

Others Notice the Israelite “Invasion”

Under the mighty hand of God, the Israelites were quickly advancing into Canaan. They were moving up the eastern side of the Jordan and their armies were conquering the inhabitants with ease. It looked like it would not be long before they would cross over the Jordan and enter the heart of the land. Other nations were beginning to take notice. Particularly Moab to the east. “Moab was filled with dread because of the Israelites.”

I. Balak, King of Moab (22:1-4)

Balak was very afraid of the Israelite advance. For all he knew, the nation would come and attack him as well. He watched how easily the Israelites defeated others who had once defeated his own armies.

II. Balak Summons Balaam (22:5-7)

Balak decides that the only way to stop the Israelites is to try to find a prophet who would deliver to them a curse from God. Balak sent for Balaam to do the job. Balak would also see that Balaam would be well paid for cursing Israel.

CURSE

To ask God to bring evil on someone else

III. Balaam Decides What to Do (22:8-20)

When presented with the request, Balaam tells the representatives of Balak to spend the night and he would find out from the LORD whether or not he should curse Israel. The LORD, of course, told Balaam during the night in no uncertain terms that Israel was blessed by Him and Balaam had better not try to curse them.

The next morning Balaam tells the Moabites that he cannot curse the Israelites. “The LORD has refused to let me go with you,” he said.

Balak, king of Moab, assumed that Balaam just needed more money. He sent another delegation to Balak offering him even more if he would agree to curse Israel. Once again, Balaam instructed the men to wait overnight and he would find out what the LORD had to say.

This time, God allows Balaam to go with the Moabites, but gives him firm instructions to him to speak only as the LORD would direct him.

IV. Balaam's Donkey Speaks (22:21-33)

As Balaam traveled on with the Moabites, God became very angry with him. Apparently, Balaam intended to curse Israel anyway and take the money from Moab even though God had told him this would not happen. The LORD came and blocked the path on which Balaam was traveling.

The donkey Balaam was riding saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with a sword in his hand. The donkey turned off into a field and Balaam beat the donkey to get her back on the road. The angel of the LORD appeared again between two vineyards. The road was narrow and there was a wall on either side. The donkey turned off into the wall and crushed Balaam's foot against it. Balaam beat the donkey again to get her back on the road. A third time the angel appeared at a place in the road that was so narrow there was no place for the donkey to go. The donkey stopped and lay down on the road. Balaam became furious and beat the donkey again.

The LORD opened the donkey's mouth and she spoke to Balaam and said, "What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times . . . am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden, to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?"

Then Balaam's eyes were opened and he saw what the donkey had seen already three times— the angel of the LORD blocking his path.

God spoke to Balaam telling him that his path was a "reckless one." Balaam had intended to act against God's will. God indicated to Balaam that the donkey had saved his life. If she had not turned off the path, Balaam would have been killed.

V. Balaam Reacts to the LORD's Appearance (22:34-39)

Balaam appears to be humbled by this experience. He admits that he has sinned against God and offers to go back. God told him to continue on, but only to speak what he was told.

Meanwhile, Balak had heard that Balaam was coming and went out to meet him. A bit of comedy can be found in the way that Balak greets him. Of all things, Balak is frustrated at Balaam for taking so long to arrive!

Balaam lets Balak know right away that he can only speak as the LORD gives him the words. Truly, Balak will be in for quite a surprise. He thought he had hired a prophetic "hit man," but he would get something quite different.

Section Review

I/II. Balak, King of Moab/Balak Summons Balaam

1. Who was Balak?
2. Why was Balak concerned about the Israelite advance into Canaan?
3. What was Balak's plan to stop the Israelites?

III. Balaam Decides What to Do

1. How did Balaam respond to the Moabites?
2. What indications are there in this section that Balaam did not really want to do God's will?
3. What kind of a prophet do you think Balaam really was?
4. Are there people like Balaam today? What should we do if we meet one? (Rom 16:17)

IV. Balaam's Donkey Speaks

1. How did God appear to Balaam while he was going to meet Balak?
2. What did the donkey say to Balaam?
3. What did the LORD say to Balaam?

V. Balaam's Reacts to the LORD's Appearance

1. How did Balaam act after God had appeared to him?
2. What do think we can learn from this lesson about:
 - a. True prophets of God
 - b. God's intent to preserve his chosen people
 - c. God's reaction to those who oppose Him
 - d. God's ability to carry out His will

Balaam Speaks

Balaam is really in hot water now. He knows that if he blesses Israel, Balak will probably kill him and if he curses Israel, God will probably kill him.

The LORD Speaks to Balaam Again (23:1-5)

Balaam builds some altars and offers sacrifice on them as if he is trying to get God to change his mind and allow him to curse Israel. God is not fooled. The LORD answers saying, “Go back to Balak and give him this message . . .”

Balaam’s First Oracle (23:6-12)

Instead of curses, only blessings for Israel would come out of Balaam’s mouth. Balak, of course, is angry at the way things are going.

Balaam’s Second Oracle (23:13-26)

Again Balaam speaks, but nothing but good words for Israel comes out of his mouth.

Section Review

- Discover the “themes” of Balaam’s first two oracles