

## Numbers 22

Good evening and thank you again for joining us. Would you turn in your Bibles to Numbers 22 please?

Jonah and Balaam. 3 vs 10

Tonight we're going to study an unusual prophet, the man named Balaam. His intriguing story covers chapters 22-24, and we're going to study all 3 of those chapters tonight

The title of tonight's message is HIS SURE WORD.

Before we begin let's ask for the Lord's blessing.

PRAY

Balaam is one of the most fascinating and complex characters in all of the Bible. He's mentioned not only in numbers, but in Deuteronomy, Nehemiah, Micah, even in the book of Revelation he's mentioned. But never in a positive light.

Balaam was a prophet-able to see into the future. Yet instead of using this gift for the glory of the Lord, the Bible tells us:

**2 Peter 2:15 They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;**

Balaam is proof God can use anyone, including a soothsayer and a donkey for His glory.

**1 Then the children of Israel moved, and camped in the plains of Moab on the side of the Jordan across from Jericho.** Remember what we studied last week. Moses and Israel's armies are on a roll. They've defeated two armies east of the Jordan - Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan.

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.” 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. In addition to the sheer size of Israel’s army, word had spread that God had delivered the Hebrews from Egypt. Balak surely heard of God’s miracles in Egypt and in the desert. So Balak decided he needed help to defeat the Israelites, so he calls in a secret weapon.

5-6

5 Then he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor at Pethor, which is near the River<sup>[fn]</sup> in the land of the sons of his people,<sup>[fn]</sup> 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.” Evidently, Balaam was well known for his abilities.

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. Though he was obviously a man with significant spiritual gifts, he didn’t have a heart after God, as we’ll soon discover.

9 Then God came to Balaam and said, “Who are these men with you?” When God asks questions, He’s not stumped and looking to

us for answers. Rather He's getting us to reveal our hearts. Balaam knew these were wicked men who had a sinful plan.

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." God's instruction here to Balaam is crystal clear. He said, Balaam, do not go, and do not curse.

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."

15 Then Balak again sent princes, more numerous and more honorable than they. " Balak doesn't give up. He tries again with more influential people to sway Balaam.

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.' "In other words, name your price!

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." At first, Balaam sounds noble! He says all the gold and silver won't make him disobey God. Yet his actions speak differently

Balaam wants the money, so he asks the delegation of dignitaries to spend the night. He's hoping God will change His mind.

God's will isn't Balaam's motivation, money is.

In the New Testament, the Apostle Jude, mentions Balaam as he condemns the false teachers of his day. **Jude 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.**

I heard the story of a preacher who told his wife he got offered a job at a bigger church in a bigger city with a bigger salary. He told his wife he was going to go upstairs and pray about it.

His wife asked-want me to come up and pray with you?

He said no, you stay down here and start packing.

That's who Balaam was like

**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."** Apparently Balak's men didn't stay at Balaam's house, but they were in town. And God's instructions were clear - Balaam is not to move unless the men from Moab come calling.

But notice what Balaam does...

**21 So Balaam rose in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab.** The delegation never appeared, but Balaam goes anyway.

**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.** The Angel of the Lord suddenly appears to block the path of Balaam and his donkey.

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. The donkey sees the angel of the Lord and is like-NOPE!

But remember Balaam is eager to get paid, so he strikes the donkey to get back onto the road.

24-25

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. The donkey is again blocked by the angel, but this time he has nowhere to turn. He squishes up against the vineyard wall and it crushes Balaam's foot. And he lashes out in anger, and hits the donkey 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. This time the donkey has nowhere to turn so he simply collapses. Now Balaam is infuriated, so grabs his staff and wails on the donkey. Things aren't going according to plan-he's going to be late and maybe miss out on his paycheck!

What Balaam fails to realize is that all of these frustrating circumstances are his fault. And instead of taking responsibility, and being accountable for his own actions, Balaam takes out his frustrations on the most convenient target. He ends up beating the tar out of his poor donkey.

When a person gets out of God's will, life gets hard. And often the person takes out their frustrations on the most convenient target—those closest to them.

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?” Shockingly, God opens the mouth of a donkey. How is this possible?

Remember in the garden of Eden when Eve had a discussion with a serpent. Apparently, at the time serpents could talk.

There are many theologians who believe before sin, mankind could converse with animals, but when sin entered the picture that kind of communication ceased. It's a very real possibility.

Yet we shouldn't be too shocked at a talking donkey. If God created the mouth of the donkey, couldn't He open it when it suited His purposes? Of course!

