

Message #25**Numbers 23:1-30**

The man who dominates this part of the book of Numbers is a man named Balaam. Now Balaam is a non-Israelite prophet, who, according to the New Testament, was not godly, but wicked. Peter said he was a prophet for hire who would prophesy things for unrighteous money. He was a spring without water heading to hell (II Pet. 2:15-17); Jude said that Balaam's doctrinal teaching was heretical that caused people to move to a woe judgment (Jude 11); Jesus said that Balaam taught people to commit immorality and idolatry (Rev. 2:14). So Balaam is not a good prophet. He is a Satanic man.

However, there was apparently one thing Balaam did not dare to do and that was to say God said something if God really didn't say it. He was very afraid of God and he had some strange code of ethics on this point.

When Balak hired him and wanted him to prophesy against Israel, he would not do it. In fact, now that the true God was in the picture, he would only prophesy what God wanted him to prophesy.

BALAAM DOES NOT PROPHESEY AGAINST ISRAEL, BUT HE PROPHESES GREAT BLESSINGS FOR ISRAEL, WHICH ANGERS BALAK WHO HIRED HIM.

We may remember that Balak hired Balaam to come over 400 miles south so that he could get him to put a curse on Israel. He wanted to put some Satanic curse or hex on the nation Israel.

Balak took Balaam to some high place where Baal was worshipped and Balaam told him to build seven altars and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for a sacrifice (**23:1**). Some have believed that Balaam did this as part of his demonic ritual. But we think he probably knew of the sacrifices God demanded and he was offering a complete sacrifice to the God of the Jews. Actually this was supposed to be done by the priests, but Balaam just arrogantly takes it upon himself to order this done, which Balak did.

Balak did just what Balaam requested and Balaam offered up a bull and ram on each altar (**23:2**). This is important because Balaam realizes there is no chance of connecting with God without a blood sacrifice. There is no access to God whatsoever without the shedding of blood.

Then Balaam told Balak to stand beside his burnt offering and he would go up and perhaps meet with the Lord, so Balak stood there and Balaam went up a hill (**23:3**). Balaam does not know whether or not God will meet with him, but he did know the only chance for such a meeting would be through the sacrifice. It was probably a shock when God did meet with him.

According to **verse 4**, God met Balaam and Balaam immediately informed God that he had set up those altars and had offered the sacrifices. So Balaam is motivated by wrong motives and he had developed wrong methods, but God decided to meet with this Satanic sorcerer and use him for His purposes.

Do not ever forget this point; God is sovereign over everything and everyone. He can use the most diabolical people for His sovereign purposes to care for His people.

God can use a God-mocking, Christ-rejecting, Devil-worshipping leader to hand you a paycheck. God controls things and He uses things for the good of His own people.

Balaam is trying to impress God with the fact that he had set up a worship scene (v. 4). God was not impressed with Balaam's "pompous parade of his hypocritical worship." God doesn't say this is so nice you did this. He put a word in the mouth of Balaam and said you go back to Balak and you tell him what I want you to tell him (23:5-6).

When Balaam returned, Balak and the Moabite leaders were all anxiously waiting for him. They could not wait for him to pronounce a curse on Israel. He was standing by the altar and probably had a smile on his face.

Ever since **Numbers 14:45**, when Israel had suffered a defeat due to her rebellion against Moses, foreign powers felt they could destroy Israel. So when Balak and his leaders saw Balaam coming, they were anticipating some good news for them and bad news for Israel.

Then God led Balaam to talk to them and he gave them six opening messages:

- 1) Balak brought me from Aram from the east to curse Jacob and denounce Israel. **23:7**
- 2) I cannot curse what God does not curse. **23:8a**
- 3) I cannot denounce what God does not denounce. **23:8b**
- 4) God has shown me that His people are separate from all other nations. **23:9**
- 5) God has given this nation His multiplication blessing. **23:10a**
- 6) When I die, I would like to have their upright status. **23:10b**

According to **verse 11**, when Balak heard that, he was upset. He wondered what he had done. Here he had hired him to come prophesy against Israel and to curse Israel and he came and actually blessed Israel.

But Balaam told him, look, I have to speak what God says I am to speak (v. 12).

Now Balak decided to try something else. According to **verse 13**, he took Balaam to another location where he could only see a portion of Israel and not the entire nation. Apparently he thought that when Balaam saw massive numbers of Israelites, it spooked him so he decided to take him to a place where the numbers were smaller. His thinking was if he sees smaller numbers, he will conclude we can take them and he will curse them.

