

**NUMBERS**

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Numbers chapter 22 as we continue our study through the Word of God. Tonight we will be introduced to an interesting and puzzling man by the name of Balaam. He truly is an enigma! This man is mentioned in 8 books of the Bible: Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Nehemiah, Micah, II Peter, Jude and Revelation. And folks, it is never in a good way! And keep in mind he is mentioned more often than Mary, the mother of Jesus and many of the apostles! So there must be some lessons the Lord wants us to learn from this man!

Many don't know what to do with this man named Balaam, this prophet of God. Some say that he is saved; he has to be saved because God is speaking through him. Others say that he is not saved and that he is a pagan prophet. Who is right? I believe he was not saved, he never was saved and I will show you why as we go through these Scriptures tonight.

One other point before we move on. In Numbers chapters 22, 23 and 24 we see the work of Balaam, the things that he did, the oracles that he gave. Then, as we move into Numbers chapter 25 we will see the result of what he did, and again, it is not a good thing! With that said, let's begin reading in Numbers chapter 22, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word.

**NUMBERS 22****VERSES 1-4**

1. The children of Israel are camped on the east side of the Jordan River, and across this River is the Promise Land. On the other side is the city of Jericho, this fortified city, their first enemy they must destroy in the land of Canaan! For the children of Israel, their victories are making the news. So much so that Balak, the king of the Moabites was terrified of them. He thought that they were getting too close to them and that they would be next in their conquering of the land. You see, Sihon, king of the Amorites defeated Moab and took some of their land. Then the children of Israel defeated Sihon. Thus, if Moab couldn't defeat Sihon, then they were not going to be able to defeat the children of Israel, they are in big trouble!

2. Did God want them to defeat Moab and take their land? Not at all, but why didn't He want them to? In Deuteronomy 2:9 we are told, **“Then the Lord said to me, ‘Do not harass Moab, nor contend with them in battle, for I will not give you any of their land as a possession, because I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot as a possession.’”** If he would have known and believed God's Word then he would have had nothing to fear. What a great lesson for each of us to not only learn God's Word, but to believe it, to apply it to our lives and walk by faith. You see, faith casts away fear!

VERSES 5-6

1. Balak's solution to this problem is to call for Balaam, a soothsayer, to bring a curse upon the children of Israel. And Balaam's accomplishments were well known, for Pethor, where he lived, was a town in Mesopotamia, located on the west bank of the Euphrates River. That is over 300 miles away from Moab! Of this area Balaam came from we are told:

Possibly Pethor was not far from the great city of Mari, discovered in 1933 in the Euphrates Valley. The discovery of a vast number of cuneiform tablets at Mari, beginning in 1933, revealed among other things the existence of a complex cult of prophets and seers whose activities precisely resemble those of Balaam. The fact that he undoubtedly represented the prophetic customs and practices of Mari and vicinity makes possible a better understanding of Balaam's narrative in Numbers.

- Walvoord & Zuck, Bible Knowledge Commentary- Old Testament, p. 241

VERSES 7-8

1. As these elders come to Balaam they make him a deal, hopefully that he can't refuse. They brought him money to pay for his services. Balaam's response is that he needs to bring this before the LORD to see what He wants him to do. Thus, it seems that he is a believer, doesn't it? It does but he is not! I know many will disagree with me on this but hear me out and then decide. You see, if he was into the occult, which I believe he was, then he would know the names of the various gods that were out there, he spoke to them, and he very likely knew of the God of Israel. He called on these false gods to curse and bless people and it would seem that he was better at cursing them!

Thus, for the children of Israel he knew it was the LORD, YAHWEH. Balaam is nothing more than a pagan prophet who sought *ANY* god to bless and curse people by. As we move on I will show you more of why I feel Balaam was not a believer in the true and living God! And as we will see, he was not just a prophet, but he was in it for a profit!

