

## Permitted But Not Blessed

Balaam was one of those noteworthy Old Testament figures who, though **not** one of God's chosen people, was willing to acknowledge that **Yahweh (the Lord) was indeed a powerful God**. But he did not believe in the Lord as **the only true God**.

His story exposes **the deception** of maintaining an outward façade of spirituality over a corrupt inner life.

Balaam was a man torn between the call to deliver the message God gave him and **his desire to profit** from serving a pagan king.

*Even his talking donkey didn't settle his mind.*

**Numbers 22:20-22** - <sup>20</sup> And God came to Balaam at night and said to him, "If the men come to call you, rise *and* go with them; but only the word which I speak to you—that you shall do." <sup>21</sup> So Balaam rose in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab.

**Balaam, the Donkey, and the Angel** - <sup>22</sup> Then God's anger was aroused because he went, and the Angel of the Lord took His stand in the way as an adversary against him. And he was riding on his donkey, and his two servants *were* with him.

### I. Intro. -- The Character of Balaam

- **Charles Dickens** introduces the book, *A Tale of Two Cities*, in this manner: ***"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times."***
- **That seems to be the summary of the life of Balaam. He was the best of prophets, and he was the worst of the prophets.**
- In fact, were we able to fast-forward him into our generation, **he would probably be one of our most sought-after preachers**. He had a silver tongue and was full of charisma.
- **But he was a devil in a prophet's mantle.** Ambrose and Augustine, both mention him as being a prophet but along with that they mark him as a soothsayer and a magician.

- ***When you read the summary of*** the prayers, prophecies, and exhortations that he would speak in **the book of Numbers** you will find that **he was a very gifted man.**
- **Consider this:** “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.” ***Strong words, full of meaning, pregnant with purpose, but devoid of something lasting.***
- **Consider his description of the character of God:** “God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and shall He not do it?” Insight issues from those phrases. ***Revelation with a point but still lacking something.***
- ***Balaam, the man who was gifted as the prophet was an imposter who was full of deceit.*** However, the eloquence with which Balaam preached ***was enough to fool both Moses and all the children of Israel.***
- His problem was that **he placed all his tears into his voice** and **not his soul.**  
***He urged repentance and reformation in his powerful appeals, but it was absent from his own life.***
- Think of Balaam in his all-night prayer meeting, on his knees, begging for the direction and opportunity of God but all his anxious moments, his perplexing problems, **his desperation in his own prayer was marred by that terrible flaw of self-deceit.**

He heard as he wanted to hear from God.

- **His hearing was dimmed, and his own understanding was darkened.**
- **Consumed with what time held for him** instead of **what eternity promised.**
- Despite all of this, this man was a prophet who saw far beyond those who lived with him in that day, for he would prophetically exclaim, **“A star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel.”**
- **He was speaking of a Messiah** who was on **the distant horizon of the future.**

**Numbers 31:8** - They killed the kings of Midian with the rest of those who were killed—Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. **Balaam the son of Beor they also killed with the sword.**

- **Balaam the son of Beor they also killed with the sword. Slain by his own people, the Israelites.** For when they came to destroy the kings of Midian, **Balaam was in their midst.**
- **So, we must take a trip to Moab's battlefield.**
- There we see heaps, rows, piles, and avenues of the dead.
- Vultures have now shredded the carcasses at their own hideous feast.

**Who is the man lying dead in the pyramid of the fallen Midianites?**

- His clothes betray him as a prophet.
- Sightless eyes now gaze at the heavens.
- **Balaam, can it be? How did you get here? Why are you on the wrong side of the Jordan? How did you fall among the enemy?**

**Balaam, this best and worst prophet, would tell you right now, “God let me go, but God didn’t go with me. I was permitted but I wasn’t blessed in my going.”**

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## **II. The Story Behind the Text**

- When the children of Israel had reached the borders of Moab and Midian, **the kings of those countries feared that they would be overthrown by this mass of Israelites.** They had witnessed what had happened to Og of Bashan and Sihon, the king of the Amorites. **So, they found them a preacher who was quite well known.**
- **Balaam's reputation was of such** that people knew that whoever he blessed was blessed and by the same token, those whom he cursed was cursed.
- **Not much has changed since Balaam's days.**
- **When we have difficulties,** sometimes we think it might be easier to push them off on someone else, **instead of facing them down ourselves.**  
***So, the kings shoveled their problem on to Balaam.***

- **” Curse Israel!!!”** They said. The kings of Moab and Midian **sent messengers promising him a vast reward if he would follow through. *Balaam invited them in to spend the night while he inquired of the Lord.***
- **Balaam prayed and God instructed him. “Stay away from these men, you cannot curse Israel because they are blessed.”** So, the next morning, Balaam said, **“I am unable to go with you, God will not let me.”**
- They went home and more messengers were sent from the king. **They offered greater rewards and honor.** Balaam said, **“*If they would give me a house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond what God has explicitly told me to do. But I will pray again.*”**

Those things that God has resolved by His Word, by principle, by statute, we have no business praying for Him to change His mind.

