

Balaam (Numbers 22-25)

- I. The story of Balaam is an interesting study, from which many good life lessons can be drawn for us today.
- II. Balaam was a child of the devil who is now in hell (**2Pe 2:14-17**).
 1. Balaam sometimes talked and acted as if he were a child of God though.
 2. Balaam paid lip service to God (**Num 22:18; Num 23:26; Num 24:13**).
 3. Sometimes the children of the devil are virtually indistinguishable from the elect (**Mat 13:24-29 c/w Mat 13:38**).
 4. Like Balaam, sometimes children of the devil appear to be children of God, such as:
 - A. Cain
 - i. God told Cain that if he did well he would be accepted (**Gen 4:7**).
 - a. Even though favor was shown to Cain, he still didn't learn righteousness (**Isa 26:10**).
 - b. This is the nature of wicked men (**Exo 9:34**).
 - ii. God heard Cain's request and protected him (**Gen 4:13-15**).
 - a. God does good to both the righteous and the wicked (**Mat 5:45**).
 - b. But just because God does good to a person doesn't mean that they are a child of God.
 - iii. Despite the good that God did for Cain, he was still a child of the devil (**1Jo 3:12**).
 - B. Ishmael
 - i. God heard Ishmael's cry, provided for his needs, and promised to make him a great nation (**Gen 21:17-20**).
 - ii. Yet, Ishmael was not a child of God (**Rom 9:6-9**), being born after the flesh, not the Spirit (**Gal 4:28-29**).
 - C. Esau
 - i. Esau forgave Jacob and treated him kindly after Jacob stole his blessing by deception (**Gen 33:4-11**).
 - ii. Even wicked men know how to treat their family well (**Mat 7:9-11**).
 - iii. Yet, Esau was not elect and was hated by God (**Rom 9:10-13**).
 - D. Judas
 - i. Judas was one of Jesus' disciples and apostles (**Mar 3:14,19**).
 - ii. Judas did miracles in the name of Christ (**Mar 3:15**).
 - iii. Judas repented after he betrayed Jesus (**Mat 27:3-5**).
 - iv. Yet, Judas was a devil and not a child of God (**Joh 6:70; Joh 17:12; Mat 26:24**).
 - E. The Pharisees
 - i. The Pharisees appeared to be righteous (**Mat 23:14, 25, 27-28**).
 - ii. Yet, they were the children of the devil (**Joh 8:44; Mat 23:15,33**).
 - F. Satan's ministers
 - i. Satan's ministers appear to be ministers of righteousness (**2Co 11:13-15**).
 - ii. But they are in reality Satan's ministers, not God's (**2Co 11:15**).
 5. A study of Balaam's life is interesting in that it shows us how wicked men can appear to be righteous, but are in reality wolves in sheep's clothing, lying in wait to deceive (**Mat 7:15; Eph 4:14**).

- A. This study should teach us to scrutinize false teachers and look carefully at their fruits to discern whether they are of God (**Mat 7:15-20**).
- B. We must try the spirits to see if they are of God before believing them (**1Jo 4:1-3; 1Th 5:21; Pro 14:15**).
- C. A devil possessed person can speak some truth (**Act 16:16-18**).
- D. Search the scriptures and see if what they say is so (**Act 17:11**).
- E. If they speak not in accordance with the word of God, there is no light in them (**Isa 8:20**).
- F. A true prophet or spiritual man will acknowledge that what Paul wrote are the commandments of God (**1Co 14:37**).
 - i. If they disagree with Paul's teaching, they are not of God.
 - ii. A good test for a false prophets would be to ask them if they believe that:
 - a. God chooses some people and not others based on His will alone (**Rom 9:11**)?
 - b. God hates some people (**Rom 9:13**)?
 - c. all men are born spiritually dead and are by nature the children of wrath (**Rom 5:12; Eph 2:1-3**)?
 - d. all men are utterly wicked and incapable of seeking God or doing anything good (**Rom 3:9-12**)?
 - e. women ought to be silent in church (**1Co 14:34-35**)?
 - iii. If they contradict any of the preceding things which Paul taught, they are false prophets.
- G. If a man preaches another gospel, he is accursed (**Gal 1:8-9**).
- H. There are plenty of people out there prophesying in Jesus' name and doing many miraculous works in His name who are reprobates who will be told to go to hell on judgment day (**Mat 7:21-23**).

III. The story of Balaam (Numbers 22-25)

IV. Num 22:1-4 - Balak's irrational fear

1. Israel had just finished destroying the Amorites (**Num 21:24-25, 31-32**).
2. The Amorites had previously conquered the former king of Moab (**Num 21:26**).
3. Israel then sets up camp in the plains of Moab (**Num 22:1**).
 - A. The Moabites were the offspring of a bastard born of incest (**Gen 19:31-33, 36-37**).
 - B. Israel had been told to not fight with Moab because God had not given their land to them (**Deu 2:8-9**).
4. Nevertheless, Moab is afraid and distressed because of Israel (**Num 22:3**).
 - A. Moab was fearing where no fear was (**Psa 53:4-5**).
 - B. Fear causes distress because fear hath torment (**1Jo 4:18**).
 - i. Distressed *ppl.* - a. Afflicted with pain or trouble; sorely troubled; in sore straits.
 - ii. Torment *n* - 3. A state of great suffering, bodily or mental; agony; severe pain felt or endured. 4. An action, circumstance, or condition which causes extreme pain or suffering of body or mind; a source of pain, trouble, or anguish, or in weakened sense, of worry or annoyance.
 - C. The fear of man bringeth a snare (**Pro 29:25**).

- D. We must never be terrified by our adversaries (**Phi 1:28**).
 - E. The Lord has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, love, and sound mind (**2Ti 1:7**).
 - F. Fear is the opposite of faith (**Mar 5:36**).
 - G. We must put our trust in God and not fear what men can do to us (**Psa 56:3-4, 11**).
 - H. If the Lord is on our side, there is nothing to fear (**Psa 118:6; Heb 13:6**).
 - I. The godly will not fear even if a host encamps against them (**Psa 27:3**).
5. Because of their unwarranted fear, they imagine the worst (**Num 22:4**).
- A. This is called *automatic negative thinking*, putting the worst possible construction on a situation.
 - B. *Automatic negative thinking* and *irrational fear* will lead to rash and foolish actions.
 - i. *Automatic negative thinking* and *irrational fear* will cause one to flee for no reason.
 - a. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth..." (**Pro 28:1 c/w Lev 26:17**)
 - b. One time the wicked Syrians fled when no man pursued them because the Lord made them hear the noise of a great army when none was there (**2Ki 7:5-7**).
 - ii. *Automatic negative thinking* and *irrational fear* will cause one to make a foolish decision which can end up causing the feared event, or something even worse, to happen.
 - a. A great example of this was the *irrational fear* and *automatic negative thinking* of the chief priests and the Pharisees concerning Jesus.
 - b. They devised a plan to kill Jesus because they reasoned that if they left Him alone they would be destroyed by the Romans (**Joh 11:47-50**).
 - c. The exact opposite happened: the Romans destroyed them *because* they rejected and killed Jesus (**Mat 21:33-46; Mat 22:2-7**).
 - iii. The people at the tower of Babel reasoned that unless they built a tower and made a name for themselves they would be scattered all over the earth (**Gen 11:4**).
 - a. Because they built the tower, God confused their language and scattered them abroad upon the face of the earth (**Gen 11:5-8**).
 - b. Their *irrational fear* and foolish action caused their fear to come upon them and changed the course of human history.
 - iv. The very existence of the nation of Moab was due to one of Lots' daughters making a foolish decision based on irrational fear (**Gen 19:31-33, 36-37**).
 - v. King Saul likewise had an unfounded fear and paranoia about David, and therefore tried to kill him (**1Sa 18:7-9; 1Sa 18:28-29; 1Sa 19:1**).
 - a. Be cautious about thinking all men are evil and out to get you (**Psa 116:11**).
 - b. This did not end well for Saul.
 - vi. Because of *irrational fear* and unbelief, Israel refused to take the promised land.

