

Numbers 22-23

Good evening Church.

It is wonderful to be here with you all tonight.

I want to remind you that next Wednesday Night is our prayer meeting; but before we get into prayer, our Elder John Toomey will be giving a State of the Ministry update, to kind of fill us in where God has brought us from, and what God is doing in our midst.

So tonight, we are going to continue our study of the Book of Numbers.

And we have come upon one of the most interesting narratives in scripture.

We will meet this man Balaam, who is a soothsayer or sorcerer of some kind, and he also seems to be spiritually connected to Yahweh the God of Israel.

The narrative of this man leaves the reader really in a debacle, because we will see many paradoxes in this story.

Honestly, there are times we might even honor him as a saint, then other times this man Balaam is an outright sinner.

This man remains a mystery, and so do much of the details of the story.

And just when we can determine that this seer is a heathen and outright enemy of God, he will then give many inspired oracles about the nation of Israel and even Messiah.

This pagan Babylonian man will even come under the power and sway of the Holy Spirit.

Yet with all of the confusion surrounding this man, the Scriptures put him as a man of upmost importance, not because of the great example he sets for us, but he serves as a warning against falsehood within God's people.

In fact, the scriptures mention him more than the mother of Jesus, Mary. More is said of Balaam than there is written about any of the apostles. McGee

He is a fascinating man indeed, and his story is filled with wonder and even the miraculous.

So before we get into it, remember what has happened.

The nation of Israel is now a new generation of Hebrews.

The faithless older generation has all died in the wilderness.

Last time we were together, we learned that this new generation was able to learn from their mistakes, we saw genuine repentance in them after they questioned God and His leader Moses.

From that lesson, we watched them full of faith conquer two mighty kings that stood between them and the promise land.

They even defeated a family of giants; the fears of the past have dissipated into the drive of faith as they press forward.

Now, there is no human army that can withstand this people of God, empowered by God, and led by God.

And the other nations began to understand this as fear begins to grip the heart of Israel's enemies.

And since no face to face conflict will work, we will meet a king Balak, who looks to defeat Israel spiritually, as he understands this is his only hope.

You see it was a common belief back then that each people group had their own god that led their nation.

Word is getting out that the Hebrew God, Yahweh is supreme, so they must reach out to Him if there is to be any victory.

And one man has the reputation that Balak is looking for, a man who can curse Israel, and turn their God against them.

Understand that this man Balaam must have a reputation of success for king Balak to offer so much wealth to him.

Balak has no doubt Balaam can accomplish what he is asking here.

Balaam, I imagine is one of the most powerful men in the region, for he can take down kingdoms with their gods.

Let's see how he does against the One True God and God's protected people.

Balak Sends for Balaam

22:1 Then the children of Israel moved, and camped in the plains of Moab on the side of the Jordan across from Jericho.

2 Now Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. 3 And Moab was exceedingly afraid of the people because they were many, and Moab was sick with dread because of the children of Israel. 4 So Moab said to the elders of Midian, "Now this company will lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field." And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time. 5 Then he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor at Pethor, which is near the River in the land of the sons

of his people, to call him, saying: "Look, a people has come from Egypt. See, they cover the face of the earth, and are settling next to me! 6 Therefore please come at once, curse this people for me, for they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land, for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed."

Israel, now encamped in the Jordan Valley, across from Jericho, and they are ready to enter in the land.

Israel had already went around the Edom and Moab and here after their two victories, the Moabites are shaken up.

We see here this time they are allied with the Midianites, a tribal group that lived in the deserts east of Jordan.

They together understand their way of life is threatened by this large army in the valley.

There is no greater trigger for war than economic security and stability being endangered.

When that is threatened the armies of this world awaken.

However, Israel is too strong for these two people groups.

We learned last week, Sihon who was defeated by Israel, actually defeated Moab.

The Moabites know they are doomed, and their king Balak sends a delegation to Balaam

They are probably up on the mountains looking down.