- **We all have watched people who have fought with their own wills and resolve at an altar –**
- **And straightway walked away and found that God permitted them to go in that direction, but they were not blessed.**
- When Balaam prayed again, this time God came to him and said, **“*If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them. . .*”** So, Balaam arose, saddled his donkey and went with the Midianites. But the next verse says, **“*God’s anger was kindled because he went.*”**
- **We must be on guard every moment of our lives.**
- **We must watch ourselves, our words, our attitudes, because the enemy will not rest until he has captured the soul.**

Two things that we all must remember:

(1) The enemy never gives up.

(2) God doesn’t need to speak twice.

- **God’s will was plainly revealed to Balaam the first time the enemy came to call.**
- **But in Balaam’s backsliding, he welcomed them into his home, knowing full well, they were bent on destroying God’s people.**

The enemy's messengers intrigued Balaam and he allowed them to stand around too long.

- Balaam said, "No, I can't curse Israel."
- But spend the night.
- But eat at my table.
- But let's stay friends.

*Balaam, God said it. There's no need for Him to say it again to prove it's worth.*

- God said it once and that's enough.
- Twice in the Bible we find the mention that Jesus was born of a virgin.
- The New Birth is mentioned several times.
- Our Holiness position is found several times.
- But once ought to be enough.

When you tinker with things under the guise of "I will pray about it" you find yourself in dangerous territory. You are only a short way from fraternization with the enemy. The price at stake is your own soul.

- *When Balaam prayed a second time*, God told Balaam to head out.
- God said, "*Go ahead and go but I am not going with you.*"

**God said you have my permission, but you don't have my blessing.**

God said I will allow you to do it, but I am not going to bless you.

- Some may think that just because God gives them permission to do something, means that God is blessing them. . . . **How wrong they are.**

**Permission doesn't** carry approval.

**Permission doesn't** imply blessing.

**Power doesn't** imply right.

**Opportunity doesn't** bring sanction.

**At Kibroth-Hataavah, the children of Israel began to murmur.**

- They were sick of manna.
- They wanted meat.

God sent a wind that brought a flock of quail into their midst.

- They collected many barrels of quail.
- While still in their teeth, the wrath of God was kindled against them.
- The Psalmist said, “He gave them their request, but he sent leanness into their soul.” A plague smote them.

So, it becomes the accumulation of a habit.

So it becomes the repeated indulgence of some illicit desire.

So it becomes repeated disobedience.

When you try to turn around and come back something hinders your progress.

- Go ahead and go to Moab and often those who go never make it back.
- And for those who do make it back, they find themselves much in the condition of Naomi who went to Moab during the famine. . . . .
- *Bent, broken, and bitter.* . . . . .

### III. Balaam’s Pattern

- There arises a series of New Testament Scriptures that bring to us a pattern in the lives of men who are accustomed to becoming the Balaam’s of life.

We note in:

**2 Peter 2:15** -- The Way of Balaam

**Jude 11** -- The Error of Balaam

**Revelation 2:14** -- The Doctrine of Balaam

It first begins with a way, which leads to an error, which finally culminates in a doctrine that destroys the man.

*Yet one of the arresting facts in the story of Balaam* is that God would use a dumb beast that Balaam was riding to speak to him a final time about the destiny that he was taking.

**In the process of the matter, the donkey moved against a wall and nearly crushed the foot and ankle of Balaam.**

- But the pain of his hobbled walk **could not even convince him.**
- The sensible thing to have done would to have ***returned home and rested the foot*** until it was well and forgotten the whole matter with Balak. . . . .
- **But Balaam couldn't.**
- Something about the silver and gold had captured his carnal heart.
- **He could not turn back now.**  
The way of Balaam led to the error of Balaam, which sealed his doom with the doctrine of Balaam.

**CLOSE -- Is Our Heart Like That of Balaam?**

**I am fearful that some may have had a limited work of the Spirit in their lives.**

- They look just good enough to keep the preacher off them.
- They look just good enough to keep people from wondering about their spiritual status.
- They have just enough knowledge of the Word of God to keep God at a safe distance.

**But on the inside - a deceitful heart**

- The heart is a caldron of emotions.
- What lies in the undiscovered country of your soul? Is it. . . . .

**Galatians 5:19-21** - Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, <sup>21</sup> envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

**All these things come from the heart.**

**When these emotions run unchecked in our hearts we are doomed to spiritual failure.**

**Look well on the outside but be sure that the inside matches what is seen on the outside.**

**The spirit of the world will tell you** to destroy the voice of the preacher and live as you want.

**When worldliness gets into the church** and into the pulpit it has massive destruction not only on this generation but the one to follow.

**What about holiness standards?** They must be embodied in every believer.

**As for our new converts,** I will work with you as long as it takes.

We must protect ourselves against the slippery way back to the world. We would **NOT** want God to write "Ichabod" on us.

**The Glory of God has departed.**

- **That is precisely what happened to Balaam.** He lost his first love.
- **He began to find himself** doing things that he used to shun.
- **He found that somewhere along the way** that he had let God no longer really have charge in his life.
- **Could we be backslidden from God,** even though week in and week out you appear to be involved and somewhat spiritual.

**Galatians 5:22-26** - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. <sup>24</sup> And those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup> If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. <sup>26</sup> Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

- But remember this, **we will never have the ability to fool God.**
- Despite popular opinion and popular story lines if you are left behind there will be **no second chance.**