

# Numbers 21 -24 • Balaam and Balak

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Numbers chapter 21. The nation of Israel is very close to entering into the Promise Land. And what they are doing is they're coming around onto the other side of the Promised Land. And they're going to eventually cross the Jordan. And then enter into the land. And you remember Jericho, is the first city that they will eventually conquer. But they're coming up from behind, or I guess beneath Jericho. And then they are coming in from the side. But they've got some issues to deal with on the way.

It says in verse 1, that *"When the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who lived in the Negeb, heard that Israel was coming by the way of Atharim, he fought against Israel, and took some of them captive. 2 And Israel vowed a vow to the LORD and said, 'If you will indeed give this people into my hand, then I will devote their cities to destruction. 3 And the LORD heeded the voice of Israel and gave over the Canaanites, and they devoted them and their cities to destruction. So the name of the place was called Hormah."* (And the word "Hormah" actually means destruction) *4 From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way."* (ESV)

Now, this was probably very frustrating to get... You know how it feels to get so close to a particular goal that you have in mind, and then to feel like you're going back the way you came. That's got to be very, very frustrating. But the reason they were trying to bypass Edom, was because they were told they weren't to mess with the people of Edom. And they... And the Edomites did not want them going through their land.

They had to turn around and go back on the road that they were coming from, which they call, the way to the Red Sea. Now they are obviously not going to the Red Sea. But they are on that road. Right? And this must have been just tremendously frustrating. And I think the people felt that way. Unfortunately, they gave in to their frustration.

And it says in verse 5, that, *"And the people spoke against God and against Moses, 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food."* (And they stepped over the line right there. It says,) *6 Then the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died.*

*7 And the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you. Pray to the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. 8 And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." 9 So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live." Stop there for just a minute.*

I know, crazy story, even a little bit weird. Right? There are some things about this passage that are pretty typical we've seen before. And that's the murmuring aspect. That's predictable. God's judgment is particularly interesting, related to this murmuring. Sending these, what is called, fiery serpents, no doubt referring to what the venom perhaps produced in someone who had been bit, I'm imagining.

And the solution was even more crazy. And that is, God telling Moses to fashion a bronze image of a serpent and then set it up on a pole for everybody to look at. And God told Moses, to tell the people that when anybody is bitten by one of these things... Notice He didn't take the snakes away. Seems like that would have been a fairly easy solution. But instead of taking the snakes away, they continued to be there. But if anyone got bit, they were to look at this bronze serpent hanging on this pole and they would be saved from death. Ah, you got to admit it's just a little bit strange. It's just... It's a little bit weird.

The question naturally arises: What is so special about this bronze serpent that by looking at it after someone's been bit, that it would save them from that very deadly snake bite? And the answer is, nothing. There was nothing special about that bronze serpent. It was an image, a metal image, fashioned in the shape of these serpents. And put up on a pole.

And you're saying, well then, what's the deal here anyway? People, this is a test of faith and it's nothing less. The people were told, if they were bitten, to look upon this serpent up on the pole and they would be healed and not suffer any ill effects. But the key to their being healed is they had to believe it. They had to believe they would be healed.

See they've been told... Moses told them here's what God says to you, "If you're bit by one of these snakes, I want you to go right to this area in the camp where this pole is set with this serpent up on it. And I want you to look at it and when you look at it, you're going to be healed. You're not going to suffer ill effects from that snake bite."

Guys, this is an exercise of faith. And God is preparing His people to walk by faith. And understand salvation by faith. You guys understand that this picture of this bronze serpent is so similar to what we are called to do related to the idea of looking upon Jesus Christ, on the cross for our sins.

That this is actually used in the New Testament by Jesus, as a symbolic pointer to what we share in our faith in Christ. Let me show you a passage from - on the screen - from John chapter 3. Goes like this.

**John 3:14-15 (NIV84)**

*Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.*

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Listen, what the people of Israel were being told to do, was to believe in the promise of God. And yeah, it surrounded a bronze serpent on a pole. Little bit weird, I know. I always thought, couldn't you have come up with something else? But those were the things that were. This was the cause of their issue. Right? And what are they told to do? They're told to put their faith in God's promise.

Perfectly attuned to what we do in Jesus Christ, that you can see Jesus, even made a connection, "*Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that...*" all who believe, all who look upon Him...

We look upon Jesus in a very real sense, as well as the people looked upon this bronze serpent. By the way, "bronze" is the metal of sin. Don't ever forget that either. There are many connections with the metal of bronze in the Scripture. And it's always keyed to the idea of sin. But that's why the snake was made out of bronze.