They have a plan to send for the Midianite prophet.

McGee

We see Balaam lived in Pethor, and he was the son of Peor, who according to rabbinic literature was a gentile prophet.

They were near the River, which would be the Euphrates River.

This is probably a 400-mile journey, and speaks to the fame of this prophet Balaam.

They send them with an urgent message and as we will see some money.

7 So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the diviner's fee in their hand, and they came to Balaam and spoke to him the words of Balak.

8 And he said to them, "Lodge here tonight, and I will bring back word to you, as the Lord speaks to me." So the princes of Moab stayed with Balaam.

9 Then God came to Balaam and said, "Who are these men with you?"

10 So Balaam said to God, "Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent to me, saying, 11 'Look, a people has come out of Egypt, and they cover the face of the earth. Come now, curse them for me; perhaps I shall be able to overpower them and drive them out.'"

12 And God said to Balaam, "You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed."

13 So Balaam rose in the morning and said to the princes of Balak, "Go back to your land, for the Lord has refused to give me permission to go with you."

14 And the princes of Moab rose and went to Balak, and said, "Balaam refuses to come with us."

Now this mysterious prophet seems to somehow have a relationship with God.

He is genuinely trying to receive a message from God to appease his potential employer.

And God does come and communicate with this man.

And at this point in the story Balaam seems to be a good prophet, God tells Balaam the nation of Israel cannot be cursed because He has blessed them.

Balaam at this point seems to be honest and sincere, he obeys the Word of God and sends back the delegation and informs Balak that Balaam will not be able to do as he expected.

And that should be it... Now this is where the commentators began to speculate, that the diviner's fee perhaps was not enough for Balaam, and he is

really refusing, because he knows the desperate predicament these men are in, he is holding out for a better offer.

Now that is difficult to see here, but as the narrative develops, we definitely see corruption in this man Balaam, and we see he will be caught between his desire for riches and God's will.

Is it possible for a man to speak oracles of God and be corrupt? Well let us find out...

15 Then Balak again sent princes, more numerous and more honorable than they. 16 And they came to Balaam and said to him, "Thus says Balak the son of Zippor: 'Please let nothing hinder you from coming to me; 17 for I will certainly honor you greatly, and I will do whatever you say to me. Therefore please come, curse this people for me.'"

18 Then 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 word of the Lord my God, to do less or more. 19 Now therefore,

please, you also stay here tonight, that I may know what more the Lord will say to me."

Now here is where we began to see corruption in the heart of Balaam.

He already had an answer from God, and yet he is hoping for a crack in the closed door before him that he can squeeze through.

They offer him more riches, and notice how Balaam mentions a house full of silver and gold, perhaps putting a greater offer into the hearts of the princes.

Balaam here is now allowing his flesh to overrule the Word of the Lord.

Balaam is now showing he is nothing more than a hireling is, and far from a true prophet of God.

Now with his lips he professes to know and obey God, with such pious talk here.

But Balaam's heart is anxious for lucre.

And understand this about God, there comes a point where your heart is wanting something so earnestly,

and although God's will is for you to abstain, He will give you over to your wicked desires.

You see Balaam's mind is made up; he is only trying to shroud himself in godly talk to hide the covetousness within.

You know these types of people, who overly talk with holy overtones, and a false humility, but the way they walk in this world is far from the claim they are presenting.

They are led by their flesh, yet though their mouths attest to the holy.

We see God next reveals what is in Balaam's heart.

20 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." 21 So Balaam rose in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab.

Notice Balaam gives no argument, "Lord, but you said I cannot help them."

In fact Balaam does not wait for the men to come get him, this is the crack in the door he was waiting for.

Balaam goes and finds them, hoping his riches have not left yet.

Balaam takes no heed to the first warning, because this time he has heard what he wants to hear.

He saddles his donkey, and God gives him his heart's desire.

God will not impose His will on anyone, you see we must choose to obey, to express a genuine love toward God.

