

## **Balaam - THE DOUBLE-MINDED MAN**

Numbers 22-25      Reading 22:15-34

### **Introduction**

Israel had escaped Egypt and were near the end of their forty year wilderness wanderings and were about to enter the Promised Land. With the Lord's help, they'd defeated the Canaanites and the Amorites and were now camped in the plains of Moab.

Balak, king of Moab, knew what had happened to the Amorites, so he and his people were more than a little unnerved by this hoard of Israelites parked next door. Balak and the chief men of the idolatrous nations of Moab and Midian, sought to hire the man with the best reputation to put a curse on the nation of Israel. That man was Balaam.

Balaam, in his day, was a genuine prophet, who possessed great knowledge concerning God, and even received direct revelations from God.

### **The first visit**

They sent a delegation to Balaam with a handsome fee and asked him to come with them to put a curse on the nation of Israel so their armies could defeat them (vv.5-7).

Balaam invited the delegation to spend the night while he sought direction from God (v.8).

God came to Balaam in a dream and made it very plain that he was not to return with the delegation, nor was he to curse Israel (vv.9-12).

**"God said to Balaam, Do not go with them. You must not put a curse on those people, because they are blessed." (Num. 22:12).**

**The next morning Balaam got up and said to Balak's princes, Go back to your own country, for the LORD has refused to let me go with you. So the Moabite princes returned to Balak and said, Balaam refused to come with us.**

### **The second visit**

King Balak sent back a bigger and nobler delegation back to Balaam along with a "blank check" verses 15-19.

Balaam knew God's will but he wanted the money. His mind knew what God said but his heart loved the money offered.

Balaam already knew what God's answer was (v.12), but ignored it in the hope of changing God's mind (v.19b).

Balaam once again invited the delegation to spend the night while he sought direction from God. (vv.15-19a).

This time he was given permission, only to discover that God would not allow him to utter anything but blessings upon Israel.

This is not God changing His mind, but a demonstration of God's permissive will. The permissive will of God is that which God will allow, that is not according to His desired will.

What was the use of Balaam going to meet king Balak if he could not do what the king wanted him to do?

Balaam still hoped that he could either manipulate God or change God's mind so he could do what God told him that he couldn't do.

Balaam wasn't motivated by his love for God, but rather by his love for money.

## The ass

Has God ever talked to you through a chicken? What would you do if an animal talked to you? The first reaction may be that you are hearing things. The second reaction would be that you are going crazy. The third reaction is denial. The fourth reaction is shock. The final reaction should be to listen. If an animal ever speaks, it's best to listen.

Balaam had first hand experience with this dilemma. He had a donkey speak to him.

On the way he even got the infamous warning from his donkey because **God was very angry when he went**. If they had taken a photograph of the two of them which one was the ass?

When his eyes are opened **Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, I have sinned. I did not realise you were standing in the road to oppose me**. I have got the message. I will go home and never try again to go and curse the people of Israel

No

When his eyes are opened **Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, I have sinned. I did not realise you were standing in the road to oppose me. Now if you are displeased, I will go back**.

IF !

There is the confession of error, but it is a confession that falls short of the repentance of changing direction or behaviour. God permits the fool motivated by his love of money and blinded by his greed to go on.

This double-minded man, says, "I have sinned," and feels that he has, and feels it deeply too, but he is so worldly-minded that he "loves the wages of sin."

Balaam was entirely persuaded that his actions were wrong but he continued along the same way nonetheless. Convinced but not repentant. Repentance is not conviction.

The confession of Balaam's sin brought no blessing instead he continued on his path of tragedy

## Three failures

Three times he tried to curse Israel, but three times God only allowed him to bless Israel.

Having learnt his lesson Balaam went home and repented of his foolishness.

No

Remember which one was an ass?

God created numerous opportunities for him to repent of his evil intention to utter a curse on the nation of Israel. Yet, on each occasion that Balaam was confronted with the consequences of his decisions, he chose to continue along his ill conceived path. In this battle of wills, it was ultimately the will and the words of God that came forth from Balaam's mouth, as his intended curses were turned into blessings and praises heaped upon the children of Israel. Balaam intended evil, God delivered good.

## One success

Deprived of the rewards promised him by Balak, king of Moab, Balaam's covetous heart conceived an alternative evil way to blight Israel.

He to the king, "You cannot overthrow these people in battle, for God is with them; try and entice them from their God."

He suggested that some of the women of Midian and Moab tempt the Israelite men sexually and then compound their sin by getting them involved in idolatry. Then God would have to punish His people.

Balak's purpose would be served, and Balaam would be rich.

Scripture briefly confirms this plan was put into action.

"The men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate and bowed down before these gods. So Israel joined in worshipping the Baal of Peor. And the LORD's anger burned against them." (Num. 25:1-3).

These women lured the Israelite men to their idolatrous feasts, a time of joy and pleasure ... which was very ensnaring, especially to young people; and the children of Israel being so much enamoured with the beauty of the Moabitish women, and so strong were their lusts and passions, that they could not refuse the invitation: John Gill

Some have suggested that the daughters of Moab used to take the image of Peor out of their bosom, and said to the men; worship this, signifying that on that condition they would then gratify them sexually.

It's only later when God allows Israel to defeat Midianites that we learn that this scheme should be attributed to Balaam. It tells of the Midianite women who followed Balaam's advice and were the means of turning the Israelites away from the LORD in what happened at Peor, so that a plague struck the LORD's people. Numbers 31:16

## Consequences

God's people can be deceived by evil, and when they are, they can suffer great loss

Israel paid a high price. As a result of Korah's rebellion 14,700 plus the initial rebels died. This time it was 24,000

## Judgement on Balaam

The inevitable Day of Judgment finally came for Balaam when Joshua led Israel into the Promised Land. "In addition to those slain in battle, the Israelites had put to the sword Balaam son of Beor, who practised divination." (Josh. 13:22).

## Conclusion

Consider Balaam who sacrificed eternal riches for temporal gain. It is the love of money. It is the compelling desire to gain some part of the world even at the loss of the soul. But what good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Mark 8:36

Balaam thought that he could disobey God and get away with it.

One very sad thing about the story of Balaam is even though he had a real encounter with the one and only true God, he failed to fully obey Him as God, and as a result Balaam kept returning to his own ways, the results of which were dire and tragic.

Like Balaam, there are a lot of people who are think that they can live for themselves and get away with it.

Here was a man who said with genuine conviction "I have sinned", and today for example you might see him in a church giving generously on a Sunday; then on Monday knowingly involved in exploiting the poor at home or abroad in the name of good business sense.

The confession of "I have sinned," from a double minded man is worthless, however genuinely meant at the time unless there is the fruit of repentance. A change of thinking AND behaviour is necessary.

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