

## ***Session 1 The Forerunner Message in Numbers 23-24***

### **I. IMPORTANT INSIGHTS FROM THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF BALAAM**

The body of Christ can gain important insights into the biblical narrative of the end times from the life and ministry of Balaam in at least 3 ways.

- A. First, the Lord spoke through Balaam to give end-time prophecies and insights into the forerunner message—Numbers 23-24 contains 7 prophetic oracles given by Balaam to Balak, a Moabite king. God’s people are called to remember these 7 prophetic oracles related to blessing Israel (Mic. 6:5).

***<sup>5</sup>O My people, remember...what Balaam...answered him [Balak]...that you may know the righteousness of the LORD.*** (Mic. 6:5)

- B. Second, the Lord showed how dangerous and futile it is to seek to curse or denounce Israel (23:8) and how it is impossible for occultic activity or sorcery to prevail against Israel (23:23).

***<sup>8</sup>“How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? How shall I denounce whom the LORD has not denounced?...<sup>23</sup>For there is no sorcery...nor any divination [that prevails] against Israel.”*** (Num. 23:8, 23)

- C. Third, Balaam is mentioned 3 times in the NT as picture of a ministry leader who fell away from the faith (2 Pet. 2:15; Jude 11; Rev. 2:14). We are warned to avoid the *way*, *error*, and *doctrine* of Balaam. These passages are applicable throughout Church history while having a specific application to the end-time Church. He is a picture of prophet or teacher with an element of sincerity in his walk with God who drifted from it because of his love for money and honor.

1. ***The way of Balaam*** (2 Pet. 2:15): Balaam merchandized his prophetic gift for profit.

***<sup>14</sup>...They have a heart trained in covetous practices...<sup>15</sup>They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam...who loved the wages of unrighteousness;  
<sup>16</sup>...a dumb donkey...restrained the madness of the prophet.*** (2 Pet. 2:14-16)

2. ***The error of Balaam*** (Jude 11): Balaam gave King Balak a plan on how to seduce Israelites to engage in immorality and idolatry (Num. 25). Balaam was motivated by greed. Jude applied this to leaders who “crept unnoticed” into the leadership of the church in his day.

***<sup>4</sup>For certain men have crept in unnoticed...who turn the grace of our God into lewdness...  
<sup>11</sup>For they have...run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit...*** (Jude 4, 11)

3. ***The doctrine of Balaam*** (Rev. 2:14): John warned the church in Pergamos to refuse to hold the doctrine of Balaam or teachings that led to compromise. Balaam taught Balak to seduce God’s people by getting them to engage in immorality and idolatry (Num. 25:1-3; 31:16).

***<sup>14</sup>I have a few things against you [church in Pergamos], because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.*** (Rev. 2:14)

***<sup>16</sup>Look, these [Midianite] women caused...Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the incident of [Mount] Peor...*** (Num. 31:16)

- D. In addition to Numbers 22-24, there are 10 passages that speak of Balaam (Num. 31:8, 16; Deut. 23:4-5; Josh. 13:22; 24:9-10; Neh. 13:2; Mic. 6:5; 2 Pet. 2:15; Jude 11; Rev. 2:14).
- E. I do not include Numbers 22 as one of the 150 end-time chapters, but I included it in this handout because it provides important information about how Balaam sought the Lord yet ended up falling away from the Lord and engaging in sorcery. Balaam is a type of the false prophets in the end times. Balaam gave 7 important prophetic oracles that are recorded in Numbers 23-24.

