

# HIGHLIGHTS OF NUMBERS



## Sermon Series Notes

### “The Story of Balaam” (Numbers 22-25a)

Danny Hodges - OT3506

#### Chapter 22

v.1 Israel is right on the brink of living in a land of blessing far beyond their wildest dreams. See Num.13:23, 27a.

v.2 God is working on behalf of Israel in powerful, supernatural ways. Large and powerful armies are being defeated.

vv.3-6 Balaam has quite a reputation. He is a sorcerer, and Balak intends to hire his services to put a curse on Israel.

v.7 This fee would have been a very significant amount of money.

v.8 There is a bit of mystery here, but Balaam somehow knows that the God of Israel's name is Jehovah. So he intends to contact Jehovah in order to gain insight into this situation.

v.9 God revealing himself to someone like Balaam should not surprise us. He revealed Himself to Abimelech king of Gerar (Gen.20:6-7), to Pharaoh in dreams (Gen.41:25), & to Nebuchadnezzar in a dream and in visions (Daniel 4:1-18), & to Pilate through a dream his wife had.

vv.10-14 This is a good decision by Balaam, but one that was very difficult for a guy like him to make. He's accustomed to getting paid for his work.

vv.15-17 Making a right decision in a time of temptation does not mean temptation goes away. Usually, in time, temptation increases! Jesus said that every day has enough evil of its own; Eph.6:13 says there is a “day of evil.”

v.18 This is an incredible statement. Balaam is a sorcerer, but he not only refuses the handsome fee for his services, but he basically says, "I cannot be bought." The true God has revealed himself personally to him, and he seems to be making some pretty wise decisions as a result. But verse 19 causes me to question what is really going on deep within Balaam's heart.

v.19 Balaam's looking for a different answer than the one God clearly gave him.

Illus: How many times have your children asked you to go somewhere/do something, and when you said no, they immediately go to the other parent?

If we are determined to go a particular direction, even if it is not the Lord's will, God will let us do so (v.20).

Balaam has a "thy will, my will" attitude." He is a double minded man (James 1).

vv.21-22 Opposition from the Lord (v.22); Anytime we read in the OT "the angel of the Lord," this is Christ; See Gen.16:7, 9, 10-11 (Hagar); 22:15 (Abraham); Ex.3:2 (Moses); Joshua 5:13-15 (Joshua, not called the angel of the Lord here, but it certainly is); Judges 6:11-12, 14-23 (Gideon); Judges 13 (Samson's parents); II Sam.24:16; I Kings 19:7 (Elijah); II Kings 19:35; Zech.3:6-7 (Joshua the priest); Psalm 34:7

v.23 Prov.4:19 But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.

Balaam is spiritually blind here as a result of his decision to go a path that God told him not to.

vv.24-25 When you go a path that God has said not to go, you end up with a lame walk. You also end up potentially lashing out against the very one who is trying to keep you out of harm's way (Balaam's donkey).

vv.26-28 I cannot imagine the donkey I once had actually speaking to me! "Little Rock" was my pony, but I am convinced he was a donkey in a pony's body!

860. 'athown, aw-thone'; prob. from the same as H386 (in the sense of patience); a female ass (from its docility):--(she) ass.

v.29a This part of the story is fresh every time I read it or teach it! Balaam begins to have a conversation with his donkey!

vv.29b-30 What is happening in Balaam's life is "out of the ordinary." It is God trying to get his attention.

v.31 God opens his eyes, and his response is a wise one!

v.32 Balaam, you are headed for trouble! Reckless: To act without thinking or caring about the consequences.

v.33 A donkey with more spiritual sight and wisdom than Balaam!

v.34 A good move by Balaam, he confesses his sin.

vv.35-41

## Chapter 23

vv.1-2 No details are given as to why Balaam offered these particular sacrifices, but the next couple of verses may suggest that God directed him on what to offer. Read vv.3-4.