So according to **verse 14**, he took him to the field of Zophim to the top of Pisgah and again they built seven altars and offered a bull and ram on each one. The top of Pisgah was some high peak rock place, which probably was the highest hill point in the Pisgah range.

Once again Balaam told Balak to stay put and he would go off and meet with the Lord (v. 15). Once against the LORD met with Balaam and told him to go back to Balak and report what God said (v. 16). So Balaam returned to Balak and gave him God's 13 messages (v. 17). Keep in mind that these messages about God are coming from a Satanic man:

Message #1 - Balak, you need to listen to the Word of God. **23:18**

You not only need to listen to the Word of God, you need to understand it and obey it.

Message #2 - God is not a Person who will lie. **23:19a**

It is an eternally damning thing to think God does not tell the truth. God's Word is truth. There are no distortions or lies in it and people better understand that point.

Message #3 - God is not a Person who will repent of what He says He will do. **23:19b**

People change their views and break their word all the time. People say one thing and then lie and don't do what they say. God does not operate like that. He never changes His mind. God will not ever recall any of His promises. We repent of things all the time and rightly so. God never repents of anything.

Message #4 - When God says He will do something, He will do it. **23:19c**

You can count on the fact that whatever God's Word says will happen. Whatever grace He has promised or whatever judgment He has promised will happen.

Message #5 - When God speaks something, He will make it good. **23:19d**

Nothing can prevent God from making good what He has promised to do. No man or angel can stop God from fulfilling His Word.

Message #6 - When God gives a command to bless something, no man can revoke it. **23:20**

Balaam says I know you hired me to come here to curse Israel, but I have received a command to tell you God has blessed Israel. There is nothing I can do to undo this.

This is so encouraging for us to know. No one can turn God's blessings to His people into a curse. No one can revoke the pronounced blessings of God.

Message #7 - God does not look on Israel in a way to bring trouble or misfortune. **23:21a**

The word "misfortune" (*aven*) specifically and "trouble" (*amal*) refers to all the misery and sorrow that wickedness, sin and iniquity causes (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 21 & p. 639). God does not view His people this way. God does not view His people at that time as wretched, perverse people who He needed to judge with a series of negative judgments.

Message #8 - God is with Israel and He is their King Warrior. **23:21b**

Balaam says God is specifically with Israel and He is her King Warrior. You don't want to go up against these people because this is a war no one will win.

Message #9 - God brings His people out of bondage. **23:22a**

Probably many of these nations thought that Israel brought themselves out of Egypt. Balaam says it was God who brought them out of Egypt. God, Himself, is leading and guiding these people.

Message #10 - God is for Israel and He protects Israel like the horns of a wild ox. **23:22b**

This animal the “wild ox” was considered to be one that was ferocious and deadly. You did not contend against this animal because it would destroy you. You do not want to go against Israel for God will destroy those who do.

Message #11 - God will not permit anything Satanic or demonic to destroy Israel. **23:23a**

Do not miss this verse. There is nothing Satan and his forces can do to destroy Israel. Balaam cannot put some curse or hex on Israel because this is God’s property.

Message #12 - God will fulfill everything He has promised to Israel at the proper time. **23:23b**

All of the promises God has made to Israel will be fulfilled at the proper time. Israel still has some great things in store for her.

Message #13 - God will one day reverse things for Israel and she will be a lion who will destroy her enemies. **23:24**

There will come a day when Israel will be seen as the powerful nation of God. She will rise up like a lion and all her enemies will be devoured.

Those were the messages Balaam brought to Balak, the King of Moab.

Now when Balak heard this word from Balaam, he said to him, let’s compromise. Don’t curse them, but also don’t bless them.

Balak said okay, well don’t curse them if you aren’t supposed to do that, but also don’t bless them. What we will do is figure out a way to do no blessing which turns out to be close to a little cursing (**23:25**).

But Balaam said look, I told you I must speak what the Lord says I must speak (**23:26**). So far, Balak was 0 for 2, but he was not about to quit.

So in **verse 27**, he said I will take you to another place and you can once again look things over and perhaps there it will be agreeable with you and God that you can curse them.

So here we go again (**28-29**). Up they go to another place and again they build seven altars and they offered up a bull and ram on each altar.