Anyway, let's move on. Verse 10. "*And the people of Israel set out and camped in Oboth. 11 And they set out from Oboth and camped at Iye-abarim, in the wilderness that is opposite Moab, toward the sunrise. 12 From there they set out and camped in the Valley of Zered. 13 From there they set out and camped on the other side of the Arnon, which is in the wilderness that extends from the border of the Amorites, for the Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites. 14 Therefore it is said in the Book of the Wars of the LORD, (Obviously, something we don't possess at all today) Waheb in the Suphah, and*

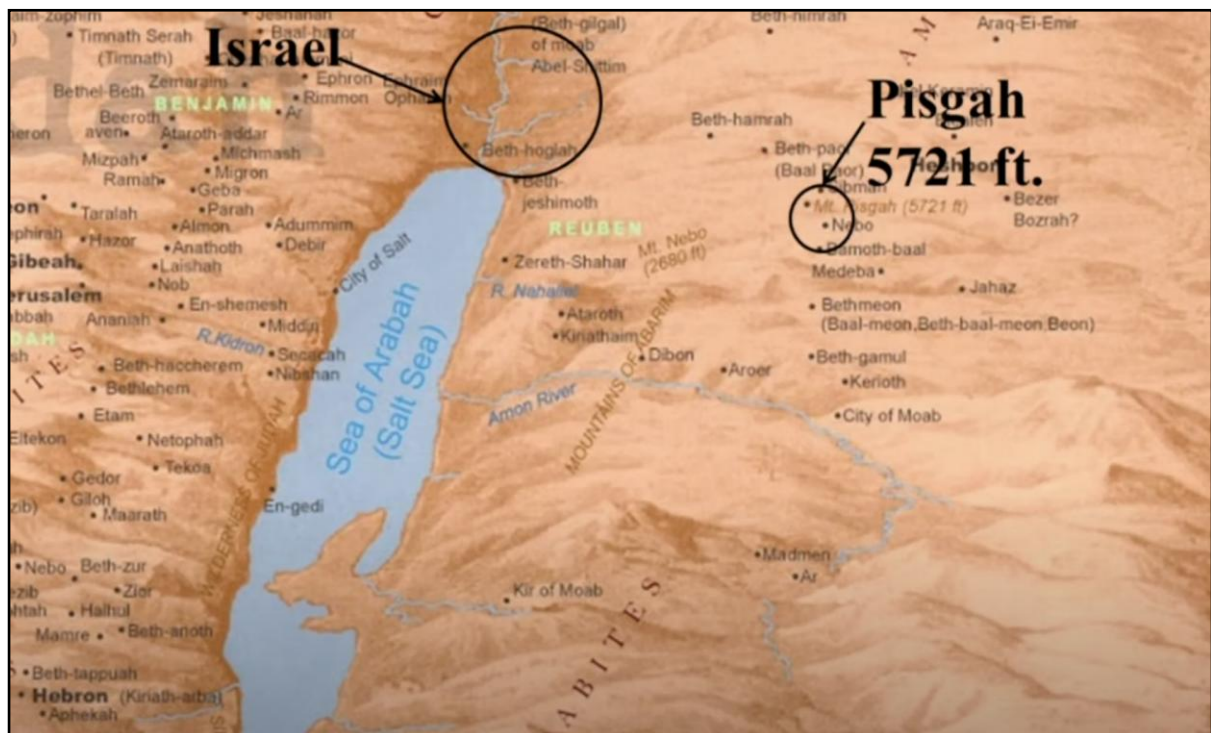
*the valleys of the Arnon, 15 and the slope of the valleys that extends to the seat of Ar, and leans to the border of Moab.*

*16 And from there they continued to Beer; that is the well of which the LORD said to Moses, "Gather the people together, so that I may give them water." 17 Then Israel sang this song:*

*"Spring up, O well!-Sing to it!- 18 the well that the princes made, (and) the nobles of the people dug, with the scepter and with their staffs."*

*And from the wilderness that went on to Mattanah, 19 and from Mattanah to Nahaliel, and from Nahaliel to Bamoth, 20 and from Bamoth to the valley lying in the region of Moab by the top of Pisgah that looks down on the desert."*

Pisgah was obviously a raised area. In fact, it's just a few miles northeast of the... Or east rather of the northeast edge of the Dead Sea. Let me show you, I've got a map actually, that I want to show you of this area, so you can get a sense.



Now Israel is over here on the other side of, the Salt Sea. But you can see where the nation of Israel basically is now. This area of this Pisgah, which, is about 5,000... Well, close to 6,000 feet. And it says, from up there you can see the whole valley. And this is the... They are obviously not up on top of the Pisgah.

They're in that region around it. And there's this huge area - landmass - that they're taking a look at.

And eventually, Israel is going to move their way, across the Jordan. And they're going to make their way into the Promised Land. They're not there yet. But where they are right now is very significant. Because it is from here that the king of Moab is going to present a challenge here to Israel in the coming chapters. And we'll get into that. Let's run through the rest of this chapter quickly.

*"<sup>21</sup> Then Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, saying, <sup>22</sup> Let me pass through your land. We will not turn aside into field or vineyard. We will not drink the water of a well. We will go by the King's Highway until we have passed through your territory." <sup>23</sup> But Sihon would not allow Israel to pass through his territory. He gathered all his people together and went out against Israel to the wilderness and came to Jahaz and fought against Israel."*

Talk about picking a fight that you can't win. I mean, this guy... They are willing to pass through this guy's land and leave it alone. But, of course, he's afraid. Fear will do weird things to you. And in fact, it's not the last time we'll read about it.