### VERSES 9-12

1. God did speak to this pagan prophet, but why? Because God will use even unsaved people to carry out His plans and purposes as we see here. Does God speak to the unsaved; does He speak through the unsaved? Yes He does! In Genesis 20:6-7 He spoke to Abimelech the king of Gerar. He spoke to Pharaoh in dreams back in Genesis 41:25. And in Daniel he spoke to Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon. And believe it or not He even uses Satan to carry out His plan and purposes! And God is very clear on what He wants him to do. He said, **“You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed.”** Numbers 22:12. There should be no confusion, but as we will see, there will be.

2. One other point here and that is God saying that the children of Israel **“are blessed.”** It didn't matter what Balaam did because God blessed Israel. Yes, they did not deserve it, but God did bless them. Folks, the same is true for us. To get freaked out by the enemy by what they say or do, is foolish. God is sovereign. He is in control. That does not mean the enemy doesn't have power but the enemy is not equal with God and in the end, God wins!

Thus, may we storm the gates of Hell and take back from the enemy what He has taken away! You see, Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, “**And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.**” The church is not built upon Peter, but upon Jesus, the Rock and not the pebble or stone! And thus, the gates of Hell will not prevail; they will not overtake the church! May we not forget that!

#### VERSES 13-17

1. Balaam tells these men that he can't go with them and they leave but return with a better offer, why? I believe Balaam left the door open to them, maybe “I wish I can go with you but God won't let me!” In other words, “I really want to go and if you show me the money, maybe I will go with you.” And thus, they come with more people and more money. Because Balaam did not close the door to this temptation, it came back even stronger than before. What a great lesson for us to learn, to close those doors and not leave them open even a crack, for the enemy wants to get a foothold in your life. What will Balaam do here? Let's read on and see.

#### VERSES 18-19

1. This is confusing. Balaam tells these men that God said no and yet, he tells them to stay the night and maybe God will change His mind! Folks, God does not change His mind and Balaam really wanted to go, he wanted the money. We do that with God, He tells us no and we barter and keep pestering Him that we want this or that, and that is not a good thing. I like the way that Jon Courson put it as he wrote:

“Honey,” said the preacher, “we just got an invitation to go to a bigger church in a bigger city with a bigger salary. So I’m going to go upstairs to pray about it.”

“Do you want me to pray with you?” asked his wife.

“No,” the preacher answered. “You stay down here and start packing.”

- Jon Courson’s Application  
Commentary Old Testament,  
Vol. 1: Genesis-Job, p. 510

### VERSES 20-21

1. Why did God let him go? Folks, there is the perfect will of God and for Balaam He was not to go to Balak. But Balaam refused to listen to God and thus, there is the permissive will of God and He will let Balaam go but he is only to speak the words that He gives to him. The perfect will of God for our lives is obviously what is best for us. The permissive will of God, that path is not as good and there are many problems along the way. May we not only seek after God’s will for our lives, but also obey what God has told us!

I will give you one example of this. Many years ago there was a couple at the church we went to back in Chicago and they had a burning passion to move to California and they prayed about it, they put their house up for sale and it just didn't happen. They spoke to Pastor Phil and he prayed with them. Still nothing and they started to get angry with God. Houses around them were selling at a higher price than what they had theirs up for. They kept lowering the price of their home to try to sell it. And they kept after God but the doors kept closing. Pastor Phil told them that God may want them to stay here but they did not want to and they did finally sell their house and they moved to California. Within a short period of time they were divorced, lives shattered. The perfect will of God for them was to stay, it was what was best but they refused to listen and obey. Thus, the permissive will of God for them was allowed and it was not good. May we learn the lesson!

#### VERSES 22-27

1. If God let Balaam go, why was He angry with Balaam? Because He did not want him to go but Balaam refused to listen to the perfect will of God and went. His hearts desire superseded God's perfect will. Thus, as he travels to Moab on his donkey, an Angel of the Lord, a Christophany or an Old Testament appearance of Jesus Christ blocks his way. And, interestingly enough, his donkey has more spiritual insight than Balaam and as Balaam tries to go one way the donkey turns the other, then he goes another way and he turns a different way and finally the donkey just sits down! The donkey knew not to go but Balaam refused to listen!

