

“The First Two of Balaam’s Prophecies”

Numbers Chapter 23

Balak King of Moab has hired a false prophet to curse Israel so they could be victorious in battle over them. Balaam, the false prophet, being hired is to curse had a reputation for cursing enemies of kings for pay. Balaam gives Balak a small performance clause that he could only speak that which God gives him to speak.

Israel, at this time, is encamped in the plains of Moab totally unaware of this plot against them. God often times fights our battles and we do not even notice.

- 2 Kings 6:15-15 the king of Syria’s army had surrounded Elisha. Elisha’s servant worried. Elisha told him “*Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them*”. The servant’s eyes were opened and he saw a great number of horses and chariots of fire on their side.
- Acts 23:12-15 Forty men plotting to kill Paul vowed to not eat or drink until he was dead. Paul knew nothing about this. Yet God orchestrated the events that Paul’s nephew heard of the conspiracy and thus arrangements were made to keep Paul safe.
- God fights many battles for us.

The next two chapters we will look at the 4 prophecies of Balaam. Balaam has a consistent pattern to hear God. The 1st three are commissioned by Balak. After Balak refuses to pay because of Balaam’s breach of contract Balaam gives the fourth prophecy to Balak free of charge.

The real lessons here are found in what God says about His people, Israel and about His own character.

Num 23:1 1) The First Prophecy vs 1-12

Then Balaam said to Balak, "Build seven altars for me here, and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me here."

Num 23:2 Balak did just as Balaam had spoken, and Balak and Balaam offered up a bull and a ram on each altar.

Num 23:3 Then Balaam said to Balak, "Stand beside your burnt offering, and I will go; perhaps the LORD will come to meet me, and whatever He shows me I will tell you." So he went to a bare hill.

- See commentary on Numbers 22:40-41. Do not confuse the Canaanite sacrifices with the Levitical sacrifices given by God to Moses. These were pagan sacrifices.
- Numbers 22:40 indicates that they were on the high places of Baal.

Num 23:4 Now God met Balaam, and he said to Him, "I have set up the seven altars, and I have offered up a bull and a ram on each altar."

Num 23:5 Then the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth and said, "Return to Balak, and you shall speak thus."

Num 23:6 So he returned to him, and behold, he was standing beside his burnt offering, he and all the leaders of Moab.

- They Go to a mountain top
- There were sacrifices made
- Balaam gets apart to hear from God (see 24:1 It was to perform some sort of divination or enchantment.)
- God gives Balaam a word to speak
- Balaam returns and speaks God’s word

Num 23:7 He took up his discourse and said, "From Aram Balak has brought me, Moab's king from the mountains of the East, 'Come curse Jacob for me, And come, denounce Israel!'

Num 23:8 "How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? And how can I denounce whom the LORD has not denounced?

Num 23:9 "As I see him from the top of the rocks, And I look at him from the hills; Behold, a people who dwells apart, And will not be reckoned among the nations.

Num 23:10 "Who can count the dust of Jacob, Or number the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the upright, And let my end be like his!"

- Balaam says he cannot curse what God has not cursed or denounced. ISRAEL IS NOT CURSED!
- God says his people will dwell alone. (Dwells Apart)
- And who will not be reckoned among the nations. (Considered not part of other nations) (Different)
 - 1 Peter 1 14-16 "As obedient children, **do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance**, but like the Holy One who called you, **be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."**
 - 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 "**Do not be bound together with unbelievers**; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God: just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. Therefore, **COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE**," says the Lord. "AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty."
- God wants His people separate from the rest of the world. The church today is striving to embrace the world in the name of relevance. Yet God wants the His People to be distinctly different that they stand out.
- "Who can count the dust of Jacob or number the fourth part" This speaks to God's promise to Abraham fulfilled.
 - Genesis 22:17 "I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies."
 - Genesis 15:16 (the fourth part) "Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete."
- "Let me die the death of the righteous" - Balaam sees benefit being God's People. Life! This is man's common desire. The problem is that man can "die the death of the righteous" only if they "live the life of the righteous". It isn't granted to the unrighteous.
 - Numbers 31:8 Balaam will die by the sword in the battle Israel had with Midian

Num 23:11 Then Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, but behold, you have actually blessed them!"

Num 23:12 He replied, "Must I not be careful to speak what the LORD puts in my mouth?"