And it says in verse 24, *"And Israel defeated him with the edge of the sword and took possession of his land (It was) from the Arnon to the Jabbok, as far as to the Ammonites, (to the border of the Ammonites, excuse me,) for the border of the Ammonites was strong."*

And this was a very large area. Let me show you again. We'll put the map up here,



And this box just basically covers the area where this king ruled. That was his kingdom. And this was not meant to be part of God's Promised Land. This was not part of the Promised Land. But they conquered it. And it will eventually be the home of the tribe of Gad and Reuben. They're going to ask to stay there. After they go into the land to help their brothers clear the land of the Canaanites, they're going to ask if their families then can stay there. If they can come back then and remain in the land. Anyway, you get a little sense picture wise of where we're talking. Alright?

Verse 25, *"And Israel took all these cities, and Israel settled in all the cities of the Amorites, in Heshbon, and in all its villages. 26 For Heshbon was the city of Sihon the king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab and taken all his land out of his hand, as far as the Arnon. 27 Therefore the ballad singers (your Bible may say, poets) say,*

*"Come to Heshbon, let it be built; let the city of Sihon be established. 28 For fire came out from Heshbon, flame from the city of Sihon. It devoured Ar of Moab, and swallowed the heights of the Arnon.*

*29 Woe to you, O Moab! You are undone, O people of Chemosh! He has made his sons fugitives, and his daughters captives, to an Amorite king, Sihon.*



*30 So we overthrew them; Heshbon, as far as Dibon, perished; and we laid waste as far as Nophah; fire spread as far as Medeba."*

Cool. Apparently that was a song. It was a hit, I'm sure - Top 40 and everything like that.

*"31 Thus Israel lived in the land of the Amorites. 32 And Moses sent to spy out Jazer, and they captured its villages and dispossessed the Amorites who were there. 33 Then they turned and went up by the way to Bashan."*

Now this is still north. If you think about that map that I just showed you and that red box. Now they are moving even farther north. Okay. Which is the land of Bashan.

*And it says, "And Og the king of Bashan came out against them, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei. 34 But the LORD said to Moses, "Do not fear him, for I have given him into your hand, and all his people, and his land. And you shall do to him as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived (in) Heshbon. 35 So they defeated him and his sons and all his people, until he had no survivor left. And they possessed his land."*

Now Israel, as you can see, is living in this vast area on the wrong side of the Jordan. Again, this is land that God did not intend to give His people. This was not part of the original Promised Land. And yet Israel has conquered these nations because these nations, basically, came out and tried to fight against Israel. And now they're living there at least for the time being. And as I said, two and a half of the tribes of Israel will eventually stay there. Alright? On the other side of the Jordan.

*Alright, Numbers chapter 22. This is where it gets interesting. "Then the people of Israel set out and camped in the plains of Moab beyond the Jordan at Jericho. 2 And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. 3 And Moab was in great dread of the people, because they were many. Moab was overcome with fear of the people of Israel."*

Did you catch that? Again, this is another interesting situation. I mean, in one sense, Balak's fear is understandable because the nation of Israel has already conquered these other nations there on the other side of the Jordan. His fear I suppose is well placed. But what's interesting or what he didn't know is that God had actually commanded the Israelites to leave Moab alone. Don't touch them. Right?

God had no intention of giving the land of Moab to Israel. And if he just... Of course, if the guy would have known that, probably wouldn't have been so fearful. But did you notice that the last thing it says here, is that he was overcome? In fact, the whole nation was overcome with fear. And when you're overcome with fear, you do stupid things, don't you? You do dumb things. You do things you wouldn't do otherwise. There you go.

*"4 And Moab said to the elders of Midian, "This horde (is now) will now lick up all that is around us, as the ox licks up the grass of the field." So Balak the son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time, 5 sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor, which is near the River in the land of the people of Amaw, to call him, saying, "Behold, a people has come out of Egypt. They cover the face of the earth, and they are dwelling opposite me.*

*6 Come now, curse this people for me, since they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them from the land, for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed."*

Stop there for just a minute. We are introduced to the main character of these next 3 chapters. Balaam, who appears out of nowhere. We've never heard of him before. And what we learn of him is that he has a gift of prophecy, although, he's mixed with some weird pagan influences and divining. And that sort of thing - sorcery. And we don't know...

Well, we get into the story and we find out that he has an understanding of Israel's covenant God. He even refers to Israel's covenant God, by His covenant name, Yahweh. How Balaam came to know Yahweh by name, as the God. And to make Him, his own God, which he claims in this passage, you'll see. We don't know. We don't have any idea. What we do know is that Balak knew who He was and respected Him for His power.

You'll notice Balak said to him, I know that those whom you bless are blessed, and those whom you curse are cursed. Balaam, is considered a powerful man.

Verse 7, *"So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian (You see we've got two, really two nations going on here. The Midianites and the Moabites) departed with the fees for divination. (You'll notice that they brought some money with them. Apparently that was a common payment for such services) in their hand. And they came to Balaam and gave him Balak's message. 8 And he said to them, "Lodge here tonight, and I will bring back word to you, as the LORD speaks to me."* (And by the way, the word LORD is YAHWEH. All right?) *So the princes of Moab stayed with Balaam."*



Now, did you notice here that, they brought him the fees for divination. What is divination? Let me show you the definition on the screen here of divination.

