

# BALAAAM

**(OR HOW TO MAKE AN ASS OF YOURSELF)**

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**BALAAM**  
**(or how to make a complete ass of yourself)**

The Error, the Way, the Prophecies and the Doctrine of Balaam.

**SECTION ONE- THE ERROR OF BALAAM**

Jude

11 Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.

2Peter 2:

14 Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children:

15 Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

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

17 These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.

Rev2:

14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

This began as a simple study of the story of Balaam and has grown rapidly into a four part series dealing with the Error of Balaam, the Way of Balaam, the Prophecies of Balaam and finally the Doctrine of Balaam. They are not the same thing, even though they are linked, and therefore, should not be confused with each other.

There are two key things which need to be kept in mind throughout this series. Firstly, be aware of the many parallels between the people and events described in the book of Numbers, Chapters 22-25 and the so called modern church of today as it strives to find its place and relevance in the world. Then, of paramount importance is the incredible amount of revelation given about the nature and character of God in these scriptures.

Let's begin this 4 part study with an examination of the Error of Balaam. He is first introduced in the book of Numbers, chapter 22.

*Num:*

*22:1 And the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in the plains of Moab on this side Jordan by Jericho.*

*2 And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites.*

*3 And Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they were many: and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel.*

*4 And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time.*

*5 He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam 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 against me:*

Verse 7 tells us just who these messengers were. They weren't simple servants, but the elders of both the Moabites and the Midianites. Note the honour given to Balaam. See the opening for Pride to raise its ugly head. Pride is frequently the doorway to error.

*6 Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse 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 blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.*

It is interesting to note, that while God is capable of giving both blessings and curses which are real and powerful, Satan's supposed blessings are merely counterfeit ones that certainly do not last.

There are three defining statements concerning Balaam that we need to make to establish our initial understanding of him. First, Balaam is called a prophet in 2 Pet 2:16 and the curses and blessings of true prophets are powerful indeed. We have only to look at Elijah to see that.

Secondly, he is treated almost like a god by Balak, who like many people today, tried to ascribe to a man, the power that rightly belonged to God.

However, thirdly, Balaam has a close association with God; he KNOWS God. Note this important similarity to many people today who truly know God, but who fall into the same error as he does.

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

Balak knew that Balaam responded to money. He didn't come cheap. Sound familiar? Flattery and money, the way of the world.

*8 And he said unto them, Lodge 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.*

Note the use of the word *again* in verse 8. This was obviously not the first time he had been approached by the rulers of Moab.

Why doesn't Balaam give an immediate refusal, since as a prophet of God, he would know God's attitude to the children of Israel? Maybe he hoped to persuade God, or maybe he hoped to discover another way to get the money.

*9 And God came unto Balaam, and said, What men are these with thee?*

Didn't God know? Why this question if it was not a test of Balaam. When God asks a question, we need to be very aware; there is always a purpose to it and we need to be discerning. Balaam wasn't.

*10 And Balaam said unto God, Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, hath sent unto me, saying,*

*11 Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt, which covereth the face of the earth: come now, curse me them; peradventure I shall be able to overcome them, and drive them out.*

*12 And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed.*

Note God's clear answer- 1. Don't go with them; 2. Don't even consider cursing them; and 3. They are under His blessing. Gen12:2-3 tells us:

*2 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:*

*3 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.*

There is a clear lesson here for us and the entire church today. God has not changed and neither has His word. This scripture still applies to the children of Israel.

*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 leave to go with you.*

Balaam did not give them God's complete answer. He only gave the first part, thus leaving a door open for further negotiations. Why? We must give the full counsel of God, not just the convenient parts. We cannot be selective with the Word of God, especially not for our own gain, or not only will we fall into the error of Balaam, we will also enter the way of Balaam, and from there it is only a small step till we succumb to the doctrine of Balaam.

*14 And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Balak, and said, Balaam refuseth to come with us.*

Note here, that the princes of Moab didn't tell the full story either. Once deception, partial truths is begun, it has a way of growing and continuing. Thus, Balak is deceived by the response. He believes that Balaam is just holding out for more money. This brings up echoes of a certain book '*You need more money!!*' How contrary to the Word of God. It's amazing how quickly and how easily the Word of God becomes diluted until it loses its true meaning and becomes whatever you want it to mean. It becomes what the Bible calls '*another Gospel*'.

