

Balaam was a prophet constantly switching between two camps. He was a double minded man unstable in all his ways. This disappointing feature is much more common than is often realised. Most of us are not firmly in either camp. We want to be popular (loved by the world) and we want to be faithful (approved by God and Christ) but we struggle to be consistent and often move first one way then the other. We might not like to admit it, but there is often too much of Balaam inside ourselves!

The prophet upset his host yet again. Balak was his sponsor and desperate to oppose these bothersome Hebrews who threatened his way of life and wealth. He had generously facilitated Balaam in so many ways but had been spurned by the positive comments about Israel which he had made. This was to be the final opportunity for him to make good with the King of Moab and earn the promised rewards.

*“Therefore now flee thee to thy place: I thought to promote thee to great honour, but, lo, the LORD hath keep thee back from honour”*. At the end of this chapter both these miscreants go their separate ways. Their short-lived alliance was doomed to failure, they had little in common. The severing of their links was sure to take place there is no true harmony between the flesh and itself, it is instead a raging sea full of troublesome storms and dangerous winds. The peace and tranquillity that man craves can only come from the Father Himself.

Balaam was inspired by the spirit of God even though he was a failed individual – *“the spirit of God came upon him”*. We might be surprised by this, but it is not in doubt. The aspect that God used him could mean that at the time Balaam was struggling within himself to follow the right way and was given every encouragement and support from the Eternal but that he ultimately let himself and God down by abandoning that path for the way of sin and death. God knows the end before the beginning, but was still minded to work with him. It is also interesting to consider that the nation of Israel was the centre of God’s attention, but it was also employed elsewhere in others who were concerned about divine truth although separated by distance from the actual Truth holders in open manifestation.

When Balaam considered his situation, he did move into a better position. *“When Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he went not as at other times, to seek for enchantments, but he sent his face towards the wilderness”*. Sadly, this did not last. God is looking for those who endure to the end, not those who in the heat of the moment, might seem to move in His direction. It was in the wilderness that the remnant can be found, not in the popular cities nor the affluent fields of prosperity. We should be prepared to go without the camp, bearing his reproach.

Balaam saw Israel abiding according to their tribes, thus organised around the tabernacle as God had decreed. An organic manifestation of order and stability. Blessed with an abundance of herds and flocks the people was well able to feed themselves however the manna still rained down from heaven, so these animals were not significantly depleted. Sacrifices were made to the glory of God what a sight to behold! No earthly power could resist such an organised army of determined people. Balak feared them gravely and resented the final declaration *“cursed is he that curseth thee”*. The contrary was also true *“Blessed is he that blesseth thee”* as in Genesis 12v3.

Israel was to be transformed from a wandering desert-based people to those who inhabited the land of milk and honey. *"How goodly are thy tents O Jacob and thy tabernacles O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as the gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the LORD hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters. He shall pour water out of his buckets and his seed shall be in many waters"*. This blessing was not revealed to Israel first of all but to her enemies the Moabites! The message was subsequently written down and the value of such a revelation would have been significant to the despised tribes. God is able to encourage and motivate in ways that are beyond our methods!

*"God hath brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn (reem buffalo or wild ox) he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones and pierce them through with his arrows"*. This emphasis on physical dominance was very meaningful to everyone. It meant peace and reassurance; the times were violent when the easiest way to feed yourself and your family was to steal food from your neighbours rather than earn it in the sweat of your face! The only way to break that cycle was to secure defendable borders for your own people. This was to be a just war because God had granted permission to remove the iniquity of the Canaanites Amorites and other transgressors which previously inhabited the land.

Balaam flirted with the principles of righteousness but was not wholehearted. His protestation seems so correct and spiritual in content. *"If Balak would give me his home full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the LORD to do either good or bad of mine own mind; but what the LORD saith, that will I speak"*. It would not be much longer before these words would be seen to be the hot air of an actor.