- a. They were concerned that their little ones would perish (**Num 14:1-4**).
- b. Because of their rebellion, they ended up perishing and their little ones were saved (**Num 14:31-32**).

V. Num 22:5-14 - Balaam's first meeting with the princes

1. Because of his irrational fear, Balak calls for Balaam and exaggerates the supposed danger, saying that Israel *covered the face of the earth* (**Num 22:5**).
2. Balak asks Balaam to curse Israel for him so that he can drive them out of the land (**Num 22:6**).
 - A. What Balak didn't realize is that cursing Israel would bring the curse of God upon him (**Num 24:5, 9; Gen 27:29**).
 - B. If Balak was wise, instead of trusting in men (**Jer 17:5; Psa 146:3; Psa 118:8-9**), he would have gone to the God of heaven for help (**Psa 107:13**).
 - C. Balaam was a soothsayer (**Jos 13:22**).
 - i. Soothsayer - 1. One who speaks the truth; a truthful or veracious person. Obs. 2. One who claims or pretends to the power of foretelling future events; a predictor, prognosticator.
 - ii. Balak was foolish to trust in a pretending prophet instead of the God of heaven.
3. Balak sends the elders of his country with a bribe (rewards of divination) for Balaam and they tell him the words of Balak (**Num 22:7**).
 - A. Balaam apparently had a reputation for loving the wages of unrighteousness (**2Pe 2:15**).
 - B. Money answers all things (**Ecc 10:19**).
 - C. False prophets/teachers will divine for money (**Mic 3:11; Isa 56:10-11; Tit 1:11**).
 - D. Balaam was like one of the princes of Israel later in their history who could be bribed with gifts and rewards to pervert justice (**Isa 1:23**).
 - E. But a true man of God cannot be bought for money (**Act 8:18-20; Tit 1:7; 1Pe 5:2**).
4. Balaam tells them to stay the night while he goes and asks God about it (**Num 22:8**).
 - A. What was there to ask God about?
 - B. Why did Balaam feel the need to ask God if he could curse His people?
 - C. Note: when you are tempted to sin, never pretend to be pious and ask God if it's okay.
 - D. Have you ever counseled a fellow Christian against a foolish decision that they were contemplating, only to have them respond that they are "praying about it"?
 - E. "Never put a question mark where God puts a period." (Unknown)
5. God comes to Balaam and asks who the men were who were with him (**Num 22:9**).
 - A. God obviously knew who the men were (**Psa 147:5**).
 - B. But God sometimes "plays dumb" and asks questions to which He already knows the answer (**Luk 24:17-20; Joh 4:16-17; Joh 6:5-6**).
 - C. When God starts asking questions, it's likely not to make small talk, but rather interrogation (**Gen 3:9-13; Gen 4:9-10**).
6. Balaam answers that Balak sent a message unto him (**Num 22:10**).
 - A. Notice how Balaam doesn't exactly answer God's question directly.
 - B. Balaam would have made a great politician.

- C. How frustrating it must be for God to deal with feebleminded sinners who can't even answer His questions directly!
- 7. Balaam relays to God Balak's message to him (**Num 22:11**).
- 8. God answers Balaam in no uncertain terms and says that he is not to go with them, nor to curse Israel (**Num 22:12**).
 - A. Sometimes God's answer to our prayers is "no".
 - i. This doesn't mean that God doesn't love us -- it rather means that He loves us enough to not let us do something that will harm us.
 - ii. Sometimes God says "no" to help us learn to rely on His grace to get us through a hard time (**2Co 12:7-9**).
 - iii. Sometimes God says "no" because He has a greater plan that must be accomplished (**Luk 22:42**).
 - B. Remember God's answer to Balaam because much of the remainder of this study is based on it.
- 9. Balaam sends the messengers back saying that the Lord refused to let him go with them (**Num 22:13**).
 - A. Balaam clearly understood God's command to him, in that he promptly and unequivocally told them he could not go with them.
 - B. At this point, Balaam is outwardly appearing as if he is a righteous man.
- 10. The princes of Moab then return to Balak and tell him that Balaam refused to come with them (**Num 22:14**).

VI. Num 22:15-21 - Balaam's second meeting with the princes

- 1. Balak then sends more princes again to Balaam, this time more honorable princes (**Num 22:15**).
 - A. Balak is obviously hoping that the presence of prestigious men would tempt Balaam to disobey God.
 - B. Beware of the man who doesn't respect your convictions and keeps trying to persuade you to disobey God.
 - C. We must never honour the person of the mighty (**Lev 19:15**).
 - i. God himself doesn't respect persons (**Act 10:34; Rom 2:11**).
 - ii. Our Lord Jesus was known for not respecting persons (**Mat 22:16**).
 - iii. The apostle Paul was unaffected by men who appeared to something special (**Gal 2:6**).
 - iv. The man of God is warned against showing any partiality (**1Ti 5:21**).
 - v. Christians are not to show favor to the rich (**Jam 2:1-9**).
 - vi. The wicked have persons in admiration because of advantage (**Jud 1:16**).
- 2. The princes again try to persuade Balaam to come to Balak (**Num 22:16**).
 - A. God had already said that Balaam was not to go with them (**Num 22:12**).
 - B. They knew that God had told him not to go with them, so they were in essence saying, "Don't let God stop you from coming to Balak."
 - C. We ought to obey God rather than men (**Act 4:19-20; Act 5:29**).
 - D. When princes require us to do things that God has forbidden, we must deny them (**Dan 3:14-18**).
 - E. When princes forbid us to do something that God requires, we must deny them (**Dan 6:6-10**).

3. Balak promises to promote Balaam to very great honour if he would just disobey God (**Num 22:17**).
 - A. God promises that those that honour Him will be honoured, but those that disobey Him will be lightly esteemed (**1Sa 2:30**).
 - i. King Balak promised Balaam just the opposite.
 - ii. It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes (**Psa 118:9; Psa 146:3**).
 - B. Even if we would get honour from men, there is nothing worth disobeying God for (**Mat 22:37-38**).
 - C. The way to honour and exaltation is by humbling oneself, not by proudly disobeying God (**Jam 4:6,10; 1Pe 5:5-6**).
 - i. Honour comes by humility and the fear of the LORD (**Pro 22:4**).
 - ii. Never believe a person who promises to honour you for disobeying God: a godly person only honours someone who fears God (**Psa 15:4**).
4. Balaam responds to Balak's request with a very pious sounding statement: he will not do anything less or more than God said, even for immense wealth (**Num 22:18**).
 - A. Balaam's answer is full of wisdom.
 - B. The Lord had already spoken and forbidden Balaam to go to Balak (**Num 22:12**).
 - C. Balaam unequivocally says that he would not go beyond the word of God.
 - i. Balaam let his yea be yea and his nay, nay (**Jam 5:12**).
 - ii. Balaam was steadfast and unmovable (**1Co 15:58**).
 - iii. Balaam was not going to go in the way of evil men (**Pro 4:14-15**).
 - iv. Balaam was not going to go to the right hand, nor to the left (**Pro 4:25-27**).
 - v. Balaam was not going to add to God's word, lest he became a liar (**Pro 30:5-6**).
 - vi. Balaam was not going to add to or take away from God's word, which would have brought a curse on him (**Rev 22:18-19**).
 - D. Balaam makes it clear that God's word is more valuable to him than gold or silver (**Psa 119:72, 127; Psa 19:7-10**).
 - i. Unfortunately, Balaam is just paying lip service to God, as the next verse shows us.
 - ii. He doth protest too much, me thinks.
 - E. Notice that Balaam calls the LORD *his* God (**Num 22:18**).
 - i. As has already been shown, Balaam was a child of the devil (**2Pe 2:14-17**).
 - ii. Many will call Jesus *Lord* on judgment day who are not His sheep and who will be sent to hell (**Mat 7:21-23**).
5. Balaam tells them to wait there for the night until he can find out if God has anything more to say to him (**Num 22:19**).
 - A. God had already plainly said that Balaam was not to go with them (**Num 22:12**).
 - i. God doesn't change His mind (**Jam 1:17; Heb 13:8; Mal 3:6**).
 - ii. What, then, was the purpose of asking Him the same thing again?
 - iii. "Never put a question mark where God puts a period." (Unknown)
 - iv. Balaam was not unclear on what God had said (**Num 22:13**).
 - v. Balaam simply didn't like what God had said and was hoping that God would change His mind.