*15 And Balak sent yet again princes, more, and more honourable than they.*

If Brian Houston can't get you, we'll send Rodney Howard-Brown and if that doesn't work, there's always Benny Hinn or Kenneth Copeland!! Satan doesn't give up easily, so why do we?

*16 And they came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus saith Balak the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me:*

*17 For I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people.*

We have here, an appeal to covetousness, pride and ambition; the lusts of the eye, the lusts of the flesh and the pride of life. These are the Three great temptations of the Bible; the ones faced and failed by Adam and Eve, but faced and overcome by Christ. (See *The Nature of Temptation* for more detail.) Note how persistent the wicked are. Do we pursue sinners as strongly, to get them to change their ways?

*18 And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more.*

Pious words, but the heart behind them is revealed in the next verse. Note how only the money is mentioned here.

*19 Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the LORD will say unto me more.*

Why doesn't Balaam send them away? Why does he ask them to stay? God had already given His answer. He doesn't change. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. What was Balaam doing? What did he hope to achieve?

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

Is God really changing His mind here? NEVER! He has given His answer, now He is testing Balaam's obedience. God will never give us permission to sin, but He allows us to sin as a test of our obedience. If it weren't possible for us to sin, then obedience would be meaningless; we'd have no choice. However, just because it's possible for us to sin, doesn't give us a licence to sin. Romans, especially in Chapters 3 and 6 makes that very clear.

Note the test he is given. Balaam is told he can go with the men, (but no mention is ever made of permission to curse Israel.) IF, and only IF, the messengers come and call him in the morning. Balaam leaves nothing to chance, thus revealing his true heart motive.

*21 And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.*

He didn't wait to see if they came and called him, he went to them, ready to travel. He failed God's test of obedience. Here is the Error of Balaam; he tried to serve both God and mammon and you can't do it. It is impossible. The Bible doesn't say it's difficult. It says it's impossible. If you see someone serving mammon, then you KNOW he/she is not serving God. They are deceived if they believe they are; they have fallen into the error of Balaam.

*Matt. 6: 24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

*Luke 16: 13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

His sin was greed, the love of present gain. He was two faced, of two minds and thus unstable in all his ways. (James 1:8) What we have here, is the same dichotomy we see today in much of the church; Faith and Works vs Faith and Wealth.

*22 And God's anger was kindled because he went:*

When we fall into the error of Balaam, we risk God's righteous anger. We will have to face His wrath for our disobedience, for following the Way of Balaam; the second part of this study.

## SECTION TWO- THE WAY OF BALAAM

Let's begin by quickly refreshing the key concepts from part one, the error of Balaam. Balak, the king of the Moabites, wants the prophet Balaam to curse Israel. He tempts him with wealth, power and prestige; the three main temptations the world and Satan uses. God gives Balaam a clear threefold response that he is not to go to Balak, and not to curse Israel, because Israel is under God's blessing.

Balaam, when tested by God in this area, fails the test of obedience and commits what the Bible calls the error of Balaam; he tries to serve both God and mammon and God, in His Word, says this is impossible. If you serve mammon, seek after riches and wealth and follow the world's way of doing things, rather than God's way, then you have fallen into the error of Balaam. You are ruled by greed not God. When we fall into the error of Balaam, we risk God's righteous anger. We will have to face His wrath for our disobedience, for following the Way of Balaam. Balaam can here be equated with much of the modern church.

Numbers 22:

*21 And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.*

Balaam's ass can be matched with our conscience; a voice we too sometimes fail to listen to when we should. Yet, God has given it to us for a warning also, so that we will know when we stray from His path.

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

There are three points to be made here. God was angry because of disobedience. Balaam went to Moab against the wishes and commands of God. The men of Moab are not with him. No mention of them is made, just his two servants. Finally, not only did the angel stand in his way, it stood against him as an adversary; it stood in direct opposition as an enemy might, with the intent of killing the prophet if necessary. Disobedience to God puts you in peril of your life; if not in the natural, then certainly in the spiritual.