God lays out for us in His Word the way we are to live godly in Christ Jesus, however those whose hearts buffet against His Word, God will give you over to your passions.

Rom 1:24-25 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the

creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

Balaam is released to experience the reality of disobeying God's revealed will.

He wastes no time packing up his donkey, and this perhaps, now a giddy prophet, sets out to be with his rewarders...

Balaam, the Donkey, and the Angel

22 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. 23 Now the donkey saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand, and the donkey turned aside out of the way and went into the field. So Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back onto the road. 24 Then the Angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on this side and a wall on that side. 25 And when the donkey saw the Angel of the Lord, she pushed herself against the

wall and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall; so he struck her again. 26 Then the Angel of the Lord went further, and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. 27 And when the donkey saw the Angel of the Lord, she lay down under Balaam; so Balaam's anger was aroused, and he struck the donkey with his staff.

And here it is obvious that this man has no spiritual discernment at all.

His animal has more spiritual discernment than he does.

But the earnestness in this man shows his covetous heart clearly.

I cannot tell you how many times I have seen people go down the wrong path, a path that God's Word clearly forbids.

And God sends little trials, subtle warnings, but the sinners passion has deluded all truth.

They are so determined they will force situations, and recklessly move forward.

Here Balaam's donkey is being faithful, and good, yet his desires, have blinded him.

Now, I somewhat can understand Balaam's frustration here, there is not many things more frustrating than riding a beast that will not obey you.

Growing up in Phelan we had many horses, I, however hated those horses, my chores consisted of cleaning up manure, and feeding these smelly beasts.

I never rode them, I did not trust them.

Growing up my father gave me my first Daisy BB gun at the age of 10 or so.

Now he set up a couple bales of hay and gave me targets and instructed that was the only place I was allowed to shoot.

Now I don't know if you have ever been a young boy with your first BB gun, but you know how little girls have that instinct in them to nurture, even my littlest girl found enjoyment in caring for her baby brother, it is instinct.

Well young boys have an instinct too, and when my hands held that BB gun for the first time, the mighty hunter within awoke inside me.

Those targets did not move, and they only sufficed my attention for an hour or so.

Our house was full of animals, chickens, geese, pigs, goats, and the mightiest game of all, in my imagination, the horse.

Now, after taking aim at many of the littler animals and finding no success in my aim, I looked up and saw that big smelly beast, I lifted my rifle and I took aim, and shot it right in the butt.

The horse went crazy and I ran inside and put my gun away and turned on cartoons and pretended like nothing happened.

Well, of course my mother was brushing her horse not long after that and noticed a little BB stuck in the left flank.

I paid for my mistake dearly, and I thought that was the end of it.

But about 4 years later, my best friend came over and wanted to ride the horses, I never rode them.

But my mother wanted us out the house, now we had two horses, Leon, who was the best horse, anyone could ride that horse, little kids, old ladies, Leon was so gentle.

Then there was Generation, the beast I hunted.

He was a miserable horse and only my mother could ride him.

Of course, my mother wanted my friend to ride the good horse for liability reasons; she could care less what happened to her boy.

And Generation put on a good show, until we got down the road away from my mother's eyes, and I swear that horse remembered I was the one who put that BB in its backside.

He would not go right when I needed him to go right, and forget about going left, that horse did whatever it wanted to do.

And I noticed it began a slow trot, that was gaining speed the longer I let it go.

So I pulled back on the reigns, but that horse was not stopping, in fact when I pulled back it took off on me, and left down the road and began running full speed through the desert.

I had no control over this beast, and soon I figured my best option was to abandon this horse.

Now horses are pretty high up there, and I knew it would hurt, but I went.

And as soon as I was off that horse it was fine, and began to gallop back home, and my family still jokes about it, because that horse came trotting back into the yard without its rider with so much pride, it was as if it waited for that moment for four years.

To this day, I have a huge mistrust of horses even though I grew up with them.

They have a mind of their own; I am convinced they are highly intelligent animals.