- B. Balaam was acting as so many charismatic "Christians", believing that the word of God is not final and looking for a continuing revelation.
 - i. God's word is forever settled in heaven (**Psa 119:89**).
 - ii. God *hath spoken* unto us by His Son (**Heb 1:2**).
 - iii. When the NT was perfected (completed), the continuing revelation of prophesy was done away with (**1Co 13:8-10**).
 - C. How many times do Christians know exactly what God says about something they want to do, but continue to "pray about it" to find out if they should do it or not?
 - i. As a parent, doesn't it irritate you when your child asks for something after you have already told him "no"?
 - ii. How do you suppose it makes God feel when we do it to Him?
 - iii. One time God had to essentially tell Moses that *no means no, so quit asking* (**Deu 3:23-26**).
 - D. Balaam's going to ask God again was his attempt to get God to rubberstamp what he really wanted to do.
6. God comes to Balaam that night and tells him to go with the men if they call him again (**Num 22:20a**).
- A. Did God change His mind and tell Balaam to go with them after He had told him earlier to not go with them? (**Num 22:12**)
 - B. God didn't change His mind because He is weak or fickle, but rather as a judgment against Balaam (**Num 22:22**).
 - i. God will answer a sinner according to the multitudes of idols in his heart (**Eze 14:4-9**).
 - ii. God knew Balaam's heart, that he loved the wages of unrighteousness (**2Pe 2:15**), and God was answering him accordingly.
 - iii. Balaam had rejected God's words, and therefore God judged him by giving him the fruit of his own thoughts (**Jer 6:19**).
 - iv. When sinners reject God's counsel, God will send a false prophet to tell them to do what they want to do so that they will be destroyed thereby (**1Ki 22:20-23**).
 - v. When God tells you to do something in His word, don't be fooled by a prophet who tells you otherwise because it could cost you your life (**1Ki 13:7-24**).
 - vi. Wisdom had already cried unto Balaam (**Pro 1:20-23**).
 - a. Balaam refused wisdom's call (**Pro 1:24-25**).
 - b. Now God was giving Balaam what he wanted as a judgment against him (**Pro 1:26-31**).
 - c. Balaam's turning away from God's counsel eventually slew him (**Pro 1:32; Num 31:8**).
 - C. Even though God sent Balaam to Balak as a judgment against him, God still had a plan to accomplish His purpose (**Num 22:20b**).
7. Balaam, being all too eager, gets up in the morning and goes with the princes of Moab (**Num 22:21**).
- A. Notice that God told Balaam to go with them *if the men come to call thee* (**Num 22:20**).
 - B. It is not specifically said that the men came to call Balaam again in **Num 22:21**.

- C. It appears that Balaam went with them without even waiting for them to come and call him to go with them, as the LORD had said.
 - i. Godly men will make haste to keep God's commandments (**Psa 119:60**).
 - ii. The wicked will make haste to fulfill their desires and their sin (**Psa 16:4; Pro 1:16; Pro 7:22-23; Pro 19:2**).
 - iii. Hasten v. - 1. a. *trans.* To cause to make haste; to urge on; to accelerate, expedite, hurry: = haste v. 1.
 - iv. Oh, that men would be as eager to keep God's commandments as they are to sin!

VII. Num 22:22-35 - Balaam's trip to meet Balak

- 1. God gets angry at Balaam for going with the princes (**Num 22:22**).
 - A. Why would God get angry with Balaam for going with the princes when He told him that he could go two verses earlier in **Num 22:20**?
 - i. God had already plainly told Balaam to not go with them (**Num 22:12**).
 - ii. When Balaam didn't like God's answer and sought for a second opinion, God answered a fool according to his folly and told him to go (**Pro 26:5**).
 - a. On occasion, God has actually told people who know better to sin, and then judged them for it.
 - b. God told rebellious Israel to sin (**Amo 4:4; Eze 20:39**).
 - c. God allows the wicked to sin, and yet He is angry with them for it everyday (**Psa 7:11**).
 - iii. God sometimes allows us to do things contrary to His law because of the hardness of our hearts (**Mat 19:8**).
 - iv. God gave Israel quail to eat when they clamored for it, but then He judged them for it (**Psa 106:14-15; Psa 78:29-31**).
 - v. Parents sometimes act similarly with their children who know that they are forbidden from doing something, but continue to ask anyway -- the parent finally has enough and says "Go ahead", and then spansks the child when they do it.
 - B. God then sent an angel to stand in Balaam's way as an adversary against him as he rode upon his ass (**Num 22:22**).
 - i. This was one of the holy angels, *the angel of the LORD*, not a fallen angel.
 - ii. God sends His angels to protect his children (**Psa 91:11-12; Act 5:19**).
 - iii. God sends His angels to destroy the wicked (**2Ki 19:35; Act 12:23**).
 - iv. With Balaam, God's angel was sent to be his adversary.
- 2. Balaam's ass sees the angel with its sword drawn and turns aside into the field (**Num 22:23**).
 - A. The prudent ass foresaw the evil and hid herself; the simple Balaam passed on and was punished (**Pro 22:3**).
 - i. The ass feared God and departed from evil (**Pro 3:7**).
 - ii. The ass endeavored to not enter into the path of the wicked, nor go in the way of evil men (**Pro 4:14**).
 - iii. The wise ass decided to avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away (**Pro 4:15**).
 - B. The ass was a wise beast -- wiser than Balaam -- and could see spiritual things.

- i. Balaam, on the other hand, was a natural brute beast (**2Pe 2:12,15; Jud 1:10-11**).
 - ii. Brute *adj.* - 1. Of animals: Wanting in reason or understanding; chiefly in phrases brute beasts, the brute creation, = the 'lower animals'. 2. a. Of human beings, their actions, and attributes: Brute-like, brutish; dull, senseless, stupid; unintelligent, unreasoning, uninstructed; sensual.
 - iii. How pitiful it is when an ass is wiser than a prophet.
 - iv. Go to the ass, thou fool, and learn of her! (**Pro 6:6-8**).
 - C. Balaam then smites his ass to turn her into the way (**Num 22:23**).
 - i. The wise ass feared and departed from evil, but Balaam the fool raged and was confident (**Pro 14:16**).
 - ii. The ass pondered the path of her feet and looked well to her going (**Pro 4:26; Pro 14:15**).
 - iii. Balaam was not regarding the life of his beast (**Pro 12:10**).
 - D. Balaam should have considered his ways when God put an obstacle in his path.
 - i. If we are doing God's will as revealed in the scripture, then we should pay no attention to adverse circumstances (**Ecc 11:4-6**).
 - a. It is a lazy man who sees potential trouble and turns back (**Pro 22:13**).
 - b. We should not be as them that turn back unto perdition, but them who believe to the saving of the soul (**Heb 10:39**).
 - ii. In Balaam's case, since God had already told him not to go, he should have turned back, but instead pressed on toward perdition.
- 3. The angel of the LORD then stands in a path with walls on each side (**Num 22:24**).
 - A. Balaam had been riding on that *broad* way that leads to destruction (**Mat 7:13**) where his ass had room to go around God's roadblock.
 - B. God now tightens up Balaam's path by putting walls on both sides of Balaam so the ass has little leeway to go around the angel.
 - C. As God turns a river of water by its banks (**Pro 21:1**), God is attempting to turn Balaam from his sin.
 - D. If God can't trust us with freedom, He will take it away to cause us to walk in His paths.
- 4. The ass sees the angel of the LORD and swerves into the wall to avoid him, crushing Balaam's foot, and causing Balaam to smite her again (**Num 22:25**).
 - A. Having already warned Balaam to no avail, God now inflicts some pain on him.
 - B. Balaam is unfazed by his crushed foot and smites his ass and forges on ahead.
 - i. Foolishness can't be forced out of fools, not matter how severe the beating (**Pro 27:22**).
 - ii. One word of reproof will affect a wise man more than 100 stripes will a fool (**Pro 17:10**).
 - C. Notice how Balaam punishes his ass when he gets chastened for his own rebellion.
 - D. We should always take care to not transfer our punishment to others who are undeserving of it.
 - i. This could be being harsh to your wife after you were reprimanded at work.
 - ii. This could be being impatient or severe with your children because you are being chastened by God for your sin.