**Definition of divination—**

1) The practice of seeking knowledge of the future or the unknown by supernatural means.

synonyms: fortune telling, divining

Divination basically means: The practice of seeking knowledge of the future or the unknown by supernatural means. Synonyms would be: fortune telling or divining.

Alright? And in Balak's case, he believed that divination could also produce a curse on his enemy. Balaam says, stay here for the night, I'll talk to God, and give you my answer in the morning.

Verse 9, *"And God came to Balaam and said, 'Who are these men with you?'"* <sup>10</sup> *And Balaam said to God, 'Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent to me, saying, <sup>11</sup> 'Behold, a people has come out of Egypt, and it covers the face of the earth. Now come, curse them for me. Perhaps I shall be able to fight against them and drive them out.'"* <sup>12</sup> *God said to Balaam, (I want you to notice this answer.) "You shall not go with them. You shall not curse the people for they are blessed."*

But does that sound clear to you as far as a response from God? It sounds pretty clear to me. God says, you shall not go. You shall not curse them; they are a blessed people. Should be, the situation should be done. Right? We should be just... That should be the end of the chapter. And then we move on. Not so much.

Verse 13, *"So Balaam rose in the morning and said to the princes of Balak, 'Go to your own land, for the LORD has refused to let me go with you.'"*

I want you to think about that response for just a minute. Because you can almost hear Balaam's heart in it as if he was saying, I really would like to go with you, but I can't. God's not letting me. Aw shucks, I guess I can't go. There you are. Almost like asking him to ask again.

*"<sup>14</sup> So the princes of Moab rose and went to Balak and said, 'Balaam refuses to come with us.'"*

*"<sup>15</sup> Once again Balak sent princes, more in number and more honorable than these. <sup>16</sup> And they came to Balaam and said to him, 'Thus says Balak the son of Zippor: 'Let nothing hinder you from coming to me, <sup>17</sup> for I will surely do you great honor, and whatever you say to me, I will do. (Boy, when your king says that to you, that means something) Come, curse this people for me.'" <sup>18</sup> But Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, "Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the command of the LORD my God (Notice that: the LORD my God.) to do less or more.*

*<sup>19</sup> So you, too, please stay here tonight, that I may know what more the LORD will say to me."*

Now that's an interesting response, isn't it? Instead of saying, "Guys, you were here just a few days ago. You brought the same request. I told you. I told the first guys that came. God, said no. He said no. Goodbye. But notice what Balaam says at the very end. He goes, yeah, well, I told your first guys that came that even if, the king gave me a whole house full of silver and gold, I can't come with you guys. Tell you what, stick around I'll see what else God says. And you can kind of hear what's going on here. He's entertaining this thing. And he wants to see, maybe, possibly God might change His mind on this thing. And who knows, I can still get rich.

*Verse 20, "And God came to Balaam at night and said,... "If the men have come to call you, rise, go with them; but only do what I tell you." <sup>21</sup> So Balaam rose in the morning (probably delighted) and saddled his donkey and went with the princes of Moab.*

*<sup>22</sup> But God's anger was kindled because he went, and the angel of the LORD took his stand in the way (of) his adversary. (Notice that God is calling Balaam an adversary) Now he was riding on the donkey, and his two servants were with him."* Now, stop there for just a moment.

You might be wondering here: Why does God get angry at Balaam when He clearly told Balaam, the second time around, okay, go with them. If they've come to take you, then go with them. But only say what I tell you to say. Why is God getting angry? Didn't He tell Balaam to go? Yes, He did. But remember, only after Balaam, demonstrated a very clear desire to go. In other words, Balaam wanted to disobey God. He wanted very much to disobey God.

God is letting him; God is letting him disobey. Christians, you need to be very clear in your understanding of what this is revealing to you and I, about the

nature of God, as it relates to our obedience or our disobedience. God gives us very clear things in His Word.

I had a gal email me. And she's not from our fellowship. But saw our teachings online. Emailed me and said, "I know what God's Word has says about not being unequally yoked with unbelievers. But let me tell you a little bit about my boyfriend..." And went on and proceeded to tell me about her boyfriend. She's a believer, he's not. "I know what God says, but..."

And then she just explained the situation. And I was a little bit taken aback. Because she told me at the very first part of her note, "I know what God says, but, what do you think?" So I wrote her back and I just simply said, "okay."

And I actually put the passage in there about not being unequally yoked with unbelievers. I quoted it in my response. And I said, "alright, you write me back and tell me what you see, what you think this passage is telling you about your boyfriend." She wrote back, and said, "telling me not to be yoked with him."

God has spoken. Right? When we look for another answer, when we look for another response, when we look for further information... And I have to say, when she wrote back, she was very humble and very responsive and it was beautiful actually. She wrote back and said, "you're right."

It's like, yeah I see, okay. I think she just maybe, needed somebody else to say, okay, this is what God's Word says. Are you going to do it? Or are you going to look for a loophole? Because sometimes we do that. We look in God's Word and then we look for a loophole. But is that what God really means when He says that? Or is He just saying in a general sort of a way?

