

Balaam and the Talking Donkey



July 19, 2015



The Story of Balaam:

1. At end of Book of Numbers: Ch. 22-25, 31
2. Very interesting Story

The story of Balaam is complex

Balaam made some poor decisions—not because God's way of life and instructions are unclear. At times he seemed to serve as a spokesperson for God, yet his actions showed he was not a faithful *man* of God.

Intro:

At the time of entering the Promised Land

Prior events:

- a. Israelites wanders for 40 years
- b. The bronze serpent
- c. Miriam buried
- d. Israelites defeats Amorites and Bashan
- e. Israelites border next the nation of Moab

The Story of Balaam: Num 22

- **22** Then the Israelites traveled to the plains of Moab and camped along the Jordan across from Jericho.
- ² Now Balak son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites, ³ and Moab was terrified because there were so many people. Indeed, Moab was filled with dread because of the Israelites.
- ⁴ The Moabites said to the elders of Midian, “This horde is going to lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field.”
- So Balak son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time, ⁵ sent messengers to summon Balaam son of Beor, who was at Pethor, near the Euphrates River, in his native land.

- Balak said: "A people has come out of Egypt; they cover the face of the land and have settled next to me. ⁶ Now come and put a curse on these people, because they are too powerful for me. Perhaps then I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land. For I know that whoever you bless is blessed, and whoever you curse is cursed."
- ⁷ The elders of Moab and Midian left, taking with them the fee for divination. When they came to Balaam, they told him what Balak had said.
- ⁸ "Spend the night here," Balaam said to them, "and I will report back to you with the answer the LORD gives me."

- So the Moabite officials stayed with him.
- ⁹ God came to Balaam and asked, “Who are these men with you?”
- ¹⁰ Balaam said to God, “Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, sent me this message: ¹¹ ‘A people that has come out of Egypt covers the face of the land. Now come and put a curse on them for me. Perhaps then I will be able to fight them and drive them away.’” ¹² But God said to Balaam, “Do not go with them. You must not put a curse on those people, because they are blessed.”
- ¹³ The next morning Balaam got up and said to Balak’s officials, “Go back to your own country, for the LORD has refused to let me go with you.”

Balak: Where is he from???

He was from Moab

Who is Moab????

Moab/Ammon were the children of Lot

The Bible refers to both the Moabites and Ammonites as Lot's sons, born of incest with his daughters [Genesis 19:37-38](#)



(note: Abraham/Lot history is repeated)

- Analysis:
- Can you find anything wrong that Balaam has done so far???
- Man of God, Know Israelites are the nation of God
- Hoping to get some type of reward.
 - God has refused to let me go (he wanted to go)
 - Dad will not let me go.



- The first thing God says to Balaam is in the form of a question, **“Who are these men with you?”** (22:9).
- God knows who these men are. He does not need Balaam to inform Him
- Why, then, does God ask a question to which He already knows the answer?
- As parents, we do the same thing all the time. When we catch our children doing something wrong, we may ask, “Just what do you think you are doing?” We know the answer, but we want to see how forthright they are with their answer.

- These were men who were seeking to persuade Balaam to curse the very people God had blessed.
- In the light of this, what were these men doing in Balaam's house, as his guests? To invite one to be a guest in your home was to grant them the highest level of intimacy and fellowship.
- This is why the Apostle John instructs that false teachers not be shown such hospitality:

Everyone who goes on ahead and does not remain in the teaching about Christ does not have God. The one who remains in this teaching has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house and do not give him any greeting, 11 because the person who gives him a greeting shares in his evil deeds (2 John 1:9-11).

Balak's Message to Balaam

- **5** And he sent messengers to Balaam, . . . saying, "Look, a nation has come out of Egypt. They cover the face of the earth, and **they are settling next to me.** **6** So now, please come and curse this nation for me, **for they are too powerful for me.** Perhaps I will prevail so that we may conquer them, and drive them out of the land. **For I know that whomever you bless is blessed, and whomever you curse is cursed."**

Balaam's Answer to God's Question

10 And Balaam said to God, "Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent to me saying, **11** "Look, a nation has come out of Egypt, and it covers the face of the earth. Come now and put a curse on them for me; perhaps I will be able to defeat them and drive them out."

- Balaam leaves out the fact that Balak expresses concern that the Israelites will live beside him, and not that he fears that the Israelites will annihilate the Moabites.
- Balaam most certainly does not tell God that Balak has flattered him by stating that whomever Balaam blesses is blessed, and that whomever he curses is cursed.
- Balaam is well aware that this is God's prerogative, and not man's.
- Even though God asks Balaam a very open-ended question, Balaam responds in a very tight-lipped fashion. Balaam seeks to withhold information from God

■ God's Answer

12 But God said to Balaam, "You must not go with them; you must not curse the people, for they are blessed."

Balaam's Account of God's Response

13 So Balaam got up in the morning, and said to the princes of Balak, "Go to your land, for the LORD has refused to permit me to go with you."

- To be **refused** permission to go with these men is quite different from being **forbidden** to do what they have asked Balaam to do.
- In other words, God's will was not only crystal clear; it was emphatically stated.
- The most important truth of all was never conveyed to this dignified delegation: The Israelites could not be cursed because God had blessed them.
- It was not just Balaam who was unable to curse the Israelites; no one could do so.
- Instead, he was trying to technically (yet minimally) obey God.

