

Series: Questions

Title: What Men are These with Thee?

Text: Numbers 22: 9

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The next question in our “Questions” series is God’s question to Balaam. “And God came unto Balaam, and said, What men are these with thee?” (Nu 22: 9)

Balaam was false prophet. He an example of those who once professed to believe Christ, who even preached in Christ’s name, yet “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.” (2 Pet 2: 15)

On each side of Balaam was a company of men: to his left were God’s enemies Balak, the Moabites and the Midianites and to his right, were God’s people: the children of Israel and Christ our Mediator. When God’s enemies came to hire Balaam to curse God’s people, Balaam told them to spend the night while he sought direction from God, “And God came unto Balaam, and said, What men are these with thee?” (Nu 22: 9)

We could learn a lot from Balaam’s heresy. But the key thing we will focus on is that believers should always keep the company of Christ and his people, not that of God’s enemies.

## **GOD KNOWS OUR COMPANY**

First, God knows the company we keep in this world. God is the all-knowing, all-present, all-seeing God, “For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings.” (Job 34: 21) “Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off.” (Ps 138: 6)

God is high—he is higher than all, in greatness, dignity, and power. Yet God has respect unto the lowly. The lowly are his people: those the Holy Spirit has created new, with a broken and contrite heart; they are lowly in heart to submit to and follow the Lord Jesus, united with the Lord’s people. Caleb and Joshua were lowly men, true believers, among the children of Israel.

Everything God was doing here, he was doing for his people. God watches over his lowly people with pleasure and protects them from evil. God came to overrule Balaam’s madness because of his lowly people in Israel. It is because God everlastingly loves his people in Christ. They are the purchased possession of his darling Son. His people are those in whom the Spirit of God abides.

But the proud he knoweth afar off. Proud men boast about their free will, they speak blasphemously of God and his power. Still, God knows them and God allows them (even makes them) to do only that which glorifies him, only that which is for the good of his people. “And the afflicted people thou wilt save: but thine eyes are upon the haughty, that thou mayest bring them down.” (2 Sam 22: 28)

So be sure to understand: God knew who the men were that were with Balaam. And God knew that Balaam knew who these men were. God knew what was in all their hearts. But God will have Balaam to answer this question with his own mouth—Verse 9, “And God came unto Balaam, and said, What men are these with thee?”

That is a good question for us to always answer about ourselves. “What men are these with thee?” Am I in the company of Christ Jesus and God’s chosen, redeemed, sanctified people? Or am I in the company of God’s enemies? Am I seeking the glory of my Redeemer? Or am I seeking the mammon of unrighteousness

which Balaam loved? If God took notice of the company that was with this false prophet then God certainly knows the company that his people keep.

## **DOES OUR COMPANY MATTER?**

Secondly, does it matter, before God, what company a believer keeps? It certainly does. Believers are instructed throughout the scriptures concerning the company we keep. We are taught by Christ our Wisdom to “walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous.” (Pro 2: 20)

By nature, there is none good, but one, that is God. (Rom 3: 10-12; Mk 10: 18) Among the sons of Adam there is: none, righteous, no, not one, none that understandeth, none that seeketh after God, none that doeth good, no, not one.

But a believer has been made holy by God: by God the Father in electing grace, by God the Son in redeeming grace; by God the Holy Spirit in regenerating grace.

1 Peter 1: 13: Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 14: As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: 15: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

The believer’s holiness is Christ with whom we have made one in the new birth and our righteousness is Christ through faith in Christ. So “The Way” of good men is Christ the Way. And “The Paths” of those made righteous in him are the old paths of the gospel which our Master teaches us to walk in. Therefore, “Whoso keepeth the law [Christ said, “Keep my words”, and those who keep Christ’s words, obeying our Master] is a wise son: but he that is a companion of riotous men shameth his father. (Pro 28: 7) “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.” (Pro 13: 20)

The reason the company we keep is so important is because of what Christ has accomplished for us. (1 Pet 4)

1 Peter 4: 1: Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; 2: That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

From the time our Redeemer entered this earth until Christ bore the sins of all God’s elect people, he suffered for us in the flesh. He suffered rejection of God-hating sinners and suffered rejection of self-righteous religionists. It all culminated in Christ suffering the cruel death of the cross. This Christ did for us who are chosen and called of God.

But now Christ has ceased from suffering for sin. He is risen and lives unto God. So have all those Christ represents. The believer who has been made a new creation has ceased from living a life of sin to the lusts of men. We are now living unto God and seeking his will in all things.

Brethren, serving Christ in this world will mean suffering: one company will reject us because we refuse to condone their sin; another company will reject us because we refuse to condone their false, free-will, self-righteous religion. But Christ suffered for us so we ought to be ready to suffer for him. We should “live the rest of our time in the flesh, not to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.”

1 Peter 5: 3: For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable

idolatry: 4: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you; 5: Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

**So we see**, believers are well-instructed throughout scripture that the company we keep certainly does matter. We have to work, go to school and live alongside sinners. Therefore, we should always be ready to teach sinners the gospel and receive sinners. But we ought never be yoked with sinners or approve of sinners who live in constant rebellion against God, whether they be outside of religion or within religion.

## **DANGERS**

Next, let's see some of the dangers of being yoked with unbelievers by seeing what took place between these men and Balaam.