5. The angel of the LORD now stands in a narrow place where the ass can't try to get around him (**Num 22:26**).
 - A. God has now made it impossible for Balaam to pass the angel.
 - B. God is in essence telling Balaam, *hither shalt thou come, but no further* (**Job 38:11**).
 - C. If we continue to rebel against God and the knowledge He has given us, He will take away our freedom entirely (**Isa 5:13**).
6. The ass, seeing the angel in front of her, falls down, and Balaam smites her with his staff (**Num 22:27**).
 - A. There is a time to fight and time to surrender (**Luk 14:31-32; Ecc 3:8**).
 - i. To continue with the foolish Balaam would have been the ass' destruction (**Pro 13:20**).
 - ii. The ass had realized this was a time to surrender.
 - iii. However, the ass riding on the ass was not so wise.
 - iv. Ass *n.* - 2. Hence *transf.* as a term of reproach: An ignorant fellow, a perverse fool, a conceited dolt.
 - v. Dolt *n.* - 1. A dull, stupid fellow; a blockhead, numskull.
 - B. This wise move by the ass didn't go unpunished.
 - i. Balaam intensifies his wrath towards his ass, hitting her with his staff.
 - ii. The ass was wise for not wanting to continue on with this furious madman (**Pro 22:24-25**).
 - iii. Doing the right thing and not running with the wicked sometimes causes us to incur their wrath (**1Pe 4:3-4**).
 - iv. The ass was suffering reproach for doing the right thing, and she took it patiently.
 - v. We are blessed when we suffer for righteousness' sake (**1Pe 4:14; Mat 5:10-12**).
7. The LORD opens the ass' mouth and she asks Balaam why he has smitten her three times (**Num 22:28**).
 - A. This was the first time in recorded history that a dumb ass spake (**2Pe 2:16**).
 - i. But it has certainly not been the last time.
 - ii. One merely needs to turn on the TV to find herds of dumb asses speaking.
 - B. Balaam is so obsessed with filthy lucre (**2Pe 2:15**) that he is unfazed by his animal talking to him.
 - i. It is not hyperbole to say that Balaam was insane, since the scripture calls him *mad* (**2Pe 2:16**).
 - ii. Madness *n.* - 1. Mental disease, insanity; now applied esp. to insanity characterized by wild excitement or extravagant delusions; mania.
 - iii. Beware of the love of money; it will make you lose your mind.
 - C. Notice how the ass was more righteous than Balaam.
 - i. She didn't reproach or revile Balaam for beating her unjustly.
 - ii. She is a good example for us to not revile back when we are persecuted (**1Pe 2:21-23; 1Pe 3:9; Mat 5:44**).
 - iii. She meekly asks him why he hit her three times.
 - a. She could see the angel because God gave her eyes to see.

- b. She didn't know that Balaam was a spiritually blind fool who couldn't see the angel ready to kill him.
 - c. Sometimes children of God naively think that reprobates can see the same things they can, and therefore wonder why they act so wickedly.
- 8. Balaam answers the ass and tells her that he hit her because she mocked him, and if he had a sword he would kill her (**Num 22:29**).
 - A. Note: never are you so blind and stupid as when you're arguing with a dumb ass.
 - B. The ass' patience is now being tested.
 - i. She humbly besought her master's favour, but he responds back with vitriol.
 - ii. She is a good example for us to serve our masters respectfully, not just the good and gentle, but also the froward (**1Pe 2:18-19**).
 - C. Balaam is showing what a fool he is, threatening to kill his ass for no good reason.
 - i. A fool's wrath is presently known (**Pro 12:16**).
 - ii. A fool utters all his mind (**Pro 29:11**).
 - iii. Balaam doesn't have rule over his own spirit (**Pro 25:28**).
 - iv. Being a natural man, Balaam is swift to shed blood (**Rom 3:15**).
- 9. The ass responds to Balaam (**Num 22:30**).
 - A. The ass wisely reasons with Balaam.
 - B. The ass calmly reminds Balaam that she has been his ass on which he has ridden for a long time.
 - i. Notice how she did not respond back in kind, railing on Balaam (**1Pe 3:9**).
 - ii. Rebuking a fool would have gotten the ass a blot (**Pro 9:7**).
 - iii. She is trying to agree with her adversary quickly before the situation escalates (**Mat 5:25**).
 - iv. The ass yielded when her ruler rose up against her and thereby pacified a great offence (**Ecc 10:4**).
 - C. She then asks him if she had ever mocked him before.
 - i. Balaam had tried to stir up strife, but the ass was slow to anger, appeasing strife (**Pro 15:18**).
 - ii. The ass's pleasant words helped to heal the situation (**Pro 16:24**).
 - D. Balaam answers with a calm and simple, Nay.
 - i. A soft answer turned away wrath (**Pro 15:1**).
 - ii. The ass's forbearance and soft tongue prevailed in diffusing the situation (**Pro 25:15**).
 - E. Notice the irony in this little exchange.
 - i. The ass gives a rational, reasonable response.
 - ii. Balaam responds with, "Nay."
- 10. The LORD opens Balaam's eyes and he sees the angel with his sword drawn and he falls flat on his face (**Num 22:31**).
 - A. Prior to God opening his eyes, Balaam could not see the angel.
 - i. Angels are spirits (**Heb 1:7**).
 - ii. They cannot be seen with the natural eye, unless God opens one's eyes to behold them (**2Ki 6:14-17**).
 - iii. On occasion, angels materialize and are seen of men (**Gen 19:1; Dan 9:21-22**).

- iv. Sometimes, they are indistinguishable from men (**Jdg 13:16**).
 - v. You may have met one and not known it (**Heb 13:2**).
 - B. Note: sometimes we fail to see a spiritual danger that is right in front of our eyes, as is the case with Balaam.
 - i. Like Balaam, our adversaries are spiritual, not carnal (**1Pe 5:8; Eph 6:11-12**).
 - ii. The weapons that we use to fight them are spiritual weapons (**2Co 10:3-5; Eph 6:13-17**).
 - iii. In Balaam's case, his spiritual adversary is righteous; in our case they are wicked (**Eph 6:12**).
 - C. When Balaam sees the angel, he immediately falls flat on his face.
 - i. Angels are fearful creatures (**Jdg 13:6; Luk 1:11-12**).
 - ii. Men have Balaam's response when they see an angel in it's glory (**Luk 24:4-5; Mat 28:2-4; Dan 8:16-17; Rev 19:10; Rev 22:8-9**).
 - iii. Imagine what men will do when they see the glorified Lord Jesus Christ who has more glory than the angels (**Heb 1:4**).
 - iv. Imagine what our resurrected bodies will be like when they are made equal to the angels (**Luk 20:36**).
- 11. The angel of the LORD interrogates Balaam, asking him why he smote his ass thrice (**Num 22:32a**).
 - A. Balaam didn't know that the eyes of the LORD are in every place beholding the evil and the good (**Pro 15:3**).
 - i. Balaam didn't know that the ass had an advocate.
 - ii. The angel was pleading the cause of the oppressed.
 - iii. Balaam was called to give an account of his deeds.
 - B. We also have an advocate, Jesus Christ (**1Jo 2:1**).
 - i. God pleads the cause of the poor and needy and the afflicted (**Psa 35:1; Psa 43:1; Psa 119:154; Pro 22:22-23; Pro 23:10-11**).
 - ii. God gives his angels charge over His elect to protect them (**Psa 91:9-12**).
 - C. Someday the wicked that oppressed us will give an account of themselves to God (**1Pe 4:4-5**).
 - D. The LORD will take vengeance on those that oppressed His people (**Rev 6:9-10**).
 - E. We will all someday give an account of what we have done when we thought nobody was watching (**Rom 14:10-12; 2Co 5:10**).
- 12. The angel tells Balaam that he withstood him because his is perverse before him (**Num 22:32b**).
 - A. How it must have felt for Balaam to have an angel advocate for his ass and call him perverse!
 - B. Whereas God sends His angels to protect the righteous, He sends them to withstand the wicked (**Act 12:20-23; 2Ki 19:35**).
- 13. The angel tells Balaam that if the ass had not turned from the angel three times that he would have killed Balaam and saved the ass (**Num 22:33**).
 - A. Balaam's ass saved his butt.
 - B. Notice that even if the ass had continued toward the angel, the ass would still have been spared, but Balaam would have been slain.