*23 And the ass saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword 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.*

In Biblical imagery, the field is usually symbolic of the harvest. Balaam had an opportunity for harvest, but failed the test again. This verse yields two questions: Who saw the angel, the ass, or the prophet? Why was this the case?

The eyes of the ass were open to the protection of his master; the eyes of Balaam were blinded by the sin of disobedience, and his lust for the wages of unrighteousness. He was probably counting his reward and considering his greater honour as promised by Balak. The gods of this world had blinded him to his peril. How many thinking they are right with God and in His will, are even today, blinded to their peril. The ass served his master, as we should. Balaam served himself.

The ass tried to protect his master; it tried to lead him from the wrong way, into the fruitful field and what was its reward? It was struck. When we try to bring correction to those on the way of Balaam; the way of striving after the pleasures of this world, the things of mammon, the fruits of unrighteousness, we can expect the same response. We won't be thanked, we'll be attacked, struck, by the very people we are trying to save.

*24 But the angel of the LORD stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side.*

Note where the angel is standing; in the vineyard, with a wall of protection on either side. The vineyard, speaks of Israel, and by association, we the church who have been grafted into the true vine. (John 15) A wall on either side, allowing no passage, also is representative of the narrow way of Christ. Balaam was not able to continue on this way, the angel prevented it. He was following another way.

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

A second time the ass tries to protect and save his master. This time, physical injury, hurt is necessary and once more Balaam's response is the same. How often is it necessary for people to suffer some sort of physical ailment, disease or hurt before they will heed a warning and change their ways? How often are these things blamed on Satan, when it's really the Lord who is dealing with us. Next time you find yourself in a difficult or unpleasant situation, don't be too hasty to blame Satan. He may not be 'having a go' at you, the Lord may be trying to get your attention.

*26 And the angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place, where was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left.*

There is a broad way, which leads to destruction, and a narrow way which leads to everlasting life; few are they who find it.

*27 And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff.*

Three times the angel of the Lord stood against Balaam, three times the ass attempted to save him and three times Balaam struck the ass in anger. Three is the number of Divine completeness, it represents that which is solid, real, substantial complete and entire. Here we have a trinity of threes which ends with both the ass and the prophet prostrate before the angel. Still Balaam is blind to the things of God, such is his desire for the things of the world. It takes something totally unusual to wake him up, to open his eyes and his ears.

*28 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?*

*29 And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee.*

God uses the foolish things of this world to confound the wise. Note the complete lack of surprise by Balaam at this incredible miracle. Instead, such is his anger, he wishes only to kill his faithful

beast. The ass speaks wisdom, the prophet folly, much like many of the so called prophets of today.

*30 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 wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay.*

We need always to be awake to unusual behaviour; it might be the hand of God at work. Our eyes and ears need to be open. Note the threefold, reasoned response of the ass to the blind rage of the prophet. This is how we should deal with our critics and those who abuse us for our stand for righteousness. Who is our master, what is our service, what is our intent towards others, especially those who 'spitefully use us'?

The words of Matthew 25: 37-40 spring to mind.

*37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?*

*38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?*

*39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?*

*40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

Returning to Numbers 22:

*31 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 bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face.*

Finally, a correct response from the prophet. Note, it took the Lord to open Balaam's eyes. Only He can do it. None of our reasoning will work unless God opens the eyes and hears of our hearers. Consider Moses before Pharaoh or Stephen before the Pharisees. We certainly don't see Balaam flat on his back laughing. He's flat on his face in the presence of a Holy God.

*32 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 perverse before me:*

The way of Balaam, the way of disobedience, the way of chasing after mammon, the way of unrighteousness, is perverse before God; it will suffer the judgement of God and ultimately the wrath of God. The wages of sin is still death, as becomes clear in the next verse.