F. **Outline of Numbers 23**

**23:1-6** Building 7 altars to accommodate idolatrous rituals (1<sup>st</sup> time)

**23:7-12** Balaam's 1<sup>st</sup> prophetic oracle: the covenant nation

**23:13-17** Building 7 altars to accommodate idolatrous rituals (2<sup>nd</sup> time)

**23:18-26** Balaam's 2<sup>nd</sup> prophetic oracle: the empowered nation

**23:27-30** Building 7 altars to accommodate idolatrous rituals (3<sup>rd</sup> time)

G. **Outline of Numbers 24**

**24:1-14** Balaam's 3<sup>rd</sup> prophetic oracle: the lovely nation

**24:15-19** Balaam's 4<sup>th</sup> prophetic oracle: the messianic nation

**24:20** Balaam's 5<sup>th</sup> prophetic oracle: judgment on the Amalekites

**24:21-22** Balaam's 6<sup>th</sup> prophetic oracle: judgment on the Kenites

**24:23-24** Balaam's 7<sup>th</sup> prophetic oracle: judgment on Assur and Eber

## II. THE UNCERTAINTY ABOUT BALAAM

- A. The ministry of Balaam has caused uncertainty for many Bible students. This non-Israelite prophet may have started out sincerely before he forsook the right way to become a sorcerer or soothsayer. Some contend that he was a false prophet from the beginning. Numbers 22-24 does not clarify this.
- B. Peter referred to him as “a prophet” who was eventually overcome with greed (2 Pet. 2:16). The Old Testament referred to him as a soothsayer (Josh. 13:22) who used sorcery (24:1) and was a manipulative, covetous man who tried to not offend God while still gaining Balak's reward.
- <sup>15</sup>*They have forsaken the right way...following the way of Balaam...who loved the wages of unrighteousness <sup>16</sup>...a dumb donkey...restrained the madness of the prophet. (2 Pet. 2:15-16)*
- <sup>1</sup>*When Balaam saw that...he did not go as at other times to seek to use sorcery... (Num. 24:1)*
- C. God met with Balaam and spoke through him prophetically numerous times (22:9, 20, 23:4, 16). He received true and accurate revelations from God (22:8, 13, 18-20, 38; 23:5, 12, 16; 24:1, 13). He had a widespread reputation of having accurate prophecies and possessing the power to release a blessing or a curse on an entire nation (22:6). There are indications that he sought to please God and that he feared the Lord (23:10; 24:4, 16), confessed his sin (22:34), and spoke of his commitment to speak only what the Lord spoke to him (22:38; 23:3, 5, 12, 16).

<sup>16</sup>*...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.* (Num. 24:16)

### III. THE CONTEXT FROM NUMBERS 22

- A. The story of Balaam occurred about 1,400 BC, shortly before Moses' death and the crossing of the Jordan River to enter the Promise Land. Israel was camped in the plains of Moab, just east of the Jordan River, opposite to Jericho. The Moabites were filled with terror at the close proximity of the invaders because Israel had defeated the Amorites and their kings, Sihon and Og (22:1-3). The Moabites were in an alliance with the Midianites to fight against Israel.

*<sup>1</sup>Then the children of Israel...camped in the plains of Moab on the side of the Jordan across from Jericho. <sup>2</sup>Now Balak...saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. <sup>3</sup>And Moab was exceedingly afraid...Moab was sick with dread because of the children of Israel. (Num. 22:1-3)*

- B. King Balak sent leaders to find Balaam to offer him money to help them defeat Israel (22:5-13). Balak sent them on a long journey over the mountains and across the deserts to Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq) to find Balaam to offer him money to come to Moab to curse Israel.

*<sup>5</sup>Then he [King Balak] sent messengers to Balaam...at Pethor, which is near the River...to call him, saying: "Look, a people has come from Egypt...[they] are settling next to me!" <sup>6</sup>Therefore please come at once, curse this people for me...for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed. <sup>7</sup>So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the diviner's fee in their hand, and they came to Balaam... <sup>8</sup>he said to them, "Lodge here tonight, and I will bring back word to you, as the LORD speaks to me"...<sup>9</sup>Then God came to Balaam and said, "Who are these men with you?"...<sup>12</sup>And God said to Balaam, "You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed." <sup>13</sup>So Balaam...said to the princes of Balak, "Go back to your land, for the LORD has refused to give me permission to go with you." (Num. 22:5-13)*

- C. Balak sent a second embassy to Balaam to seek to allure him with money and honor (22:14-19). Balak assumed that Balaam's delay was just a tactic to be offered more money, so the king sent more leaders who had higher positions in the government and offered more money.

*<sup>14</sup>The princes of Moab rose and went to Balak, and said, "Balaam refuses to come with us." <sup>15</sup>Then Balak again sent princes...[saying] "Please let nothing hinder you from coming to me; <sup>17</sup>for I will certainly honor you greatly...come, curse this people for me"...<sup>19</sup>[Balaam said] "...please, you also stay here tonight, that I may know what more the LORD will say to me." (Num. 22:14-19)*

- D. The Lord was angry that Balaam wanted to go to Balak to obtain money for cursing Israel (22:22).

