

## **“Are You Arguing With A Donkey?”**

### **Introduction**

- A. Man is unique among all of God's creation in that he has the ability to learn from history.
  - 1. Man has the ability to record events as he lives them; thus, leaving a record for future generations.
- B. The Bible is the very best in recording past history from which we can learn.
  - 1. We can learn from the good conduct of others.
  - 2. Also, we can learn from the mistakes and bitter experiences of others.
    - a. It is wonderful that we don't need to have those same bitter experiences in order to learn and profit.
- C. Paul taught - Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11
- D. In this lesson we want to examine the mistakes of a unique man with hope that we can learn and avoid the same mistakes.
  - 1. The man is the prophet Balaam.

### **I. BALAAM LOVED MONEY.**

- A. Moab and Midian (ancient relatives of Israel) form an alliance and try to hire Balaam to prophesy a curse against Israel.
  - 1. They came with the diviner's fee in their hand; e.g., a fee that was paid to soothsayers and fortune tellers. Num. 22:7
- 2. Numbers 22:8-14**
  - a. Vs. 12 - This should have ended the matter once for all.
- B. However, when more princes came promising more money and honor, Balaam wanted very much to go with them. Num. 22:15-17
  - 1. His answer in verse 18 was a good one.
    - a. No amount of money or place of honor is worth the compromise of one's convictions.

- b. Also, no amount of threats or persecutions should cause us to compromise our convictions.
- 2. Balaam has a very real inward problem, the same one Judas had, the love of money.
  - a. **2 Peter 2:15** NASB 15 forsaking the right way they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness,
  - b. **Jude 1:11** NASB 11 Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

II. ***BALAAM WANTED TO SEE WHAT MORE THE LORD HAD TO SAY.*** Num. 22:19

A. It is hard to understand here why God tells Balaam to go, and then becomes angry with him when he goes. **Num. 22:20-22**

B. However, God had plainly spoken to Balaam,

1. "You shall not go with them," but Balaam was not satisfied with that. He wanted more.
2. There was a man in a saloon who had far too much to drink. When asked for another drink, the bartender replied with the age-old question, "Don't you think you have had enough?" The drunk replied, "But I want more than enough!"
3. God had stated enough to Balaam,
  - a. but He wanted more than enough. This shows his lack of honor and respect toward God.

C. Human nature doesn't change.

1. God has revealed His will about how to obtain forgiveness of sins but people want more. Acts 2:38
2. God has revealed His will about music in worship but people want more. Eph. 5:19
3. God has revealed His will about divorce and remarriage but some want more. Matt. 19:9

4. Honor and respect toward God demands that we do exactly as God ordained, no more and no less.

c. Look at the example of King Saul. **1 Sam. 15:18-23**

### **III. BALAAM'S EXPERIENCE WITH HIS DONKEY.**

A. Three times his donkey tries to avoid the angel. **Num. 22:23-27**

**B. God causes the donkey to speak. Num. 22:28-30**

1. I find this rather amusing.

a. Evidently Balaam is so wrapped up in his anger that he doesn't realize that he was talking with a donkey.

b. When a donkey starts talking to us, we need to recognize that something strange is going on!

c. Radio commentator Paul Harvey tells of an experiment involving a young chimpanzee who would always try to slip out of his cage when the door was opened. Scientists thought this young chimp was very intelligent, so far as chimps go, and was a good specimen to teach communication skills. For fourteen years, project directors labored diligently and patiently with this chimpanzee, providing things in its cage to enable it to form certain syllables. Finally the day arrived when it seemed that the chimpanzee was actually going to construct a sentence from the symbols it had been learning. Word went out, and other scientists crowded into the room and gathered around the cage. At last, the first message from the world's most pampered, most cared for, most patiently trained chimpanzee was about to come forth. Millions of dollars had been spent on this project. The scientists could hardly contain themselves as they pressed around the cage. They watched breathlessly as symbols were formed into words and into a sentence. The chimpanzee said, "I want out!"

**C. The angel gives instructions to Balaam. Num. 22:31-35**

1. Balaam tells Balak that he will speak only the Word of God. Num. 22:36-38

### **IV. IN THE NEXT TWO CHAPTERS, BALAAM THREE TIMES BLESSES ISRAEL INSTEAD OF CURSING THEM.**

A. Balak becomes angry with Balaam and sends him away without a reward. Num. 24:10-14

B. From all of this, it might appear that Balaam wasn't such a bad character after all.

1. However, this is not the end of the story.

V. ***BALAAM TEACHES BALAK HOW TO PUT A STUMBLING BLOCK BEFORE ISRAEL.***

***Revelation 2:14*** 'But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit acts of immorality.

A. ***Numbers 25:1-9*** immediately follows the story of Balaam.

1. Balaam knew that the way to cause God to curse Israel was to get them to sin.

2. Balaam tried to turn God away from his people and failed.

***Deuteronomy 23:3-5*** "No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of their descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall ever enter the assembly of the LORD, 4 because they did not meet you with food and water on the way when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you. 5 "Nevertheless, the LORD your God was not willing to listen to Balaam, but the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you because the LORD your God loves you.

***Joshua 24:9-10*** NASB 9 'Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel, and he sent and summoned Balaam the son of Beor to curse you. 10 'But I was not willing to listen to Balaam. So he had to bless you, and I delivered you from his hand.

3. However, he was successful in turning the people away from God.

4. When Israel sinned at Peor, God sent a plague, killing 24,000.

B. Later, when there was war with the Midianites, Balaam was also killed with the sword. Num. 31:8-16

1. Notice that it was "through the counsel of Balaam" that these women caused Israel to sin. Vs. 16

C. Never under any circumstances should we teach or encourage others to do wrong.

1. We should never encourage or condone anyone in doing something we would not do ourselves.

## **VI. BALAAM DID NOT PRACTICE WHAT HE PREACHED.**

A. Not once was Balaam labeled a "false prophet."

1. He was a prophet of God and revealed the mind of God.
2. His problem was that he didn't live up to his own words.

B. He made several good statements, but didn't follow any of them.

1. **Numbers 22:18-19** - The love of money is the root of all evil.

**1 Timothy 6:10** NASB 10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang.

2. **Numbers 22:38** - If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God.

**1 Peter 4:11** Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

3. **Numbers 23:10b** - This should be our goal.

**Revelation 14:13** NASB 13 And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them."

C. Remember the Lord's words against the scribes and Pharisees. Matt. 23:2-3

1. Let us first remove the beams out of our own eyes, and then we can help others.

**Conclusion:**

A. We can learn from the life of Balaam.

1. We need to be on guard against internal corruption. It is that subtle internal contamination that will destroy us. **Prov. 4:23**
2. We need awesome respect for what God says. If God has revealed Himself on a matter, let us accept it as is, and do not "seek what more the Lord has to say."
3. We should never teach, condone, or encourage others in doing wrong.
4. We need to speak forth words of truth and abide in them.

Original source David J. Riggs