*33 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 saved her alive.*

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

In some ways, this is an incredible statement. He acknowledges his sin, but there is no sign of any true repentance, no sign that he had any real change of heart or motive in going to Balak. Why has he sinned? Because he didn't KNOW that the Lord stood against his going. He, a prophet who spoke to God didn't know the will of the Lord. It was a confession of sin brought on by outward forces he could do nothing about, rather than any inward change of heart. Thus it was not real repentance.

Note also the use of the word 'if'. He still couldn't SEE that what he was doing was displeasing to God, but he was in no position to argue.

*35 And the angel of the LORD said unto Balaam, Go with 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 had gone with the intent, or hope at least of being able to curse Israel and thus win the favour of Balak, but here he is reminded that God's will is sovereign and the prophet will only be allowed to bless God's people.

2Peter 2: 14-17, speaks to our generation, our society and even in many cases, our churches and their leadership.

*14 Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children:*

*15 Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;*

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

*17 These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.*

Dry wells and clouds which produce no rain; both speak of the absence of the Holy Spirit. Sadly, that's the state of most of the world, and most of the church; all those who follow the way of Balaam. And, like Balaam, for them, 'the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.'

Let's be sure we follow the old way, God's way, the way of righteousness, not the way of unrighteousness, the way of the world, the way of mammon, the way of Balaam.

### SECTION THREE- THE PROPHECIES OF BALAAM

One of the most important aspects of the Prophecies of Balaam that we need to remember from the outset, is that they reveal an incredible amount about the nature and character of God Himself. There is much for us to learn here about our God.

*Num 22:*

*41 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Balak took Balaam, and brought him up into the high places of Baal, that thence he might see the utmost part of the people.*

*23:1 And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven oxen and seven rams.*

*2 And Balak did as Balaam had spoken; and Balak and Balaam offered on every altar a bullock and a ram.*

*3 And Balaam said unto Balak, Stand by thy burnt offering, and I will go: peradventure the LORD will come to meet me: and whatsoever he showeth me I will tell thee. And he went to an high place.*

Balaam and Balak try to bribe God with their use of the altars and sacrifices, but they came with a wrong heart attitude. Their purpose, was not to honour God, but to enrich Balaam. Am I the only one who sees a similarity here to some of our high profile preachers? Note also, that these sacrifices cost Balaam nothing. A sacrifice that costs us nothing, is not really a sacrifice at all and is therefore, worth nothing. God, Himself, has set the standard for sacrifice. He sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ to suffer and die on a cross for our sin. That was a sacrifice that cost.

Balaam didn't really go to meet with God; rather, he used enchantments, the works of Satan. See Num. 24 :1. Balaam was all show and hype; the modern church parallels can not be denied.

God, however, was still able to use Balaam for His purposes. He was able to turn a planned curse into a blessing for those He loves. God can and still does do that today. He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

*4 And God met Balaam: and he said unto him, I have prepared seven altars, and I have offered upon every altar a bullock and a ram.*

Note the boasting of Balaam that begins here and continues in even greater measure later. Who is he trying to impress, God or man? I'm reminded here of the Pharisee and the Publican; one raised his eyes to heaven and boasted, the other hung his head in shame as he acknowledged he was a miserable sinner. Which one was pleasing to God?

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

*6 And he returned unto him, and, lo, he stood by his burnt sacrifice, he, and all the princes of Moab.*

*7 And he took up his parable, and said, Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel.*

*8 How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the LORD hath not defied?*

Balaam basically pronounces that Israel is safe from his curses and every other form of attack he could bring and that it is blessed, happy and secure.

We have here, a clear demonstration of the weakness of Balaam's power compared to God's; of the weakness of Satan compared to almighty God.

Note too, the security implied here for the people of God; we are owned by God, and therefore, blessed by God. We may be attacked by Satan, but we cannot be cursed by him. Romans 8:39, 'nothing can separate us from the love of God.'

*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.*

We are to be happy in the security, that we are a called out people. We are called out from the world to be His people. Therefore, while we are in the world, we are not of the world. We do not walk according to the world's ways, but according to God's. We are to walk the Ancient Paths.

