

Lesson 11 15th July, 2018

God Speaks Through Balaam

Lesson Scope: [Numbers 22-25](#)

References in brackets refer to the lesson scope unless otherwise noted

Lesson Focus

Balak had hired Balaam to curse Israel. To the heathen, who believed they could influence their gods to switch their protection from one people to another, this seemed like the answer to their supposed threat from Israel. Remember, Deuteronomy 2:9 shows that Israel was not a threat to Moab. God's message through Balaam revealed that He was far from turning away from Israel. God's plan for Israel was unchanged, and He would work His will of blessing all the families of the earth by bringing Christ to the world through Israel (23:23).

Balak is not the only man in history who sought the destruction of Israel. Mortal man, however, can never obstruct God's plan for His people or interfere with His eternal blessings to the righteous or His judgments on the unrighteous. God's people face a foe that is intent on their destruction. But God can overrule and turn the schemes of the enemy into blessing.

Take lessons from Balaam. God used an imperfect man to deliver a message of blessing. He can use us today as we remain yielded to Him and only speak His words. Remember that even though God used Balaam in this account, it was not long until Balaam chose to fight against Him. Purpose to be faithful today in directing fellow Christians heavenward. In the coming days, resist the "Moabite" pressures, from without or within, to turn against the people of God.

Lesson Aim: To identify principles related to God's blessing upon His people.

Theme Verses: [Genesis 12:2-3](#). And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Lesson Text

The Separate Nation

Numbers 23:5 And the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, Return unto Balak, and thus thou shalt speak.

Numbers 23:8-10 How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, *whom* the LORD hath not defied? ⁹ For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. ¹⁰ Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth *part* of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!

The Unchanging God

Numbers 23:19-24 God *is* not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do *it*? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? ²⁰ Behold, I have received *commandment* to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. ²¹ He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God *is* with him, and the shout of a king *is* among them. ²² God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn. ²³ Surely *there is* no enchantment against Jacob, neither *is there* any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought! ²⁴ Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat *of* the prey, and drink the blood of the slain.

The Prospering People

Numbers 24:2-9 And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding *in his tents* according to their tribes; and the spirit of God came upon him. ³ And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: ⁴ He hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling *into a trance*, but having his eyes open: ⁵ How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, *and* thy tabernacles, O Israel! ⁶ As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the LORD hath planted, *and* as cedar trees beside the waters. ⁷ He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed *shall be* in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. ⁸ God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the

strength of an unicorn: he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce *them* through with his arrows. ⁹ He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed *is* he that blesseth thee, and cursed *is* he that curseth thee.

The Coming Star

Numbers 24:12-14 And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying, ¹³ If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the LORD, to do *either* good or bad of mine own mind; *but* what the LORD saith, that will I speak? ¹⁴ And now, behold, I go unto my people: come *therefore*, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days.

Numbers 24:17-19 I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. ¹⁸ And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly. ¹⁹ Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city.

Questions for Study

The Separate Nation

1. Why did Balak call Balaam to curse Israel?
2. How did Israel's separation from the nations prepare them for a victorious death (23:10)?
3. What deliverance does a truly separated life bring to us?

The Unchanging God

4. How could Balaam say that God did not see perverseness in Israel?
5. How can we testify today of what God has wrought?

The Prospering People

6. List examples of those who cursed Israel, and give the results.

The Coming Star

7. What did the prophecy of the Star do for Balak?
8. How does the Star enable us to "do valiantly" today?

Analyzing the Passage

Israel was God's special people. They were a separate people, singled

out and distinguished from the Gentiles (23:9). As such, they became a target for the enemies of God. God was blessing His people, however, and the years in the wilderness had not destroyed their strength. When Balaam viewed their camp from the top of the high place, he was impressed with their numerical strength (23:10).

God was not about to withdraw His protection. He empowered them with "the strength of an unicorn" (wild bull) (23:22; 24:8). There was no magical power of enchantment that could be used against Israel, because God, the greatest power in the spirit world, was protecting and blessing them (22:23).

While Balaam could not turn God away from His people, he did succeed in turning some of the Israelites away from God (25:1-3; 31:16). Staying in God's favor was a matter of personal choice.

Israel would conquer the Promised Land and make it their permanent home (23:24; 24:8-9). The Star, Sceptre, and "he that shall have dominion" refer to Christ (24:17, 19).

Principles and Applications

The Separate Nation

1. God's people are a separated people (23:9). Just as God called Abram out of Ur, so He called Israel out of Egypt to "dwell alone." The clarion call of Christ in 2 Corinthians 6:17 is to come out and be separate from the world and from sin. The truly separated people can claim the promise that God will receive them as His children.

2. Divine blessings upon the righteous extend beyond time (23:10). As Balaam heard God's blessing on Israel, one would think that he would have desired more than just to be like the righteous at their end! The blessings the righteous receive in time are for preparation for eternity. It is foolish to make selfish choices today while expecting to join the righteous sometime before we die.

