

Message #24**Numbers 22:1-41**

At this point in the book of Numbers, this second generation of Israel is on a winning streak. She is in a right relationship with God. She trusts God and is obeying His Word and God is giving her a string of victories. Israel has fought and defeated every physical enemy.

Israel had a great victory over the Canaanites (21:1-3); she had a great victory over the Amorites (21:21-25) and she had a great victory over the Og in the land of Bashan (21:33-35). Things were good, things were moving right.

But now Israel was about to face another kind of enemy and that enemy would be Satan. This is an enemy you cannot physically see or cannot physically fight. This is an enemy God must handle and in this text He does do just that.

The lesson Israel needs to learn and so do we is this:

GOD'S PEOPLE MUST GET RID OF THE ENEMIES THEY KNOW AND SEE AND TRUST GOD TO ELIMINATE THOSE THEY DON'T KNOW AND CANNOT SEE.

Satan will try to attack God's people and get them to turn away from God and His Word. He may use a counterfeit religious leader or system to pull people away from truth, but God's people need to stay committed to Him and His Word for they will see victory.

Now this story of Balaam is a very famous story from the O.T. that is often referred to in the New Testament. Peter refers to it (II Pet. 2:15); Jude refers to it (Jude 11); and Jesus Christ refers to it (Rev. 2:14). So we clearly and carefully want to see it and understand it.

According to **verse 1**, the sons of Israel travelled to the plains of Moab beyond the Jordan, opposite Jericho. They were right on the verge of taking the Promised Land. All they have to do is cross the Jordan, take Jericho and the land is theirs.

As they waited for that moment, they were finally enjoying that land east of the Jordan and there appeared to be a break in the action of warfare. But there was stuff going on behind the scenes.

This chapter breaks down nicely into four main parts:

PART #1 – Balak gives a first invitation to Balaam which he refuses. **22:2-14**

When people in the area saw the success of Israel, they became very concerned. Sihon and Og were big time kings and they had been destroyed. Now Balak, a Moabite king, was really getting uneasy.

According to **verses 2-3**, Balak, who was the king of Moab, feared the Israelites because the Israelites had a reputation destroying enemies. They had large numbers of soldiers and they were winning. In fact, all of the Moabites were greatly afraid.

The truth is, it was not the plan of God to attack Balak and the Moabites, but he didn't know that. Israel was headed to the Promised Land and the only reason why she fought was because she was attacked. God had ordered Moses not to go to war against Moab (Deut. 2:9).

According to **verse 4**, Balak consulted with the elders of the Midianites and they, the Moabites, were all afraid that Israel would take everything, which Israel did not intend to do. They were not Canaanite land enemies, but Balak did not know the will or Word of God. **What he could have done, what he should have done was go to Moses and asked the will of God. But he did not do that.**

What Balak did in **verse 5** was to contact a man named Balaam, who was the son of Beor, who lived at Pethor. Pethor was a town located on the west bank of the Euphrates about 12 miles south of Carchemish. If my mathematical topographical skills are accurate, Balaam lives nearly 400 miles north of the Jericho area.

Balaam appears to be some secular diviner and prophet for hire. He must have been some powerful Satanic spiritualist who could predict the future. So what Balak did was send some messengers to Balaam and ask him to come and pronounce some curse on the Israelites (**verse 6**). He wanted Balaam to come curse Israel because what Balak thought is that whoever Balaam blesses is blessed and whoever he curses is cursed.

Balak knew he could not defeat Israel on his own, but he figured if he got some Satanic help, he could defeat them.

At this point, Israel knows nothing about any of this. She has no knowledge that Balak is trying to get Balaam to pronounce some Satanic curse on them so they can be destroyed. Truth is, Israel doesn't need to know because God always knows. God's people don't need to know what is going on in the Satanic world because God always knows.

Well the Elders left and traveled to see Balaam with their fee for his divination and they came to Balaam and reported to him their situation (**v. 7**). Peter said that Balaam was really motivated by the money. In fact, Peter said he "loved the wages of unrighteousness" (II Pet. 2:15). These messengers would have had gold, silver and animals to pay his fee.

According to **verse 8**, Balaam asked the messengers to spend the night so he could consult and possibly glean the will of God. This is intriguing because apparently Balaam was going to ask Jehovah (LORD) the God of Israel about the matter. Now by saying this, he certainly is impressing these men. But I am not certain he actually expected to happen what happened.

According to **verses 9-12**, God did appear to Balaam and asked him about the men and he specifically told Balaam not to go with them and not curse them because Israel was a blessed nation.