One point he did make clear was that he would depart to his own people, because the people of Israel were never his people, he disdained to become part of the mixed multitude that accompanied them. *"And now behold I go unto my people: come therefore and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days"*. He thought that because he had not indulged Barak the King of Moab as fully as that man wanted that he was safe. How far from the Truth that was. There is no third camp, if you are not in the camp that embraces the hope of Israel then you are without that camp and instead in the company of the wider world.

Under inspiration Balaam was moved to detail aspects of a distant future. He would be raised to see these things for himself at a time long after he had died. This was the doctrine of resurrection from the dead of those responsible. Balaam will not be approved as he ultimately sided with Israel's satans, their adversaries as that word means. However, he would witness these things firsthand but not in glory, but in the weeping and gnashing of teeth of the rejected, something we must desperately avoid!

Who was it that Balaam was to be raised up to personally see even if he was prevented from sharing that future glory? The "him" that he would see, was the Jewish Messiah, the as yet unborn Jesus Christ. *"I shall see him but not now: I shall behold him but not nigh"*. Denied future fellowship because he spurned present fellowship let us not make that same tragic mistake. We must strive to be among those who are nigh to him both now and in the future! How do we get close to Jesus? It is only by keeping his commandments! 1 John 2v3. There is no other way.

Eight different people who opposed Israel are mentioned in the indictment. It starts with Moab as they were Balak's own people, cousins of Israel, descended from Lot Abraham's nephew. Who was to smite Moab? The star out of Jacob the sceptre that would emerge from Israel. The promised ruler was from the crouched lion of Judah as Jacob himself had prophesied centuries before, Genesis 49v9,10 *"unto him shall the gathering of the people be"* Shiloh. Moab was to be smitten in the corners, not fatally struck but wounded, its wings clipped.

The children of Sheth however were to be destroyed in total, *"in the latter days"*. That is future to our day and generation. Sheth means destruction, so destruction itself is to be destroyed! Jesus himself will accomplish this in God's grace. Sheth may have been a literal person but who or where we do not know, and his children may have been symbolic of those given to violence. It may stand for independent unrooted bands of the chaotic mob, anarchists we might call them today.

Edom shall be a possession, this implies a possession of the victorious Jesus, the generalissimo of the future host. Edom borders Israel and descend from Esau the grandson of Abraham who rejected his birthday. Now a vassal of the revived Israelitish state. *"Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies"*. Seir is a section of Edom. It means rough or wooded, a raw unworked land. That it was to be possessed by the enemies of Christ should remind us that a great war is to be fought, a conflict which will include the battle of Armageddon.

*"Israel shall do valiantly! Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city"*. Whilst the city is not named here, those who trace this future path will have no difficulty in identifying this city as the long adversary of Israel, the city of Rome.

Amalek is an interesting one. This renegade people preyed on the weak and the infirm. There were not even to be present in the latter days! Their fate was to be meted out long before those days arrived. His latter end shall be that he shall perish for ever! Amalek was to be destroyed by the decree of the LORD. 1 Samuel 15v3 *"Now go and smite Amalek utterly"*. 1 Chron 4v43 *"They smote the rest of Amalek that were escaped"*. Thus, they were never to be an end time player! Where is Amalek today?

The Kenites were one of the peoples who occupied the land of Canaan before Joshua conquered that land. They occupied the rocky redoubts of the south and were bypassed by Israel as they approached the plains of Moab where this scene was played out. No natural defences will prevent the power of Christ to achieve the victory that is coming. *"Strong is thy dwelling place and thou puttest thy nest in a rock. Nevertheless, the Kenite shall be wasted until Asshur shall carry thee away captive"*.

Asshur is the ancient people of Assyria, one of the world's first superpowers. Today that seed has born fruit in the King of the North, Russia, which has inherited her mantle, in these latter days of the gentiles. *"He also shall perish forever"* at his appointed time. It will be the ships from the coast of Chittim. Which naval power will be instrumental in destroying Assyria in these latter days? They will also afflict Eber, meaning a shoot or representing the Hebrews! Afflict, yes but it will be Christ who destroys Asshur!