*<sup>21</sup>So Balaam...went with the princes of Moab. <sup>22</sup>Then God's anger was aroused because he went, and the Angel of the LORD took His stand... <sup>23</sup>The donkey saw the Angel...with His drawn sword ...and the donkey turned aside... <sup>28</sup>The LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me three times?" (Num. 22:21-28)*

*<sup>31</sup>Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the Angel of the LORD standing in the way with His drawn sword... <sup>32</sup>The Angel of the LORD said, "...I have come out to stand against you, because your way is perverse before Me..." <sup>34</sup>Balaam said..."I have sinned...if it displeases You, I will turn back." <sup>35</sup>Then the Angel...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. (Num. 22:31-35)*

#### IV. BUILDING 7 ALTARS TO ACCOMMODATE IDOLATROUS RITUALS (NUM. 23:1-6)

- A. King Balak took Balaam to a mountain top to see Israel and to offer sacrifices to his false gods.  
*<sup>39</sup>So Balaam went with Balak, and they came to [Mount] Kirjath Huzoth. <sup>40</sup>Then Balak offered oxen and sheep...<sup>41</sup>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. (Num. 22:39-41)*
- B. Balaam asked Balak to build 7 altars where 7 bulls and 7 rams were sacrificed (23:1, 14, 29-30), thinking that this was a necessary element for divination and sorcery to work.  
*<sup>1</sup>Balaam said to Balak, “Build seven altars for me here, and prepare for me here seven bulls” ...<sup>3</sup>Balaam said to Balak, “I will go; perhaps the LORD will come to meet me...” (Num. 23:1-3)*
- C. It is surprising that God met Balaam and gave him a prophetic word to give to Balak (23:4-5).  
*<sup>4</sup>God met Balaam, and he said to Him, “...I have offered on each altar a bull and a ram.” <sup>5</sup>Then the LORD put a word in Balaam’s mouth, and said, “Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak.” (Num. 23:4-5)*

#### V. BALAAM GAVE BALAK 7 PROPHETIC ORACLES (NUM 23-24)

- A. Seven prophetic oracles were given by Balaam—2 oracles in Numbers 23 and 5 in Numbers 24.
- B. The ultimate fulfillment of parts of Balaam’s prophecies are in the Tribulation and Millennium with some partial fulfillment in ancient history. His prophetic words also point to the time when the Lord will remove the ancient enmity that persists between Israel and some Middle Eastern nations.

#### VI. BALAAM’S 1<sup>ST</sup> PROPHETIC ORACLE: THE COVENANT NATION (NUM. 23:7-12)

- A. In Balaam’s first oracle (23:7-10), he highlighted God’s blessing on Israel as evidenced by their population growth and prophetic destiny to walk in righteousness (23:10). Balaam lived in Pethor (22:5), a small town in Aram (a region in Mesopotamia between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.)  
*<sup>7</sup>And he took up his oracle and said: “Balak the king of Moab has brought me from Aram... ‘Come, curse Jacob for me, and come, denounce Israel!’ <sup>8</sup>How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? And how shall I denounce whom the LORD has not denounced? <sup>9</sup>For from the top of the rocks I see...a people dwelling alone, not reckoning itself among the nations. <sup>10</sup>Who can... number one-fourth of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my end be like his!” (Num. 23:7-10)*
- B. *Not reckoning itself among the nations:* Israel understood that they were not to be assimilated into the nations because of their divine covenant and calling to be set apart from all nations (23:9).
- C. *Who can number Israel?:* Israel had increased just as God promised Abraham (Gen. 13:16). Their population was about 2 million. Balaam only saw ¼ of Israel’s camp but could not count so many.
- D. *Let me die the death of the righteous:* Balaam prayed that he might also have a prophetic destiny to walk in righteousness—similar to end-time Israel who will enjoy God’s full blessing forever.

- E. For the second time Balaam and Balak built 7 altars to accommodate idolatrous rituals (23:13-17). Balak took Balaam to another place—to the top of Mount Pisgah (23:14) hoping that God might allow Balaam to curse Israel if he did not see all of the nation.

