

PHINEHAS THE SON OF ELEAZAR

(1 Chron. 9:20)

Introduction:

1. Let us engage in another character study. They are interesting and so powerfully instructive.
2. This morning let us consider Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron first high priest of Israel.
3. Let us consider who he was, what he did, and what we can learn from him.

Discussion:

I. Who He Was.

- A. Phinehas was the son of Eleazar the third son of Aaron, the brother of Moses, of the tribe of Levi (Ex. 6:25). To Aaron and his sons was given the high priesthood (Ex. 28).
- B. Phinehas' uncles Nadab and Abihu were killed by God because of their disobedience to His commands on how He would be worshipped (Lev. 10:1, 2). Because of this, when Aaron died the high priesthood fell to Eleazar (Num. 20:26).
- C. Phinehas served as an officer over the priests who were the keepers to the entrance of the camp and the gatekeepers of the tabernacle (1 Chron. 9:20).
- D. As the firstborn of Eleazar, Phinehas would have been the high priest after Eleazar's death (Josh. 24:33), but there is no mention of this in scripture (more on that later).

II. What He Did.

- A. In Num. 25:1-13, we read how at Shittim (aka Acacia Grove) the children of Israel began to engage in sexual immorality with the women of Moab and Midian, and worshipping Baal of Peor.
 1. This is two fold; by carousing with these women they were seduced into worshipping Baal of Peor, which more than likely involved sexual immorality.
 2. Remember that the Midianites (descendants of Abraham via Keturah Gen. 25:2) and the Moabites (descendants of Lot, Abraham's nephew Gen. 19:30-38) were allied in trying to curse Israel as they began to enter the land (Num. 22:4, 5). It was Balak, the king of Midian, who hired Balaam to curse Israel.
 3. Apparently, after being unable to curse Israel Balaam advised Midian and Moab to try to seduce Israel into false worship knowing that God would then punish Israel.
 4. This is indeed what took place (note Num. 25:2, 3; cp. 1 Cor. 6:16; 10:8) and God sent a plague upon Israel which ended up killing 24,000 Israelites (a plague killed 14,700 after Korah's rebellion, Num. 16).
 5. God commanded Moses to kill all who had engaged in the false worship and to hang their bodies in the sun (offering up their death to God, v4).
 6. In Num. 25:6-14, we read that as this was being done a Simeonite named Zimri brazenly showed his Midianite woman to his kinsman and went into his tent with her. Phinehas filled with zeal for the Lord followed them into the tent and with a javelin killed them both. When this deed was done the plague stopped.
- B. In Num. 25:16-18, we read that God commanded Moses to "harass" the Midianites for what they had done. In Num. 31:1-17, we read that 12,000 soldiers were sent with Phinehas and the "holy articles" (probably alarm trumpets used for war) to "harass" Midian to the tune of burning all their cities, killing all the males, and killing all the females who had known a man.
- C. In Josh. 22:10-34, we read about the potential civil war between the children of Israel over the altar built by the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh on the east side of the Jordan. The other tribes thought that this was a signal that those tribes were not going to help them in their conquest of the promised land west of Jordan. Phinehas (called "the priest" in v30, cp. vv 31, 13) was sent by the people to check out the facts before battle began. But it was all a misunderstanding that Phinehas was able to relate and a civil war was avoided.

III. What We Can Learn From Him.

- A. The importance of faithful service to the Lord. Phinehas' father, Eleazar, had been commanded to not weep as the burned corpses of his brothers were carried from the sanctuary to a place outside the camp, their brethren were allowed to weep but not them-God will be regarded as holy and glorified (Lev. 10:3, 6, 7).
- B. The importance of zeal for the Lord (killing Zimri and leading the battle against the Midianites), and that this is pleasing to God and can save others.
- C. The importance of peace making. Phinehas, the one who led the crushing of Midian is being sent to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half-tribe Manasseh. He did not come with guns blazing; but came, inquired, listened, considered, and judged righteously. Truly there is a time for war and a time for peace, a time for corrective discipline and a time for patient instruction.
- D. God does not forget those who serve Him faithfully (Ps. 106:30).
- E. After the death of Eleazar scripture does not tell us that Phinehas was installed as high priest. As a matter of fact, after Eleazar's death we read nothing of the high priesthood or the tabernacle during the whole period of the judges (other than a passing mention of the house of God at Shiloh). As a further matter of fact, the only mention of the word "priest" is with regards to a man who made a Levite a priest on his own to serve him and his idols! Then this man was robbed and the "priest" went with the robbers to be their "priest" happy as could be. What can we learn from this? Was Phinehas faithful? Possibly, we are not told. We know that something was going on in Shiloh but it appears that the rest of Israel had forsaken God. That can give us comfort, albeit cold comfort, for the dark days that appear to be coming our way. Nothing good, but nothing new. Remain faithful and full of zeal, for with this God is pleased and He will save.

Conclusion:

1. It has never been easy to be a faithful child of God, so we should probably stop seeking that easy life. There is much history to consider; many lessons for our instruction. We must resolve to be faithful to God no matter what is going on around us. We must remain zealous for God, but always thoughtful and under control.
2. And although scripture does not tell us the fate of Phinehas it does tell us our fate if we remain faithful and zealous for the Lord.
3. Invitation.