No, this is very specific. God told Balaam in no uncertain terms, do not go. Do not curse them. They are blessed. And Balaam looked for a loophole by going to God a second time. And what did God do? He said, fine, go.

But you know what? You are now in opposition to God. And at this particular point onward, we are in an adversarial role with one another because you have chosen to ignore the clear revelation of God's Word.

And Christians, this happens in our lives sometimes, too. When we ignore the Word of God, we throw it behind us, and we say, yeah, but there's got to be a loophole. And we begin to proceed on, even knowing that God has made it clear, and direct understanding for us in His Word.

How does it go for Balaam here? Look what it says in verse 23. *"And the donkey saw the angel of the LORD (Wow!) standing in the road, with a drawn sword in his hand. And the donkey turned aside out of the road and went into the field. And Balaam struck the donkey, to turn her into the road. 24 Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on either side. 25 And when the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she pushed against the wall and pressed Balaam's foot against the wall. So he struck her again. 26 Then the angel of the LORD went ahead and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right or to the left. 27 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam. And Balaam's anger was kindled, and he struck the donkey with his staff."*

Well, it's a sad commentary when a dumb animal has more spiritual insight than a human being. Isn't it? In this particular case... And this man is truly gifted on a spiritual level. He's not using it to for good, necessarily. But yeah.

Verse 28. This is the part that gets really weird. *"Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, 'What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?'" 29 And Balaam said to the donkey, 'Because you have made a fool of me. I wish I had a sword in my hand, for then I would kill you.'*

And you can see here, in his response, just how filled with rage he is over this situation. Because first of all, guys, listen, he knows he's doing wrong. He knows it. And when we are doing wrong and things begin to fall apart on us along the way, it just builds up anger and resentment. Because we know we're not doing what we ought to be doing. We know it. And we're coming up against all these things.

And Balaam doesn't even realize his donkey is talking for heaven's sakes. And he just, he's filled with such fury, he talks back to the animal and says, *"...you've made a fool of me."* And that's pride, by the way, and if I had a sword in my hand, I'd kill you where you sit. Right?

*"30 And the donkey (notice here, the donkey) said to Balaam, 'Am I not your donkey, on which you have ridden all your life long to this day? Is it my habit to treat you this way? And (all Balaam can) say is, 'No.'*

Which is interesting. Isn't that interesting that God can even cause a donkey to speak in such a way that He removes the arguments that Balaam might otherwise give.

*"<sup>31</sup> Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand. And he bowed down and fell on his face. <sup>32</sup> And the angel of the LORD said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to oppose you because your way is perverse before me. <sup>33</sup> The donkey saw me and turned aside before me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, surely just now I would have killed you and let her live." How do you like that? God even says, your donkey just saved your life and you beat her for it.*

*"<sup>34</sup> Then Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you stood in the road against me. Now therefore, if it is evil in your sight, I will turn back."*

And we look at that and we go, if? If it is evil? Seriously? He's still playing games with God. Have you ever had somebody say that to you when they're apologizing? Doesn't it remove the whole apology, if I've hurt you, I'm sorry. When they know that you're clearly hurt. Or they wouldn't, probably, be apologizing.

But what we do when we say that is we're removing or... We're not removing. What we're doing is we're basically, saying, your anger is unjustified or your hurt is unjustified, right? I see that you're hurt, but I think you're really ridiculous for being hurt. And okay. Well, if I've hurt you, then I'm sorry. Which it sounds so sincere. But again, it's a statement we make to describe my own self-justification.

And here again, Balaam is fishing around for permission to still go, if this is... If I'm doing anything wrong here, Lord, I'll turn back. Even though God had made it crystal clear, originally and now in this appearance of this angel of the LORD that this is not His will.

Do you know this very attitude is one that Peter wrote about many years later? Let me show you this passage on the screen from 2 Peter chapter 2, beginning at verse 15.

**2 Peter 2:15-16 (ESV)**

*Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.*

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Peter calls, what moved and motivated Balaam, madness. But you notice here in this passage, Peter talks about Balaam's love of gain. Right? He loved gain from wrongdoing. And that's what's going on here, you guys. Make no mistake about it.

Peter is serving as, Holy Spirit inspired commentary of Numbers. And telling you and I, that what drove Balaam on to defy the Lord, even though God had given him very clear instruction, don't go, don't curse. And then appearing to him in the form of the angel of the Lord with drawn sword. I mean, who in their right mind wouldn't have hightailed it home and hidden under the bed, for like a month. And yet this man is like, well, if this is a problem, I think I can still... I can go home, if you really want me to. Like I'm baiting you to let me go. What was driving him? Peter tells us - that love of gain. That love of gain.