<sup>13</sup>*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.”*

<sup>14</sup>*So he brought him to...the top of [Mount] Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered a bull and a ram on each...<sup>16</sup>The LORD met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth...” (Num. 23:13-16)*

## VII. BALAAM’S 2<sup>ND</sup> PROPHETIC ORACLE: THE EMPOWERED NATION (NUM. 23:18-26)

- A. Balaam emphasized that the Lord will not repent from His commitment to bless Israel (23:19) and that no amount of sorcery or money could change this. Balaam relayed to Balak what God told him to say, but Balaam did not do what God commanded him to do—to bless Israel (23:20).

<sup>18</sup>*He took up his oracle and said: “Rise up, Balak, and hear! Listen to me...<sup>19</sup>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?...*

<sup>20</sup>*I have received a command to bless...<sup>21</sup>He has not observed iniquity in Jacob...The LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a King is among them. <sup>22</sup>God brings them out of Egypt; he has strength like a wild ox. <sup>23</sup>For there is no sorcery against Jacob, nor divination against Israel. It now must be said of Jacob and of Israel, ‘Oh, what God has done!’ <sup>24</sup>Look, a people rises like a lioness...it shall not lie down until it devours the prey...” (Num. 23:18-24)*

- B. *He has not observed iniquity in Jacob:* The Lord had not observed sin in Israel to the measure that He would curse Israel, leading to its complete destruction, or change His plans for them (23:21).
- C. *The shout of a King:* Balaam saw Israel’s future King and God’s favor being with them (23:21). Since the Lord is their King, Israel will ultimately be victorious in battle over every enemy (23:24).
- D. *God brings them out of Egypt:* The Exodus was the supreme example of God’s willingness to intervene supernaturally to deliver Israel (23:22). At the end of the age, the Lord will deliver Israel comparably to their deliverance from Egypt. He will strengthen Israel like an ox (23:22; 24:8).
- E. *Sorcery and divination:* No amount of sorcery or demonic activity can prevail against God’s plans. Awed by what he saw, Balaam proclaimed that surely no sorcery will prevail against Israel (23:23). The Antichrist using demonic power will not succeed in exterminating Israel (Rev. 12:13-17).
- F. *Oh, what God has done:* Israel’s future will be so glorious that many will marvel (23:23-24).
- G. *Rises like a lion:* Israel will be empowered to rise up as a lion to devour her enemies (23:24; 24:9).
- H. For the third time Balaam and Balak built 7 altars to accommodate idolatrous rituals (23:27-30). Balaam gave Balak the impression that God might change His mind about Israel.

<sup>27</sup>*Balak said to Balaam, “...I will take you to another place; perhaps it will please God that you may curse them...from there.”<sup>28</sup>Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor...<sup>29</sup>Balaam said to Balak, “Build for me here seven altars, and prepare for me here seven bulls...” (Num. 23:27-29)*

### VIII. BALAAM'S 3<sup>RD</sup> PROPHETIC ORACLE: THE LOVELY NATION (NUM. 24:1-14)

- A. This prophetic oracle celebrates how lovely God will make Israel, its people, and society. Balaam understood that God was pleased to bless Israel (24:1). As Balaam stood with Balak on a mountain to see Israel's camp, they saw Israel's divinely prescribed order in their encampment, and the Spirit moved on Balaam (24:2). Balaam saw the futility of sorcery against Israel (24:1; cf. 23:23).

***<sup>1</sup>...Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel; he did not go as at other times, to seek to use sorcery...<sup>2</sup>Balaam...saw Israel encamped according to their tribes; and the Spirit of God came upon him...<sup>4</sup>who sees the vision of the Almighty, who falls down, with eyes wide open.*** (Num. 24:1-4)

- B. Balaam saw Israel's future King and people, describing their land as a watered garden (24:5-7). The blessing and prosperity of Israel is compared here to the beauty of fertile valleys yielding abundant harvests; he saw the excellent arrangement of Israel's camp and compared it to the rows of aloes and cedars by the waters and to stately cedars whose roots go deep so they stand in a storm.