And as we will see, they have incredible memories, as Balaam's donkey recalls their history together.

However, Balaam's donkey will go way beyond natural intelligence, and God will do something miraculous through her.

28 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 abused me. I wish there were a sword in my hand, for now I would kill you!"

30 So the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden, ever since I became yours, to this day? Was I ever disposed to do this to you?"

And he said, "No."

Now this whole encounter is miraculous to say the least.

Now, it is not that difficult for me to believe God, who created the heavens and the earth can open the voice box of one of His creation.

That is not the difficult part for me here; the more confusing part in this narrative is that Balaam answers his animal with no thought about God, or the lengths God is going to try get his attention.

The donkey speaks and he answers, and losing an argument is bad enough, but losing an argument to a donkey is about as low as you can go.

This animal saved Balaam's life 3 times here, and the donkey was beaten by Balaam for it.

I find it interesting that the donkey was caught between Balaam's stick and the Angel three times, and Balaam will be caught 3 times between the demands of Balak and the Word of God.

And it is a sad testimony that the donkey in this story has more discernment here.

Now, some commentators mention the pagan sorcery of the day used omens from animals, and found a

connection between the animal world and the spiritual world.

And perhaps Balaam is not shocked here, because of his connection to pagan ritual.

And that could be the case, but a talking beast was not the main point here, the displeasure of the Lord is at our forefront.

Don't be too shocked that God uses a donkey here in our text to speak, if He can get a man like me up here every week to speak God's Word, this talking donkey to me is less of a phenomenon.

Next, we read...

31 Then the Lord opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand; and he bowed his head and fell flat on his face. 32 And the Angel of the Lord said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times?"

I would like to mention God's love for animals here.

Prov. 12:10 A righteous man regards the life of his animal, But the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

I do not advocate shooting horses with BB guns, that was a wicked act.

But caring for our animals is good and right.

The angel continues...

Behold, I have come out to stand against you, because your way is perverse before Me. 33 The donkey saw Me and turned aside from Me these three times. If she had not turned aside from Me, surely I would also have killed you by now, and let her live."

34 And Balaam said to the Angel of the Lord, "I have sinned, for I did not know You stood in the way against me. Now therefore, if it displeases You, I will turn back."

35 Then the Angel of the Lord said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but only the word that I speak to you, that you shall speak." So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.

Now this Angel of the Lord here is what many believe as a Theophany or Christophany, this is Jesus in the Old Testament.

And here the Angel of the Lord tells Balaam his donkey saved his life, and we see God's displeasure in Balaam's departure.

God sees the intent of his heart, and warns him to only speak what He puts in his mouth.

And you would think this whole ordeal would be enough to sway the prophet into obeying God.

But this man's heart is set on gain and earthly treasures, and the temptations of Satan will prove all too much.

36 Now when Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the city of Moab, which is on the border at the Arnon, the boundary of the territory.

37 Then Balak said to Balaam, "Did I not earnestly send to you, calling for you? Why did you not come to me? Am I not able to honor you?"

38 And Balaam said to Balak, "Look, I have come to you! Now, have I any power at all to say anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that I must speak."

39 So Balaam went with Balak, and they came to Kirjath Huzoth. 40 Then Balak offered oxen and sheep, and he sent some to Balaam and to the princes who were with him.

Balaam's First Prophecy

41 So it was, the next day, that Balak took Balaam and brought him up to the high places of Baal, that from there he might observe the extent of the people.

So Balaam is met by the anxious Balak, and Balak reminds the soothsayer he can give him much honor.

Balaam replies with a reminder that he is limited to only speak what God puts in his mouth.

And I imagine Balaam the hireling, is contemplating how he can circumvent God's will here and get some of that honor.

And here Balak first offered oxen and sheep, and sent the dead animals to Balaam and some of the princes.

This was the traditional methods of oriental diviners.
Wenham

Verse 41 Balaam is given a high vantage point to assess the camp of God's People.

