

## Balaam's Tragic Story Numbers 22 – 25

### Balaam's Tragic Story: Introduction

- *If I was asked for any proof that the story of Balaam, as I find it in the Bible, is a true story, I should lay my hand on this one only—and that is, the deep knowledge of human nature which is shown in it. Charles Kingsley (1819 – 1875)*
- Truth can reach *our minds* without ever transforming *our hearts*.
- We may know the *will of God* without conforming *our own wills* to it.
- It is easier for us *to know* what is right than *to do* what is right.
  
- Why do we need correct ideas about God?
- Why does our thinking have to be biblical?
- Why does God reveal truth about himself to us?
  
- To influence our hearts.
- To subdue our wills.
- To help us to correctly form the patterns of our lives.

### Numbers 22

- 22:3 Moab had nothing to fear.
- See Deuteronomy 2:8-9
- They lived outside of the land God gave to Israel.
- 22:4 This connection between Moab and Midian is a tight one and is going to last.
- 22:12 Can this possibly be clearer?
- 22:13 True, but a little weakly stated.
  - He fails to say that a curse is strictly prohibited.
  - He leaves the possibility open if the Lord would allow it.
  
- 22:15-21 The wavering is with Balaam rather than God.
- God has no intention to curse the Jews.
- God often allows a sinful course of action.
- This is especially true if a person knows God's will, yet remains unwilling to obey it.
- 22:22-41 God still gives Balaam a truly supernatural experience to make his intentions clear.
  
- *God often gives up men to follow the impulse of their own lusts; but there is no approval in thus leaving them to act at the prompting of their own wicked hearts. Robert Jamieson (1802 – 1880)*

### Balaam's Tragic Story: Numbers 23

- 23:1-2 This reveals that Balaam treats the Lord much like one of the pagan gods.
- Outside of Israel, the gods were not thought of as moral beings with absolute authority.
- They were much like people, just more powerful.
- They could potentially be bribed.
- 23:7-10 Balaam has truly heard from God.
- God may speak to and through those who are not submitted to him in their hearts.
- 23:9 Israel's unique place among the nations

- 23:10 Many want to “die the death of the upright,” without ever living the life of the upright – the life of faith.
- 23:13-17 Balaam would still happily curse Israel if only he was able to do so.
- 23:18-24 Again God has truly spoken. Israel is always going to have place of blessing in God’s heart.
- 23:25-30 More negotiation.

#### **Balaam’s Tragic Story: Numbers 24**

- 24:9 Too bad for people who want to curse Israel.
- 24:17... David fulfilled much of this.
- Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment as the ruler from Israel who rules over the nations.

#### **Balaam’s Tragic Story: Numbers 25**

- 25:1-9 Baal worship often included sex.
- That was true in this case.
- 25:3 Idolatry (again) caused God to get angry with Israel.

#### **Epilogue: Numbers 31**

- 31:1-2 God’s instructions to Moses
- 31:7-8 The plan is carried out.
- 31:13-16 Balaam encouraged the women to entice the men of Israel into idolatry and sexual sin.
- This was the way he finally “cursed” Israel.

#### **What This Story Doesn’t Teach**

- That God favors all Jews no matter what they do.
- Rather what we see is:
  - God will still reject individuals within the nation.
  - God will still reject entire generations of the nation.
  - The nation still retains its chosen status.
- That war is a good thing.
- Rather what we see is:
  - War is a simple fact of life – a not-always-necessary evil.
  - Again, see Deuteronomy 2:8-9. Israel was not to attack Moab.
  - Moab and Midian provoked God by leading Israel into idolatry.
- That racism is a good thing.
- Rather what we see is:
  - It was the idolatry – not the ethnicity – of these nations that God opposed.
  - Since Genesis 12:1-3 God’s stated goal has been to bless all the families of the earth through Israel.
  - The church has been intentionally multi-ethnic since its birth.
  - Recommended Book by Mark DeYmaz

### **Balaam's Tragic Story: Lessons to Learn**

- Truth can reach *our minds* without ever transforming *our hearts*.
- We may know the *will of God* without conforming *our own wills* to it.
- It is easier for us *to know* what is right than *to do* what is right.
  
- Why do we need correct ideas about God?
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- James 1:22-25
  
- *The Pilgrim's Progress* ends when Christian arrives at the celestial city.
- A man named Ignorance also arrives, but is cast into a ditch at the side of the final hill.
- John Bunyan writes, "*Then I saw that there was a way to hell, even from the gates of heaven.*"
  
- *All wrongdoing is a mighty blunder. It is only righteousness which is congruous with a man's highest happiness. "The fear of the Lord," that is wisdom.*                      Alexander Maclaren