- Balak was unhappy because he did not get what he wanted.
- Balaam stated his performance clause.

Num 23:13 2) The Second Prophecy vs 13-26

Then Balak said to him, "Please come with me to another place from where you may see them, although you will only see the extreme end of them and will not see all of them; and curse them for me from there."

Num 23:14 So he took him to the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on *each* altar.

Num 23:15 And he said to Balak, "Stand here beside your burnt offering while I myself meet *the LORD* over there."

Num 23:16 Then the LORD met Balaam and put a word in his mouth and said, "Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak."

- Balak takes Balaam to another mountain to look at things from a different point of view.
- The pattern is the same.
 - They go to a mountain top
 - There were sacrifices made
 - God gives Balaam a word to speak
 - Balaam gets apart to hear from God
 - Balaam returns and speaks God's word
- Maybe if Balaam looks not at the whole or big picture but looks as just a small segment things may appear different.
 - Taking smaller elements out of the context of the whole can allow one to perceive a meaning that is not true. Balak was hoping for this.

- Num 23:17 He came to him, and behold, he was standing beside his burnt offering, and the leaders of Moab with him. And Balak said to him, "What has the LORD spoken?"
- Num 23:18 Then he took up his discourse and said, "Arise, O Balak, and hear; Give ear to me, O son of Zippor!
- Num 23:19 "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?
- Num 23:20 "Behold, I have received *a command* to bless; When He has blessed, then I cannot revoke it.
- Num 23:21 "He has not observed misfortune in Jacob; Nor has He seen trouble in Israel; The LORD his God is with him, And the shout of a king is among them.
- Num 23:22 "God brings them out of Egypt, He is for them like the horns of the wild ox.
- Num 23:23 "For there is no omen against Jacob, Nor is there any divination against Israel; At the proper time it shall be said to Jacob And to Israel, what God has done!
- Num 23:24 "Behold, a people rises like a lioness, And as a lion it lifts itself; It will not lie down until it devours the prey, And drinks the blood of the slain."
- God's message is not a blessing or a cursing. It is an instruction to Balak concerning God's Character and His people Israel.
 - "God is not a man that He should Lie" -God does not lie. He does not repent. He is not like man.
 - God speaks and He makes good. God's word is all important to Him
 - Psalm 138:2 NKJV "You have magnified Your word above all Your name."
 - "He has not observed misfortune in Jacob" the KJV reads "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob"
 - This again is about God. Not Jacob. As you read about Jacob he is a man and has many shortcomings. Israel has fail and grumbled against God time and time again. Yet God says He has not beheld iniquity. It doesn't say it isn't there. God is choosing not to see it.
 - God's grace is so much greater than we walk in.
 - Jeremiah 31:33-34 "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."
 - Psalm 103:12 "As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us."
 - 1 John 2:12 "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake."
 - "What has God Done" this amazing nation that had been called into existence by God. This nation has survived by the hand of God and this nation is blessed by the hand of God
 - God will be glorified by the work he has done through Israel.
- Num 23:25 Then Balak said to Balaam, "Do not curse them at all nor bless them at all!"
- Num 23:26 But Balaam replied to Balak, "Did I not tell you, 'Whatever the LORD speaks, that I must do'?"
- 2nd time, Balak was unhappy because he did not get what he wanted.
 - 2nd time, Balaam stated his performance clause.
- Num 23:27 **3) The Third Prophecy** vs Chapter 23:27- Chapter 24:11
- Then Balak said to Balaam, "Please come, I will take you to another place; perhaps it will be agreeable with God that you curse them for me from there."
- Num 23:28 So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor which overlooks the wasteland.
- Num 23:29 Balaam said to Balak, "Build seven altars for me here and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me here."

Num 23:30 Balak did just as Balaam had said, and offered up a bull and a ram on *each* altar.

- Balak takes Balaam to another mountain to look at things from a different point of view.
- Maybe if Balaam hears from God from a different place it will be more agreeable with God.
- They do not understand God's unchanging Nature.
 - Malachi 3:6 "For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed."
 - James 1:17 "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow."
 - Hebrews 13:8 "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."
- The pattern is the same.
 - They go to a Mountain top
 - There were sacrifices made
 - But here the pattern changes (next chapter)

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