- i. Sins of ignorance merit less punishment than sins of presumption (**Num 15:27-29 c/w Num 15:30-31**).
 - ii. To whom much is given, much is required (**Luk 12:47-48**).
 - iii. To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin (**Jam 4:17**).
 - iv. Because animals are not rational beings, they are not held to the same level of accountability as humans are.
 - C. Balaam has been reprov'd again by the angel in hearing that the angel would have killed him and saved his ass.
- 14. Balaam confesses that he has sinned (**Num 22:34**).
 - A. Notice how Balaam did not confess his sin of disobeying God's first commandment to him when He told him "Thou shalt not go with them" (**Num 22:12**).
 - i. Balaam rather in essence says to the angel, "I'm sorry -- I didn't know that you were standing there in my way."
 - ii. In other words, "I'm sorry that I got caught going where God told me not to go."
 - B. Next Balaam *offers* to "repent", saying, "*If it displease thee*, I will get me back again." (**Num 22:34b**)
 - i. Notice how Balaam doesn't declare that he *is going to repent*, but rather he conditions his repentance on how the angel feels.
 - ii. Balaam doesn't need to ask if it displeases the angel because God had already said, "Thou shalt not go with them" (**Num 22:12**).
 - iii. Balaam is trying to feign repentance, all the while hoping that the angel will tell him to keep going because he loves the wages of unrighteousness.
 - iv. Balaam is not bringing forth fruit meet for repentance (**Mat 3:8**).
 - C. Balaam's "confession" and "repentance" would be tantamount to the following:
 - i. You tell your son to not go to the party.
 - ii. He goes anyway and you get there ahead of him and catch him as he is walking up the driveway to his friend's house.
 - iii. He says, "Dad, I have sinned -- I didn't know you were going to be standing in the driveway. If my going to this party is going to displease you, I will turn around and go back home."
 - iv. What father would consider that a sincere apology and repentance?
- 15. The angel tells him to go with them and Balaam goes (**Num 22:35**).
 - A. Balaam hasn't learned a thing.
 - i. The angel of the LORD told Balaam the same thing that God told him in **Num 22:20**.
 - ii. God was angry with him for going that time and sent His angel to stop him (**Num 22:22**).
 - iii. Balaam apparently has a short memory.
 - iv. God's first command still stands: "Thou shalt not go with them" (**Num 22:12**).
 - B. Balaam is only concerned about what he wants, not what God wants (**Phi 2:21; Pro 18:2**).

VIII. Num 22:36-41 - Balak's meeting with Balaam

1. Balak goes out to meet Balaam when he hears that he is come (**Num 22:36**).

2. Balak is angry with Balaam for not coming soon enough (**Num 22:37a**).
 - A. Balak was an impatient man.
 - B. The wicked are diligent and want to waste no time devising and accomplishing their sin (**Pro 7:15; Pro 24:2; Psa 64:2-6; Mic 2:1**).
 - C. Balaam was foolish to desire to be with Balak (**Pro 24:1**).
 - D. Balaam should have rather made haste to keep God's commandments (**Psa 119:60**).
3. Balak again entices Balaam to do evil by telling him that he is able to promote him to honour (**Num 22:37b**).
 - A. Balak thinks his wealth is his strength which he uses to gain influence (**Pro 18:11**).
 - B. Beware of the man who tries to entice you to disobey God with promises of wealth and honour (**Pro 1:10-19**).
 - C. Balaam should have remembered that it is God that promotes us and then gone back home (**Psa 75:6-7**).
 - D. If Balaam would have exalted and embraced wisdom, it would have promoted him to honour (**Pro 4:8**).
 - E. Instead, Balaam is going to be promoted to shame (**Pro 3:35**).
4. Balaam tells Balak that he will only speak the word that God puts in his mouth (**Num 22:38**).
 - A. Balaam is again sounding pious.
 - B. Note: beware of the man who is in the process of disobeying God and at the same time is telling you that he will only say what God tells him to.
 - C. God condemns such prophets (**Jer 23:34-36**).
5. Balaam goes with Balak to Kirjathhuzoth (**Num 22:39**).
6. Balak offers some oxen and sheep, and then sends for Balaam (**Num 22:40**).
 - A. Balak apparently thinks that he is going to find favour with God by making some sacrifices.
 - B. The sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to God (**Pro 15:8-9**).
 - C. Note: don't ever think that your religious service to God is a substitute for doing what He says (**Luk 6:46**).
 - D. God even hates His own ordinances when they are done by sinners (**Isa 1:10-20**).
7. Balak takes Balaam to the high places of Baal that he might see the people of Israel (**Num 22:41**).
 - A. Apparently, Balak thinks he is going to obtain God's favour by staging he and his hireling false prophet, Balaam in a place where false religion is practiced.
 - i. This is the first mention of Baal in the Bible.
 - ii. Serving Baal is forsaking the LORD (**Jdg 2:13**).
 - iii. Baal was not able to help his foolish followers in Elijah's day (**1Ki 18:26-29**), nor will he be able to help Balak curse Israel.
 - B. God hates the high places of idolatrous worship (**Lev 26:30; Num 33:52; 1Ki 11:7-10**).
 - i. This demonstrates how stupid Balak and Balaam were, expecting to find favour from God in a place of pagan wickedness.
 - ii. Idolaters are as stupid as the idols they make (**Psa 115:4-8**).

IX. Num 23:1-12 - Balaam's first attempt to curse Israel

1. Balaam has Balak build him seven altars and prepare seven oxen and seven rams and they offer them on the altars (**Num 23:1-2**).
 - A. Balaam apparently thinks that making a sacrifice will make up for his disobedience.
 - i. Balaam failed to understand that to obey is better than to sacrifice (**1Sa 15:22**).
 - ii. God desires mercy and knowledge more than sacrifice (**Hos 6:6**).
 - a. Balaam has rejected the knowledge of God's will (*thou shalt not go with them* - **Num 22:12**), and instead offers a burnt offering.
 - b. Balaam has failed to show mercy, endeavoring to curse the people of God, and instead offers a sacrifice.
 - iii. God desires humility over sacrifice and burnt offerings (**Psa 51:16-17**).
 - iv. Justice and judgment are more acceptable to God than sacrifices (**Pro 21:3**).
 - v. To love God with all one's heart means more to God than all the sacrifices and burnt offerings one could offer (**Mar 12:32-33**).
 - a. We love God when we keep His commandments (**Joh 14:15**).
 - b. Balaam was not keeping God's commandment, and therefore not even *fourteen sacrifices* would suffice.
 - vi. Rather than sacrifice, God requires us to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before him (**Mic 6:6-8**).
 - B. Remember that God is much more pleased with us when we keep His commandments, live honestly and justly, have mercy on people, and walk humbly before Him, than when we make outward sacrifices for Him.
2. Balaam leaves Balak with the burnt offerings and goes to a high place to see if God will meet him (**Num 23:3**).
 - A. What do you suppose Balaam is hoping will happen?
 - B. He obviously hopes that God will meet him and give him something to say that will please Balak, else he would have never gone with him in the first place.
 - C. Balak wants Balaam to curse Israel (**Num 22:6**).
 - D. Therefore, Balaam is hoping that God will tell him, or allow him, to curse Israel.
 - E. This is further evidence that Balaam was just blowing smoke when he spoke so piously about not going beyond the word of the LORD (**Num 22:18; Num 24:13**).
3. God meets Balaam and Balaam tells Him about all the sacrifices he made (**Num 23:4**).
 - A. Balaam is clearly trying to get on God's good side and persuade him to let him curse Israel.
 - B. Balaam's sacrifice was an abomination to God (**Pro 21:27**).
 - C. God cannot be bought off.
 - i. God will not take gifts (bribes) (**2Ch 19:7**).
 - ii. God likewise forbids us to take gifts for a bribe to pervert justice (**Exo 23:8; Deu 16:19**).
 - iii. It is a wicked man that does so (**Pro 17:23**).
 - iv. If God forbids us from doing it, He certainly wouldn't do it Himself.
4. The LORD puts a word in Balaam's mouth and tells him to return to Balak and speak it, so Balaam returns to him (**Num 23:5-6**).
 - A. This is how God spoke to men by the prophets in times past, by putting a word in their mouths (**2Sa 23:2; Jer 1:9**).
 - B. Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (**2Pe 1:21**).