*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!*

He appears to admire Israel; shouldn't we too have qualities which are admirable? Shouldn't the world look to the Children of God for moral and spiritual leadership? Why don't they? Does it have something to do with heart motivation? The world tends to treat the Christian church with contempt, rather than admiration. This should not be.

Note also, that their end is happy because of their righteousness. The death of the righteous is obviously better than that of the unrighteous for they are blessed of God. Balaam envies them this. I am reminded of Paul's statement in Phil 1:21-24.

*"21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

*22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.*

*23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:*

*24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you."*

It is interesting, that people want a righteous death; they want to go to Heaven, but they don't want to have a righteous life. It's like a certain bumper sticker which reads, 'Live your life so the preacher won't have to lie at your funeral'. People want to be saints in heaven, but not on earth.

*11 And Balak said unto Balaam, What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them altogether.*

*12 And he answered and said, Must I not take heed to speak that which the LORD hath put in my mouth?*

*13 And Balak said unto him, Come, I pray thee, with me unto another place, from whence thou mayest see them: thou shalt see but the utmost part of them, and shalt not see them all: and curse me them from thence.*

*14 And he brought him into the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar.*

*15 And he said unto Balak, Stand here by thy burnt offering, while I meet the LORD yonder.*

*16 And the LORD met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, Go again unto Balak, and say thus.*

*17 And when he came to him, behold, he stood by his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab with him. And Balak said unto him, What hath the LORD spoken?*

Balaam keeps trying to curse Israel; look at his effort; more altars, more sacrifices. Why do the unrighteous put more effort into what they do to tear us down, than most Christians do to help build the Kingdom of God? God, however, merely ratifies His first blessing.

*18 And he took up his parable, and said, Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor:*

*19 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.*

Consider the power and implications of verse 19. It reveals not only part of the nature and character of God, but also that of man. God does not, in fact cannot lie; only man does that. The word *repent* used here, refers to changing your mind, or the direction your life is going. God never changes His mind, nor would He change His direction; He changes not. However, it is most interesting to note that first of all, repentance is a gift from God Himself. (Acts 5:31) We cannot repent of ourselves. Yet, man is the only created being to whom God grants this gift of repentance. Nowhere do we read of the fallen angels being offered this chance, only mankind for whom Christ died.

A parallel scripture is found in Heb 6:18 (Amp).

*This was so that, by two unchangeable things [His promise and His oath] in which it is impossible for God ever to prove false, or deceive us, we who have fled [to Him] for refuge might have mighty indwelling strength and strong encouragement to grasp and hold fast the hope appointed for us and set before us.*

God keeps His promises; He does not change His mind, so Balaam cannot even hope to reverse God's blessing.

*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.*

At this time, God sees no iniquity in Israel and will not remove His blessing. There was no idolatry in the camp either, though we shall see next time what happens when the children of Israel fell into that trap. The implication for us is clear; if we keep from sin, we keep from harm. If we stay clear of iniquity and idolatry in all its forms, the blessing of God will be upon us and we shall be safe and secure from all curses levelled against us. However, the reverse is also true; sin that has not been dealt with, removes God's protection.

Remember, anything done against God's people, or His church is done against Him. 'Revenge is mine saith the Lord.' So, 'if God is for us, who can be against us?' For, 'no weapon formed against us shall prosper.'

*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.*

*25 And Balak said unto Balaam, Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all.*

*26 But Balaam answered and said unto Balak, Told not I thee, saying, All that the LORD speaketh, that I must do?*

*27 And Balak said unto Balaam, Come, I pray thee, I will bring thee unto another place; peradventure it will please God that thou mayest curse me them from thence.*

*28 And Balak brought Balaam unto the top of Peor, that looketh toward Jeshimon.*

*29 And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven bullocks and seven rams.*

*30 And Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar.*

The question here, is why did Balaam make a third attempt to curse Israel. I see two possibilities. First, three is the number of divine completeness and it is very likely that God permitted this, in order that His purposes, blessing Israel, could come to complete fruition. A second possibility, is that as the top of mount Peor was the seat of Baal worship, the most High Place of Moab, Balaam and Balak may have thought that the power and influence of the God of Israel might have been weaker there, so that the curse could go ahead. Either way, Balaam should have known better.

