

BALAK AND BALAAM

BIBLE TEXT Numbers 22:1-41

LESSON 110 - SENIOR COURSE

MEMORY VERSE: "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" (Numbers 23:19)

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Numbers 22:1-41 (KJV)

¹ And the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in the plains of Moab on this side Jordan *by* Jericho.

² And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites.

³ And Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they *were* many: and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel.

⁴ And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all *that are* round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And Balak the son of Zippor *was* king of the Moabites at that time.

⁵ He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor to Pethor, which *is* by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me:

⁶ Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they *are* too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, *that* we may smite them, and *that* I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou blessest *is* blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.

⁷ And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand;

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I Moab Distressed

- 1 The Israelites pitch their tents in the plains of Moab across the river from Jericho, Numbers 22:1
- 2 Balak, king of Moab, greatly terrified, confers with the Midianites and sends messengers to Balaam to come to curse Israel, Numbers 22:2-6
- 3 The elders of Moab and Midian depart with the reward of divination in their hand, Numbers 22:7;

Deuteronomy 23:4 (KJV)

⁴ Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee.

Joshua 24:9 (KJV)

⁹ Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and warred against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you:

1 Samuel 9:7-8 (KJV)

⁷ Then said Saul to his servant, But, behold, *if* we go, what shall we bring the man? for the bread is spent in our vessels, and *there is* not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we?

⁸ And the servant answered Saul again, and said, Behold, I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver: *that* will I give to the man of God, to tell us our way.

Micah 6:5 (KJV)

⁵ O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD.

II Balak and Balaam

- 1 The Lord speaks to Balaam and tells him not to go with these men; not to curse Israel, for they are blessed, Numbers 22:8-12;

1 Kings 22:14 (KJV)

¹⁴ And Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak.

- 2 Balaam tells the princes that the Lord refuses to let him go; and they tell Balak that Balaam refuses to come, Numbers 22:13, 14
- 3 Balak sends more honorable princes to Balaam, and promises to promote him to great honor, Numbers 22:15-17
- 4 Balaam tell them that if Balak would give him his house full of silver and gold he could not go beyond the word of the Lord, Numbers 22:18
- 5 Balaam consults God and is permitted to go, Numbers 22:19-21

III An Adversary

- 1 The Lord sends an angel with a drawn sword to stand in Balaam's way as an adversary against him, Numbers 22:22
- 2 The ass turns aside and Balaam's foot is crushed against a wall, Numbers 22:23-25
- 3 Balaam strikes the ass, and the angel goes farther to a narrow place and the ass falls down under Balaam, Numbers 22:26, 27
- 4 The ass speaks and the Lord opens the eyes of Balaam, Numbers 22:28-33;

2 Peter 2:15-16 (KJV)

¹⁵ Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam *the* son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

¹⁶ But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's

and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak.

⁸ And he said unto them, Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the LORD shall speak unto me: and the princes of Moab abode with Balaam.

⁹ And God came unto Balaam, and said, What men *are* these with thee?

¹⁰ And Balaam said unto God, Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, hath sent unto me, *saying*,

¹¹ Behold, *there is* a people come out of Egypt, which covereth the face of the earth: come now, curse me them; peradventure I shall be able to overcome them, and drive them out.

¹² And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they *are* blessed.

¹³ And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak, Get you into your land: for the LORD refuseth to give me leave to go with you.

¹⁴ And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Balak, and said, Balaam refuseth to come with us.

¹⁵ And Balak sent yet again princes, more, and more honourable than they.

¹⁶ And they came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus saith Balak the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me:

¹⁷ For I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people.

¹⁸ And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of

voice forbad the madness of the prophet.

5 Balaam humbles himself; he is told that he has permission to go with the men but to speak only the words the Lord gives him, Numbers 22:34, 35

6 Balak meets Balaam, offers sacrifices, and takes him up into the high places of Baal to view the camp of Israel, Numbers 22:36-41;

Deuteronomy 12:2 (KJV)

² Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree:

Note:

Israel's Encampment

Having defeated two kings and taken their booty, Israel marched forward to the plains of Moab and pitched camp just across the river from Jericho. From this point they could look across and view the land of Canaan, their long-desired home.

For forty years they had wandered around in the wilderness and many times had been sorely tempted and tried. They had gone through many hardships, and their souls were often discouraged because of the way. They had learned their lessons of obedience the hard way. But now with colors flying and banners streaming they were marching with a conqueror's tread. They had defeated two great kings and had taken possession of their lands. The nations around were becoming alarmed. The king of Moab, in whose borders they were dwelling, was terrified, and he wondered what he could do to stop them. He had observed Balaam, and had seen that whom he blessed, was blessed, and whom he cursed, was cursed.

The world takes notice. Words and actions are weighed. We may think many times we are unseen; but besides the all-seeing Eye that is ever watching over us, there are those on earth who are taking note of our actions, too. We are living epistles known and read of all men.

Reward of Divination

The king of Moab consulted with the princes of Midian and together they decided to send for Balaam to come to curse Israel for them.

Balaam was a seer, of whose background little is known. He seemed to know and fear the Lord. He was possibly one of those descendants of righteous Noah, who still had a knowledge of the Truth in his heart although he was not in the family line of Abraham.

The princes came with the reward of divination in their hand. The money must have looked good to Balaam, for we learn from other passages of Scripture that his heart coveted it; nevertheless, he went and inquired of the Lord what he should do, after which he came back and told the princes that the Lord refused to let him go with them.

