

FALLING INTO A TRANCE

NUMBERS 22:6 – 24:14

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~ Our last report from the Book of Numbers concluded with a brief introduction to the prophet Balaam. Balaam is a strange and shady Bible character who walks out on the pages of Scripture, and then hides in the shadows until Simon Peter, Jude and, ultimately, Jesus, calls him out and exposes him in apostasy. We never get a clear picture of this man, though – we are only provided a hazy outline of a figure – but he’s going to be with us throughout the Bible - in varying facets of spirit with the other bad actors of Holy Writ. It is difficult to make a true evaluation of Balaam, and we can only do that with the leading of the Spirit of God as our teacher.

We’re only going to consider the salient points in the record of Balaam in our Spiritual Safari, and you will have to make a prayerful evaluation as to what Balaam was all about in your own thinking with the Mind of Christ. If you do that, then we will agree. If you do not do that, you are going to reject literally every point I make about Balaam. Balaam was a prophet who was very well-known throughout the entire nation. Balaam is hired by Balak to come and curse the children of Israel. Balak was very superstitious; and when he saw these people pouring into the Jordan River valley, he wasn’t too happy about it. That was his land and he liked it the way it was; in fact, Balak wanted them gone! Well, in our last report we saw the messengers come down from Balak to Balaam and say....

XXII

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.

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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.

~ Old man Balaam had quite a reputation, we see. I guess anyone who said, "...curse your own so I can kill them with an easy mind," was the type who felt comfortable approaching the prophet Balaam. Well, either way, whoever Balaam blessed was blessed, friends; and you can decide for yourself if you believe the Bible is the Word of God - or not. So, these men from Balak had come to Balaam with the ransom of a king. Unbridled wealth. It's about much more than money; it's about Balaam's reputation in the world first and foremost - and the overbearing power that comes with that - and was paid in all sorts of goods and produce. This is something that was completely satanic - and it's the reason the Lord was driving out the Midianites and the Moabites from His land at this time in which we are studying. Remember, the children of Israel were commanded by God to move in and drive them out....

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.

~ So, we see this man seemingly making an honest attempt to ascertain the will of God in this passage - and God does communicate with Balaam, to be sure. God tells Balaam he 'shall not go' with them. That's the only message Balaam received from God. God isn't going to tell Balaam to curse Israel, because they are His chosen people. God gave a categorical and a matter of fact answer to Balaam not to go. I don't see how to interpret this any other way than 'shall not go.' Well, Balaam isn't taking that as an answer from God. Most self-professing believers will not obey a direct command from God today, either....

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,

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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.

~ Balaam appears to be a sincere and honest man obeying direct communications from God in this passage. If this were the end of the story, then our reasonable conclusion would be exactly that. However, Balak is persistent, and he isn't just going to go away. Balak comes back at Balaam with a better price - but even that doesn't seem to affect Balaam; and he turns the second offer down....

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 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.

~ And with those words in verse nineteen, the compromise begins. It sounds pious enough, but the mere mention of a house full of silver and gold by Balaam was indicative of his mind set of covetousness. People speak of the things their hearts are set on. God has already given a definite and clear answer to Balaam - which means Balaam is defrauding these men now. God has already told Balaam not to go. Balaam is hoping God will open a crack in a door for him so he can get his foot in and – if that happens – Balaam is going all the way. Many people are told no by God, so they ask Him again - and again. They believe God will change His mind. Most people tend to think God has called them to the place where there is more money, more people - and more-better-looking people, usually! I'll admit – it's hard to turn down sometimes....

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.

~ Okay – we see the Lord doing something that He does for many of His servants - and He may do it for you and me if we aren't careful. It's never good when we pray for the permissive will of God for our lives, friends. While God may permit that thing you want - you'll regret it. God didn't change His mind about Balaam not going; the answer was no! God knew they would up the price and that this would continue as it did. So, God says, "...go ahead and go!" God permits us to do things He does not approve of because we either do not ask for His leading - or we just do whatever we want to do anyways. Most – and I do mean most – so called Christians are nowhere near the direct leading of the Lord God. Remember, God granted the request of the children of Israel for the meat in the wilderness, but He "sent leanness to their souls," too. Sometimes our requests are granted with leanness sent to our souls. Is that how you want to live your Christian life? I don't....

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.

~ Now, we clearly see this “prophet” doesn’t have the mind of God at all. God was simply waiting to see if Balaam would obey after all - but Balaam didn't listen and away he went. God wouldn't give any more spiritual discernment to Balaam after this act of disobedience. Must be the leanness in his soul? Balaam's dumb animal had more spiritual awareness than Balaam did! We see the angel of the Lord standing in the path of the vineyards. Wine and vineyards speak of joy - and this angel is blocking Balaam’s way to it. All other ways are walled off. What a tremendous picture we have in this section of Scripture. Balaam went with the princes because he is covetous. He loves money....

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 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?