*24:1 And when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness.*

This time he uses no charms or enchantments. In other words, here he is no longer dealing with the works and methods of Satan; he recognises the uselessness of that in the presence of the Most High God. The implication, however, is that the first two times he did in fact uses the devices of Satan. How significant is it, that God still responded.

*2 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:*

Note again here, his boasting; see how empty it really is, how full of pride he is, and how deceived he is. He thought to curse the people of God and all he is ever able to do is bless them. His eyes may be opened, but his heart isn't and God looks at the heart.

Compare this to Paul in 2 Cor 12:5-6.

*5 Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.*

*6 For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.*

What a difference between the humility of Paul, who had every reason to boast, and Balaam who had none. How do we know the true people of God? This should give us a good indication. Let your fruit speak, not your mouth.

Let's return to Numbers chapter 24.

*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 lignaloes which the LORD hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters.*

Note here the reference to fruitfulness, trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord. This powerful imagery should speak to us clearly as we are the Lords planting today and as such, we are called also to be fruitful.

*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 blessings in verses 5 to 9, cover several areas; beauty, fruitfulness, honour, power, victory, courage, security, and influence on other people. These blessings are for us also, and we need to recognise their place and application in our lives. While each could be a separate study, it will suffice for now to consider each briefly.

Beauty, has both a natural and a spiritual use in scripture. It is used to describe people, places and things, but these pale besides its use in attempting to describe God. Ps 27:4 is a good example. Try reading it in the 'Amplified' version if you have it. It expresses a longing to see God, to be in His presence. Beauty is perfected in Him and rather than beauty defining God, He defines beauty.

Fruitfulness is a multi-faceted topic. By our fruit are we known, and a lack of fruit signifies eventual destruction. See 'Beware the Axe' for more detail.

Honour not only refers to respect and high esteem, but it also implies the qualities of nobility, and integrity; again, all aspects of the nature and character of God which we are to emulate.

Power is a two edged sword. There is worldly power and that provided by God through the Holy Spirit. (Dunamis) We are to seek the second, not for ourselves, but for the enabling it gives us to accomplish the tasks the Lord sets before us. 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord'.

Victory is what we have in Jesus Christ. He gives us the victory over sin, temptation, Satan and death. If Christ is for us, then who can be against us? Therefore, we should never settle for anything less than victory in our spiritual walk.

Courage in the Bible, goes hand in hand with success; when God tells people to have courage, it's because He will guarantee their success. God plus you is a majority. Courage, is almost always linked with obedience. We obey Him and He will bless us with the courage to be successful.

Security is what we have through salvation and being born again. Romans 8 tells us nothing can separate us from the love of God. We are safe and secure in the palm of his hand.

Influence on others is the natural result of having all of the above. We are God's ministers, servants and ambassadors in this sinful world and if we don't exert a positive influence on the people around us, then who will. We are called out to go forth. That means we are expected to be an influence for good and for God.

*10 And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together: and Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times.*

*11 Therefore now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee unto great honour; but, lo, the LORD hath kept thee back from honour.*

A question; whose honour do we seek? The Lord's, or the World's

*12 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.*

It's interesting, that while Balaam sounds good, says what appear to be the right words, yet, in his relationship with God, there is no love, no fear and no faith. Of how many so called Christian leaders, could we say that today? The faith some of them talk about, is not the Faith of the Bible. Rather, it is faith in Faith and frequently, faith in a man, (the preacher) instead of faith in God.

*15 And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said:*

*16 He hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open:*

Again the empty boasting.

*17 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.*

Here we have a clear and powerful Messianic prophecy. This is one of the earliest in the Bible.

*20 And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and said, Amalek was the first of the nations; but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever.*

21 *And he looked on the Kenites, and took up his parable, and said, Strong is thy dwellingplace, and thou putttest thy nest in a rock.*

22 *Nevertheless the Kenite shall be wasted, until Asshur shall carry thee away captive.*

23 *And he took up his parable, and said, Alas, who shall live when God doeth this!*

24 *And ships shall come from the coast of Chittim, and shall afflict Asshur, and shall afflict Eber, and he also shall perish for ever.*

25 *And Balaam rose up, and went and returned to his place: and Balak also went his way.*

There are links here, to the Book of Daniel, especially Chapter 2 verses 31–35.