And if God can speak through a donkey, then He can speak through any of us!

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!” Balaam was so furious that he answered back without hesitation. He didn't seem fazed to be carrying on a conversation with his donkey.

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.” You just witnessed a conversation between a faithful donkey, and an unfaithful prophet.

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. God opened Balaam's eyes to see who was blocking his path.

32 And the Angel of the LORD said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? 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." The Angel of the LORD rebuked Balaam not only for beating the donkey, but especially because Balaam's way was perverse.

The dictionary describes perverse as "showing a deliberate and obstinate desire to behave in a way that is unreasonable or unacceptable, often in spite of the consequences."

Balaam was acting wickedly and contrary to the Lords plan

Notice that the Angel of the LORD tells Balaam that his sin is against Him personally (32-your way is perverse before Me),

This is a Theophany, an Old Testament appearance of Jesus. Before His birth in Bethlehem, Jesus stands before and confronts Balaam.

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." What do you mean 'if'? Did God not make it entirely clear? Balaam sounds like he's repentant, but he's not.

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.

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?" Balak is upset over the delay of Balaams arrival-'what took you so long?'

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." Perhaps Balaam really believed and understood this, or more likely, this was his way of protecting himself in case he failed. That way he could say that it was God's fault, and not his.

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. 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." Now in the next two chapters, Numbers 23-24, Balaam utters four prophecies, which unbeknownst to either Balak or Balaam, reveal not only Gods future plans for Israel, but the coming King, Jesus Christ!

## Numbers 23

1-8

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: (oracle meaning prophecy in Hebrew)

"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?  
Balaam can't curse anyone that God intends to bless. And God has promised His blessing upon Israel.

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[fn] of Jacob,

Or number one-fourth of Israel? Pause here. Instead of a cursing, through Balaam, God promised to bless Israel by making them a singular nation and blessing them with great size-just as God promised back in Genesis 12.

Balaam then ends the prophecy with these words...

Let me die the death of the righteous,

And let my end be like his!”

Balaam finished his prophecy by yearning to die the death of the righteous. But the problem was he wasn't willing to live the life of a righteous person.

11-13

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?”

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.” Balak decided that the site was the problem, so he takes Balaam to another place where he'll only be able to see part of the nation gathered.

14-19

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? God this time addresses Balak personally through Balaam, telling the king that He doesn't change His purposes or go back on His solemn promises. **Malachi 3:6 “For I am the LORD, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.**

20 Behold, I have received a command to bless;

He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it. God had promised to bless Israel and He's not going to change His mind.

God's promises are sure. God never, ever lies. **Romans 11:29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.**

Verse 21 is a shocker...

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.** Through our studies how many times have we seen the nation rebel against God! the golden calf, complaining about manna and lack of water, trying to overthrow Moses, the list of the nations sins goes on and on! It's not that the sin hasn't been there. God just chose not to see Israel's sin.

And this is what God does with us through Jesus Christ. The New Testament term “justified” means to treat someone just-as-if-I'd never sinned.

And we are justified in Christ! **2 Corinthians 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**

God knows we've sinned and failed Him, but we are already forgiven because of Jesus.

**22 God brings them out of Egypt;**

**He has strength like a wild ox.**

**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!'** Israel was a testimony to the mercies of God. Remember they were a nation of slaves-now they're a miracle.

When people looked at Israel God intended for them to say, "Oh, what God has done!"

And this is God's intention for us. When people look at our lives, from where we've been to where we've come – God wants people to say with astonishment, "Oh what God has done!"

**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."** Balaam pronounces that Israel will be victorious in battle like a lion ripping apart its prey

**25 Then Balak said to Balaam, "Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all!"** Balak tells him-shut up-don't curse or bless them!

26 So Balaam answered and said to Balak, “Did I not tell you, saying, ‘All that the LORD speaks, that I must do’?” 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.[fn] 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. Balak hopes another change of scenery will help...

## Chapter 24

1 Now when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he did not go as at other times, to seek to use sorcery, but he set his face toward the wilderness. Apparently, on the two previous occasions, Balaam tried to bring a curse on Israel, but he couldn't. Now he let the LORD speak to him.

2 And Balaam raised his eyes, and saw Israel encamped according to their tribes; and the Spirit of God came upon him. This is amazing. The HS comes upon Balaam.

And it's a reminder that just because a person displays some spiritual gifting, it doesn't mean that's evidence of a holy life or spiritual maturity. The Corinthians exhibited a wide diversity of spiritual gifts, but at the same time they were immoral, divisive, and carnal.

