

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
1-12-22
Numbers 24

Preparation For The 3rd Prophecy – Verses 1-2

¹ Now when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he did not resort to divination as at other times, but turned his face toward the wilderness. ² When Balaam looked out and saw Israel encamped tribe by tribe, the Spirit of God came on him.

24:1 Because Balaam was a sorcerer, he would look for omens or signs to help him tell the future. In this situation, however, it was clear that God himself was speaking, and so Balaam needed no other signs, real or imagined.

God's Third Message Through Balaam – Verses 3-9

³ And he spoke his message: “The prophecy of Balaam son of Beor, the prophecy of one whose eye sees clearly, ⁴ the prophecy of one who hears the words of God, who sees a vision from the Almighty, who falls prostrate, and whose eyes are opened: ⁵ “How beautiful are your tents, Jacob, your dwelling places, Israel! ⁶ “Like valleys they spread out, like gardens beside a river, like aloes planted by the LORD, like cedars beside the waters. ⁷ Water will flow from their buckets; their seed will have abundant water. “Their king will be greater than Agag; their kingdom will be exalted. ⁸ “God brought them out of Egypt; they have the strength of a wild ox. They devour hostile nations and break their bones in pieces; with their arrows they pierce them. ⁹ Like a lion they crouch and lie down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse them? “May those who bless you be blessed and those who curse you be cursed!”

24:5 How lovely are your tents, O Jacob: This beautiful prophecy speaks of Israel's blessed abundance, and the dominance over neighbor nations God will give Israel. Most of all, it speaks of the abiding blessing of God on Israel, and directly rebukes Balak for trying to curse Israel (cursed is he who curses you).

24:7 Who was Agag? Agag was the title for the king of the Amalekites, just as Pharaoh was the ruler of Egypt. Saul, the first king of Israel, defeated Agag (1 Samuel 15:8). Balaam has prophesied correctly the ruin of Israel's oldest enemy (Exodus 17:14-16).

24:9 Blessed is he who blesses you, and cursed is he who curses you: Each of the first three prophecies, it has gotten worse for Balak. In the first one, Balaam fails to curse Israel; in the second, he blesses Israel, and in the third, he curses Balak! How much worse can it get for the king of Moab?

Balak's exasperation with Balaam – Verses 10-13

¹⁰ Then Balak's anger burned against Balaam. He struck his hands together and said to him, “I summoned you to curse my enemies, but you have blessed them these three times. ¹¹ Now leave at once and go home! I said I would reward you handsomely, but the LORD has kept you from being rewarded.” ¹² Balaam answered Balak, “Did I not tell the messengers you sent me, ¹³ ‘Even if Balak gave me all the silver and gold in his palace, I could not do anything of my own accord, good or bad, to go beyond the command of the LORD—and I must say only what the LORD says?’

24:10-11 I would greatly honor you, but in fact, the LORD has kept you back from honor: Balak said that he would not pay Balaam because Balaam would not curse Israel. This hit Balaam where it really hurt him.

24:11 Although Balaam's motives were not correct, in blessing Israel he acted with integrity. God's message had so filled him that Balaam spoke the truth. In so doing, he forfeited the reward that had lured him to speak in the first place. Staying true to God's Word may cost us promotions and advantages in the short run, but those who choose God over money will one day acquire heavenly wealth beyond measure (Matthew 6:19-21).

24:12-13 The LORD says, that I must speak: Balaam tried his best to excuse himself, and to blame God. But he knew that his heart's desire (a big paycheck) would not be fulfilled, because he failed to please his employer.

God's Fourth Message Through Balaam – Verses 14-19

14 Now I am going back to my people, but come, let me warn you of what this people will do to your people in days to come."¹⁵ Then he spoke his message: "The prophecy of Balaam son of Beor, the prophecy of one whose eye sees clearly, ¹⁶ the prophecy of one who hears the words of God, who has knowledge from the Most High, who sees a vision from the Almighty, who falls prostrate, and whose eyes are opened: ¹⁷ "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel. He will crush the foreheads of Moab, the skulls of all the people of Sheth. ¹⁸ Edom will be conquered; Seir, his enemy, will be conquered, but Israel will grow strong. ¹⁹ A ruler will come out of Jacob and destroy the survivors of the city."

24:15-19 The star out of Jacob is often thought to refer to the coming Messiah. It was probably this prophecy that convinced the Magi to travel to Israel to search for the baby Jesus (see Matthew 2:1-2). It seems strange that God would use a sorcerer like Balaam to foretell the coming of the Messiah. But this teaches us that God can use anything or anyone to accomplish his plans. By using a sorcerer, God did not make sorcery acceptable; in fact, the Bible condemns it in several places (Exodus 22:18; 2 Chronicles 33:6; Revelation 18:23). Rather, God showed his ultimate sovereignty over good and evil.

Balaam's Fifth Message – Verse 20

20 Then Balaam saw Amalek and spoke his message: "Amalek was first among the nations, but their end will be utter destruction."

24:20 The Amalekites were bitter foes of Israel. Even though they are very prominent in the Old Testament, they seem to just vanish with no record of them. In all of this, we can see that God blesses whom He chooses, and curses whom He chooses. The church is like Israel. In fact, they are spiritual Israel. The Lord's blessings are upon His church. Those who try to oppose the church, God destroys.

Balaam's Sixth Message – Verses 21-22

21 Then he saw the Kenites and spoke his message: "Your dwelling place is secure, your nest is set in a rock; ²² yet you Kenites will be destroyed when Ashur takes you captive."

24:21 We can hardly escape the fact that Balaam was actually seeing the enemies of the church in the Moabites, Edomites, Amalekites, Kenites, and Assyrians. Each of them symbolize the evil world system, which opposes God and His people. The Kenites above, were trusting in their own ability to save them. They were rock dwellers.

24:22 Though they were so strongly fortified, secluded and surrounded with rocks and mountains. Yet they should gradually waste away, as they were but few left in Saul's time (1 Sam. 15:6). There is no fortification strong enough that God cannot send someone to destroy it.

Balaam's Seventh Message – Verses 23-25

23 Then he spoke his message: “Alas! Who can live when God does this? **24** Ships will come from the shores of Cyprus; they will subdue Ashur and Eber, but they too will come to ruin.”

25 Then Balaam got up and returned home, and Balak went his own way.

24:25 So Balaam rose and departed: Undoubtedly, both were disappointed, each because Israel had not been weakened spiritually and therefore made ready for defeat in battle. Balak wanted Israel defeated, and Balaam wanted Balak's money, but each wanted Israel spiritually cursed as a way to get it, and God would not curse Israel.

24:25 Balak also went his way: We must credit Balak for one thing; he knew where the strength of Israel was. He did not seek to defeat Israel through military strategy or new weapons. He knew it was a spiritual battle, and if Israel won the spiritual battle, they would certainly win the military battle.

We should walk in the same awareness. If we did, we would give more time and attention to building our spiritual strength, in having a close walk with Jesus. We should not allow Balak to be more perceptive about spiritual things than we are.