

NUMBERS 22-24 GOD WILL BLESS (... CONTINUES)

COUNTERFEIT SPIRITUALITY

We want to observe that king Balak has a problem. Something we all experienced from time to time. He sought help from Balaam, hoping that the reputation of Balaam as a spiritual man (diviner, soothsayer...) can be his answer. We want to see in Numbers 22-24 how God's word assess Balaam and his works.

SEE WHAT IS DEMANDED!

Look at the following verses, tally the cost for Balak:

22:7, 15	
22:17	
22:40	
23:1, 14, 29	

Compare that to the commanded burnt offering sacrifice given to Israel in the worship of Yahweh (Leviticus 1).

SEE THE PROJECTED DELIVERABLES!

Have a look at Balaam's assessment on the outcome in verse 23:3. What is significant in his statement?

Compare this to the account given to us in Numbers 12:7. Can you state the difference?

SEE THE CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER!

What was the result measured against the goals in which Balak want accomplished?

Goal		Outcome	
22:41		23:7-10	
23:13		23:18-24	
23:27		24:3-9	

What can you gather from your observations and discussions?

THE ORACLES OF BALAAM

NUMBERS 23, 24

There are altogether 7 oracles (or proverbs or prophecies) uttered through Balaam. These are recorded in exquisite Hebrew poetry which made use of parallelism to deliver their message.

ORACLE 1 GOD'S PAST BLESSINGS

Re-organizing the words in the stanza, let's look at the message:

From Aram Balak brought me, the king of Moab from the eastern mountains.	Balaam summoned!
Go, curse for me Jacob! And Go, execrate Israel!	Balaam states his purpose to curse Israel. (Note that Jacob is used interchangeably with Israel)
How may I imprecate whom God has not imprecated? How may I execrate whom Yahweh has not execrated?	But he cannot! Discuss among your group on what this bodes for your own Christian walk!
As I see him from the top of the mountains, and as I gaze at him from the hills— Look! A people that dwells alone; It is not reckoned among the nations.	What do you think is the message here? How can I apply it to my life?
Who may number the dust of Jacob? Who can count the dust-cloud of Israel? O that I might die the death of the upright! Ah, that my latter end might be like his! ¹	Part 1 speaks admirably on the blessing that God has on Israel. Part 2 speaks of Balaam's desire upon witnessing God's blessing on Israel. Cross reference to 31:8, 16 to see his actual end. What lesson can you draw from this observation?

¹ Allen, R. B. (1990). Numbers. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers* (Vol. 2, p. 898). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

ORACLE 2 GOD'S PRESENT BLESSINGS

<p>"Rise up, O Balak, and hear! Give ear to me, O son of Zippor!"</p>	<p>Here's the message from God!</p>
<p>God is not a man, that he is able to lie, Nor is he human, that he is able to change; Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not confirm it?</p>	<p>Here is a declaration of God's immutability! Describe in your group your understanding of this important attribute of God.</p> <p>Interesting contrast can be made between Balaam and God. Balaam is a perfect example of a changing, equivocating, constantly shifting person.</p>
<p>Look! I have received [orders] to bless; Since he has blessed, I am unable to revoke it!</p>	<p>Follows from God's immutability!</p>
<p>He does not see evil in Jacob, Nor does he regard trouble in Israel. Yahweh his God is with him. And the battle cry of a King is in him.</p>	<p>First declaration of God as the king made through the declaration of Balaam. Because God is the king, He can do whatever he pleases even through Balaam.</p> <p>The first 2 stanza is interesting. Are there no evil in Israel? Really? No trouble in Israel? How do you think we should understand these 2 stanza?</p>
<p>God is bringing them out of Egypt, He is their aurochs horns!</p>	<p>Can you guess the meaning here?</p>
<p>For there is no divination against Jacob, Neither is there magic against Israel. Now it must be said for Jacob, And for Israel—"What God has done!"</p>	<p>Is this the same foundation for your assurance in life? Discuss its implications!</p>

ORACLE 4 - 7

It is actually quite fascinating in the way the 7 oracles are structured. I would suggest the following high level view:

- Oracle 1: Blessing on Israel (God had blessed Israel)
- Oracle 2: Blessing on Israel (God is blessing Israel)
- Oracle 3: Blessing on Israel (God will continue to bless Israel)
- Oracle 4: The penultimate blessing in the coming king and He shall rule over all
- Oracle 5: Curse on Amalek
- Oracle 6: Curse on Kenites
- Oracle 7: Curse on Israel's enemies

We want to take special look at Oracle 4, the climax of Balaam's utterance.

“ I see him, but not now,
I behold him, but not near,
A star shall march out from Jacob,
And a scepter shall rise from Israel—
And shall crush the temples of Moab,
Even the skulls of the sons of Sheth. ”
Verses 17

“This final oracles (4-7) thus spans the entire sweep of human history. Nations after nations will rise to world domination and then fall to defeat. But when the messianic King arrives on the scene, no people other than Israel, the nation set apart, will survive the final day of destruction. At the end of all things, when all of human history has played out its course of changing fortunes, the Lord's people will be the only ones left standing.”³

Given that this prophecy foretold the coming messiah, what immediate impressions/expectation would you have of this Messiah?

Jesus Christ is viewed by all Christians as the fulfillment of this Messianic promise. Base on your knowledge of the gospels, what actually happened in the life of Jesus? (From his birth to his ministry)?

³ Numbers, God's presence in the wilderness by Iain M. Duguid in Preach the Word series edited by R. Kent Hughes; pp 287.

So what can we say of the prophecy: "A Star shall come out of Jacob; A scepter shall rise out of Israel, and *batter the brow of Moab, and destroy all the sons of tumult.*" ?

Messiah is to come out from Israel. What does Galatians 3:29 and John 1:11, 12 tells us about this Israel?

What kind of hardships do you think Christians could face in this world (perhaps Romans 8:35 is a good guide)? Are you experiencing some of these in your own life?

So from Numbers 22-24, what confidence do you have to face and triumph in the face of those troubles?