Some people refuse to do things because the commandment of the Lord forbids it, but in their hearts they wish the commandment was not thus, for they long to do it. It is an unwilling restraint. Sometimes the Lord grants us permission to do things because we persist in our desire for them. But His real will for us would be different.

The Lord finally permitted Balaam to go, but we believe the reason was that Balaam wanted to go. Many times the Lord will let us have our own ways but they are adverse to His way. The Lord wants us to love His every commandment and word because they are made in righteousness and truth. David said, "Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it" (Psalm 119:140); and, "Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward" (Psalm 19:11).

The tragic end of Balaam, and the fact that the last that was said of this much-enlightened man is very unfavorable, so far as his spiritual condition is concerned, points out the terrible consequences of actions prompted by a heart not fully set to do the will of God. Balaam loved

silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more.

¹⁹ Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the LORD will say unto me more.

²⁰ And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, *and* go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do.

²¹ And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.

²² And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants *were* with him.

²³ And the ass saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field: and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way.

²⁴ But the angel of the LORD stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall *being* on this side, and a wall on that side.

²⁵ And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall: and he smote her again.

²⁶ And the angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place, where *was* no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left.

²⁷ And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with

the wages of unrighteousness and sold his soul for them. He knew about God, and his lips spoke some of the most sublime prophetic truth we have concerning the world's Redeemer. But Balaam lost all that he might have gained, by loving the paltry treasures of earth. The price a lost soul must pay during all eternity for a few moments of earthly pleasure, favor, honor, or wealth is too great for one to consider those things for a moment if those fleeting treasures are taken in place of the riches of Heaven, the joys of God's favor, or the honor of being one of God's children.

Temptation

Balak was determined that Balaam should curse Israel. He sent greater and more honorable princes to him and promised to promote him to great honor. Many people have swerved from the truth through promise of money or prestige in this world. Balaam no doubt to some extent feared the Lord, yet he had a covetous heart. The Word tells us that "the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (I Timothy 6:10).

If we could read the hearts of all those who profess to be Christians today, we wonder, how many would be revealed as having erred from the faith through the love for a bigger salary, greater honor, or more fame in this world.

Balaam did not have in his heart what Elisha had when Naaman, captain of the host of Syria, was healed and wanted to give Elisha gold and silver and changes of raiment. Elisha's servant, Gehazi, was the one who had a covetous heart. He thought he was receiving money from Naaman — a goodly prize — but, instead, he received Naaman's leprosy. Elisha said, "Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants?" (II Kings 5:26).

King Saul was another man whose heart was covetous and desired fame. The Lord told him to destroy utterly the Amalekites. When Samuel asked him why he did not obey the voice of the Lord, Saul said, "The people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal." And Samuel said, "Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD?" Many people esteem it a light thing to disobey the Word of God.

Adversaries

Balaam's way was perverse to the Lord, and God sent an angel to try to turn him from his perverseness.

It has been said that the Lord will at first mildly try to turn us from our evil way, but if He fails in that, the second time He will crush our foot against a wall. If that more drastic method is ineffectual, He will bring us into such straits that we can neither turn to the right hand nor the left, but will fall before His judgments. The messenger of justice would have killed Balaam had not the mercy of God prevented the ass from proceeding. The angel here was an adversary to Balaam in his perverseness, trying to turn him back into the right way.

Peter speaks of "cursed children: which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness **of** the prophet" (II Peter 2:14-16). May we never be found guilty of loving the wages of unrighteousness, but may we keep the integrity of our souls by being obedient to the voice of our God.

God Unchangeable

The first time the Lord spoke to Balaam He said, "Thou shalt not

a staff.

²⁸ And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?

²⁹ And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee.

³⁰ And the ass said unto Balaam, *Am* not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since *I was* thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay.

³¹ Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face.

³² And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? behold, I went out to withstand thee, because *thy* way is perverse before me:

³³ And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive.

³⁴ And Balaam said unto the angel of the LORD, I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again.

³⁵ And the angel of the LORD said unto Balaam, Go with the men: but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.

³⁶ And when Balak heard that Balaam was come, he went out to meet him unto a city of Moab,

curse the people: for they are blessed." God does not lie. He does not change. Yet there seemed to have been something in Balaam's heart that would gladly have cursed Israel for the honor, promotion, and wealth he would have received, if the Lord would just give him permission to do it. He loved the wages of unrighteousness — a selfish interest — willing that a whole nation perish, just for the wealth and honor it would bring to him. "All of self, and none of Thee"; may we get to the place where it is, "All of Thee, and none of self."

QUESTIONS

- 1 Who was Balak? Who was Balaam?
- 2 Where was Israel encamped?
- 3 What did Balak say about Israel?
- 4 What did he want Balaam to do?
- 5 What was an adversary to Balaam, and why?
- 6 What miracle was performed?
- 7 How many times did the angel of the Lord try to stop Balaam?
- 8 What was the condition of Balaam's heart?
- 9 What does the Word say is the root of all evil?

which *is* in the border of Arnon,
which *is* in the utmost coast.

³⁷ And Balak said unto Balaam, Did I
not earnestly send unto thee to call
thee? wherefore camest thou not
unto me? am I not able indeed to
promote thee to honour?

³⁸ And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I
am come unto thee: have I now
any power at all to say any thing?
the word that God putteth in my
mouth, that shall I speak.

³⁹ And Balaam went with Balak, and
they came unto Kirjathhuzoth.

⁴⁰ And Balak offered oxen and
sheep, and sent to Balaam, and to
the princes that *were* with him.

⁴¹ And it came to pass on the
morrow, that Balak took Balaam,
and brought him up into the high
places of Baal, that thence he might
see the utmost *part* of the people.