

Title: The Way of Balaam  
Text: Numbers 22-24  
Scripture reading: 2 Peter 2: 10-16  
Date: May 31, 2012  
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**2 Peter 2: 14: Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: 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 voice forbad the madness of the prophet.**

**Proposal:** Balaam is set before us in scripture as an example of the way which false prophets go.

**Division:** 1) The Heart of Balaam; 2) The Word Spoken by Balaam; 3) The Practice of Balaam

In Numbers 22, the children of Israel were camped in the plains of Moab. Balak, king of the Moabites, was afraid of them. He sent messengers to Balaam saying,

**Numbers 22: 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; and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak.**

## **I. THE HEART OF BALAAM**

First, the heart of Balaam is compromise under the pretense of holiness and love.

**Numbers 22: 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.**

When Balaam pretended to pray, Balaam really used enchantments: he sought omens—signs. (Read Nu 24: 1.) He did it to appear holy before these men. But though Balaam did not come to God, God came to Balaam.

**Numbers 22:9 And God came unto Balaam, and said, What men *are* these with thee?**

God knows Balaam's covetous heart and the desire of those men to curse God's people. But God is about to overrule the wrath of Balaam and Balak to praise God's own name and to bless his people. He is doing the same here now by what he did then.

**Application:** Brethren, let this be great comfort to you, brethren. Our God is sovereign. He is able to overrule devils and evil men to bring about his will, even over the ministry of false prophets. Against the evil desires of falsehood, God will promote his glory and the good of his people.

Secondly, the heart of false prophets is to compromise with the enemies of God, even against the word of God.

**NUMBERS 22:12: And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they *are* blessed.**

**Application:** This is true now as it was then. GOD'S people are blessed. Blessed because Christ Jesus is blessed and all God's elect are blessed in him and for his sake.

Psalm 72: 17: His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and *men* shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed.

The Lord's people are eternally safe and secure in Christ. For the sake of our Advocate, God shall protect us against all the wiles of evil in this world. David said,

Psalm 109: 28: Let them curse, but bless thou: when they arise, let them be ashamed; but let thy servant rejoice.

**NUMBERS 22:13: 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.**

Notice, the word of God to Balaam was, **Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they *are* blessed.** But Balaam merely told them **the LORD refuseth to give me leave to go with you.** He might as well be saying, "Perhaps if you come again, at another time God will allow it." He left the door open when God said shut it. He did it for one reason. Peter said, "an heart they have exercised with covetous practices;...he loved the wages of unrighteousness;"

**Application:** Covetousness is the greedy desire for what you do not have. It is the root of all evil—including all heresy. False teachers have a heart exercised with covetous practices. They love not the Lord Jesus Christ but they love the wages of unrighteousness. Therefore they are willing to compromise with those who preach another Jesus and another way of salvation.

Not so faithful men. Faithful men are faithful to God, his word, and his people.

2 Corinthians 4:1: Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; 2: But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God....5: For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. 6: For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 7: But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

Thirdly, the heart of Balaam is presumption and self-will.

Balak sent again princes more honorable to Balaam with a better offer.

**Numbers 22: 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.**

Note: Satan allures men with money, with positions of honor—give you titles, teaching positions—promising to serve you, the very things the covetous heart desires.

**Numbers 22: 18: And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of 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.**

God tried Balaam in this to show us that the heart of a false prophet is presumption and self-will. God told him to go with one condition—v20: “If the men come to call thee, rise up, *and* go with them.” Will Balaam be presumptuous and self-willed to go? Or will he heed the Lord’s command, patiently wait until the men came another time and call him to go?

**Application:** God’s tries his preachers and his people. He commands us to preach Christ, to use what he has given us to make sure the gospel goes forth and to wait on God to give the increase. Our heart is like Moses,

Exodus 33: 14: And he said, My presence shall go *with thee*, and I will give thee rest. 15: And he said unto him, If thy presence go not *with me*, carry us not up hence. 16: For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? *is it* not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that *are* upon the face of the earth.

But Peter says the heart of false teachers and those who follow are **presumptuous, self-willed**—Samuel told Saul stubbornness is as idolatry. Balaam did not send the men away and wait to see if they called him again. What did Balaam do?

**Numbers 22: 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:...**

Balaam mocked God. God’s anger was kindled because he went. And God rebuked him

**2 Peter 2: 16: But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man’s voice forbad the madness of the prophet.**

**Numbers 22: 22:...and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary against him.**

The Angel is the pre-incarnate Christ, Christ the Messenger of the covenant (Ex 23:20; Mal 3: 1) Balaam’s donkey saw the Angel of the Lord but Balaam did not.

The donkey turned and Balaam smites him three times. When the ass asked why? Balaam said,

**Numbers 22: 29: Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee....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?**

Balaam said he smote the ass because he mocked me—the Lord says that is what you are doing to me.

**Numbers 22: 32:...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.**

Balaam’s eyes were open so that he had a great head knowledge of truth.

Numbers 24: 15: And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: 16: He hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the

knowledge of the most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open:

But it was all in the head. He had not the Spirit of God—without the love of Christ in his heart a man has no constraint to follow Christ and serve him.

