

Numbers Chapter 22

- Up to this point Israel has been victorious over their enemies; Pharaoh and his army were buried in the red sea, Amalek, the king of Arad, Sihon king of the Amorites, Og king of Bashan – all destroyed.
- As Israel was encamped across from Jericho in the plain this side of Jordan, in a seemingly peaceful valley. Unknown to them they were about to face a different kind of enemy.
- A spiritual foe, one hidden in the mountain heights, watching, waiting – calling upon the forces of evil to curse them.

Ephesians 6:12 “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

V: 1-4 Balak king of the Moabites, fearful of Israel, seeing what they had done to the Amorites; concerned that they too would be consumed like an ox eating grass in the field.

- Balak = “waster / devastator” Son of Zippor = “Sparrow”.
- Midian refers to the land that is Saudi Arabia today; so Moab and Midian join together in opposing the children of Israel.
- What they didn’t realize was that they were in no danger. Much like the Edomites, God had told the children of Israel to leave the Moabites alone.

Deuteronomy 2:9 “And the Lord said unto me, distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle: for I will not give thee of their land for a possession; because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot for a possession.”

V: 5-6 Balak sends to Balaam, the son of Beor, a Gentile who lives in Pethor.

- Balaam = “Not of the people”, “swallower of the people”, “confuser of the people”.
- Beor = “Burning.”
- Pethor = “Soothsayer.”
- By the river of the land, which is the Sajur, a tributary of the Euphrates River.
- In 1967 a Dutch archaeological team discovered some inscribed pieces of plaster at a site in Jordan known as Deir Allah. The fragments are written in Aramaic and date to about 850 BC. They mention Balaam son of Beor describing him as the “seer”

- Balaam is mentioned in Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Nehemiah, Micah, 2 Peter, Jude, and Revelation – spoken more often than Mary the mother of Jesus.
- Yet for all of that Balaam is somewhat of an enigma, seemingly a pagan soothsayer, yet he knows and communicates with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and he later refers to God (v: 18) as “the Lord my God” at one point.
- The Bible eventually condemns his ways, and explains his motives:

2 Peter 2:14-15 “¹⁴Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: ¹⁵which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;”

Jesus wrote to the church in Pergamos:

Revelation 2:14 “But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.”

- Balaam eventually dies with the Moabites at the hands of the children of Israel.
- The request is for Balaam to curse the children of Israel because Balak knows that they are too mighty for him, and that a military solution won't work.
- Balak knows that whoever Balaam blesses, they are blessed – and whom he curses, they are cursed.

V: 7-8 The elders of Moab and Midian take off to get Balaam, with the price of divination or soothsaying to pay for his services.

- This is the very first mention of “divination” in the Bible.
- Divination: (H7081) “qecem”, (keh'-sem); divination, oracle, divine sentence, witchcraft.

Deuteronomy 18:10-12 “¹⁰There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, ¹¹or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. ¹²For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord:...”

- The children of Israel had previously been warned about not using “enchantments” in **Leviticus 19:26** – but we're not talking about the children of Israel.

- **This could be an issue of semantics or an issue of perspective; Balaam is speaking for God but those around him assume he's using divination – we don't really know.**
- Balaam receives them and lets them know that he needs to check with God.

V: 9 When God asks this question it is not because God doesn't know, God is asking to help Balaam understand who he's dealing with and perhaps what he doing.

- Perhaps the Holy Spirit has brought similar conviction to us at times and we hear that still small voice asking "what are you doing with these guys?"

1 Corinthians 15:33 "Be not deceived: evil company corrupts good manners."

- We need to choose our friends and associates carefully, knowing the impact these choices will have on our walk with the Lord.

2 Corinthians 6:14 "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?"

V: 10-11 Balaam explains his situation and Balak's request.

V: 12 (**Key verse**) God then tells Balaam 2 things:

1. You shall not go with them.
2. You shall not curse them, because they are blessed.

Deuteronomy 32:39 "See not that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with Me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand."

Romans 8:31 "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

V: 13-14 Balaam informs the ambassadors from Moab & Midian of God's decision and tells them to go home, where they in turn inform Balak.

- Actually Balaam only tells them part; that he cannot go with them – he left out the part about how he cannot curse the children of Israel – because God has blessed them.

V: 15-19 Balak send back more honorable emissaries with the promise of a greater reward, greater honor for his services.

- The problem is that Balaam already knows what God has said to do.