Verse 13 says that Balaam went the next morning to Balak's leaders and told them to go back to their land for God refused to let him go with them. **What Balaam did not tell them is that God told him that Israel could not be cursed because she was the blessed nation of God.**

So the leaders did exactly what Balaam said; they went back and told Balak that Balaam would not return with them (**v. 14**).

There is certainly something that we want to see here. God is sovereignly able to use any thing and any one for His sovereign purposes. He can use those who are saved and He can use those who aren't saved. He can even use the Satanic world to accomplish His will. That is obvious here.

PART #2 – Balak gives a second invitation to Balaam and he accepts. **22:15-21**

Balak must have thought if we send more classy men to Balaam, he will change his mind. The first group of men must not have been high-ranking men because this time, he would send “distinguished” men.

According to **verses 15-17**, Balak sent another contingency of distinguished leaders to see Balaam and they told him if he would go back with them and curse Israel, they would make him rich. Balak says name your price and I will pay it.

According to **verses 18-19**, Balaam told them that even if Balak gave him huge sums of silver and gold, he could not do anything contrary to the command of the Lord, My God. We must not assume from this that he was committed to the true God of the Bible because he wasn't. He was an idolater. But this was his excuse for not going. However, he did invite them to stay so he could give them any new data from God.

We learn from **verse 20**, that God told Balaam to go with them if they called on him, but only reveal the word that He tells him. But notice **verse 21**, **Balaam did not wait for them to call on him; he saddled his donkey and went to them.**

PART #3 – God opposes Balaam and tells him what to do. **22:22-35**

Now that angered God. They did not call on him, he was ready to go. He was riding with two of his servants. **Verse 23** says that when Balaam started riding his donkey, the angel of the LORD (Jesus Christ Himself) stood in their way and when the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing with His sword in His hand, the donkey turned off and went into the field. Balaam did not see the angel and he beat the donkey and turned it back to the trail (**verse 23**).

Again the angel of the LORD blocked the narrow trail and so the donkey pressed Balaam's foot against the wall of the mountain and Balaam struck the donkey and turned her back again (v. 24-25).

The angel of the LORD went further to a place in the trail where it was so narrow that you could not turn to the right or the left and he blocked the path and when the donkey saw it, so for a third time, she tried to prevent Balaam from going that direction and this time she laid down under Balaam. Balaam was so angry and struck the donkey with a stick (v. 26-27).

Well at this point, God opened the mouth of the donkey and the donkey said why have you hit me three times? (v. 28). Now the donkey is talking to Balaam, which it had never done before. You would think Balaam would be shocked by this, but he is so mad that he talks back to his donkey in front of the other men. This must have been quite a spectacle.

Balaam answered and said if I would have had a sword in my hand I would have killed you for making a mockery of me in not going where I wanted you to go (v. 29). Well the donkey said, I am your donkey and you have ridden me all of your life and have I ever refused to go where you wanted (v. 30). Balaam admitted no.

At that moment the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam and he saw the angel of the LORD standing with His sword drawn and he bowed down (v. 31).

At this point the angel of the LORD asked why did you strike your donkey three times. The donkey isn't your problem, I am. I am your adversary because you are doing that which is contrary to Me, but the donkey saw it and kept you from doing it or I would have killed you and let your donkey live (v. 31-33).

According to **verse 34**, Balaam said, "I have sinned" and I will turn back from displeasing you. Now admitting you have sinned and committing your life to Jesus Christ are two different things.

According to **verse 35**, God told Balaam to go with the men but to speak only that which He told him.

PART #4 – Balak finally meets Balaam. 22:36-41

According to **verses 36-41**, Balak went out to meet Balaam and he was upset that he had not been there earlier. He reminded him that he was in a position to give him great remuneration. But Balaam said I will only be able to reveal to you what God says to me.

So they went to Kiriath Huzoth where they offered a sacrifice. The next day they went to the top of Bamoth Baal, about 2 ½ miles south of Mount Nebo and there they could see a portion of the people. Balak wanted Balaam to survey the situation and look over the people.

Some people attack the Bible because a donkey speaks. Truth is donkeys and horses have tremendous knowledge of things on the trail that humans do not see. I can testify of that with my horse Solomon, who was my horse for over 20 years.

Three trail episodes come to my mind. 1) Grizzly in front and he was smelling it and sensing it. I could not get him to go up a trail with the normal speed. 2) Elk up a mountain - he wanted to turn and go a different direction that I was leading him, and he was leading me to the elk. 3) Unsafe bog up ahead. He kept veering away from the way I was trying to get him to go because there was a dangerous bog in the dark.

Israel had no clue that this was happening. When God's people are obeying God, they can trust God to take care of those unseen enemies. He is sovereignly at work behind the scenes every day of our lives.