**Application:** For the same reason, like Balaam, false prophets are those natural, brute beasts that willingly, deliberately, “forsake the right way.” They forsake what they know is truth because their true love is the wages of unrighteousness. They want money. They want honor among the Moabites—Balak will promote you to a teaching position, great honor, men will obey you—the covetous man will take it, even if it means turning his back on God and cursing Israel.

## II. THE TRUTH SPOKEN BY BALAAM

**Numbers 22: 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.**

God sent Balaam to make his power known on the vessels of mercy. Balaam despised the gospel, yet the Lord put words in his mouth and forced him to speak the truth of the gospel.

**Numbers 23: 8: How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, *whom* the LORD hath not defied? 9: For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. 10: Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth *part* of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!**

**Numbers 23: 19: 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? 20: Behold, I have received *commandment* to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. 21: He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God *is* with him, and the shout of a king *is* among them. 22: God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn. 23 Surely *there is* no enchantment against Jacob, neither *is there* any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought! 24 Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat *of* the prey, and drink the blood of the slain.**

Each time he proclaimed the truth, Balaam received opposition from Balak for preaching the gospel. But though he said the truth and withstood opposition because of the truth. It did not change the fact that God declares Balaam a false prophet. Three times in the New Testament, Balaam is used as the example, to warn us to avoid false prophets.

**Application:** Men and women that support those who have gone the way of Balaam, justify their preachers because they say he preaches much truth. Balaam did! But though his doctrine was true doctrine, he was yet a false prophet. Why?

## III. THE PRACTICE OF BALAAM

It was not that Balaam’s doctrine was heresy. But by his compromise with false religion, Balaam taught Israel to worship Jehovah at the altar of Baal.

**Numbers 22: 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. **23: 1:** And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven oxen and seven rams. **2** And Balak did as Balaam had spoken; and Balak and Balaam offered on *every* altar a bullock and a ram. **3:** And Balaam said unto Balak, Stand by thy burnt offering, and I will go: peradventure the LORD will come to meet me: and whatsoever he sheweth me I will tell thee. And he went to an high place.

Three times, he did this. Each time calling upon the name of the Lord “**in the high places of Baal!**” Though the words coming out of his mouth was the gospel, the false doctrine he believed in his heart was manifest in that he joined with the worshippers of Baal.

At last, Balaam resorted to another tactic, he used the women of Moab to cause Israel to commit trespass against God.

**Numbers 31:15:** And Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive? **16:** Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD.

**Application:** Peter says “**they have eyes full of adultery.**” Like Balaam used all these works in the high places, all this appearance of charity and union with those of different opinion, like Israel was attracted by the women: false prophets use their church and many religious activities to attract:

- their humanitarian missions and gospel missions along with their prayer meetings (The Lord Jesus told us not to those things to be seen of men.)
- their many wonderful works in the name of the Lord.
- their compromise with those who preach Armenian, free-will works religion

Jeremiah 3: 2: Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lien with. In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness. 3: Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore’s forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed.

As harlots unashamed, boasting, Peter calls it rioting.

2 Peter 2: 13: And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you

Using it all to allure those who were clean escaped from their error.

2 Peter 2: 18: For when they speak great swelling *words* of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, *through much* wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.

That is what began to happen with Israel.

**Numbers 25: 1:** And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. **2:** And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did

eat, and bowed down to their gods. **3: And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.**

**Application:** God tried those in Israel through all Balaam's idolatry and many failed. Will we?

James 1: 27: Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world.

It is one thing to visit will-worshippers and preach the gospel to them—for they are fatherless and widows. It is another to join with them and become spotted.

**Be sure we get it:** The idolatry Balaam led them into was not an open denial of truth, or of God, or of the gospel. It was the mixing of the worship of God with the worship of Baal, preaching grace but practicing will worship and works religion, mixing Christ our Altar and our Sacrifice with man's altars and mans' sacrifices.

Titus 1: 16: They profess that they know God; but in works they deny *him*, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

2 Corinthians 6: 16: And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, 18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

Hebrews 13: 10: We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle....Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

## LASTLY

God prevented Balaam from cursing his children and each time he was made to bless them. And God continued to bless his people in the plain. So God shall make the wrath of man to praise him and work for the good of his saints. Balaam was made to confess it, saying,

**Numbers 24: 5: How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, *and* thy tabernacles, O Israel! 6: As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the LORD hath planted, *and* as cedar trees beside the waters. 7: He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed *shall be* in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. 8 God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn: he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce *them* through with his arrows. 9 He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed *is* he that blesseth thee, and cursed *is* he that curseth thee.**

In the end, God sent his servant Moses. Through Phineas he stayed the plague—a picture of God sending his true messenger with the gospel of Christ whereby the Spirit of God conquers the heart of his children and brings his people to believe on Christ in whom our plaque has been put away. So God saves his people from Balaam's way. We overcome by the blood of the Lamb, by the word the testimony—the gospel, by his grace giving us a new heart so that we no longer love our lives unto the death, but forsake all and follow Christ through faith.

God prevented the honor Balaam sought. Balaam went his way and Balak went his way. And eventually David arose and conquered Moab—a picture of Christ fully slaying all our enemies in the day he returns.

**Numbers 24: 17 I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. 18 And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly. 19: Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city.**

As long as we continue with this world's Moabites constantly trying to allure us into their false religion, we are to do one thing. Follow Christ, taking heed to his gospel until that Star of Jacob returns.

**2 Peter 1: 19: We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:**

Amen!