~ God had to use a miracle to get a message through to Balaam. In Balaam's day it was a miracle that this ass spoke; today, it's a miracle when one will shut up! Well, this is the way of Balaam. Peter mentions they had 'gone astray following the way of Balaam who loved the wages of unrighteousness but was rebuked for his iniquity by the dumb ass speaking with a man's voice that forbade the madness of the prophet.' Most Christian organizations are measured for success today by dollars. If I use that standard, I don't amount to anything in this so-called safari. Covetousness is Balaam's way, friends. However, to really be sure about that of which we speak, we need to probe a bit deeper into Balaam's personality. Jude says the apostates in his church ran greedily after the error of Balaam for a reward. Even so, Balaam has a strong psyche, thoroughly capable of rationalizing misinformation and accepting outright lies that are KNOWN to be false. He will use that rationalization to explain away his motives here. Balaam is trying to ascribe a worthy motive for his conduct in order to form his hidden agenda. Many people are doing something that's questionable today, and they come up with all sorts of rationalizations for justifying it....

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:

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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.

~ So, God leaves no question that it angered Him that Balaam went with these men. Balaam didn't even flinch or glance back as he went - even after this event. So, let's set the scene here as Balaam goes along on his way to meet Balak, and then they will set out to view the nation Israel from every conceivable angle. The king of Moab takes Balaam up high in the mountains where Balaam can see the camp of Israel below. We will see Balak is not happy with any of the prophecies from Balaam; and they end up viewing the camp from all four sides and from four different mountains....

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

XXIII

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.

4 And God met Balaam: and he said unto him, I have prepared seven altars, and I have offered upon every altar a bullock and a ram.

5 And the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, Return unto Balak, and thus thou shalt speak.

6 And he returned unto him, and, lo, he stood by his burnt sacrifice, he, and all the princes of Moab.

7 And he took up his parable, and said, Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel.

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!

~ The first prophecy from Balaam concerning Israel is a remarkable prophecy, to be sure. Of course, Balak isn't satisfied with it, so they need to go view the people from a different angle....

11 And Balak said unto Balaam, What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them altogether.

12 And he answered and said, Must I not take heed to speak that which the LORD hath put in my mouth?

13 And Balak said unto him, Come, I pray thee, with me unto another place, from whence thou mayest see them: thou shalt see but the utmost part of them, and shalt not see them all: and curse me them from thence.

14 And he brought him into the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar.

15 And he said unto Balak, Stand here by thy burnt offering, while I meet the LORD yonder.

16 And the LORD met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, Go again unto Balak, and say thus.

17 And when he came to him, behold, he stood by his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab with him. And Balak said unto him, What hath the LORD spoken?

18 And he took up his parable, and said, Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor:

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!

~ Instead of cursing Israel, Balaam blesses them again while making it clear that God cannot curse them. What Balaam does do is reason in compromise that God must condemn Israel because there was evil in the camp. Sin was definitely in the nation of Israel, and Balaam concluded that their judgment was inevitable, and that God had to judge them because of their sins. So, why not get paid for telling the obvious truth? Because God had said don't go. That's why. It is God alone that justifies, and it is He alone Who judges sinners. What we need to realize is that God has already judged our sin in Christ when we come to Him by faith. Well, the world just doesn't understand that, and old man Balaam didn't understand that, either. Balaam's mindset was that God must condemn Israel; so, why not take some reward for saying what was going to happen? Saying "I told you so" goes a long way on a resume. Interestingly, Jesus Himself gives a little lesson in Revelation chapter two when He condemns the church for holding

the doctrine of Balaam. Jesus says Balaam cast a stumblingblock in front of the children of Israel....

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.

25 And Balak said unto Balaam, Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all.

26 But Balaam answered and said unto Balak, Told not I thee, saying, All that the LORD speaketh, that I must do?

27 And Balak said unto Balaam, Come, I pray thee, I will bring thee unto another place; peradventure it will please God that thou mayest curse me them from thence.

28 And Balak brought Balaam unto the top of Peor, that looketh toward Jeshimon.

29 And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven bullocks and seven rams.

30 And Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar.

XXIV

1 And when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness.

2 And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes; and the spirit of God came upon him.

3 And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said:

4 He hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open:

5 How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!

~ It is very interesting the Spirit of God came upon Balaam. In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God did come upon and depart from individuals. We see soon the Spirit departs from King Saul. There was sin in the camp of Israel and God dealt with it very specifically in the judgment that came with the brazen serpent. However, no outsider will be bringing up charges against the believer! All Balaam can do is bless them. Satan cannot bring a charge against the elect of God. If God is for us who can be against us? God justifies His own and that will be very difficult to accept and understand; it certainly is NOT a license to do whatever we want to do. Paul asked, "... who shall lay charge to God's elect?" There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. If you have been declared righteous by God, then no man can rightfully accuse you....

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.

10 And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together: and Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times.

11 Therefore now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee unto great honour; but, lo, the LORD hath kept thee back from honour.

12 And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying,

13 If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the LORD, to do either good or bad of mine own mind; but what the LORD saith, that will I speak?

14 And now, behold, I go unto my people: come therefore, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days ~

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