



Lesson 43 – Balaam Part I

based on Numbers 22.

Returning to the Jordan from the conquest of Bashan, the Israelites, in preparation for the immediate invasion of Canaan, encamped beside the river, above its entrance into the Dead Sea, and just opposite the plain of Jericho. They were upon the very borders of Moab, and the Moabites were filled with terror at the close proximity of the invaders.

1) What did the Moabite king do to stave off their terror?

Numbers 22:5 He sent messengers therefore unto _____ the son of Beor to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over _____ me:

Numbers 22:6 Come now therefore, I pray thee, _____ me this people; for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou blessest is _____, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.

The people of Moab had not been molested by Israel, yet they had watched with troubled forebodings all that had taken place in the surrounding countries. The Amorites, before whom they had been forced to retreat, had been conquered by the Hebrews, and the territory which the Amorites had wrested from Moab was now in the possession of Israel.

The hosts of Bashan had yielded before the mysterious power enshrouded in the cloudy pillar, and the giant strongholds were occupied by the Hebrews. The Moabites dared not risk an attack upon them; an appeal to arms was hopeless in face of the supernatural agencies that wrought in their behalf. But they determined, as Pharaoh had done, to enlist the power of sorcery to counteract the work of God. They would bring a curse upon Israel.

2) What did they do?

Numbers 22:7 And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the _____ of divination in their hand; and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak.

The people of Moab were closely connected with the Midianites, both by the ties of nationality and religion. And Balak, the king of Moab, aroused the fears of the kindred people, and secured their co-operation in his designs against Israel.

3) How did Balaam reply to them?

Numbers 22:8 And he said unto them, _____ here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the LORD shall speak unto me: and the princes of Moab abode with Balaam.

Balaam was once a good man and a prophet of God; but he had apostatized and had given up to covetousness; yet he still professed to be a servant of the Most High. He was not ignorant of God's work on behalf of Israel; and when the messengers announced their errand, he well knew that it was his duty to refuse the rewards of Balak and to dismiss the ambassadors. But he ventured to dally with temptation and urged the messengers to tarry with him that night, declaring that he could give no decided answer till he had asked counsel of the Lord. Balaam knew that his curse could not harm Israel.



- 4) What words from his visitors filled his heart with pride?

Numbers 22:6 ... for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is _____.

The bribe of costly gifts and prospective exaltation excited his covetousness. He greedily accepted the offered treasures, and then, while professing strict obedience to the will of God, he tried to comply with the desires of Balak.

- 5) What did God tell him to do that night?

Numbers 22:12 And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt _____ go with them; thou shalt _____ curse the people: for they are blessed.

- 6) What did he tell his visitors?

Numbers 22:13 And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak, Get you into your land: for the LORD refuseth to give me _____ to go with you.

He did not tell them what the Lord had said. He was angry that his visions of gain and honor had been suddenly dispelled.

- 7) What did Peter have to say about it in the New Testament?

2 Peter 2:15 Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who _____ the wages of unrighteousness;

The sin of covetousness, which God declares to be idolatry, had made him a timeserver, and through this one fault Satan gained entire control of him. It was this that caused his ruin. The tempter is ever presenting worldly gain and honor to entice men from the service of God. He tells them it is their over-conscientiousness that keeps them from prosperity.

- 8) What happened next?

Numbers 22:15-16 And Balak sent yet again _____, more, and more honourable than they. And they came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus saith Balak the son of Zippor, Let _____, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me:

When the messengers reported to Balak the prophet's refusal to accompany them, they did not intimate that God had forbidden him. Supposing that Balaam's delay was merely to secure a richer reward, the king sent princes more in number and more honorable than the first, with promises of higher honors, and with authority to concede to any terms that Balaam might demand.

- 9) Did Balaam make them leave? (He already knew the answer)

Numbers 22:18 And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I _____ go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more. Now therefore, I pray you, _____ ye also here this night, that I may know what the LORD will say unto me more.

He longed to comply with the king's request; and although the will of God had already been definitely made known to him, he urged the messengers to tarry, that he might further inquire of God; as though the Infinite One were a man, to be persuaded.



10) What did the LORD tell Balaam?

Numbers 22:20 And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to _____ thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do.

Thus far the Lord would permit Balaam to follow his own will, because he was determined upon it. He did not seek to do the will of God, but chose his own course, and then endeavored to secure the sanction of the Lord.

11) What did the Psalmist say about such people?

Psalms 81:11, 12 But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels.

The Moabites were a degraded, idolatrous people; yet according to the light which they had received their guilt was not so great in the sight of Heaven as was that of Balaam. As he professed to be God's prophet, however, all he should say would be supposed to be uttered by divine authority.

12) What did Balaam choose to do?

Numbers 22:21 And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and _____ the princes of Moab.

Balaam had received permission to go with the messengers from Moab if they came in the morning to call him. But, annoyed at his delay, and expecting another refusal, they set out on their homeward journey without further consultation with him. Every excuse for complying with the request of Balak had now been removed. But Balaam was determined to secure the reward; and, taking the beast upon which he was accustomed to ride, he set out on the journey.

13) How did God feel about that?

Numbers 22:22 And God's _____ was kindled because he went: and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an _____ against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him.

14) Did Balaam understand what was happening?

Numbers 22:23 And the ass saw the angel of the LORD _____ in the way, and his _____ drawn in his hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field: and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way.

Numbers 22:25 And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she thrust herself unto the wall, and _____ Balaam's foot against the wall: and he smote her again.

15) What happened when they came to a narrow place in the road?

Numbers 22:27-28 And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she _____ under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff. And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?

Numbers 22:29-31 And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I _____ thee. And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever _____ to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay. Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he _____ down his head, and fell flat on his face.



2 Peter 2:16 But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice _____ the madness of the prophet.

Here was a professed magician, on his way to pronounce a curse upon a whole people with the intent to paralyze their strength, while he had not power even to slay the animal upon which he rode!

16) What did God tell him now that he was listening?

Numbers 22:32-33 And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is _____ before me: And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and _____ her alive.

17) Humbled, what did Balaam say?

Numbers 22:34 And Balaam said unto the angel of the LORD, I have _____; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it _____ thee, I will get me back again.

18) What shocking command did God tell Balaam to do?

Numbers 22:35 And the angel of the LORD said unto Balaam, _____ the men: but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.

Balaam owed the preservation of his life to the poor animal that he had treated so cruelly. The man who claimed to be a prophet of the Lord, who declared that his eyes were open, and he saw the "**vision of the Almighty**," was so blinded by covetousness and ambition that he could not discern the angel of God visible to his beast.

19) What is the condition of many in this age?

2 Corinthians 4:4 In whom the god of this _____ hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should _____ unto them.

Many rush on in forbidden paths, transgressing the divine law, and cannot discern that God and His angels are against them. Like Balaam they are angry at those who would prevent their ruin.

The Lord suffered Balaam to proceed on his journey but gave him to understand that his words should be controlled by divine power. God would give evidence to Moab that the Hebrews were under the guardianship of Heaven, and this He did effectually when He showed them how powerless Balaam was even to utter a curse against them without divine permission.

Can you see we have an enemy that tries to blind us?

Would you like to be at peace with the LORD?

When is it time to humbly seek God's will?