vv.5-10 This first prophetic oracle declares Balaam's inability to curse a people that God has blessed. The people of Israel are called to live their lives separate from "the nations." They are a people redeemed from this present world, whose destiny is something to be coveted.

vv.11-12 Is this were a movie, I would be cheering for Balaam. Former sorcerer turned prophet for God!

vv.13-24 This second oracle assures Balak that God's original blessing on Israel is unchanged. Israel is a redeemed people, and God is with her.

vv.25-26 Balak is pretty frustrated, and Balaam appears to be pretty committed to saying only what the Lord wants him to say.

vv.27-30 This will be the final stop with Balak, and Balaam's last oracle.

## Chapter 24

vv.1-4 Balaam falls prostrate before the Lord, and he says that his eyes are opened. He sees, he hears, he knows the truth. Israel is a blessed people, and the God of Israel is the one true and powerful God.

vv.5-9 This third oracle speaks of God seeing Israel's beauty, as well as predicting her widespread prosperity and tremendous fruitfulness. It prophesies a glorious kingdom and the crushing of all Israel's enemies.

With each of the first three prophecies, it has gotten worse for Balak. In the first one, Balaam fails to curse Israel; in the second, he blesses Israel, and in the third, he curses Balak (v.9b).

vv.10-14 So Balak is furious with Balaam, and Balaam reiterates to Balak that he cannot be bought, and he will not go beyond "the command of the Lord." That's impressive.

vv.15-19 Scepter: The staff of a sovereign ruler that is a symbol of authority.

This is a Christmas oracle. About 1500 years after this prophecy was uttered by Balaam, we find coming out of the east (the land of Balaam), a company of wise men. They follow this star the land of Israel, to Bethlehem. Since Balaam was considered an outstanding prophet in the east, these wise men knew his prophecy. Add to Balaam's prophecy another prophet who prophesied in the east, the prophecy of Daniel, who was a royal official in Babylon. Daniel prophesied the approximate time this star would come, this scepter would rise.

vv. 20-24 Balaam's oracles end reminding nations that have endured for years and become mighty and secure that their days are limited. In the end they will fall. In the context, only Israel will endure forever.

v. 25 So, end of story, right? Balak can't destroy the Israelites, Balaam can't curse them, and the Israelites live happily ever after. Not exactly.

Balaam said all the right things, heard clearly from God, even prophesied, and seemed to end with a continued commitment to do only what God directed him to do. But that is not the whole story.

See II Peter 2:13-22; Jude 11-13

Numbers 31:8 tells us that Balaam was killed when God used Israel to bring vengeance on the Midianites.

Something was going on in Balaam's heart that could not be seen on the surface? He was a person who said all the right things, confessed his sin, seemed to be committed to the God of Israel, but in truth his heart had never really changed. He was the OT equal to the NT Judas. He was a hypocrite.

Watch out for people like Balaam! You will find them in the church (Jude 4, 12). They say the right things, seem to have a commitment to Christ, but their hearts are darkened.

These kind of people become strategic instruments in the hands of the enemy to lead God's people astray.

## Chapter 25

25:1-3 What in the world happened? How could this occur? These people have been protected from the curse of the enemy on all sides. They are a people more blessed than any of the nations. God has done so much for them, and the future God had planned for them is as bright as the stars.

See Rev.2:14(Pergamum)...You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality.

Luke 17:1-3...Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. So watch yourselves...

## CONCLUSION

Balaam is an example of someone who says all the right things, and on the surface seems to be following the Lord. But Jesus tells us the truth about people like Balaam:

Matt.7: 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

The Israelites who were seduced here are an example for us of how easy it is to be led astray. And I do not know of any temptation greater than sexual temptation.

Ladies, don't be used by the enemy to stir carnal cravings in men! Watch how you dress! (I Tim.2:9).

See I Thess.4:3-8.

Flee (I Cor.6:18)

Fortify (I Cor.9:27)

Fight the battle daily (Eph.6:13)