This chapter here reveals for us what the Apostle Peter referred to as the way of Balaam, Peter used Balaam as an example in the midst of a section dealing with false teachers.

2 Peter 2:15-16

15 They (false teachers) have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; 16 but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet.

And each time we see Balaam referenced in the New Testament it is always in the context of false teachers.

Peter warns that these men teach heresies for the sake of selfish gain.

Here is a warning for us, if a ministry is ever centered on a man, for the benefit of a man, for the prosperity of a man, built around the word of a man, that minister and ministry has gone the way of Balaam.

That man, who uses religion to entice unstable souls, to fill his pockets with wealth, Peter says of such a person.

2 Peter 2:17 These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

Now in the next Chapter we will see what Jude referred to as the error of Balaam.

Jude explains of these false teachers... Jude 7

11 Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

Next, we read...

The Prophecies of Balaam

23:1 Then Balaam said to Balak, "Build seven altars for me here, and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams."

2 And Balak did just as Balaam had spoken, and Balak and Balaam offered a bull and a ram on each altar. 3 Then Balaam said to Balak, "Stand by your burnt offering, and I will go; perhaps the Lord will come to meet me, and whatever He shows me I will tell you." So he went to a desolate height. 4 And God met Balaam, and he said to Him, "I have prepared the seven altars, and I have offered on each altar a bull and a ram."

5 Then the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, "Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak." 6 So he returned to him, and there he was, standing by his burnt offering, he and all the princes of Moab.

7 And he took up his oracle and said:

"Balak the king of Moab has brought me from Aram, From the mountains of the east. 'Come, curse Jacob for me, And come, denounce Israel!'

8 "How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? And how shall I denounce whom the Lord has not denounced? 9 For from the top of the rocks I see him, And from the hills I behold him; There! A people dwelling alone, Not reckoning itself among the nations.

10 "Who can count the dust of Jacob, Or number one-fourth of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, And let my end be like his!"

11 Then Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, and look, you have blessed them bountifully!"

12 So he answered and said, "Must I not take heed to speak what the Lord has put in my mouth?"

We see here Balak and Balaam are working diligently to secure the favor of God; they sacrifice according to His sacred number 7.

They offer complete burnt offerings; the whole animal was dedicated to God.

And Balaam is confident that this might work, yet instead of cursing Balak's enemies, he pronounces a beautiful blessing upon God's people.

God seemingly endured this doubleminded man Balaam to use him to pronounce His favor upon Israel.

God just opened the mouth of a donkey, He has no problem using the mouth of this evil man.

Understand this in your own life; do not ever let the messenger make you immediately discredit the words coming out of people's mouths.

Jess and I have gotten in the habit, when someone gives us a Word from God that is even perhaps offensive and fleshly, we try to before we react, see if indeed it is from God.

Sometimes we react, especially if someone is coming against my wife, I might get defensive, but we try to assess ourselves, and see if the accusation is something we need to correct.

Even when we are ministering to people off the street, who perhaps are not all there because of drug use, or

demonic influence, I do not always discredit what they are saying.

God here is using this sorcerer to speak some of the most wonderful oracles on behalf of His people.

These oracles connect with Israel's history.

Speaking to the dust of Jacob, remember God's Word to Abraham... **Gen 28:14 Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth**

These words here seem to connect well with the promises of the patriarchs.

And Balak is understandably upset, he hired Balaam to do something, and he does the opposite.

Balaam reminds him he can only speak what God gives him to speak.

So next Balak, undeterred here, saw that Balaam could not curse the whole nation, but perhaps he can curse part of the nation and weaken them.

Balaam's Second Prophecy

13 Then Balak said to him, "Please come with me to another place from which you may see them; you shall see only the outer part of them, and shall not see them all; curse them for me from there." 14 So he brought him to the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

15 And he said to Balak, "Stand here by your burnt offering while I meet the Lord over there."

16 Then the Lord met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, "Go back to Balak, and thus you shall speak." 17 So he came to him, and there he was, standing by his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab were with him. And Balak said to him, "What has the Lord spoken?"

