

LESSON 7

Balaam and Israel's Destiny

Numbers 22:1–14; 23:7–12; 24:9–11

God is not a man who lies, or a son of man who changes his mind. Does he speak and not act, or promise and not fulfill? I have indeed received a command to bless; since he has blessed, I cannot change it.

Numbers 23:19–20

Class Overview: As Israel continued toward the Promised Land, a new threat emerged; one they never saw coming. While God's people camped unaware, enemies worked behind the scenes to curse and destroy them. In Numbers 22–24, the story of Balaam reveals a powerful truth: God's purposes for His people cannot be overturned, even when powerful forces oppose them.

This lesson demonstrates that Israel's destiny was not determined by their awareness, strength, or even faithfulness but by God's unchanging promise. Although Balaam was hired to curse Israel, God repeatedly turned curses into blessings. What was intended for harm became a declaration of God's unwavering commitment to His people. God protects and preserves His people in ways they may never fully understand, and that His plans are not fragile.

Class Objectives: By the end of this class, you should be able to:

1. Recognize that God is actively at work on behalf of His people, even when they are unaware of the danger or opposition around them.
2. Explain why attempts to curse God's people ultimately fail, understanding that God's blessing cannot be overturned by human or spiritual opposition.
3. Identify God's sovereignty in directing events and people, seeing how He uses even reluctant or compromised individuals to accomplish His purposes.

4. Understand that Israel's destiny rested on God's promise, not on its circumstances, strength, or consistency.
5. Apply confidence in God's faithfulness to their own lives, trusting that God's plans cannot be undone even when they cannot see what He is doing.

Introduction

ONE OF THE MOST COMFORTING TRUTHS IN SCRIPTURE is that God is often working on behalf of His people in ways they never see. Not every threat is visible. Not every battle is announced. Sometimes the greatest dangers form far away while God's people remain completely unaware.

That is exactly where Israel finds itself in Numbers 22. As they camp on the plains of Moab, the people have no idea that a king is plotting against them or that a prophet has been hired to curse them. There are no warning signs, no cries for help, no prayers recorded, yet God is already active, already intervening, already protecting.

The story of Balaam reminds us that God's purposes are not fragile. Israel's destiny did not hinge on its awareness, its strength, or even its faithfulness. It rested on God's promise. Though curses were intended, blessings were declared instead. Though opposition was real, it was powerless before God's will.

As we study this unusual and sometimes perplexing account, we are reminded that God's faithfulness often operates quietly and decisively. God guards His people not only in moments of visible crisis, but also in unseen ways—ensuring that His promises stand firm and His purposes move forward.

God Protects His People in Ways They Never See (Numbers 22:1–14)

One of the great comforts of the wilderness story is realizing how much God does for His people without their knowledge. While Israel camped peacefully, unaware of any threat, a spiritual battle was already

unfolding behind the scenes. God's protection was active long before His people ever sensed danger. As Israel approached Moab, Balak, the king of Moab, was terrified. He saw Israel as a looming threat. Rather than confronting Israel directly, Balak sought spiritual power, hiring Balaam to curse God's people. What Israel did not know was that plans were already in motion to destroy them; plans God would quietly dismantle.

God often works on behalf of His people long before they pray about a problem or even recognize that it exists. Israel never asked for protection from Balaam. They never knew a curse had been attempted. Yet God clearly intervened, refusing to allow Balaam to speak against His people. Balaam's repeated attempts to comply with Balak, followed by God's firm restraint, show that no human scheme can override God's will. Even a prophet with compromised motives could not act outside of God's authority. God's silence to Israel was not absence; it was protection.

In the New Testament, Paul reminds us that God works all things according to His purpose (Romans 8:28), and that nothing can separate God's people from His care (Romans 8:31). Never forget that many dangers are avoided, many conflicts are deflected, and many disasters are prevented without our awareness. Even when God's people are unaware, God is fully aware *and fully at work*.

Intended Curses Turned into Blessings (Numbers 23:7–12; 18–24)

What began as unseen protection now becomes unmistakable action. Balak believed that with the right words, the right rituals, and the right spiritual influence, Israel's future could be altered. What he discovered instead was a truth that echoes throughout Scripture: **God's blessings cannot be reversed.** When Balaam finally opens his mouth to speak, the outcome is not what Balak expected. Instead of curses, blessings pour forth. Balaam is compelled to speak only what God puts in his mouth, declaring words of favor, protection, and promise over Israel. No matter how many times Balak tries, in different locations, with

different sacrifices, and with different strategies, the result is always the same. God turns every attempt at harm into a blessing.