***<sup>5</sup>“How lovely are your tents, O Jacob! Your dwellings, O Israel! <sup>6</sup>Like valleys that stretch out, like gardens by the riverside, like aloes planted by the Lord, like cedars beside the waters.***  
***<sup>7</sup>He shall pour water from his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters. His [Israel's] king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted.”*** (Num. 24:5-7)

1. ***Water from buckets:*** He described the Israelites pouring water from buckets. Some suggest this refers to irrigation being used today with their seeds being nurtured beside many waters.
2. ***His king:*** The prophecy of Israel's future kingship as an anointed deliver (23:21; 24:7, 17).
3. ***Agag:*** Israel's King will be more powerful than Agag, the dynastic name given to the kings of the Amalekites, who were a powerful nation at that time. Israel will subdue all her enemies.
4. ***His kingdom shall be exalted:*** The prophecy of a future mighty kingdom (24:7-9). The King of Israel's throne would one day be established in the earth and exalted above all kingdoms.

- C. As God delivered Israel from Egypt, so Israel will defeat her future enemies like a lion (24:8-9).

***<sup>8</sup>“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...<sup>9</sup>‘He bows down; he lies down as a lion; and as a lion, who shall rouse him?’ Blessed is he who blesses you, and cursed is he who curses you.”*** (Num. 24:8-9)

1. ***Out of Egypt:*** What God did for Israel in the past in delivering them from Egypt is a type of what He will do for Israel in the end times (Mic. 7:15). Jesus will rescue Jewish captives and refugees in Egypt (Isa. 11:11; 19:20; 27:12-13; Hos. 11:11; Mic. 7:12; Zech. 10:10-11).
2. ***Wild ox and lion:*** God's power released through Israel is compared to a wild ox and a lion.
3. ***He shall consume the nations:*** God promised that Israel would defeat hostile nations.

- D. Balak concluded that Balaam would not curse Israel, so in anger he told him to leave (24:10, 14).

***<sup>10</sup>Balak's anger was aroused against Balaam...[he] said to Balaam, “I called you to curse my enemies...you have bountifully blessed them...<sup>11</sup>Therefore, flee to your place.*** (Num. 24:10-11)

IX. BALAAM'S 4<sup>TH</sup> PROPHETIC ORACLE: THE MESSIANIC NATION (NUM. 24:15-19)

- A. This end-time conflict seen in 24:15-24 is also seen in Psalm 83, Obadiah, and other passages. They give a snapshot into the future obsession that some nations will have to curse Israel.
- B. Ezekiel echoes this message, alluding to the same people groups (Ezek. 25:1, 4, 8) that embody “the ancient hostility” (Ezek. 25:15; NAS, NIV) and the “everlasting enmity” (Ezek. 35:5, NAS) that will escalate in the end times, especially in the regions mentioned by Balaam (24:17-24).
- C. Balaam had an open vision of the Lord and saw Moab (parts of Jordan) in the end times (24:14-16). In the latter days, Israel’s King will destroy “Agag” (24:7) which includes the Moabites (24:17).  
<sup>14</sup>“...I will advise you [Balak] what this people will do to your people [Moab] in the latter days.”  
<sup>15</sup>So he took up his oracle and said: “The utterance of Balaam...<sup>16</sup>who has the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, who falls down, with eyes wide open...”  
 (Num. 24:14-16)
- D. Balaam prophesied a future King described as a Star and Scepter coming out of Israel (24:17). He prophesied a coming King who would defeat all of Israel’s enemies—all the sons of tumult including Moab, Edom, Amalek, and the Kenites (24:17-23)—leaving Balak with no hope.  
<sup>17</sup>“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, batter the brow of Moab, and destroy all the sons of tumult.  
<sup>18</sup>And Edom shall be a possession; Seir also, his enemies, shall be a possession, while Israel does valiantly. <sup>19</sup>Out of Jacob One shall have dominion, and destroy the remains of the city.”  
 (Num. 24:17-19)
1. *I see Him but not now*: What he predicted here would occur in the distant future (24:17).
  2. *Star and a Scepter*: Jesus is portrayed in two metaphors—a Star and Scepter (Rev 22:16).
  3. *Destroy all the sons of tumult*: Jesus will destroy all of Israel’s enemies (24:8-9, 18).
  4. *Batter the brow of Moab*: The geographic areas of Moab and Edom are in modern-day Jordan. Balak was angry at Balaam’s prophecy of Moab’s defeat by a future Israelite king.
  5. *Edom and Seir*: Seir was another name for Edom (Gen. 32:3; Deut. 2:4) since Mt. Seir was a key geographical area in Edom. These prophecies about Moab and Edom were fulfilled in part during the reign of David (2 Sam. 8:14; 1 Kgs. 11:15-18; 1 Chr. 18:12-13), but in the future they will be judged by King Jesus (Isa. 15-16; 21:11-12; Jer. 48; 49:7-11; Obad. 15-18, 21).
  6. *Destroy the remains of the city*: The city is probably Sela, Edom’s capital, known as Petra.