Now we read balaams 3<sup>rd</sup> prophecy.

3-7

3 Then he took up his oracle and said:

“The utterance of Balaam the son of Beor,

The utterance of the man whose eyes are opened,  
4 The utterance of him who hears the words of God,  
Who sees the vision of the Almighty,  
Who falls down, with eyes wide open:

5 “How lovely are your tents, O Jacob!  
Your dwellings, O Israel!

6 Like valleys that stretch out,  
Like gardens by the riverside,  
Like aloes planted by the LORD,  
Like cedars beside the waters.

7 He shall pour water from his buckets,  
And his seed shall be in many waters.

“His king shall be higher than Agag,

And his kingdom shall be exalted. Balaam sees a prosperous nation. God’s blessing will result in abundance and military dominance.

9-10

8 “God brings him out of Egypt;  
He has strength like a wild ox;  
He shall consume the nations, his enemies;  
He shall break their bones  
And pierce them with his arrows.

9 ‘He bows down, he lies down as a lion;  
And as a lion, who shall rouse him?’[fn]

“Blessed is he who blesses you,

And cursed is he who curses you.” Notice each prophecy has gotten better for Israel and worse for Balak and the Moabites. In this third prophecy, Balaam actually curses his employer, Balak.

10 Then Balak’s anger was aroused against Balaam, and he struck his hands together; and Balak said to Balaam, “I called you to curse my enemies, and look, you have bountifully blessed them these three times! 11 Now therefore, flee to your place. I said I would greatly honor you, but in fact, the LORD has kept you back from honor.” In other words-‘you’re fired! And Balaam you’re not getting paid, and it’s all God’s fault because God wouldn’t do what I wanted him to do.’

12 So Balaam said to Balak, “Did I not also speak to your messengers whom you sent to me, saying, 13 ‘If Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the LORD, to do good or bad of my own will. What the LORD says, that I must speak’? 14 And now, indeed, I am going to my people. Come, I will advise you what this people will do to your people in the latter days.” Since Balak was not going to pay Balaam, Balaam would get back at him with a "free" prophecy, one that would show just how blessed Israel will be - both now and in the latter days.

15 So he took up his oracle and said:

“The utterance of Balaam the son of Beor,

And the utterance of the man whose eyes are opened; Balaam identifies himself as “the man whose eyes are opened.” They weren’t always open. For a while they were blind to the angel blocking his path, but now he can see.

And now who does he see-Jesus!

16 The utterance of him who hears the words of God,  
And has the knowledge of the Most High,  
Who sees the vision of the Almighty,  
Who falls down, with eyes wide open:

17 “I see Him, but not now;  
I behold Him, but not near;  
A Star shall come out of Jacob;  
A Scepter shall rise out of Israel,  
And batter the brow of Moab,  
And destroy all the sons of tumult.[fn]

In Revelation 22 Jesus calls Himself “the morning star”. The Bible teaches that Messiah was a descendant of Jacob.

The word “scepter” means ruler. Messiah is going to be king.

Some scholars see in this prophecy a reference to the star of Bethlehem that pointed the way for the Babylonian magi to find their way to Jesus’ birthplace in Matthew 2.

18 “And Edom shall be a possession;  
Seir also, his enemies, shall be a possession,  
While Israel does valiantly. Have you ever met an edomite?  
Nope? Prophecy fulfilled

19 Out of Jacob One shall have dominion,  
And destroy the remains of the city.”

20 Then he looked on Amalek, and he took up his oracle and said:

“Amalek was first among the nations,



**But shall be last until he perishes.**” Amalek, the most powerful nation at this time, was exterminated in the days of Hezekiah in 1 Chron 4

**21 Then he looked on the Kenites, and he took up his oracle and said:**

**“Firm is your dwelling place,**

**And your nest is set in the rock;**

**22 Nevertheless Kain shall be burned.**

**How long until Asshur carries you away captive?”** although they thought they were invincible in the cliffs of En-gedi, the Kenites would be carried away captive by the Assyrians in 1 Chron 2

**23 Then he took up his oracle and said:**

**“Alas! Who shall live when God does this?**

**24 But ships shall come from the coasts of Cyprus,[fn]**

**And they shall afflict Asshur and afflict Eber,**

**And so shall Amalek,[fn] until he perishes.”** The Assyrians would be overthrown by both the Greeks and the romans.

**25 So Balaam rose and departed and returned to his place; Balak also went his way.** This is not the end of Balaam-we’ll see what advice he gave that did in fact end up hamstringing the Israelites.