Balaam's words reveal a profound theological truth: Israel's standing before God is not fragile. Balaam declares, "There is no magic curse against Jacob, and no divination against Israel" (Numbers 23:23). Human schemes, spiritual manipulation, and hostile intent are powerless against God's declared purpose. At the center of these blessings is God's character. Balaam confesses, almost against his will, that God does not lie or change His mind. What God has blessed cannot be undone (Numbers 23:19–20). Israel's destiny rests on God's promise, not on circumstance, threat, or opposition.

The New Testament reflects this same confidence. Paul asks, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). The answer is not that opposition doesn't exist, but that opposition does not prevail. God's purposes stand firm, even when challenged. There may be voices that criticize, oppose, or wish harm. There may be circumstances that feel threatening or destabilizing. Yet God's blessing is not conditional on silence from enemies or the absence of opposition. It rests securely in His promise.

God not only protects His people quietly, but He also actively transforms what was meant for harm into declarations of blessing. What Balak intended as destruction became testimony. What Balaam attempted to manipulate became a proclamation. God's purpose moves forward, untouched and undefeated.

Securing His People's Future (Numbers 24:5–9; 17–19)

At this stage in the story, the issue is no longer whether Israel will be cursed. That question has been settled once and for all. What now emerges is a clearer picture of *who Israel is* and *where God is taking them*. The blessings spoken through Balaam move from protection in the present to confidence in the future. Balaam's final words go beyond immediate circumstances and point toward Israel's destiny. He speaks of Israel's strength, fruitfulness, and security, describing them

as a people established and protected by God (Numbers 24:5–9). These blessings echo God’s original promises to Abraham, that his descendants would be blessed and would become a blessing to others. What is remarkable is that these declarations are spoken not by an Israelite prophet, but by a reluctant outsider. God ensures that His promises are proclaimed even through unexpected voices, reinforcing the truth that His purposes do not depend on ideal instruments. God’s word stands because it is God’s word.

In Numbers 24:17–19, Balaam speaks of a future ruler, a star rising out of Jacob. While the immediate reference points to Israel’s future victories, the language reaches beyond Israel’s near horizon. Scripture later reveals that this promise ultimately finds its fulfillment in the Messiah. God’s plan for Israel was not limited to survival in the wilderness, but to a redemptive purpose that would bless the nations.

Paul reminds us that God’s gifts and calling are irrevocable (Romans 11:29). God does not abandon His purposes midway. What He begins, He brings to completion. This should offer us steady assurance. Our future is not determined by unseen enemies, hostile voices, or fragile circumstances. It is secured by God’s promise. Even when we are unaware of opposition, even when faith feels thin, God remains faithful to what He has spoken.

God’s promises are not temporary protections; they are lasting commitments. Israel moved forward not because danger disappeared, but because God’s word stood firm. And that same word continues to secure the future of God’s people today.

For Application

Trust God’s Work Even When You Can’t See It. Israel never knew a curse had been attempted, but God was already intervening. Much of God’s faithfulness operates quietly and unseen. Learning to trust God includes trusting what He is doing beyond our awareness.

Do Not Measure God’s Faithfulness by Circumstances Alone. Israel’s safety did not depend on the absence of danger, but on the presence of God’s promise. Likewise, peace does not come from

problem-free living, but from confidence that God is faithful regardless of circumstance.

Live with Confidence, Not Fear. When God's people understand that their future is secured by God's word, fear loses its grip. Faith grows when we stop trying to control outcomes and start trusting the God who has already spoken blessing over His people.

Memory Verse/Weekly Challenge

Memory Verse:

"I have indeed received a command to bless; since he has blessed, I cannot change it." — Numbers 23:20 (CSB)

Weekly Challenge:

This week, pay attention to moments when fear, speculation, or anxiety about "what might happen" begins to take over your thinking. Instead of trying to predict outcomes or control situations, pause and remind yourself of God's faithfulness and promises. Each day, thank God for one unseen way He may be working on your behalf, even if you cannot identify it clearly. End the week by reflecting on how trusting God's unseen work brought peace and confidence.

For Discussion

1. What surprises you most about the fact that Israel was completely unaware of the danger it faced? How does that shape the way you think about God's protection today?

2. Why do you think God chose to work through Balaam—an unexpected and flawed messenger—to bless His people? What does this teach us about God's sovereignty?

3. How does this statement, "What God has blessed cannot be changed," affect the way we respond to criticism, opposition, or fear?

4. In what ways might we be tempted to measure God's faithfulness by what we can see rather than by what He has promised?

5. What practical steps can we take to live with confidence and peace, trusting that God is at work even when we cannot see it?