2. How important it is for us to be sensitive to God and not go down a path that He has closed. God can use others, He can use circumstances and situations, He can even use a donkey to try to awaken us out of our spiritual sleep and obey His Words. May we listen!

### VERSES 28-30

1. Now this is strange, Balaam is having a conversation with his donkey and he is losing! How can he be talking to his donkey and not see a problem, and he is not Mr. Ed! It is possible that this false prophet, this pagan prophet was use to this demonic activity. It was normal for him. The only difference here is that God is speaking to Balaam through this donkey. He wanted to kill the donkey and yet, as the donkey reminded him, he has always been faithful to him!

2. As Christians, our brothers and sisters in the Lord can come alongside us and God can use them to correct us. Now, like Balaam our response may be to kill them, maybe not physically but with our words for what they are telling us! Instead of doing that, maybe you should listen to what they are saying and bring it before the Lord and then listen to Him. Yes, God does use others to get our attention! And if you are that person correcting another, don't be too prideful about that, God used a donkey to speak for Him!



VERSES 31-33

1. Here is another reason I believe this is an Old Testament appearance of Jesus Christ. In verse 32 the Angel of the LORD tells Balaam, “**because your way is perverse before Me.**” If this were just an angel, it would not be a sin against him personally! But if this were the Lord, it would make sense. And the idea behind the word “**perverse**” is that of “going the wrong way or in a rash manner.” God told Balaam not to go and he did so anyway, he did it his way!

VERSES 34-35

1. Why was Balaam so wishy-washy in what he wanted to do? Because he was more interested in the money than what God desired. In II Peter 2:15-16 we are told, “**They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet.**”

You see, Balaam loved money, wealth, possessions and that was his sin. In Jude 11 we are told, “**Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.**” Isn't it interesting, isn't it amazing what people will do for money. Let me show you what I mean with this story. We are told:

“A distinguished man was speaking to a distinguished woman, and asked her: ‘Would you sleep with me for a million dollars?’ The woman carefully thought it over, and said that she would. Then he asked, ‘Would you sleep with me for fifty dollars?’ The woman took great offense, and said ‘Do you think I am some kind of whore?’ The man answered, ‘Ma’am, we’ve already established you are a harlot. Now we are only bargaining over price.’ The same attitude has led many away from Jesus, selling Him for the sake of more money or more things.”

- David Guzik

#### VERSES 36-41

1. Balaam wanted the wealth, and as he meets Balak the king, the king tells him, “Not a problem! I can give you all that you need!” But there is a catch, a little matter that needs to be dealt with, what Balaam is to do. He must curse the children of Israel if he wants to get paid. And Balaam tells the king that he can only speak what the Lord gives him to speak, which sounds good but it may only mean that if it doesn’t happen, if they are not cursed, it is not his fault!

And God will speak through Balaam in a powerful way, but again, I don’t believe he was saved. And now for the work to begin we see the king take him to a high mountain overlooking the camp of Israel. What did they see from this vantage point? The camp of Israel in the shape of a cross with the Shekinah glory right in the middle, God dwelling right in the middle of that cross! Did they know what it meant? I doubt it but that is what they were looking at.

**NUMBERS 23****VERSES 1-3**

1. As you read this it seems that Balaam is sacrificing to God and thus, he must be saved. Again, I don't see it that way. Folks, God never instructed His people to do what Balaam is doing. Thus, this was a part of a pagan ritual. In fact, in Ezekiel 21:21 we are told, **“For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the road, at the fork of the two roads, to use divination: he shakes the arrows, he consults the images, he looks at the liver.”** In other words, the Babylonians were seeking direction in who to do battle with by examining the liver of a dead animal, it was a pagan practice known as hepatoscopy! Thus, it would seem that Balaam is doing something like this in the sacrificing of these animals, trying to appease the LORD so He would speak to Him, something he did when he tried to contact other gods!