X. BALAAM'S 5<sup>TH</sup> PROPHETIC ORACLE: JUDGMENT ON THE AMALEKITES (NUM. 24:20)

- A. Balaam prophesied the destruction of the Amalekites who lived just south of Israel (24:20).  
<sup>20</sup>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.” (Num. 24:20)
- B. *First among the nations*: The Amalekites were a preeminent military power at that time.

XI. BALAAM'S 6<sup>TH</sup> PROPHETIC ORACLE: JUDGMENT ON THE KENITES (NUM. 24:21-22)

- A. Balaam warned the Kenites that, even though they had a secure dwelling, the Assyrians would defeat them (24:21-22). They lived in in the Arabian Peninsula southwest of the Dead Sea.
- <sup>21</sup>*Then he looked on the Kenites, and...said: "Firm is your dwelling place...set in the rock;*  
<sup>22</sup>*...Kain shall be burned. How long until Asshur carries you away captive?" (Num. 24:21-22)*
- B. *Until Asshur carries you away*: The Asshurites lived in northern Sinai (Gen. 25:3, 18; 2 Sam. 2:9). The Assyrians were the most power empire in the Middle East (911-609 BC).

XII. BALAAM'S 7<sup>TH</sup> PROPHETIC ORACLE: JUDGMENT ON ASSHUR & EBER (NUM. 24:23-24)

- A. This oracle is a broad prophecy of the defeat of hostile Semitic nations by western powers. This prophecy was fulfilled in part when the Philistines (originally from Crete, Cyprus, and Mycenaean), Amalekites, and the Edomites were defeated by Israel under David and other leaders in Israel.
- <sup>23</sup>*Then he took up his oracle and said: "Alas! Who shall live when God does this? <sup>24</sup>*But ships shall come from the coasts of Cyprus, and they shall afflict Asshur and afflict Eber, and so shall Amalek, until he perishes." <sup>25</sup>*So Balaam...departed and returned to his place... (Num. 24:23-25)***
- B. *Who shall live when God does this?*: This passage is in context to the ominous words in 24:23 which uses language that depicts the day of the Lord when all who hate the covenant are removed.
- C. *Ships from Cyprus*: Ships sailing from Cyprus or Kittim—is commonly accepted as representing the western maritime powers coming from the coastlands of the Mediterranean (Philistines, Greeks, Romans, etc.; Jer. 2:10; Ezek. 27:6; Dan. 11:30). Kittim is derived from Kition, a city in Cyprus.
1. The ships of Chittim (western powers) will come against some of the lands that are dominated by the Antichrist, who is often typified as "the Assyrian" (Isa. 10:5, 24; 52:4; Mic. 5:5).
  2. Ships from this area may include naval forces from the west which will oppose the Antichrist (Dan. 11:30). These ships will destroy the geographic area associated with Eber and Asshur that are under the "kingdom of the Beast" (Rev. 16:10). In the Tribulation, the Antichrist will be attacked from military powers in the lands north and south of Israel (Dan. 11:40-45).
- D. *They shall afflict Asshur*: Asshur refers to some *eastern Semite peoples* including the ancient Assyrians and parts of modern Iraq and southern Iran. Asshur is one of the ten nations in Psalm 83.
- E. *Afflict Eber*: Eber refers to some *western Semite peoples* (Gen. 10:21) including lands and peoples in modern Iraq and Jordan. Western ships from "Cyprus" will afflict Eber and his descendants in the genealogy of Shem (Gen. 11:14-17). This prophecy was partially fulfilled when ships from Rome defeated Asshur and Eber. Rome incorporated the vestiges of the Assyrian Empire into its empire.
- F. The next verse describes how Israel engaged in immorality and idolatry with women of Moab (25:1). This violation of the covenant was so serious that the Lord commanded Moses to kill all the men who participated in Baal worship, and then He sent a plague that killed 24,000. Israel could not be defeated by Moab's military nor Balaam's sorcery, but immorality and idolatry did what Balaam's sorcery could not do—separate them from God.