

Balaam Lesson 15

INTRO:

- A. The book of Numbers makes mention of an unusual man named Balaam who is also mentioned in seven (7) other books of the Bible.
- B. His story is found in Numbers 22-24.
 - 1. He's also mentioned in Numbers 31:8,16.
 - 2. References are made to him throughout the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 23:4; Joshua 13:22; 24:9-10; Nehemiah 13:2; Micah 6:5).
 - 3. There is also mention made of him in the New Testament (2 Peter 2:15; Jude 11; Revelation 2:14).
- C. Let us be sure to not confuse Balaam with Baal. Baal was an idol god that is mentioned throughout much of the history of the children of Israel.

I. SUMMARY OF BALAAM'S LIFE.

- A. A pagan king named Balak, of the Moabites, feared the Israelites would defeat his people in battle (Numbers 22:2-3).
- B. To prevent this from happening, he attempted to hire Balaam to curse Israel so the Moabites would be sure to defeat them (22:4-6).
- C. If Balaam would do so, then Balak would reward him (22:7).
- D. When Balaam turned down the offer, Balak sent for him a second time with more honorable princes, the offer of promoting him, and would do whatever Balaam said (15-17).
 - 1. At this point, Balaam makes a very commendable statement: **Num 22:18**
- E. Though God instructed Balaam to reject the first visit (22:12), He permitted him to take it the second time, but with one condition – Balaam could only say what God would tell him to say (22:20).
 - 1. Though God allowed Balaam to go, He obviously still did not want him to go (22:22).
- F. It's here Balaam has the encounter with the angel of the LORD standing in the way of his travels which resulted in Balaam's donkey crushing his foot and talking to Balaam (22:22-34).
- G. Yet, in spite of all these hinderances, Balaam still is persistent in wanting to accept the offer.
 - 1. God permitted him to go on (22:35).
- H. What follows is a series of three parables/oracles from Balaam about Israel.
 - 1. In each case, Balaam instructed Balak to build seven altars and sacrifice seven bull and seven rams (23:1-2,14,29-30).
 - 2. Though this would have been a costly expense to Balak, they did not bring about the desired result for God would not permit Balaam to curse the people of Israel.
- I. The most important thing in all this is Balaam not only failed to curse Israel, but he ended up blessing them instead (23:7-10,18-24; 24:3-9).
- J. It was then Balaam gave a fourth and final parable showing how Israel would be victorious over her enemies in the future, including Moab (24:15-24).
- K. The story of Balaam shows him to be neither a hero nor a good prophet to Israel.

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- L. Instead, it shows God's determination and faithfulness to protect and bless His people.
 - 1. If anything, the people deserved to be defeated by Balak's armies.
 - 2. They had recently "*spoke against God and against Moses*" and complained about their food and water supply yet again (21:4-9).
- M. Despite their unfaithfulness to Him, God remained faithful to them.
 - 1. This is the lesson the other references in the Old Testament make about the situation involving Balaam.
Deuteronomy 23:4-5; Joshua 24:9-10; Nehemiah 13:2
Micah 6:5 "*O My people, remember now what Balak king of Moab counseled, And what Balaam the son of Beor answered him, From Acacia Grove to Gilgal, That you may know the righteousness of the LORD.*"
- N. A reference in Joshua adds that Balaam eventually died fighting in a battle against Israel. (**Joshua 13:22**”).
- O. A couple other important things to consider about Balaam:
 - 1. It appears he encouraged Balak to take another course of action against the Israelites.
 - a. Numbers 31:16 indicates Balaam advised Balak to entice the Israelites into fornication and idol worship at Peor, an event recorded immediately after Balaam failed in his attempts to curse Israel (25:1-2).
 - b. John warned the church in Pergamus about false teachers who encouraged similar immorality (**Revelation 2:14**).
 - c. Also, both Peter and Jude spoke of Balaam as the example of a person who attempts to gain personal wealth by teaching and encouraging wrong doing. (**2 Peter 2:15-16**).

II. LESSONS FOR US.

- A. Balaam's unintentional blessings on Israel proves to us God's faithfulness to His people.
 - 1. Remember our study of Joshua. **Joshua 1:**
- B. We, too, can say wonderful things with our mouth but not mean them in our heart.
 - 1. Balaam said some wonderful things:
 - a. When Balak's servants offered Balaam a "*diviner's fee*" (Numbers 22:7), he said, (**Numbers 22:18**).
 - b. When Balaam finally spoke with Balak face to face, he said, (**Numbers 22:38**).
 - 2. However, Balaam's actions shows his words and his heart was not in harmony.
 - 3. God's word spoken through Isaiah (Isaiah 29:13) and Jesus' applying it to those of His day (Matthew 15:8-9) are for us today: "*These people draw near to me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.*"

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4. Let us all be reminded that saying the right things is not enough and saying good things doesn't prove we are in or will remain in the right relationship with the Lord.
- C. Balaam reminds us it is possible to do things behind the scenes – either evil or good, which can have a huge affect on how things take place out in the open.
 1. When we read in Numbers 25 of how the Israelites sinned (idolatry and fornication), Balaam's name is not mentioned in the context, but we know from Numbers 31:16 he was obviously working behind the scenes.
 2. You and I don't have to be "out in front" in order to be an influence on others or affect the work of the church.
 - a. Maybe we are more of a "behind-the-scenes" type of servant.
 - b. We need those, too.
 - c. Let us make sure, though, that whether we are in private or in public, our influence is for good and for God's will to be done.
- D. We must beware of temptations to commit sexual sins and to associate with with false religions.
 1. Our world is saturated with sexual tainted temptation.
 - a. It's everywhere we look - work, shopping, radio, TV, movies, magazines, video games, etc.
 - b. There is the ever present allurements of all the 'fun' things denominations are doing.
- E. "*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil*" (1 Timothy 6:10).
 1. Balaam was finally offered enough money that he gave in to the temptation.
 2. "For the right price," as we say, Balaam sold his soul, giving advice to Balak which would get the results against Israel that Balak wanted.
 3. For Balaam, it was all about "*profit*" (Jude 11).
 - a. In 2 Peter 2:15, Balaam "*loved the wages of unrighteousness.*"
 4. Many good people have gone astray because of their "*love of money*".
- F. Don't ever change God's word or compromise Bible principles in our lives in order to gain income or wealth.

CONCLUSION:

- A. If we were to read only a few Bible verses about Balaam, we might think that he was committed to pleasing God.
- B. However, when we read all the Bible says about him, we see that's not the case.
- C. Regardless of the subject or topic, in order to get an accurate picture, we must read **ALL** the Bible says about that particular subject.