The Unchanging God

3. God's Word is irrevocable (23:19-20). What a wonderful refuge we have in an unchanging God (Malachi 3:6). The God of Israel and the Lord of the church are the same. The commands of separation, of love for our fellow men, of the permanence of marriage, of humility, of mercy, of doing justly, and of holiness are as important today as they ever were. Truly, the unchanging Word is the anchor for our souls.

4. The Lamb of God is all-sufficient for those who trust in Him (23:21). God told Israel in Egypt that when He saw the applied blood, He would pass over them (Exodus 12:13). When a repentant man lives under the blood of Calvary, he then can stand before God justified, just as if he never had sinned. The boldness with which we can come before our almighty, unchanging God gives testimony to the power of the sprinkling and washing that Christ does in our lives (Hebrews 10:19-22).

The Prospering People

5. The order God gave to Israel was part of His plan for their prosperity (24:2). God gave the plan for order in the human family: the father is the head, the wife is to be in submission, and the children are to obey their parents. Order has always been a part of God's children's success. His call to us today is still to "let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40).

6. The Lord pours out blessings for the prosperity of His people (24:8-9). Without the blessing of God, many of the things we take for granted would not be possible. Christian day schools along with a Christian curriculum, Bible schools, faithful church leaders, faithful parents, faithful young people, and a faithful brotherhood are all part of the blessings God has given for the prosperity of His children.

The Coming Star

7. The promised King provides complete and final victory over evil (24:17). Jesus' coming, His life, His death, and His resurrection make salvation available to all mankind. Although Satan continues to oppose God's people, his destiny is sealed. It is only a matter of time until he meets his doom.

8. God will complete His purpose for His people (24:18). The Father's purpose is to prepare a spotless bride for His Son. It is easy to lose sight of this as we relate to fellow brethren and sisters with our human weaknesses. We may struggle to see ourselves as "[doing] valiantly." The increasing evil of the world can cause discouragement and fear, but Christ's holy bride will be a reality (Ephesians 5:27). By His grace we can valiantly move on to ultimate victory!

Important Teachings

1. God's people are a separated people (23:9).
2. Divine blessings upon the righteous extend beyond time (23:10).

3. God's Word is irrevocable (23:19-20).
4. The Lamb of God is all-sufficient for those who trust in Him (23:21).
5. The order God gave to Israel was part of His plan for their prosperity (24:2).
6. The Lord pours out blessings for the prosperity of His people (24:8-9).
7. The promised King provides complete and final victory over evil (24:17).
8. God will complete His purpose for His people (24:18).

Answers to Questions

1. Why did Balak call Balaam to curse Israel?

Balak saw Israel as an enemy that had a greater connection to spiritual power than he had. He also knew Balaam as a soothsayer. Numbers 22:3 tells us that "Moab was sore afraid."

2. How did Israel's separation from the nations prepare them for a victorious death (23:10)?

When Israel was separated from the heathen nations and their false gods, which brought fear and torment, they could approach their "[gathering] unto [their] people" (Genesis 49:33) with confidence and firm hope of resurrection (Job 19:26).

3. What deliverance does a truly separated life bring to us?

It brings freedom from the contamination of the "unclean thing," sin. It delivers us from being a child of Satan to being a child of God. It delivers us from fear. It brings deliverance from the bondage of fighting for our "rights" and resisting evil men that hate us. It delivers us from bitterness and hate. It delivers us from self.

4. How could Balaam say that God did not see perverseness in Israel?

By nature, Israel was perverse, which they clearly demonstrated when they entered into unbelief. But when Israel by faith claimed the redemption that God offered, they stood as those to whom the Lord did not impute iniquity (Psalm 32:1-2).

5. How can we testify today of what God has wrought?

We should be quick to see the many blessings we enjoy each day as gifts from God and freely praise Him privately and publicly for them. We share with our fellow believers the inspirations we receive. When people around us complain, we share the joy of the Lord by comment-

ing on the blessings we receive from God. In our worship, we praise and extol the King of kings for His wonderful works to the children of men.

6. List examples of those who cursed Israel and give the results.

Balaam ended up cursing Israel by joining in the fight against them and so lost his life. The Ethiopians fought against Asa and were overthrown to the point that they could not recover. The Moabites came against Jehoshaphat with a great multitude and God caused them to destroy themselves. Haman moved against Mordecai and his people and was destroyed.

7. What did the prophecy of the Star do for Balak?

It gave Balak the opportunity to come to know the God of Israel personally. It was also a message on the futility of fighting against the God of Israel. The prophecy of the Star gave testimony to what God was planning to do with Israel: bring the Prince of Peace into the world.

8. How does the Star enable us to "do valiantly" today?

When the Day Star has risen in our hearts, we can have victory over self, the world, and Satan. We who are but dust and ashes can perform the works of God and be a vibrant blessing to our homes, our churches, and our neighbors.

Summarizing the Lesson

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:28, 35, 38-39).

Research Guide: Read Doctrines of the Bible pages 328-332.