- **15** Then Balak sent other officials, more numerous and more distinguished than the first. **16** They came to Balaam and said:
- “This is what Balak son of Zippor says: Do not let anything keep you from coming to me, **17** because I will reward you handsomely and do whatever you say. Come and put a curse on these people for me.”
- **18** But Balaam answered them, “Even if Balak gave me all the silver and gold in his palace, I could not do anything great or small to go beyond the command of the LORD my God. **19** Now spend the night here so that I can find out what else the LORD will tell me.”

- **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.
- **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.
- **21** Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey and went with the Moabite officials.

- if Balaam is determined not to transgress the commandment of the Lord, then why does he invite them to spend the night with him again?
- What more does God need to say to him besides “No!”? Surely God’s words to him the first time he entertained such a delegation would have sufficiently informed him that God was not pleased with this kind of hospitality.
- God tested Balaam’s heart, and he failed. God told Balaam if the men come to call, then he could go. But Balaam just rose up and went anyway

- ²² But God was very angry when he went, and the angel of the LORD stood in the road to oppose him. Balaam was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. ²³ When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand, it turned off the road into a field. Balaam beat it to get it back on the road.
- ²⁴ Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path through the vineyards, with walls on both sides. ²⁵ When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, it pressed close to the wall, crushing Balaam's foot against it. So he beat the donkey again.

- **26** Then the angel of the LORD moved on ahead and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn, either to the right or to the left. **27** When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, it lay down under Balaam, and he was angry and beat it with his staff. **28** Then the LORD opened the donkey's mouth, and it said to Balaam, "What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?"
- **29** Balaam answered the donkey, "You have made a fool of me! If only I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now."
- **30** The donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden, to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?"
"No," he said.

- **31** Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with his sword drawn. So he bowed low and fell facedown.
- **32** The angel of the LORD asked him, "Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me. **33** The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If it had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now, but I would have spared it."
- **34** Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned. I did not realize you were standing in the road to oppose me. Now if you are displeased, I will go back."

- **35** The angel of the LORD said to Balaam, “Go with the men, but speak only what I tell you.” So Balaam went with Balak’s officials.
- **36** When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the Moabite town on the Arnon border, at the edge of his territory. **37** Balak said to Balaam, “Did I not send you an urgent summons? Why didn’t you come to me? Am I really not able to reward you?”
- **38** “Well, I have come to you now,” Balaam replied. “But I can’t say whatever I please. **I must speak only what God puts in my mouth.**”

Famous Talking donkeys



- there is some ironic humor involved. Poor Balaam's life just wasn't going very well. When he thought he was finally getting the opportunity to go see King Balak and possibly name his own financial terms, his normally trustworthy donkey let him down.
- She wouldn't stay on the road, she hurt his foot, and finally, she had just lain down under him. On top of this, he started having a conversation with her—his own donkey!
- A lesson here is that once people start disobeying God, their lives often spiral out of control.
- **disobedience leads to frustration.**

- Here is an amazing thing. Balaam, does not *see* the Angel of the LORD, but his donkey does. A prophet was known as a “**seer,**”
- Let no one of us ever attempt to take credit for what he sees and says, for God can do as much through a donkey.



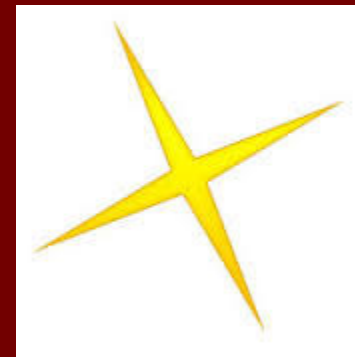
The prophecy of Balaam son of Beor,
the prophecy of one whose eye sees clearly,
¹⁶ the prophecy of one who hears the words of God,
who has knowledge from the Most High,
who sees a vision from the Almighty,
who falls prostrate, and whose eyes are opened:

¹⁷ "I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not near.

**A star will come out of Jacob;
a scepter will rise out of Israel.
He will crush the foreheads of Moab,
the skulls of all the people of Sheth.**

¹⁸ Edom will be conquered;
Seir, his enemy, will be conquered,
but Israel will grow strong.

¹⁹ A ruler will come out of Jacob
and destroy the survivors of the city."



So far so good for Balaam

He has done good.

He is now a great prophet who
prophesied about our Lord Jesus.

However, “the love of money is the
root of all evils”

Balaam returned to King Balak and informed the king on how to get the Israelites to curse themselves by enticing them with prostitutes and unclean food sacrificed to idols. The Israelites fell into transgression due to these traps and God sent a deadly plague to them as a result (Numbers 31:16)

⁷ They fought against Midian, the LORD commanded Moses, and killed every man. ⁸ Among their victims were Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur and Reba—the five kings of Midian. **They also killed Balaam son of Beor with the sword.**

Warning to false teachers, St. Peter and St. Jude wrote, "But there were also false prophets among the people, ... They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet" (2 Peter 2:1, 15-16).

Jude 11 "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core."

Lessons Learned:

God cares more about your character than your charisma.

Your gift might get you somewhere, but only your character will keep you there

integrity, discipline, self control, honesty, courage, kindness;

who cares how well you speak or teach or sing or whatever.

Balaam was a prophet of God, but he lacked character. And it cost him everything.

In Summary:

We make poor decisions—not because God’s way of life and instructions are unclear.

Faithful prophets of God don’t add to or subtract from God’s message. They don’t compromise God’s instructions or try to work a deal on the side that is contrary to God’s will

Our challenge is not to “convert” God to be on our side, but to be converted, so that we may be on His side.

Many people are just like Balaam in that they are seeking to get God to join them, to be on their side.