

Balaam's Parable

6th August 24

We recall from the previous chapter how king Balak of Moab enlisted the help of a pagan priest and diviner from the land of Aram who was well known at the time called Balaam who had the knowledge, understanding and ability to mix truth and corruption. He came from a location very close to where the Truth was once established, even Haran, where members of Abraham's family lived.

However, this supposed "wise man" was a professional soothsayer, diviner, and omen teller, who used his great knowledge to confuse, convince and persuade his listeners that he was *some great one* (see Acts 8:9) Despite being visited by God through the form of either a vision or an angel, Balaam did not keep to the instructions he was given.

Once more the God of Israel sent a message to Balaam either by vision or angel, and gave him a specific instruction to test him in regards to the matter of following the ambassadors of Moab and Midian: 22:20 "If the men have come to call you, get up and go with them, but the word that I will say to you, that you must do" ... But Balaam did not follow that instruction. The men did not come and call him. He did not wait for the word of instruction either. ... instead he set off, the lure of fame and riches being his incentive. Even his own donkey blocking his way and talking in a human voice did not shake him from his stupidity, revealing exactly who the dumb ass really was.

Instead of Balaam being used by the wicked enemies of Israel to bring about their downfall, Balaam was used by God to advertise to all the then known world of the great purpose that God had with his people then, and far into the future – even for ever. God would show who He had chosen, who He would bless, and who He would curse. (See Romans 11: 15,21,28)

So we see in this 23rd chapter a pattern develop. Balaam was used as a dumb ass. Just as the poor creature made noises and words, it didn't even understand, so Balaam uttered wonderful Divinely inspired words of prophecy that he could not understand, or control as they poured forth from his mouth. As much as he tried to curse Israel, all that came out were blessings! Of course, the king of Moab was very upset, and wanted Balaam to stop horsing around, and begged Balaam to curse his neigh-bours as he was having night-mares.

And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven oxen and seven rams.

Chapter 22 tells us where the place was – the high places of Baal. Or as the NET as it Bamoth Baal.

So Balaam who was pretending to do what God said, chose to offer sacrifices to God from a well-used pagan temple. Seven rams and seven oxen, and seven altars. Balaam knew enough to know that seven in the purpose of God was a complete number, and represented holiness, so it all gave it a semblance of religion! Balaam would not be out of place sitting in the Vatican today, so expert was he at mixing truth with a lie. As the smoke from the roasting animals ascended, Balaam (v3) asked Balak to excuse him, as he made his way to an adjacent cultic shrine.

As Balaam came back, a hush would have fallen upon the waiting crowd of officials around the king Balak, as they waited to see what great curse this great priest had been revealed to him from the gods.

Words tumbled from his mouth, so unexpected and shocking to the Moabite rulers.

Verse 8: How can I curse, whom God has not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not denounced?

Balaam described the people of Israel – he could see their vast encampment far below stretching out into the distance

9 *For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. [in other words, were considered unique] It is true. They were commanded to be a separate nation. See Exodus 19:5,6 ... ye shall be a special treasure unto me above all people: ...6 a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. ... see also 1 Peter 2:9 for the spiritual analogy.*

Then he asks a rhetorical question:

10 *Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel?* Meaning no one can count them, they are so many! Again it was no strange coincidence that Balaam was quoted words of the promises made to Abraham that he would have been familiar with since he came from near the location where the family of that famous man lived. Genesis 28:14: *thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad ... and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*

Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!

Balaam was so influenced and overcome by the Divine will – against his own will, that he even confessed that he deep down knew where the Truth lay! And that actually he was not righteous and unlikely to inherit such a reward, hence his admission here!

Of course Balak was furious! Balaam was publicly blessing his enemies, and not cursing, the very opposite of what he had asked. So he begged Balaam to come with him to another place and curse them from there. Of course, anyone of a truthful and honest mind, would know by now what the will of God was, and refused to do anything more to do with these people who were obvious enemies of God. But not Balaam. He thought he was being clever, and loved being in the limelight. His very ego was being used by God.

He travelled to a second place and went through the same charade of pretend religiosity to look the part, with sacrifices and offerings... but see Isaiah 1:11-14 for what God really thinks of such things.

This time the words put in his mouth by God:

19 God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

These are words that in fact Balaam did not believe, as despite knowing of the people of Abraham and those promises, he was happy to be part of a project designed to destroy Israel. But these words contact a fundamental truth which is underlined in Hebrews 6:17-19, a point which is the very bedrock of the foundation of the Faith. It is impossible for God to lie. That His Word is immutable. That is, **it is irreversible**.

20 Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. Certainly not, such a thought was laughable, and for Balaam to even put himself in the same sentence, and suggest that his ability was even a consideration, was an abomination.

Now it must be realised that Balaam is being used by God to announce to the world, all the worldly kings in the region, of His purpose with Israel, as they camped by the side of Jordan being prepared to enter the land of promise, that Isarel was His chosen, His people, His elect, and only through the Hope of Isarel could they be saved. So in Balaam's words there is a presentation of the broad sweep of Gpd's purpose with Isarel. This is how the following verses are to be understood

21 He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them.

This did not apply to them as a people right then – as they had been perverse and committed iniquity with the golden calf, the false report of the spies, the ten times of grumbling, and so on. But Neither was a shout of a king with them as such, their king was God. Instead they

were words referring to the end outcome of the nation – far into the future, when Moab, and Midian would be just a dusty footnote in history.

It is time referred to in Romans 11 when All Isarel will be saved. When Zechariah the prophet describes in 12:10 *I will pour upon them the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn...* when the nation repents, and embraces their Messiah to their heart. They will be atoned for and purified and made as one with God. The shout of the king... the Hebrew word used for shout is *teruah* which is the same word used for the trumpet blast used on the day of atonement. It is a proclamation of holiness. And who will be the King that will proclaim such a Holiness – but the same Messiah, the Son of God. The King – and not any of the kings of the earth- including Barak standing there open mouthed.

22 God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn. This should read *he has the horns of the wild ox.* This refers Psalm 89:17,24, 92:10, 122:9 to the victory, the crowning power, the elevation, and thrusting forward of the strength and purpose of the Mighty Ones.

The same theme can be seen:

24 Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain.

In the NET, the words *great lion* is lioness, as it is feminine. This is fascinating, as of course, it is the female lion that does all the hunting, operating as a pride, many females together. The male lion is a loner, and will often come along after the hard work has been done. Although they will hunt together but in a much lesser degree. But the point is, Israel would not achieve the victory alone, but together as 12 tribes, and with the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Rev 5:5) as head of the Pride.

Amos 3:7-8: 7 Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he reveals his secret unto his servants the prophets. The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?

See also Proverbs 28:1 *The wicked flee though no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion.* Genesis 49:9 is also of course very relevant.

By now the frustration in Balak was turning to anger, and he insisted Balaam try again, at a third location. The chapter ends as Balaam trots off in the hope of some reward.

The words he spoke, seemed to have no impact upon him, and no impression, just as the words of the dumb ass. Most people are like that. Hopefully not us.

Brother Terry