Micah 6:8 “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doeth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”

- So often we think that the primary issue is knowing God's will, the real issue is doing God's will.
- Thus far Balaam has been offered the “reward of divination”, now he is offered “very great honor” – soon he'll be taken to a high place and given a better view of things from the high places of Baal.

1 John 2:15-17 ¹⁵“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. ¹⁷And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.”

- This is why we see Balaam stall and continue to keep the servant's of Balak, he's still hoping to receive a reward – he's trying to get around God's word.
- In other words we see in **V: 18** Balaam's lips are saying one thing – but his heart is saying something else altogether.

Jesus declared:

Mark 7:6 “... well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, this people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.”

V: 20-21 God allows Balaam to go with them, conditionally. “If” they come to get him. Did they? It seems that Balaam takes the initiative, saddles his donkey and goes to them.

- The other condition is that if he goes he is only to say what God has given him to say.
- Herein we see the difference or distinction between God's perfect will and His permissive will.
- God's perfect will has already been spoken: don't go with them and don't curse the children of Israel.

- As Balaam enters into the area of God's permissive will, we see that eventually his life is in jeopardy as God's anger is kindled and the Angel of the Lord prepares to smite him.

Romans 8:31 "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

- The opposite is true as well, if God is against us, who can be for us?

V: 22-27 God's anger was kindled because he went – when he knew he wasn't supposed to, he knew the heart of the Lord and he went against that.

- The angel of the Lord stands in Balaam's way as an adversary.
- The donkey perceived what the prophet could not and tried to avoid the angel of the Lord.
- Finally when there was no where else to go, the donkey fell down before the angel of the Lord.
- Balaam has allowed his love for money to control him, 3 times the donkey has saved his life, Balaam is beside himself with anger and he would have killed his faithful animal.
- Peter called it "the madness of the prophet."

2 Peter 3:16 "But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with a man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet."

V: 28-30 The Lord enables the donkey to speak, which Balaam because of his anger doesn't seem to notice.

- Some Bible critics have a real problem with this portion of scripture; they point out that donkeys don't have a voice box or vocal chords and that it is impossible for donkeys to speak.

Matthew 19:26 "... with men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible."

- God enabled to donkey to speak:

Luke 19:40 "... I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."

- If God can make rocks talk, a donkey should be no problem!

- The donkey at this point seem more reasonable, or able to reason better than Balaam.

V: 31 The Lord opened Balaam's eyes – something that only the Lord can do.

1 Corinthians 12:3 "... no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

- Balaam suddenly realizes his situation and hits the deck.

V: 32-35 Here is a clue as to the identity of the angel of the Lord – "*thy way is perverse before Me:*" as opposed to being perverse before the Lord thy God.

- This Angel of the Lord is none other than a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus, which we call a Theophony or a Christophony.
- 2nd clue – (V: 34) we can only sin against God.
- The angel of the Lord is offered and accepts worship from Balaam which is something forbidden to ordinary angels or individual.

An angel spoke to the Apostle John in a heavenly vision:

Revelation 19:10 "And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, see thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

- The "angel of the Lord" is mentioned 10X's in this chapter.

V: 34 The admission "*I have sinned*" – these words are not necessarily evidence a sincerely repentant heart:

1. Pharaoh uttered these words. **Exodus 9:27**
2. King Saul uttered these words. **1 Samuel 15:24, 30, 26:21.**
3. Judas Iscariot uttered these words. **Matthew 27:4**

- But none of them turned to God for forgiveness or mercy.
- It does no good to utter these words and keep on sinning which is what each of these men including Balaam did.

V: 35 2nd warning: only speak the words that I have given you.

V: 36-41 King Balak comes out to greet Balaam, an indication of his anxiety.

- Balaam explains that he can only speak what God has given him to speak.
- Balak takes Balaam to the town of Kirjath-huzoth, then to the top of Baal Peor to sacrifice / worship and to see the children of Israel.
- What would they have seen as they observed the camp of the Israelites? The cross.
- Contrary to God's perfect will, Balaam goes with Balak's men.
- He starts off good, no matter how much you give me I cannot speak against or curse these people.
- Then we see Balaam going up to the place of worship with Balak, another compromise – eventually Balaam is overcome by the temptation of wealth.
- God will eventually use this evil prophet to declare some basic truths about God's people and Himself because He is a blessing God, and the children of Israel are a blessed people.