31 *Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible.*

32 *This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass,*

33 *His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.*

34 *Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.*

35 *Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.*

This is too complex to explore now, but it does illustrate the marvellous way the Bible fits so perfectly together.

The main thing to note in the final few verses of Numbers Chapter 24, is that Balaam ends up cursing the enemies of the church, rather than the church itself which had been his original intent. Surely God does work everything together for good to them who love the Lord.

## SECTION FOUR- THE DOCTRINE OF BALAAM

Part four of our study, addresses two very closely linked problems which regularly seemed to beset the children of Israel; Adultery and Idolatry. In scripture, the two seem to go hand in hand. One is the spiritual manifestation of the other. Anything which takes the place of God in our lives, is idolatry. He must have pre-eminence.

*Rev2:*

*14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.*

There are three elements here, which need to be considered: fornication, or adultery; eating food sacrificed to idols, which is linked to idolatry; and finally, the issue of a stumbling block.

*Num 31:*

*16 Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD.*

Balaam was not able to curse God's people, but he certainly found a way to bring God's wrath upon them. It was his suggestion to Balaak that he use the wiles of women to bring destruction on Israel. How often do we see this in scripture; Solomon and Samson are but two examples that spring to mind. Even Eve leading Adam into temptation can be seen as the first example of this. It's interesting to note, that the one incident where it didn't work, was

Joseph being tempted by Potiphar's wife. Joseph, in Biblical typology, is a type of Christ.

*25:1 And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.*

The first thing that strikes the reader, is that they 'abode' or began to live in Shittim. Why, when the land of Canaan, the Promised Land was so close, did they decide to stay there? One can only conjecture that it had something to do with the availability of the Moabite women. This adultery, then lead to idolatry. We are told in John 15 and elsewhere, to abide in Christ, our Promised Land. If we do, we will be safe; if we don't, then we are open to the wiles of Satan.

*2 And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.*

*3 And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.*

Note here the progression. They began with adultery, then, perhaps linked to that, was the availability of food sacrificed to idols. The adultery may even have been part of the religious rites of Baal worship and therefore, may have culminated in some sort of orgiastic feast. What is clear, however, is that some of the men of Israel committed adultery, ate food sacrificed to Baal and bowed down to worship the gods of Moab.

In verse 3, it's significant that the word 'joined' is used to indicate their idolatry. Joining, in a physical sense, is also part of their adultery. 'Tsamad' is the Hebrew word used here and it means to serve, fasten or join oneself. These men not only bowed down to

Baal, they served him and through their adultery, joined themselves to him. No wonder the Lord was angry. The doctrine of Balaam uses spiritual adultery and idolatry to achieve its ends. The consequence is God's wrath.

We're not told here how that anger was manifested, but we are in verse 8. God sent a plague. This is confirmed again in Num 31:16.

*4 And the LORD said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel.*

*5 And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baalpeor.*

God's judgement is swift and severe. Idolatry is punishable by death, both physically and spiritually. That was true then, it's just as true today. People and churches who practice these things, will suffer the consequences. If we worship anything other than the Lord our God, then we are just as guilty as the people of Israel.

*6 And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.*

*7 And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand;*

*8 And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.*

*9 And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.*

Balaam was unable to curse Israel and bring about its destruction openly, but through the use of subtlety and to a certain extent deception, Moab, using the doctrine of Balaam was able to bring about the death of 24,000 children of Israel without fighting a single battle.

This is how Satan works. He knows he cannot defeat us in open warfare, if God is on our side, so he resorts to this doctrine to bring about our defeat and destruction. It's so easy today to believe we are worshipping God, when in reality we are not. In how many churches today are people worshipping an idol or an image? In how many churches are people worshipping Faith, or even worship itself? Sadly, the answer is many.