18 Then he took up his oracle and said:

"Rise up, Balak, and hear! Listen to me, son of Zippor!

19 "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it

good? 20 Behold, I have received a command to bless; He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it.

Now the fact that Balaam keeps on participating in these pagan rituals shows the evil in his heart.

Money making is his only motive here.

And God uses the sorcerer once again to speak blessing upon Israel.

The first oracle spoke of the love of God toward His chosen people.

This second oracle consist of the faithfulness of God toward a people about to inherit the promises of God.

God does not lie, He spoke blessing to Abraham many years before this, and declared that all the nations of the earth will be blessed through the nation that descended from him.

God's Word cannot be altered or changed at the whim of some wizard.

He will not reverse the course of the destiny of His people for the sake of pagan offerings.

Notice it is only through the sacrificial system God established through the priesthood of Israel was any favor acquired.

21 "He has not observed iniquity in Jacob, Nor has He seen wickedness in Israel. The Lord his God is with him, And the shout of a King is among them. 22 God brings them out of Egypt; He has strength like a wild ox.

Now, this is strange for some, we have seen Israel sin many times since they left Egypt, yet God is declaring them here without iniquity or wickedness.

How can this be?

It is the sacrificial system set up that all points to Jesus Christ that this nation is seen righteous.

The priestly offerings are continually being presented on God's Holy Altar, and their obedience presents them in a right standing with God.

What a wonderful thing, that God here remembers none of their shortcomings.

Aren't you glad we serve a God who chooses to forget the past, that has been washed away by the Blood of Jesus Christ.

It is remembered no more, He casts as far as the east is from the west, and into the bottom of the ocean.

In Christ, all things are new.

If you are here tonight caring the weight of past sins, understand the freedom you can have through Jesus, who can cleanse you of all unrighteousness.

You do not have to carry that weight any longer.

What a wonderful thing that God sees Israel here without iniquity.

And boasts instead of their strength as of a wild ox.

This nation, when in the will of God, will be unstoppable.

Notice too at the end of verse 21 a mention to a future King.

This nation as of right now is kingless and will be for many years.

But this soothsayer is now prophesying of the King of kings that will one day come from this mighty bloodline.

Next, Balaam says...

23 "For there is no sorcery against Jacob, Nor any divination against Israel. It now must be said of Jacob And of Israel, 'Oh, what God has done!'

They are under God's protection; this soothsayer perhaps had access to mighty powerful demons, and could take down nations with his spells.

But they are no good against the power of Almighty God.

What a wonderful thing to be divinely protected against the demonic realm, and all the power of the evil one.

To have the confidence that He who is in us is greater than anything in this world.

Rom 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

You see the darkness holds sway over this world, and has an incredible amount of power.

But if you have Jesus in your life, you have the stronger Man within you.

Satan can come at you like a roaring lion, but he cannot touch you apart from God's will.

Jess and I have had spells cast on us, I have been cursed, and we have had strange encounters with darkness.

But never once has a vex or spell worked on us, because God is divinely protecting us.

There is a demonic woman who sometimes stands outside the church fence and cast curses on the church.

But I watch her, she never comes inside the church gate. She is powerless over this place.

Understand this tonight, if God is for you, you have nothing to fear from darkness.

It is only when you compromise in your walk, do you open up opportunity for evil to wreak havoc on your life.

But if you are walking in obedience tonight, understand opposition will still come, but you will advance in the power of God, and have nothing to fear.

2 Tim 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

You only have to fear, if you are walking in the flesh and not in the Spirit.

Israel will learn this lesson much later...

But right now, they are to give glory to God, 'Oh, what God has done!'

When people look at us, that should be the testimony we carry.

Not "Look at how mighty that person is, or how powerful they are."

People should marvel, as they look at your life, at what God has done in spite of you.

And here Israel is walking in obedience, and the oracle continues...