- C. God can use the wicked to accomplish His purpose too (**Pro 16:4 c/w Psa 17:13-14**).
 - D. If God can open the mouth of a dumb ass, He can open the mouth of a false prophet.
5. Balaam gives his first prophecy and ends up blessing Israel instead of cursing them (**Num 23:7-10**).
- A. Balak has devoted much time, wealth, and energy to ensure that Balaam curses Israel and has been waiting in eager anticipation for it.
 - i. The expectation of the wicked shall perish (**Pro 10:28**).
 - ii. The hope of unjust men perisheth (**Pro 11:7; Job 8:13-14**).
 - iii. God takes the wise in their own craftiness (**Job 5:13**).
 - iv. Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein (**Pro 26:27**).
 - v. Transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness (**Pro 11:3-6**).
 - vi. You reap what you sow (**Gal 6:7**).
 - B. Balaam meant for evil when he prophesied, but God meant it for good.
 - i. God turned Balaam's curse into a blessing (**Deu 23:4-5**).
 - ii. This is what God did in allowing Joseph to be sold into slavery in Egypt (**Gen 50:20**).
 - iii. The LORD will use the wrath of man to praise him (**Psa 76:10**).
 - iv. Balaam had devised his way, but the LORD directed his steps (**Pro 16:9**).
 - v. Balaam has devised a plan, but the counsel of the LORD prevailed (**Pro 19:21**).
 - vi. Balaam's way was not in himself, but rather it was the LORD directing his words (**Jer 10:23**).
 - vii. God will do all his pleasure (**Isa 46:10**).
 - viii. God showed His righteousness by not allowing Balaam to curse Israel and turning the curse into a blessing (**Mic 6:5**).
6. Balak is angry with Balaam for blessing his enemies instead of cursing them (**Num 23:11**).
- A. Balaam had told Balak that he would only say what the LORD told him to say (**Num 22:18**).
 - B. Therefore, Balak is really angry with God for having Balaam bless his enemies.
 - C. Balak's foolishness has perverted his way and now he frets against the LORD (**Pro 19:3**).
 - i. Fools are afflicted because of their sins (**Psa 107:17**), but they often blame God instead.
 - ii. David was guilty of this when he got angry with God for killing Uzzah when he touched the ark of the covenant, when it was David's fault for not moving it the way God said to (**2Sa 6:8 c/w 1Ch 15:13**).
 - D. When sinners despise God's messengers, they are really despising God who sent them (**Luk 10:16; 1Th 4:8; 1Sa 8:7; Exo 16:8**).
7. Balaam replies that he has to say the words that God gave him (**Num 23:12**).
- A. Balaam's answer is technically true (**Pro 16:1**).
 - B. But, in that Balaam really wants to curse Israel (which is why he went with Balak in the first place), his answer is more of a copout than anything.
 - C. He can blame his lack to performance on God, all the while wishing that he could have cursed Israel.

X. Num 23:13-26 - Balaam's second attempt to curse Israel

1. Balak devises another plan to get Balaam to curse Israel (**Num 23:13**).
 - A. Balak takes Balaam to a different place where he can see less of the people of Israel.
 - i. Utmost *adj.* - 1. a. Situated farthest from the centre; occupying, lying at, or dwelling in the extreme bound or bounds; most external or remote in position or location; outermost, uttermost; outmost
 - ii. Balak makes sure that Balaam will not see them all.
 - iii. Maybe Balaam just had stage fright the first time in front of all those people.
 - B. Balak likely figures that it will be easier for Balaam to curse Israel if he only sees a small portion of them.
 - i. It's easier for politicians to get the sheeple to go along with their nefarious plans to murder their enemies if they are kept shielded from seeing the "enemy."
 - ii. The armchair-warrior chicken-hawks will fall for any scheme to murder foreigners as long as they don't have to look them in the eye and pull the trigger themselves.
2. Balaam has Balak build seven altars and offer a bullock and a ram on every altar *again* while he goes to get a word from the LORD (**Num 23:14-15**).
 - A. Balaam is displaying the marks of insanity at this point, repeating the same experiment and expecting different results (**Num 23:14 c/w Num 23:1-3**).
 - B. "Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." (Albert Einstein)
 - C. It is not hyperbole to say that Balaam was insane, since the scripture calls him *mad* (**2Pe 2:16**).
 - D. Madness *n.* - 1. Mental disease, insanity; now applied esp. to insanity characterized by wild excitement or extravagant delusions; mania.
 - E. Repeating the same thing expecting different results is a sign of insanity, but doing so in disobedience to God is a sure mark of such.
3. The LORD meets Balaam and again gives him words to say and sends him back to Balak (**Num 23:16-17**).
4. Balaam tells Balak to stand up and hear the word of God (**Num 23:18**).
 - A. Balaam was in essence telling Balak what Samuel told Saul, to "stand thou still a while, that I may shew thee the word of God" (**1Sa 9:27**).
 - B. It is a sign of respect for the word of God to stand when it is being read (**Neh 8:5-6**).
5. Balaam begins his prophecy (**Num 23:19-24**).
 - A. Balaam begins by stating that God is not a man that He should lie or change His mind (**Num 23:19**).
 - i. God cannot lie and He will do what He said He would do (**Tit 1:2; Heb 6:13-18**).
 - ii. God cannot deny Himself (**2Ti 2:13**).
 - iii. When God says something, it's as good as done (**Rom 4:17; Isa 46:10**).
 - iv. God keeps His word and doesn't go back on it (**1Sa 15:29; Eze 24:14; Eze 36:36; 1Th 5:24**).
 - v. For God to repent (change His mind) and go back on a promise that He made to unconditionally do something for someone would be for Him to lie, and that He will not do.