Verse 35, *"And the angel of the LORD said to Balaam, 'Go with the men, but speak only the word that I tell you.' So Balaam went on with the princes of Balak.*

*36 When Balak heard that Balaam had come, he went out to meet him at the city of Moab, on the border formed by the Arnon, at the extremity of the border. 37 And Balak said to Balaam, "Did I not send to you to call you? Why did you not come to me? Am I not able to honor you?" (In other words, "Do I lack the means to make you a wealthy man?") 38 Balaam said to Balak, "Behold, I have come to you! Have I now any power of my own to speak anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that must I speak." 39 Then Balaam went with Balak, and they came to Kiriath-huzoth. 40 And Balak sacrificed oxen and sheep, and sent for Balaam and for the princes who were with him.*

*41 And in the morning Balak took Balaam and brought him up to Bamoth-baal, and from there he saw a fraction of the people." (Referring to a very small, visual part of the nation of Israel from where they were on some sort of a hill, I imagine.)*

Numbers 23, *"And Balaam said to Balak, "Build for me here seven altars, and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams." 2 Balak did as Balaam had said. And Balak and Balaam offered on each altar a bull and a ram. 3 And Balaam said to Balak, "Stand beside your burnt offering, and I will go. Perhaps*

*the LORD will come to meet me, and whatever he shows me I will tell you." And he went to a bare height, <sup>4</sup> and God met Balaam. And Balaam said to him, "I have arranged the seven altars and I have offered on each altar a bull and a ram." <sup>5</sup> And the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth and said, "Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak." <sup>6</sup> And he returned to him, and behold, he and all the princes of Moab were standing beside his burnt offering. <sup>7</sup> And Balaam took up his discourse and said,*

*"From Aram Balak has brought me, the king of Moab from the eastern mountains: 'Come, curse Jacob for me, and come, denounce Israel!'*

*<sup>8</sup> How can I curse whom God has not cursed? How can I denounce whom the LORD has not denounced?*

*<sup>9</sup> For from the top of the crags I see him, from the hills I behold him; behold, (the) people dwelling alone, and not counting itself among the nations!*

*<sup>10</sup> Who can count the dust of Jacob or number the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the upright, and let my end be like his!*

*(That's from the Lord, spoken through Balaam)*

*<sup>11</sup> And Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, and behold, you have done nothing but bless them." <sup>12</sup> And he answered and said, "Must I not take care to speak what the LORD puts in my mouth?"*

*<sup>13</sup> And Balak said to him, "Please (come to) come with me to another place, from which you may see them. You shall see only a fraction of them and shall not see them all. Then curse them for me from there."*

By the way, stop there for a moment. The idea of taking Balaam to a second location is very much rooted in pagan thought and practice. They believed... Because they believed in a multiplicity of gods, they believed different gods, had different authority, in different places. They believed there were gods of the valleys, gods of the mountains, gods of the rivers, gods of the oceans. You name it. Gods had different geographic areas, where they could exercise their authority better than in others.

By taking Balaam to another mount to see the people below, the chances - Balak figured, as a good pagan - he figured, well, there's a chance that we might enter into a little bit different domain. And maybe this God that Balaam spoke



by the first time, won't be authoritative here. And I can get him to say what I want. Because this is the domain of a different god." That's the way Balak would have thought as a dyed in the wool pagan.

All right. Verse 14. *"And he took him to the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, (You remember I showed you that.) and built seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on each altar. 15 Balaam said to Balak, (same as before) "Stand here beside your burnt offering, while I meet the LORD over there." 16 And the LORD met Balaam and put a word in his mouth and said, "Return to Balak, and thus shall you speak." (Here we go, number two.) 17 And he came to him, and behold, he was standing beside his burnt offering, with the princes of Moab with him. And Balak said to him, "What has the LORD spoken?" 18 And Balaam took up his discourse and said,*

*"Rise, Balak, and hear; give ear to me, O son of Zippor: 19 God is not a man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind.*

*Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?*

*20 Behold, I received a command to bless: he has blessed, and I cannot revoke it.*

*21 He is has not beheld misfortune in Jacob, nor has he seen trouble in Israel. The LORD their God is with them, and the shout of a king is among them.*

*22 God brings them out of Egypt and is for them like the horns of the wild ox.*

*23 For there is no enchantment against Jacob, no divination against Israel; now it shall be said of Jacob and Israel, 'What has God wrought!'*

*24 Behold a people! As a lioness it rises up and as a lion it lifts itself; it does not lie down until it has devoured the prey and drunk the blood of the slain."*

*25 And Balak said to Balaam, "Do not curse them at all, and do not bless them at all." (He's getting frustrated.) 26 But Balaam answered Balak, "Did I not tell you, 'All that the LORD says, that I must do'?" 27 And Balak said to Balaam, "Come now, I will take you to another place. Perhaps it will please God that you may curse them (from there for me.)" (And) 28 So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, which overlooks the desert. 29 And Balaam said to Balak, "Build for me here seven altars and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams." 30 And Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bull and a ram on each altar."*

Chapter 24, *"When Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he did not go, as at other times, to look for omens, but set his face toward the wilderness."*

Stop there for just a moment. This is a very interesting note. Because it's telling you and I, as in this prologue to this third Word of the Lord to Balak, that Balaam, up to this point, had been attempting to use divination to... Which is sorcery, as I said before, to conjure up a curse for the people of Israel. But God overthrew him, basically, every time. And made him speak a word of blessing instead of a curse. He'd been using his own forms of sorcery and divination to make this thing happen. That was his heart. Right?