**VERSES 4-6**

1. God gave this pagan prophet word's to say to Balak regarding the children of Israel.

**VERSES 7-10**

1. Instead of cursing Israel, Balaam blesses God's people! The camp of Israel was divided into 4 parts and Balaam is basically saying, “If you can't count ¼ of the camp you will not be able to count the number of people in the entire camp. God will multiply them.” I don't think that is exactly what Balak wanted to hear, it was not what he paid for!

VERSES 11-12

1. Obviously Balak is not happy with Balaam and Balaam blames God for what he has done. Maybe he didn't want to lose out on the money!
2. One other point here. God is blessing His people and they are completely unaware of what is going on. They are down in the camp complaining about this and complaining about that. How can they be so carnal? Before we answer that, are we unaware of the blessings that God has poured out upon us, not sure what is going on, and thus, we complain? It is something to think about!

VERSES 13-17

1. Here is the second oracle of Balaam, but this time Balak takes him to a different location. The reason for this is that they saw territorial gods, that they were over certain areas and thus, a new location may produce different results. And once again they are looking down upon the camp of Israel.

VERSES 18-24

1. Balaam rebukes Balak saying that God does not lie about His people; He does not lie at all! He said that He would bless them and that is exactly what He will do! He will not change and thus, God is not done with His people, He will fulfill His promises to them. Also, it says that God did not see any iniquity in the children of Israel, any wickedness in them – how did He miss that? Because He saw the nation as justified by the shedding of the blood and thus, their sin was covered and He saw them as they will be, not as they are! And God does the same with us; He sees the finished product you might say!

2. Also notice what verse 23 says, “**For there is no sorcery against Jacob, Nor any divination against Israel. It now must be said of Jacob And of Israel, ‘Oh, what God has done!’**” I don’t believe in curses against God’s people because God is for us. There are those who are superstitious, believe in generational curses and-so-on. God tells Balaam, “No, not against My people!”

VERSES 25-26

1. Balak can’t take it. He tells Balaam that if he is not going to curse them then don’t say anything at all! So far not such a good deal for Balak!

VERSES 27-30

1. Balak figures the odds are in his favor, the third time has to be good. He will take him to a different location and now he has to curse the children of Israel. So once again up on a mountain looking down upon the children of Israel and the pagan sacrifices are being offered up.

**NUMBERS 24**VERSES 1-2

1. Balaam tried on the two previous occasions to use sorcery; enchantments to curse Israel and that didn't work at all! Thus, now he just looks down upon the camp to curse them and the Spirit of the Lord comes down upon him. God is once again going to speak through this pagan prophet!

VERSES 3-9

1. In this third oracle Balaam speaks of the abounding blessings of God upon the children of Israel.

VERSES 10-13

1. Balak tells Balaam that the deal is off; if he can't curse Israel then he won't get paid. He did not keep up his end of the deal. And here we see the voice of Satan come forth as Balak tells Balaam, **“I said I would greatly honor you, but in fact, the Lord has kept you back from honor.”** Those same lies were spoken to Eve in the Garden of Eden, that God was holding some blessing back from them and thus, go ahead and take a bite! We are told in Genesis 3:4-5 of this encounter that Eve has with Satan, **“Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’”** Folks, that same lie is spoken today and many still fall prey to it, they listen and go down that path! God is not keeping blessings from you; He is trying to protect you from the danger that is out there, the schemes of the Devil!

VERSE 14

1. Balaam is going to return home but before he does, he is going to give one more oracle regarding the children of Israel, a freebee you might say!

VERSE 15-24

1. Here is the fourth and final oracle of Balaam and in this we see the pagan prophet speak of the coming Messiah who will come and rule over the nations. Specifically here he is speaking of the surrounding nations: Moab, Edom, Amalek and the Kenites, what is going to happen to these nations down the road.