- a. On the other hand, it is not a lie for God to state that He would destroy Nineveh in 40 days, and then send a preacher to tell them to repent (**Jon 3:1-4**), and after they repent, He repents of the judgment that He had planned to do to them (**Jon 3:10**).
- b. In the case of Nineveh and other similar situations in the Bible, God's declaration to destroy sinners was conditioned on their repentance, and when they repented, then He could repent of the evil (judgment) that He had said that He would do to them.
- c. This type of repentance on God's part is not a lie, but was an option He left Himself.
- vi. The irony is that Balaam is hoping or expecting God to repent and change His mind and tell Balaam to curse Israel, which is shown to be the case by the fact that Balaam goes to Him again at Balak's bidding.
- B. Balaam then says that God has blessed Israel and he (Balaam) cannot reverse it (**Num 23:20**).
 - i. We cannot disannul God's word (**Job 40:8; Isa 14:27**).
 - ii. We are not God's counselor and therefore we don't tell Him what to do (**Isa 40:13-14; Rom 11:33-34**).
 - iii. If we can break God's covenant with the day and night, then we can make Him reverse His decrees (**Jer 33:20-21**).
- C. Balaam then says that God has not beheld iniquity in Israel and that God is with them (**Num 23:21**).
 - i. The reason that God has not beheld iniquity in Israel is because He had blotted out their sins (**Isa 44:22; Mic 7:18-20**).
 - ii. Balaam says that God was with Israel (**Num 23:21**), and if God was with them, then who could be against them? (**Rom 8:31,37**)
 - iii. Balaam is definitely not helping Balak's cause.
- D. Balaam then says that God brought them out of Egypt and that He is as strong as a unicorn (**Num 23:22 c/w Num 24:8**).
 - i. It is significant that Balaam declares that God brought Israel out of Egypt.
 - a. Egypt was the most powerful empire in the world at that time and God by His mighty power delivered Israel from them and destroyed them.
 - b. If God delivered Israel from Egypt, He could certainly deliver them from Moab, his washpot (**Psa 108:9**).
 - ii. Balaam says that God has the strength of a unicorn.
 - a. Unicorn - I. 1. A fabulous and legendary animal usually regarded as having the body of a horse with a single horn projecting from its forehead (cf. 2 note); the monoceros of the ancients. The unicorn has at various times been identified or confused with the rhinoceros, with various species of antelope, or with other animals having a horn (or horns) or horn-like projection from the head. II. 7. The one-horned rhinoceros. (Oxford English Dictionary)
 - b. Unicorn - 1. An animal with one horn; the monoceros. This name is often applied to the rhinoceros. (Webster's 1828)
 - c. Unicorns are a symbol of strength in the scriptures (**Job 39:9-11**).

- d. God is mighty in strength (**Job 36:5**).
 - iii. Balak is definitely not liking what he is hearing.
- E. Balaam then says that there is no enchantment or divination against Israel (**Num 23:23**).
 - i. God forbids divination and enchantment (**Deu 18:10**).
 - a. How much more so when it is used against His people!
 - b. Offering Balaam a reward for divination was therefore a waste of Balak's money (**Num 22:7**).
 - ii. Balaam prophesied that men would say of Israel, What hath God wrought! (**Num 23:23**).
 - a. How true this was.
 - b. People have been praising God for delivering Israel out the hands of the Egyptians and their other enemies for thousands of years (**Psa 44:1-3**).
- F. Balaam concludes his second attempt at cursing Israel by saying that Israel shall destroy its enemies (**Num 23:24**).
 - i. If it wasn't bad enough already that Balaam prophesied that he was to bless Israel, that God has beheld no sin in Israel, that God had delivered Israel from Egypt, that God will allow no divination nor enchantment against Israel, and that God will again deliver Israel, now Balak hears that Israel will devour its enemies like a lion.
 - ii. Balak has fallen into the pit that he dug (**Psa 7:11-16; Psa 57:6**), the stone that he intended to roll over Israel has rolled back over him (**Pro 26:27**), and his foot is caught in the net that he set (**Psa 9:15-16**).
- G. Balak is now frustrated since Balaam has blessed Israel twice, so he tells him to neither curse nor bless Israel at all (**Num 23:25**).
 - i. Balak figures that it's better for Balaam to say nothing because every time he opens his mouth he ends up blessing his enemies.
 - ii. Being a typical wicked man, Balak doesn't want to see others blessed.
- H. Balaam responds with his favorite cop out, saying that he has to do whatever God says (**Num 23:26**).
 - i. Balaam has tried to go against God's commandment three times so far.
 - ii. When his efforts to disobey God fail and he comes under fire from his benefactor, he then blames his poor performance on his supposed obedience to God.
 - iii. Balaam is guilty of what Israel was many years later: "for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." (**Eze 33:31**).
 - iv. Balaam draws nigh to God with his mouth, but his heart is far from Him (**Mat 15:8**).
 - v. Balaam professes that he knows God, but in his works he denies Him (**Tit 1:16**).
 - vi. He has the form of godliness, but denies the power thereof (**2Ti 3:5**).

XI. Num 23:27 - 24:13 - Balaam's third attempt to curse Israel

1. Balak brings Balaam to another place with hopes that God might allow Balaam to curse Israel from there (**Num 23:27-28**).
 - A. Balak is showing himself to be of an unsound mind, repeating the same experiment and expecting different results.
 - B. Furthermore, Balak had just been told that Israel was going to destroy their enemies (**Num 23:24**).
 - C. Instead of being wise and departing from evil, Balak rages and is confident (**Pro 14:16**).
 - D. This is clear evidence of what the Bible teaches about the natural men -- there is madness in their heart while they live (**Ecc 9:3**).
 - E. Being a heathen, Balak may have subscribed to the idea of "third time's a charm."
2. Balaam tells Balak to do exactly as he had done twice before and build him seven altars and offer seven bullocks and seven rams on them, which he did (**Num 23:29-30**).
 - A. Balaam is clearly a man who believes in tradition.
 - B. The traditions of men make the word of God of none effect (**Mar 7:9,13**).
 - C. Balaam is still convinced that offering sacrifices to God will make Him change His mind.
 - D. He still hasn't learned that the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to God (**Pro 15:8**).
 - E. The Lord desires obedience, not sacrifice (**1Sa 15:22**).
3. Balaam is finally seeing the pattern: when he goes to the Lord to ask for a word, the Lord always has him bless Israel; so rather than go to God this time, he heads toward the wilderness (**Num 24:1**).
 - A. Balaam is a typical fool who will not go to the Lord for counsel because he doesn't want to hear what He will say, but only cares about what he wants (**Pro 18:2**).
 - i. A fool despises instruction (**Pro 1:7; Pro 5:12; Pro 15:5**).
 - ii. He will not go to the wise (**Pro 15:12**).
 - iii. Remember this the next time you don't come to the pastor for counsel when you are contemplating doing something that you suspect he thinks is unwise.
 - B. Balaam instead sets his face toward the wilderness.
 - i. The fool rageth and is confident (**Pro 14:16**).
 - ii. Balaam apparently figures that it is easier to ask for forgiveness than permission.
4. Balaam sees Israel abiding in their tents and the spirit of God comes upon him (**Num 24:2**).
 - A. Though Balaam was no longer going to LORD for counsel, the LORD is nevertheless in control of Balaam, turning his heart whithersoever He wants (**Pro 21:1**).
 - B. Balaam has devised his way, but the LORD is directing his steps (**Pro 16:9**).
 - C. Balaam has devised a plan in his heart, but the counsel of the LORD shall stand (**Pro 19:21**).
 - D. Balaam's going is of the LORD (**Pro 20:24**).
 - E. Though Balaam was not a good man, his steps were still ordered by the LORD (**Psa 37:23**).
5. Balaam falls into a trance, hears the words of God, sees a vision, and prophesies another blessing on Israel (**Num 24:3-9**).