But you can see now Balaam is getting the message. Balak, he still is... He wants to try one more time. But Balaam realizes this God of the Jews is not going to be had. And he realizes, you know what? It doesn't matter. Doesn't matter if I use my omens, my sorcery, my divination. God is not going to be manipulated into saying something that He doesn't want said.

And what does it say here? It says, that instead of doing those things, he simply *"set his face toward the wilderness. 2 And Balaam lifted up his eyes and (he) saw Israel camping tribe by tribe. And (it says,) the Spirit of God came upon him,..."*

That's an important distinction now. The Spirit of God did not come upon him in the previous two words. He was given a word through his own means of omen, sorcery, divination. Now, it says, the Spirit of God comes upon him. This is what we know in the New Testament as the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Okay? And this is a common Old Testament and New Testament reference, to the Spirit coming to empower someone to give a word.

Now it doesn't mean this person is a godly person. Remember that even in - also elsewhere in the Old Testament, the Spirit came upon Saul, king of Israel, when he was out hunting for David to kill him. And God came upon him and he began to prophesy. And that basically thwarted his whole desire to kill David. Right? Because God's Spirit came upon him. (1 Samuel 19:23-24)

God's Spirit will do this. The person doesn't have to be saved, or godly, or righteous. Don't think that just because the Spirit comes upon Balaam that he is any of those things.

And it says in verse 3, *"and he took up his discourse and said,"* And by the way, what you're going to hear is some of the most beautiful prophecies about

Israel that you will ever hear out of a man who was an enemy of God. And this is amazing.

*"The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, the oracle of (a) man whose eye is opened,*

*4 the oracle of him who hears the words of God, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down with his eyes uncovered:*

*5 How lovely are your tents, O Jacob, your encampments, O Israel!*

*6 Like palm groves that stretch afar, like gardens beside a river, like aloes that the LORD has planted, like cedar trees beside the waters.*

*7 Water shall flow from his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters; his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted.*

*8 God brings him out of Egypt and is for him like the horns of the wild ox; he shall eat up the nations, his adversaries, and shall break their bones in pieces and pierce them through with his arrows.*

*9 He crouched, he lay down like a lion and like a lioness; who will rouse him up? Blessed are those who bless you, and cursed are those who curse you."*

Do you guys remember those words? Those words were spoken to Abraham when God called him when he was still Abram, out of the land of his father's. And said, go to a land about which I will lead you and tell you and there I will give this land to your descendants after you. And then you know what God said to Abram? "I'm going to make you into a great nation. And those who curse you, I will curse. And those who bless you, I will bless."

And that is a word upon the nation of Israel that we respect to this day; to this day. Because there's nothing to say that God's Word in any way has expired, as it relates to this particular statement.

Let me show it to you here on the screen from Genesis 12:3, just so you can have a sense of seeing where it's located.

**Genesis 12:3 (ESV)**

*"I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

*"I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

You can see the heart of the Lord, that has spoken to Abram, and now is speaking through Balaam.

*"And (Balaam's, excuse me) Balak's anger (verse 10) was kindled against Balaam, and he struck his hands together. And Balak said to Balaam, 'I called you to curse my enemies, and behold, you have blessed them these three times. <sup>11</sup> Therefore now flee to your own place. I said, 'I will certainly honor you,' but the LORD has held you back from honor.'" (In other words, "I'm not paying you a red cent.") <sup>12</sup> And Balaam said to Balak, "Did I not tell your messengers whom you sent to me, <sup>13</sup> 'If Balak should give me his house full of silver and gold, I would not be able to go beyond the word of the LORD, to do either good or bad of my own will. What the LORD speaks, that will I speak'? <sup>14</sup> And now, behold, I am going to my people. Come, I will let you know what this people will do to your people in the latter days."*

*<sup>15</sup> And he took up his discourse and said,*

*"The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, the oracle of the man whose eye is opened,*

*<sup>16</sup> the oracle of him who hears the words of God, (who) knows the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down with his eyes uncovered:*

And then look at verse 17. I believe this is the most powerful prophecy in the entire thing.

*"I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth."*

And people, without a doubt, this is an incredible passage. The prophecy of a star and a scepter, which speaks of royalty rising out of Jacob, is very specific language referring to the coming Messianic ruler. And obviously we know that person to be, our Lord Jesus Christ. This is an amazing prophecy in light of the fact that it comes through Balaam, Balaam! One of the most powerful prophecies of Messiah, comes through this enemy who had his eyes opened to see.

Verse 18. He goes on,

*"Edom shall be dispossessed; Seir also, his enemies, shall be dispossessed. Israel is doing valiantly.*

*19 And one from Jacob shall exercise dominion and destroy the survivors of cities!*

(And that prophecy there was partially fulfilled by king David)

*20 Then he looked on Amalek and took up his discourse and said,*

*"Amalek was the first among the nations, but its end is utter destruction.*

(Balaam prophesies the complete and total annihilation of the Amalekites)

*21 And he looked on the Kenite, and (he) took up his discourse and said,*

*"Enduring is your dwelling place, and your nest is set in the rock.*

*22 Nevertheless, Kain shall be burned when Asshur takes you away captive."*

What he's prophesying here is, that the Kenites would gradually diminish in number until they are eventually taken captive by the Assyrian army. Asshur, is a reference to the Assyrian Empire. All right? Not the tribe "Asher," which has a different spelling.

