so the plague was stayed." (Psalm 106:30).

The psalmist in reviewing history to exhort the reader to holy conduct gives an example of Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron, who made a gallant stand for holiness in a time of degradation to stop the judgment of God upon the people. It is an outstanding example of service.

First—The Stand of Phinehas

"Then stood up Phinehas." We note two things about the stand of Phinehas.

- The taking of a stand. "Stood up Phinehas." Our text is a review of the sin of Israel as recorded in Numbers 25. Israel fraternized with the Midianites and became immoral. Bad doctrine leads to bad deportment. But Phinehas stood up and fought against evil and saved the day. We need more of God's people who will stand instead of sit. We sit and watch TV so much that we go to church and want to do the same thing. But service requires one to stand up for the Lord and His way. Phinehas took a gallant stand against idolatry and immorality by His actions. Would that more would serve the Lord this way.
- The time of the stand. "Then." If you would serve God well you not only will have to stand up for righteousness, but you will have to stand when everyone else is sitting. All Israel had gone to the dogs. But when an Israelite man brought a Midianite woman into the camp, Phinehas stood up and took action. It was not a popular time to wear the color and uniform of the Lord, but if you would serve God, you wear the uniform wherever you are.

Second—The Slaying by Phinehas

"Executed judgment."

If you read the account in Numbers 25 you will learn that Phinehas took a javelin and thrust it through the Israelite man and Midianite woman on one thrust. That was a gruesome act and today carnality would protest, but there comes a time when standing for the Lord will result in some very unpopular conduct. You may not thrust through somebody with a javelin but you will have to be forceful in what you do. Phinehas was not playing games. The conduct of the Israelite man and Midianite woman had resulted in much death and destruction so it had to be stopped!

Third—The Stopping by Phinehas

"So the plague was stayed."

The evil of the Israelites had brought Divine judgment upon the Israelites. Some 24,000 people died before the plague was stopped. Serving the Lord oftentimes is not very popular, and if you would stand up for the Lord and serve Him faithfully, you may have to engage in some drastic action. But it will stop the judgment of God. Most service today is only for the praise of the one serving. But Phinehas was concerned about God's praise. True service will honor God.

Psalm 106:31 And it was reckoned to him for righteousness, To all generations forever.

- Nu 25:11-13 De 24:13 Mk 14:3-9

CSB It was credited to him as righteousness throughout all generations to come.

ESV And that was counted to him as righteousness from generation to generation forever.

KJV And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore.

NET This brought him a reward, an eternal gift.

NIV This was credited to him as righteousness for endless generations to come.

NLT So he has been regarded as a righteous man ever since that time.

YLT And it is reckoned to him to righteousness, To all generations -- unto the age.

GOD CREDITS RIGHTEOUSNESS TO PHINEHAS

Reckoned ([Chasab/hasab](#); Lxx = [logizomai](#)) - This is the same pattern God used in Genesis 15:6-note when He reckoned righteousness to Abraham when he believed God.

TO ALL GENERATIONS FOREVER: That is to all generations who place their faith in God & His promises, esp His ultimate promise of a Seed Who would crush Satan's head (See the Seed = Messiah = Ge 3:15-note Ga 3:16-note). This act was a positive proof of his righteousness, and was rewarded by a covenant of peace (Nu 25:12, 13).

Summary of God crediting righteousness in the description of [Phinehas](#)

They (Israel) joined (Hebrew = to bind, fasten, yoke = pertaining to being in an association based on common beliefs or actions) themselves (NET translation = "they worshiped" - cp Nu 25:3,5) also to [Baal-peor](#) (= a local manifestation of the Canaanite deity Baal located at Peor. See Nu 25:1-3,5 31:16), And ate sacrifices offered to the dead (In other words, they practiced idolatry and a form of [necromancy](#)! cp Dt 26:14. Note some interpret "dead" as "lifeless gods" = Ps 106:28NIV). 29 Thus they provoked (Hebrew = They made angry) Him to anger with their deeds; And the plague broke out among them. 30 Then Phinehas stood up and interposed (see Nu 25:7-8); And so the plague was stayed. 31 And it was **reckoned** ([Chasab/hasab](#); Lxx = [logizomai](#)) to him for righteousness, To all generations forever (cp Nu 25:12-13 where God gave Phinehas His "covenant of peace").

Comment: When did God credit Phinehas with righteousness? When he stood up and interposed. At first glance you may be thinking "See, Phinehas was reckoned righteousness based on his good work!" That is not why God reckoned righteousness to the "spiritual account" of Phinehas. While the context does not mention the faith of Phinehas, there is no question whatsoever that he was declared righteous based on his faith not his works! Why do we say that? Because the rest of the Bible clearly teaches a man or woman will be justified before God ONLY on the basis of faith apart from works. So what is the role of Phinehas' "[good works](#)"? In Ephesians 2:8-9 Paul teaches that salvation is by grace through faith and then in Ephesians 2:10-note he teaches that those who have been saved have been "created in Christ Jesus for [good works](#), which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (See [Believers, God's Masterpiece, His Poietema](#)) In Romans 1:5-note Paul speaks of the "**obedience of faith**" or as the NIV translates it "**the obedience that comes from faith**." In other words faith is the horse and obedience is the cart, not the converse! Faith that is genuine results in a new spiritual heart which evidences itself as "new" by seeking to please God the Father. Will our obedience be perfect? Not in this lifetime, but it is not so much about perfection but about direction. Is the general direction of toward godliness and holiness (again NOT

perfection because we all blow it!). That is why Phinehas stood up against the rank idolatry and spiritual harlotry of Israel. His heart had been circumcised (see Excursus on [Circumcision](#))

John MacArthur on reckoned...righteousness - This was a just and rewardable action, evidencing faith in God. As with Abraham (Ge 15:6-note Ro 4:3 Ga 3:6-note Jas 2:23) so it was also with Phinehas. The everlasting covenant of perpetual priesthood through Aaron, from the house of Levi, was first made by God in Lev 24:8, 9 (Jer 33:17-22 Mal 2:4-8). This covenant was reaffirmed in Nu 18:8, 19. In this text, the covenant is further specified to be through the line of faithful Phinehas."