- A. Balaam prophesied that Israel's king would be higher than Agag and his kingdom would be exalted (**Num 24:7**).
 - i. This prophecy of Israel's king being higher than Agag would be fulfilled hundreds of years later in the days of Samuel and king Saul (**1Sa 15:8-9, 32-33**).
 - ii. The exaltation of Israel's kingdom was fulfilled later yet in the days of king David (**2Sa 5:12**).
 - iii. Balaam made a pretty impressive prophecy for being a child of the devil.
 - iv. The answer of the tongue is from the LORD (**Pro 16:1**).
 - B. Balaam again prophesies that Israel is going to destroy his enemies (**Num 24:8**).
 - C. Balaam concludes by saying that Balak is cursed for trying to curse Israel (**Num 24:9**).
6. Balak is furious that Balaam has once again blessed Israel for the third time (**Num 24:10**).
- A. Balak is ready to pull his hair out, thinking, "Not again!"
 - B. Balak has proved himself to be insane, repeating the same experiment three times, expecting different results.
7. Balak sends Balaam away after three failed attempts to curse Israel (**Num 24:11**).
- A. Three strikes and Balaam is out.
 - B. Balaam not only has the LORD as his adversary, but now he has lost his earthly friends too.
 - C. Never be deceived into thinking that if you go along with wicked men that they will stick by your side when things get rough.
 - D. Judas experienced this when the chief priests turned on him as soon as they got what they wanted (**Mat 27:3-4**).
 - E. God warns us to not consent when sinners entice us (**Pro 1:10-19**).
 - i. Balaam was enticed by a violent man and led into a way that was not good (**Pro 16:29**).
 - ii. Never go with the crowd and follow a multitude to do evil (**Exo 23:2; Act 19:32; 2Sa 15:11**).
 - iii. To be without knowledge is not good and he that hasteth with his feet sinneth (**Pro 19:2**).
 - F. Balak was right that the LORD had kept Balaam back from honour (**Num 24:11**).
 - i. God honours them who honour Him (**1Sa 2:30**).
 - ii. God resists the proud (**Jam 4:6**).
 - iii. It never pays to disobey God.
8. Balaam again responds to Balak with pious platitudes (**Num 24:12-13**).
- A. Balaam once again has shown that he has only the form of godliness (**2Ti 3:5**).
 - B. Balaam drew nigh to God with his mouth, but his heart was far from him (**Mat 15:8**).
 - C. Balaam professed that he knew God, but in works had denied Him (**Tit 1:16**).
 - D. Balaam had shown much love by his words, but in his heart he had gone after his covetousness (**Eze 33:31**).
 - E. Balaam was like some wicked Jews later in their history who had cast out their brethren while saying, "Let the LORD be glorified" (**Isa 66:5**).
 - F. He does a good job of making clean the outside of the platter while being full of all uncleanness on the inside (**Mat 23:25-28**).

XII. Num 24:14-25 - Balaam's prophecy of the fate of Moab

1. After three failed attempts at cursing Israel, Balaam decides it's time for him to head home, but not before he tells Balak what Israel will do to Moab in the latter days (**Num 24:14**).
 - A. Balak is about to reap what he has sown (**Gal 6:7**).
 - B. The measure that Moab thought to mete out to Israel will be measured to them (**Mat 7:2**).
 - C. God was going to reward Moab with the same punishment that they thought to inflict on Israel (**Pro 11:3-6; Est 7:9-10; Dan 6:24**).
2. Balaam begins to prophesy (**Num 24:15-16**).
3. Balaam prophesies that a Star and a Sceptre will come out of Israel will smite Moab and have dominion over them (**Num 24:17-19**).
 - A. This happened in the days of king David (**2Sa 8:2**).
 - B. This was also a prophecy of Jesus Christ.
 - i. A star heralded the arrival of Jesus (**Mat 2:2,9**).
 - ii. Jesus Christ is the bright morning star (**Rev 22:16**).
 - iii. Jesus Christ rules His kingdom with a sceptre (**Gen 49:10; Heb 1:8**).
 - iv. Jesus Christ has dominion over everything (**Eph 1:21-22; Rev 1:5-6**).
 - C. The Moabites were also forbidden from entering the congregation of Israel for 10 generations because they hired Balaam to curse Israel (**Deu 23:3-5; Neh 13:1-2**).
4. Balaam then prophesies against several other nations (**Num 24:20-24**).
5. Balaam returns to his place and Balak goes home (**Num 24:25**).
 - A. Balak has finally learned his lesson and quits trying to get God to curse Israel.
 - B. But the devil still has another trick up his sleeve.

XIII. Num 25:1-5 - Balaam teaches Balak how to destroy Israel

1. Israel begins to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab and worshiped their idols and ate things sacrificed to them (**Num 25:1-2**).
 - A. Balaam taught Balak to entice Israel to commit fornication with his women and to serve their idols (**Num 31:16 c/w Rev 2:14**).
 - B. Beware of anyone who holds to the doctrine of Balaam, who would entice you to commit fornication or serve other gods (**Rev 2:14**).
2. Israel joined themselves to Baal-peor and greatly angered God (**Num 25:3**).
 - A. Baal - The chief male deity of the Phœnician and Canaanitish nations; hence, transf. false god.
 - B. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE) says the following about Baal-peor (Baal).
 - i. "bʔal (???, baʔal; ?? aʔ, BCal, or ??? ʔ, BaCl): The Babylonian Belu or Bel, "Lord," was the title of the supreme god among the Canaanites." (*Baal*, ISBE)
 - ii. "The Babylonian Bel-Merodach was a Sun-god, and so too was the Can Baal whose full title was Baal-Shemaim, "lord of heaven." The Phœnician writer Sanchuniathon (Philo Byblius, Fragmenta II) accordingly says that the children of the first generation of mankind "in time of drought stretched forth their hands to heaven toward the sun; for they regarded him as the sole Lord of heaven, and called him Beel-samʔn, which means 'Lord of Heaven' in the Phœnician language and is equivalent to Zeus in Greek" Baal-Shemaim had a temple at Umm el-Awamid between Acre and Tyre, and his

name is found in inscriptions from the Phoenician colonies of Sardinia and Carthage." (*Baal*, ISBE)

- iii. "As the Sun-god, Baal was worshipped under two aspects, beneficent and destructive. On the one hand he gave light and warmth to his worshippers; on the other hand the fierce heats of summer destroyed the vegetation he had himself brought into being. Hence, human victims were sacrificed to him in order to appease his anger in time of plague or other trouble, the victim being usually the first-born of the sacrificer and being burnt alive. In the Old Testament this is euphemistically termed "passing" the victim "through the fire" (2Ki 16:3; 2Ki 21:6). The forms under which Baal was worshipped were necessarily as numerous as the communities which worshipped him. Each locality had its own Baal or divine "Lord" who frequently took his name from the city or place to which he belonged. Hence, there was a Baal-Zur, "Baal of Tyre"; Baal-hermon, "Baal of Hermon" (Jdg 3:3); Baal-Lebanon, "Baal of Lebanon"; Baal-Tarz, "Baal of Tarsus." At other times the title was attached to the name of an individual god; Thus we have Bel-Merodach, "the Lord Merodach" (or "Bel is Merodach") at Babylon, Baal-Melkarth at Tyre, Baal-gad (Jos 11:17) in the north of Palestine. Occasionally the second element was noun as in Baal-Shemaim, "lord of heaven," Baalzebub (2Ki 1:2), "Lord of flies," Baal-Hamm?n, usually interpreted "Lord of heat," but more probably "Lord of the sunpillar," the tutelary deity of Carthage. All these various forms of the Sun-god were collectively known as the Baalim or "Baals" who took their place by the side of the female Ashtaroth and Ashtrim. At Carthage the female consort of Baal was termed Pen?-Baal, "the face" or "reflection of Baal." (*Baal*, ISBE)
- iv. "Baal-peor ????, ba'zal pe??r; ?AA'iA' ? , Beelphegl r was god of the Moabite mountains, who took his name from Mount Peor (Num 23:28), the modern Fa??r, and was probably a form of Chemosh (Jerome, Comm., Isa 15:1-9). The sensual rites with which he was worshipped (Num 25:1-3) indicate his connection with the Phoenician Baal." (*Baal*, ISBE)

- C. Worshipping Baalpeor included eating the sacrifices of the dead (**Psa 106:28**).
 - D. Baalpeor was a shame and an abomination (**Hos 9:10**).
 - E. It is no wonder that God's anger was kindled against Israel for joining themselves to Baal-peor.
3. God orders Moses to kill all the men that were joined unto Baal-peor (**Num 25:4-5 c/w Deu 4:3**).
- A. When the devil can't destroy God's people with persecution, he will lure them away by their lusts so that God will destroy them.
 - B. The devil tried to stamp out churches through persecution for centuries, but his tactic appears to have changed in the West over the last couple of centuries.
 - C. Satan now uses affluence and technology to distract us and pollute our minds.
 - D. There is nothing new under the sun.
4. Balaam the soothsayer ends up being killed by the people he was trying to get God to curse (**Num 31:8; Jos 13:22**).
- A. The wages of sin is death (**Rom 6:23**).

- B. Balaam's lust for riches conceived sin in his heart, the end of which was death (**Jam 1:14-15**).
- C. Do not error like Balaam, my beloved brethren (**Jam 1:16**).