24 Look, a people rises like a lioness, And lifts itself up like a lion; It shall not lie down until it devours the prey, And drinks the blood of the slain."

Israel will prevail...

Have you ever seen the power in a lioness when she rises up, or a lion when it lifts itself up onto a rock or something, it is amazing to watch?

And this imagery crushes the spirit of Balak, who tells Balaam to stop speaking!

25 Then Balak said to Balaam, "Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all!"

26 So Balaam answered and said to Balak, "Did I not tell you, saying, 'All that the Lord speaks, that I must do'?"

And Balak stops the oracle, only to try to attempt again.

He will take Balaam to another place.

It is interesting he totally disregards the Word of the Lord here, and thinks manipulation will change the mind of a God who has just said His mind will not change.

You would think repentance and appealing to God's Mercy would be the best thing for Moab here.

But next, they set the stage for the third oracle.

Balaam's Third Prophecy

27 Then Balak said to Balaam, "Please come, I will take you to another place; perhaps it will please God that you may curse them for me from there." 28 So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, that overlooks the wasteland. 29 Then 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 every altar.

It has been said Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.

These two men are insane.

But understand the 'error of Balaam' is not as uncommon as you might think.

His error is that he uses his own reasoning and rationalization to try to make the outcome different.

The nation of Israel is also known as a stiff-necked and rebellious people group.

And Balaam may have insight to their recent mishap with the bronze serpent perhaps this meant an open door to curse Israel.

Maybe he knows of all of their failure since Egypt, and is thinking they deserve a curse, and they do.

Yet Balaam has failed to understand the meaning of their sacrifices, and he disregarded atonement.

Balaam is thinking with the mindset of religion.

They have come up way short in their relationship with God.

Think too about King David, who was known as a man after God's own heart.

He was a man full of sin and yet he was a man who walked closely with God.

But you must understand the error of Balaam, you see the false prophet will explain you must earn salvation through religious works, and pay back God for your mistakes.

Balaam understood the righteousness of man came up way short compared to God's holiness.

And man's righteousness is nothing more than filthy rags before God.

But the Balaam's of this earth fail to understand the righteousness of God.

That apart from any righteousness on our part, we can by faith have Christ's righteousness imputed to us.

Israel was protected and sealed by their faith that the sacrifices atoned for their sin before God.

Today, our faith is in the ultimate sacrifice Jesus Christ, who paid our full penalty upon the cross.

He cleanses us and presents us right before God.

Rom 8:31-34 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? 33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

Balaam could not understand how a believing sinner, or a sinning nation, could not come under the judgment of God.

And this is a great error indeed.

1 John 5:4-5 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. 5 Who is he who overcomes the

world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Perhaps tonight you are being defeated by the world, you are far from an overcomer.

Understand our victory lays in our faith and obedience.

If you have not yet, put your faith in Jesus Christ, there is no religious ladder to climb, you come obediently to Jesus, and trust that your sin was placed upon Him at Calvary.

There are no religious works required, you come incomplete and broken.

And from that point, Jesus takes your life and makes something wonderful with it.

Now, perhaps you are here tonight, and you are being defeated by this world, maybe you have walked with the Lord for sometime now, and you are not seeing victory in your life.

Understand Israel only has this divine protection when they are living obedient lives, we will see next time,

they will compromise, and this is where their enemies will prevail.

Maybe your troubles as a believer are coming from the fact you are disobeying God in an area of your life, understand when a believer sins, we do not come under the condemnation of God but under the discipline of God.

Repentance is the way back.

This is what separates us from the rest of the world.

Our faith is a one-step program, we repent and bask in His Grace, and walk in obedience.

Far from, the works based beliefs of the Balaam's out there.

You know our work to the Lord is so much sweeter when it is done in love and not in religion.

Get right tonight.

The elders will be available during this last song, come up and pray with them.

Whatever prayer needs you have this evening, please find your way to the front and get prayer.

So we will finish this saga with Balaam next time, God bless you, see you Sunday...