First, world, sin, false religion, will offer you tempting rewards. They came with a reward for Balaam—"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." (v7) Plus, these men were "the elders"—this would make Balaam look wise. Also, these men were from two different companies of men, "elders of Moab and elders of Midian." These were two companies of men who usually hated each other but for the sake of fighting God and his people they joined together and were willing for Balaam to be their leader. This would make Balaam's position appear of utmost importance. Furthermore, these men were the "princes of Moab" which would make Balaam look dignified. Then when they came the second time, they came with more honorable princes, offering very great honor—"And Balak sent yet again princes, more, and more honourable than they. 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: 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." (vv15-17) So we see the danger of this world, of sin and false religion is that they offer rewards, wages to tempt you.

Secondly, the danger is that the only way to serve the world, sin or falsehood is to forsake Christ. Notice, they told Balaam up front that they wanted him to curse God's people—"and spake unto him the words of Balak." (v7) The only way to curse God's people is to curse God because Christ and his people are one. So knowing what they wanted, what would have been the best thing for Balaam to do? Right then it would have been best to say, "No. I'll never do it. Go home and don't come back." But what did Balaam do?—"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." (v8) The temptation overcame Balaam. He already lusted after the reward of unrighteousness in his heart—that was bad enough—but he went further and put himself into a position to get it in his hand. Why? Be sure to get this: Balaam valued the reward of unrighteousness over the reward of the Lord himself. Scripture says, "Balaam loved the wages of unrighteousness."

Brethren, our unregenerate friends or those in false religion, who try to get us join them, may not be as malicious as these, they may only be the messengers of the devil like these men were the messengers of Balak. And our unregenerate friends certainly will not tell us, "Let's do such and such a sinful thing because we want you to curse God." Yet, that is the essence of rebellion against God. If we choose the friendship of this world and choose to sin against our God, rather than standing steadfast with Christ, we are essentially saying we value the reward of unrighteousness over the reward that Christ himself is unto us. We cannot serve both God and mammon. The Master teaches us in whom he dwells, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Mt 6: 24)

Believer, this world cannot offer us a better reward than we already have. Who is our Righteousness and our Reward but Christ Jesus, the Son of God himself. These men would make Balaam look wise. But Christ is our Wisdom; there is no wisdom that can trump the Wisdom we already have in the Person of Christ Jesus?

The world offered Balaam a position. But Christ is our position; we are seated with Christ at God's right hand; what better position can there be than Righteousness and Holiness, complete in Christ? None! The reward of unrighteousness for Balaam was a place of dignity and honor in the world. But **Christ is our Dignity and Honor**. By Christ Jesus...

1 Peter 2: 9:...ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:\ 10: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. 11: Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

We are as the children of Israel, which these men were afraid of. These men saw how Christ conquered his enemies for his people—"And the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in the plains of Moab on this side Jordan by Jericho. And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites." (vv1-2) This world hears us speak of how Christ conquered our enemies: our sins, our sin-nature, death in us and the devil for us.

Christ makes us to "set forward" and to "pitch" our tent in peace. We live without the degree of worries worldly men have, even though our enemies are all around us. We know Christ is ruling everything in this world. We are resting in Christ by the power of Christ. Outwardly we bear some of the same troubles they do, yet inwardly we have peace in Christ:

2 Corinthians 4: 8: We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9: Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; 10: Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

We have the greatest reward there is, Christ Jesus our Righteousness and eternal life with him!

## LESSONS FROM OUR MASTER

Lastly, let's learn from our Master. When our Savior was tempted of the devil, first, the devil waited till he was very hungry—he had not eaten for "forty days and forty nights." Then the devil urged Christ to fill his belly with bread from earthly stones. The reward was that his flesh would be filled. When we are weakest spiritually is when we are tempted to feed our flesh with some earthly, sinful, bread. But Christ answered Satan, saying, "Man does not live on bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Mt 4: 4) So let us live more upon Christ and his word and less upon the pleasures of this world.

The second time, the devil, urged Christ to presume upon God by urging him to jump off a high place. But each time Christ was tempted, rather than do as Balaam and open the door, **immediately**, Christ slammed the door shut. He said, "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." (Mt 4: 7) Believer, never presume upon God's grace by flirting with temptation. Instead, slam the door shut on temptation right away. Never put yourself into a position to be tempted further...as did Balaam.

The third time, the devil showed Christ all the kingdoms of this world and their glory. The devil said "I will give you all this, if you fall down and worship me." Christ said, "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." (Mt 4: 10) In every temptation, our Redeemer valued the reward of glorifying God his Father and saving his people and put no value on the reward of unrighteousness. That is what it is to worship and serve God. Believer, value our Redeemer and his precious blood and put no value on the rewards of unrighteousness.

Scripture says, “Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.” (Mt 4: 11) Christ will do the same for us by his angels. Concerning believers and temptations of the devil, of sin, of worldly companions, of false religion or any other company, Paul said,

1 Corinthian 10:13: There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Christ is the Way, immediately flee to Christ, he is the Way of Escape which God has provided for his people. “Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith,” (1 Pet 5: 8) Resist stedfast in the faith by “casting all your care on him for he careth for you.” (1 Pet 5: 7)

## **OUR COMPANY**

Balaam did not flee to Christ. He chose the wages of unrighteousness. He made his company to be the enemies of God. But believer, “What men are these with thee?” Our company is Christ, the Friend who sticks closer than a brother. We are in a company loved with an infinite, unchanging, unchangeable love of God. This company is bought with the price of Christ’s precious blood. We are in a company delivered from a present evil world, saved by the Lord. Our company is sustained by Jehovah Himself. This is a company of pilgrims on our way to heavenly Canaan—a company who shall pass over to a goodly land!

Therefore, in every tempting situation, let us be like Peter and John when they were released from prison by the enemies of God, “And being let go, they went to their own company...” (Acts 4: 23)

**Amen!**