*10 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,*

*11 Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy.*

*12 Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace:*

*13 And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.*

Note here, the two symbols, or types of Christ; *the everlasting priesthood* (Christ is our High Priest, after the order of Melchizedek) and *the atonement for sin*.

Are we zealous for our God? How do we react when we see the doctrine of Balaam at work in the world and in the church? The Word shows us clearly how we should react, not only in the Book of Numbers, but also in Psalms.

*Ps 106:*

*28 They joined themselves also unto Baalpeor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead.*

*29 Thus they provoked him to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them.*

*30 Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed.*

*31 And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore.*

The men of Israel had defiled the temple of God by their adultery and their idolatry. The judgement of God came upon the people in the form of a plague and their weeping and wailing did nothing to abate it. Only a person acting with a zeal for righteousness, doing nothing more than his duty, but with a right heart attitude, was able to have this plague stayed and have God lift His hand of judgement. Consider this well known passage from the New Testament.

*1Cor 3:*

*16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*

*17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.*

We are now God's living temple. The doctrine of Balaam, defiles this temple. Any form of physical, or spiritual adultery and/or idolatry, belongs to this doctrine. It is one of Satan's chief weapons in his fight against the true church. We must be vigilant about our worship; it must be to Him, and of Him alone.

The question of eating meat dedicated, or sacrificed to idols appeared also in the New Testament and Paul had to deal with it in some detail, as it forms a part of the doctrine of Balaam.

*1Cor 10:*

*10:1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;*

*2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;*

*3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat;*

*4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.*

*5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.*

*6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.*

*7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.*

*8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.*

Here, clearly, are references to the doctrine of Balaam being applied to the church at Corinth. The food and drink spoken of in verse 7, referred to food sacrificed to idols. We must take heed of these same warnings.

*9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.*

*10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.*

*11 Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*

*12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*

The warning is repeated once again. Verse 11 is especially relevant and significant in light of current world events.

*13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

*14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.*

How many times must a warning be given before people take notice? Idolatry is the first step taken by those who fall for the doctrine of Balaam.

*15 I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.*

*16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?*

*17 For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.*

*18 Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?*

Here, again, is a clear reference to idolatry.

*19 What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?*

*20 But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.*

*21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.*

This echoes the error of Balaam; You can't serve both God and mammon.

*22 Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?*

*23 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.*

*24 Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.*

*25 Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake:*

*26 For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.*

*27 If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.*

*28 But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that showed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof:*

*29 Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?*

*30 For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?*

*31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*

I think this basically speaks for itself. Keep a clear conscience about what you eat and drink, but make certain you don't cause a weaker brother to stumble. Use a little common sense and courtesy.

Let's return to the key verse for this study.

*Rev2:*

*14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.*

Balaam taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel and look at the consequences. Here, the stumbling block was one of adultery which lead to idolatry and eventually the judgement and wrath of God. In the New Testament, we discover quite a different stumbling block placed before the same people.

*1Peter 2:*

*7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,*

*8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.*

Note the key word found in both verse 7 and verse 8; 'disobedient'. It applies not only in this context, but also to the people of Balaam's day and to the people of our day. God had/has a plan for all three groups and it is found in verse 9.

*9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:*

This is God's call upon our lives; this is what we are supposed to be if we are obedient to the voice of our Lord. What a marvellous declaration and what a tragedy that so many have missed the call by being disobedient and following the doctrine of Balaam.

In conclusion, the final fate of Balaam, once a prophet of God, and the fate, I suspect of all who follow his doctrine.

*Num 31:*

*7 And they warred against the Midianites, as the LORD commanded Moses; and they slew all the males.*

*8 And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain; namely, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian: Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword.*

Balaam sought riches and the honour of men. All he found was death, disgrace and destruction. If you make the error of Balaam; trying to serve both God and mammon, you will soon find yourself on the way of Balaam; the way of unrighteousness and disobedience which will eventually lead you to follow and practice the doctrine of Balaam. This, as we have seen, involves adultery and idolatry probably at both the physical and spiritual level. Then will you surely face the wrath and judgement of Almighty God.