*"23 And he took up his discourse (and said to him, or excuse me) and said,*

*"Alas, who shall live when God does this? 24 But ships shall come from Kittim and shall afflict Asshur and Eber; and he too shall come to utter destruction.""*

And this is a prophecy saying that even the mighty Assyrians, along with the sons of Eber, would come to their own eventual destruction. We know that the Assyrian army empire was destroyed when Nebuchadnezzar conquered it from the kingdom of Babylon. This is a prophecy long before that, that would in fact take place.

Verse 25 says, *"Then Balaam rose and went back to his place. And Balak also went his way."* And so forth and so on.

Now, the one I want to end with here tonight is giving you some Scriptures. Because there's other references in the Bible to Balaam. And he is spoken of, he's referenced. I've already shown you one that Peter gave us. But I want to show you some others.

First of all, from the Old Testament, here's one from Deuteronomy chapter 23. It says,

**Deuteronomy 23:3-6 (ESV)**

*"No Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of the LORD. Even to the tenth generation, none of them may enter the assembly of the LORD forever, because they did not meet you with bread and with 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. But the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam; instead the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loved you. You shall not seek their peace or their prosperity all your days forever."*

*"No Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of the LORD. Even to the tenth generation, none of them may enter the assembly of the LORD forever, (We've actually read this before,) because they did not meet you with bread and with 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. But the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam; instead the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loved you. You shall not seek their peace or their prosperity all your days forever."*

This passage reminds us, that Balaam desired to curse the people. And that's what he did the first two times using his own divining sorcery methods. But what does it say here? God turned the curse into a blessing.

Then from Joshua, chapter 24, *"Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel. And he sent and invited Balaam the son of Beor to curse you, but I would not listen to Balaam. Indeed, he blessed you, So I delivered you out of his hand."* This is God speaking to the nation of Israel, reminding them of the very things we just read.

Nehemiah, from the Book of Nehemiah,

**Nehemiah 13:1-2 (ESV)**

*On that day they read from the Book of Moses in the hearing of the people. And in it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God, for they did not meet the people of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them - yet our God turned the curse into a blessing.*

*On that day they read from the Book of Moses in the hearing of the people. And in it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God, for they did not meet the people of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them - yet our God turned the curse into a blessing.*

Notice how many times God repeats this over the course of the Word to remind these people.

**Micah 6:5 (ESV)**

*"O my people, remember what Balak king of Moab devised, and what Balaam, the son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim in Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD."*

*"O my people, remember what Balak king of Moab devised, and what Balaam, the son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim in Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD."*

Again, calling to their remembrance.

Now we go to the New Testament for a couple of passages. Jude has an interesting statement.

**Jude 1:11 (ESV)**

*Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion.*

*"Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves (to the sake of gain, or) for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion.*

We just read about Korah's rebellion recently. He's the guy who rose up against Moses and Aaron. And the ground opened up and he fell in and covered him up. (Numbers 16)



Notice these three things: the way of Cain; the sake of gain to Balaam's error; and Korah's rebellion. Jude speaks of people who enter those same attitudes and endings.

Then from, in the letter to the church in Pergamum, in Revelation chapter 2. It says this,

**Revelation 2:14 (ESV)**

*But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrifice to idols and practice sexual immorality.*

*But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrifice to idols and practice sexual immorality.*

And you read this and you go, what is this? We didn't read about this yet in Numbers. What's all this about?

It says in Revelation, I have something against you. You got some people in your church who hold to this teaching of Balaam, who taught the Moabites, right, how to put a stumbling block in front of Israel. Guys, we're going to read about this next week. But it's not going to mention Balaam. We don't find out about this until we get to Revelation.

But here, we find out in the next couple - few chapters, that what Balaam said to the king of Moab is, listen, if you're going to try to curse them with curses, it's never going to work. The only way you can possibly destroy these people is to weaken them with sin. And then their God will turn against them. And what Balak did is, he sent some very pretty, scantily clad, women coming down the hill. And he enticed the men of Israel to enter into pagan worship practices sexually charged with these women. And sure enough, judgment came upon Israel right there.

But that's what we find out in the Book of Revelation. You got to get to the end of the Bible to find out what Balaam did to try to get his money. And I'm willing to bet when he came to Balak at this point, he said to him, listen, I have some information for you and it's worth something. It's worth everything you promised to me before. And so I'm going to give it to you and I'm going to tell you how you can defeat these people. And I'll bet you Balaam got his money.

But you know what? It didn't last him very long at all. You want to know how Balaam ended? It's the last verse we look at here. And we go back to the Old Testament to the Book of Joshua chapter 13. It says

**Joshua 13:22 (ESV)**

*Balaam, also the son of Beor, the one who practiced divination, was killed with the sword by the people of Israel among the rest of their slain.*

*Balaam, also the son of Beor, the one who practiced divination, was killed with the sword by the people of Israel among the rest of their slain.*

And that's talking about when God wiped out that area through his people, Balaam died. He probably got his money from Balak. He never got a chance to enjoy it. Because God exercised His judgment. We're going to stop there.