C H Spurgeon - Treasury of David - Ps 106:31. "And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore." Down to the moment when this Psalm was penned the house of Phinehas was honoured in Israel. His faith had performed a valorous deed, and his righteousness was testified of the Lord, and honoured by the continuance of his family in the priesthood. He was impelled by motives so pure that what would otherwise have been a deed of blood was justified in the sight of God; nay, more, was made the evidence that Phinehas was righteous. No personal ambition, or private revenge, or selfish passion, or even fanatical bigotry, inspired the man of God; but zeal for God, indignation at open filthiness, and true patriotism urged him on. Once again we have cause to note the mercy of God that even when his warrant was out, and actual execution was proceeding, he stayed his hand at the suit of one man: finding, as it were, an apology for his grace when justice seemed to demand immediate vengeance.

Why Was Phinehas Praised?

Several questions are generally raised in connection with this most unusual story of Phinehas. The first involves the action of Cozbi and Zimri. What were they doing that so stirred the holy indignation of Phinehas that he impaled both of them with one thrust of his spear?

We will need to understand what was involved in the worship of Baal of Peor (Num 25:1–5). And was Israel's lapse into this sin in any way connected with the advice or at the instigation of Balaam, the son of Beor?

Finally, we wish to know how the death of the couple, Zimri and Cozbi, could effect an atonement and assuage the wrath of God. All of these questions arise from one of the most bizarre episodes in Israel's long wilderness wanderings.

At this point, Israel was encamped at Shittim, or Acacia. It was a site east of the Jordan and six miles north of the Dead Sea, if this name is to be connected with modern Tel el-Kefrein.

It appears that the Israelite men began to have sexual relations with the Moabite and Midianite women (Num 25:1, 6). How such liaisons began we can only guess, but they seem to be connected with the bad advice given to the Moabites by the prophet Balaam, son of Beor. Prior to this event, the king of Moab had hired Balaam to curse the people of Israel; because of the strong hand of God on his life, however, Balaam had only been able to bless them. Apparently still bent on helping the Moabite king, Balaam had stayed on in the land of Moab and Midian. Numbers 31:16 informs us that "[the Midianite women] were the ones who followed Balaam's advice and were the means of turning the Israelites away from the LORD in what happened at Peor, so that a plague struck the LORD's people." (Apparently the Midianites were in Moab giving military advice to the Moabites at this time.)

The Moabites worshiped the war god Chemosh, but they must have also indulged in the fertility religion of Baal. This cult was marked by some of the most depraved religious practices in Canaan. In lurid and orgiastic rites, the worshipers would emulate the sacred prostitution of their gods and goddesses, often also participating in a ceremonial meal. In the case of Baal of Peor, we suspect that the cult also involved veneration for the dead. Peor may be the Hebrew and Phoenician spelling for the Luwian Pahura. This word in Hittite means "fire" and may derive from some form of the root that underlies the Greek pyr, "fire."

Among the Israelites, then, the Midianite and Moabite women continued to prostrate themselves in Baal worship, imitating fertility rituals. And one day, as all the Israelites were gathered in front of the tabernacle confessing their sin, the son of one of the leaders in the tribe of Simeon paraded before them with a Moabite woman, headed for his tent.

Reading the situation clearly, Phinehas swung into action. By the time he reached them in the back (bedroom) part of the tent, the couple were already involved in sexual intercourse. With a single thrust, Phinehas speared both of them. His action stopped the plague that had broken out among the Israelites.

Israel's wholesale embracing of the immorality and idolatry of pagan ritualistic sex had aroused the anger of God. While God had saved Israel from the curses of Balaam, the Israelites could not save themselves from sinning against God.

Phinehas was no vigilante. He was heir apparent to the priesthood; thus he, no doubt, was one of the appointed judges whom

Moses had ordered to slay all known offenders. This story does not justify the actions of private persons who, under the guise of zeal for expediting God's purposes, take matters into their own hands when they see wrongdoing rather than contacting the appropriate authorities.

Because of the Israelites' apostasy and sin, atonement was required before divine forgiveness could be proffered. The atonement that Phinehas offered was that of two human offenders.

Normally in the Old Testament, atonement is mentioned in connection with sacrifices, such as the sin offering. But in twenty-two passages, atonement was effected by means other than ceremonial offerings (for example, Ex 32:30–32; Deut 21:1–9; 2 Sam 21:3–9). Therefore, just as the life of the animal was a substitute, the means of ransoming the life of the guilty party, so the holiness of God was defended in this case through the substitution of the lives of the sinning couple. With atonement made, God could pardon his people and halt the spread of the plague.

The reward given to Phinehas was that his descendants would enjoy eternal possession of the priesthood. That priesthood continued, except for the interval of the priesthood of Eli, without interruption until the collapse of the nation in 586 B.C. (Hard Sayings of the Bible)