VERSE 25

1. Both men depart home, each not satisfied with what has taken place. Balak did not see Israel cursed and Balaam did not get the money he had hopped for, or did he? Let's look at Numbers chapter 25 because we have seen the work of Balaam, now we will see the results of what he did or how he took the matter into his own hands!

**NUMBERS 25**VERSES 1-3

1. The women of Moab came before the men of Israel and seduced them, enticed them to sin. They were all dressed up, wearing their short little skirts; make-up to the hilt and the men of Israel fell for it. You see, many of the pagan religious practices were centered around sexual immorality and thus, as they got the children of Israel to have sexual relations with them, it was based on the worship of their gods! Since Balaam could not curse the children of Israel he got the children of Israel to move away from the blessings of God and by doing so they were cursing themselves!



2. Who gave Balak this plan? I believe it was Balaam for we are told in Numbers 31:16, **“Look, these women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the Lord in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord.”** And in Revelation 2:14 Jesus tells us in His letter to the church in Pergamos, **“But 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, and to commit sexual immorality.”** In other words, Balaam told Balak, “Look, I can’t curse these people but you can get them to curse themselves by having them turn from the Lord!” And guess what, it worked then and it still works today. May we not fall prey to these devilish schemes but learn the lesson God is showing us!

3. Yes, I believe at this point Balaam was paid for his counsel but he only enjoyed it for a short time. In Numbers 31:7-8 we are told, **“And they warred against the Midianites, just as the Lord commanded Moses, and they killed all the males. They killed the kings of Midian with the rest of those who were killed — Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. Balaam the son of Beor they also killed with the sword.”** Balaam was killed! Yes there is pleasure in sin, if there wasn’t no one would fall into it. But that pleasure is short lived and in the end is death!

VERSES 4-5

1. God wanted those who were sinning, the leaders to be hung and placed for all to see as a warning so others will not go down that same path. All those who joined themselves to the Moabite and Midianite women, these leaders were to be killed. These verses tell us that they joined themselves to Baal of Peor! The word “**joined**” is a Hebrew word that speaks of being fastened or linked together. You see, light and darkness can’t mix. You can’t be joined to this world and still serve the Lord! God was not pleased with that back then and He is not pleased with it today! Paul puts it like this in I Corinthians 6:15-20, **“Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For ‘the two,’ He says, ‘shall become one flesh.’ But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”** What have you joined yourself to? I pray it is the Lord!

VERSES 6-9

1. Talk about arrogance, haughtiness! Here is a man, seeing the judgment of God upon the children of Israel for their sin, and he parades himself past Moses with this Midianite woman, so this immorality went even beyond the Moabites! And he brings her into his tent to have sex with her! Can you imagine! Now Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the high priest, has had enough, he can't take it any longer and he grabs a javelin and goes into their tent and thrusts them through. Kind of killing two birds with one stone you might say! One man took a stand and it made a difference, the plague was stopped.

2. Tragically, in this plague 24,000 people died! Now, if that is true why are we told in I Corinthians 10:8, "**Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell.**" Why the discrepancy of 1,000 between these two verses? Paul speaks of 23,000 in one day so maybe the plague lasted longer than a day. The other thought may be that in Paul's total he is not including the leaders, 1,000 of them.

VERSES 10-13

1. Phinehas was zealous for the Lord and he brought the atonement of God to the people. What about you? Are you zealous for God? Are you bringing the atonement of God that is found in Jesus to the people? You see, one man made a difference and folks, one man or one woman can make a difference today. You see, if God is for you or more correctly if you are for Him, nothing is impossible!

VERSES 14-18

1. Balak thought he was now safe but he wasn't. God told His people to attack the Midianites every chance they had. But I thought Balak was a Moabite? He was but at this time the Midianites were mingled with the Moabites. Now this may seem harsh, but it is not. If you don't do battle with the flesh on a daily basis, at every chance you have, then you will succumb to it! As I close this evening let me leave you with these words from Paul as he wrote in Romans 13:11-14, "**And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.**" May we take heed and obey!