



## Sermon Discussion Questions

November 10, 2024

*In the Wilderness*

# BALAAM AND THE MESSIAH

Numbers 24:14-19

### 1. Opening Discussion Questions: (in a group setting you may not want to use all of these)

- a. When you were a child (or perhaps think about one of your children) did you ever ask repeatedly for a Christmas or birthday gift but were told it wasn't appropriate or safe (BB guns are a classic example) – but you kept on asking anyway? Describe the circumstances. How did your parents (or you) react to the repeated requests?
- b. Many people have had interesting experiences trying to get their first driver's license. Share your experiences. Don't be embarrassed if you had to take the test multiple times – it's common in this "rite of passage".
- c. Although apparently not as true in these times, one of the most difficult things some young men have to do is to ask their true love's father for his blessing and her hand in marriage. If applicable, describe how this took place when you got engaged. Did the father immediately say sure, toy with the suitor for a while, or perhaps even refuse to bless the union?

### 2. Sermon Outline/Key Points

- a. Balaam Predicted the Coming of a Powerful Future King.
  - i. Balaam blessed Israel 3 times before getting fired by Balak.
  - ii. Balaam then predicted a far future king of great power.
- b. Balaam's Message was an Early Prophecy of the Eternal Kingship of Jesus Christ.
  - i. The Bible speaks early and throughout of the coming Messiah.
  - ii. Jesus was formally crowned through His death and resurrection.
- c. Until King Jesus Returns, Our Job is Clear!
  - i. King Jesus, the star and scepter, was crystal clear – we must make disciples!
  - ii. Three ways to get involved at LRBC:
    1. Heart of the Community
    2. Simply Churches
    3. Missions
  - iii. Are you a disciple making disciples?

### 3. Study/Discussion Points:

#### a. *Sunday Afternoon*

- i. As soon as possible after listening to the sermon set aside some time to ponder these questions prayerfully:
- ii. What one thing most stood out to you in this sermon?
- iii. What new truth did you learn or of what truth were you reminded?
- iv. After listening to the sermon, is there a Scripture passage you feel led to meditate on or commit to memory this week?
- v. What is one thing you feel God is leading you to do after hearing this message?
- vi. Did God convict you of a need to make any changes in your life and walk with Him?

- b. **Monday – Balaam’s First Message** (This week’s focal passage covers Balaam’s fourth prophecy in Numbers 24:14-19 but before getting to that the first three days of the week will be used to consider the first messages or oracles that God had Balaam deliver.)
- i. Read Numbers 22:36 – 23:12.
  - ii. After the fateful encounter with his talking donkey Balaam completes his long journey and meets with King Balak.
    1. What does Balak’s initial greeting tell us about him? Who did Balak consider to be most important and controlling the outcome of events?
    2. What does Balaam’s response to the king tell us about him? Who does Balaam acknowledge is really in control? Why would it have been unexpected for Balaam to give any other response (see Numbers 22:31-35)?
    3. Balaam’s commitment to doing as God directs is, at least in part, predicated on the fact that the angel of the Lord had spared his life. Today we often hear of people making brash promises to serve God if He will rescue them from a bad situation. What is often missing that makes it impossible to fulfill such promises (see Ezekiel 36:26, John 3:3-7, Romans 12:2, and Titus 3:5)? What are Balaam and people who make such “agreements” with God primarily focused on? Where should our focus be (Romans 8:14-17, Matthew 22:37, and 1 John 4:7-8)?
  - iii. What does the fact that Balaam directed that seven altars be prepared suggest about his beliefs? How does this contrast with what Noah (Genesis 8:20), Abram (Genesis 12:7 & 22:9), Isaac (Genesis 26:25), Jacob (Genesis 33:20 & 35:1-7), and Moses (Exodus 17:15) did?
  - iv. Very little detail is recorded about God’s meeting with Balaam other than Balaam’s demonstration that he really did not know God. How does he show that beyond any reasonable doubt? How do we sometimes do the same thing in our prayers?
  - v. Summarize the first message of Balaam in your own words. Can you identify four major themes that God provides Balaam (verses 7-8 & Genesis 12:1-3, verse 9 & Exodus 19:5-6, verse 10a & Genesis 28:14 and verse 10b & Genesis 12:3, 22:18, & 28:14)?
  - vi. How does the closing exchange between Balak and Balaam show that neither had changed their going in positions?
- c. **Tuesday – Balaam’s Second Message**
- i. Read Numbers 23:13-26.
  - ii. How does Balak begin the second round? Compare Balak’s request to that of the officials of the king or Aram in 1 Kings 20:23-25. What does that suggest as a likely reason for seeking a new location? How might it relate to the repeated use of seven altars?
  - iii. What similarities and what differences do you see between the events leading up to the second message and those preceding the first? In particular, what did Balak do differently and what might it suggest about his view of God? Think about what you remember about how Pharaoh responded to the plagues God sent via Moses before the Exodus. How was his view of God similar?
  - iv. Again, summarize the message in your own words. If Balaam’s first message can be seen as presenting the Israelites as God’s *chosen* people what single word might be used for how they are presented in this message (see particularly verses 22 & 24)?

- v. Verse 19 presents a great statement about God's nature. Compare it to these Old Testament verses: 1 Samuel 15:29, Job 12:13 & 36:5, Psalms 33:11, 89:34, 102:27, & 110:4, Jeremiah 4:28 & 7:16, and Malachi 3:6. After reading these what truth can you state about God? How should that have influenced Balak? Us? How do Titus 1:2, Hebrews 6:18, and James 1:17 bring this truth to bear in our lives today?
- vi. What changes, if any, in Balak and Balaam are shown in the closing exchange?

**d. Wednesday – Balaam's Third Message**

- i. Read Numbers 23:27 – 24:9.
- ii. How do the preparations for the third message differ from the first two? What doesn't change? What might you conclude about Balak from this? When you read Numbers 24:1 do you get a picture of Balaam as a man who is trusting more in God or one who is trying to control matters himself?
- iii. Summarize Balaam's third message in your own words. If the first message is about the Israelites being *chosen* and the second about being *conquerors* what word might describe them in this message? Of the three messages how does this one seem to be the most prophetic?
  - 1. What does Balaam prophecy say will occur in Israel in verse 7?
  - 2. One sign that a prophecy is from God is that it is fulfilled. What happened 300 years after Balaam that validated this message was from God (see 1 Samuel 8:4-9)?
  - 3. Another sign that a prophecy is really from God is that it agrees completely with other scriptures. How do Genesis 17:6, 17:16, & 35:11, and Deuteronomy 17:14–20 show that what Balaam was predicting was not a new idea of his own? Why is it important for Christians today to recognize and accept that all prophecy (teachings) must fully agree with scripture?
  - 4. In what sense is it still a prophecy that remains to be fulfilled (see Matthew 25:31 and Revelation 19:15)?
- iv. In the last phrase of the third message God gives Balaam the same message he gave Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3. Why is this particularly important? What is God referring to when he speaks these words to Abraham? This is an important promise that is repeated often in the Bible. Read these passages: Genesis 15:5, 18:18, 22:18, 26:4, 28:4, 28:14, Deuteronomy 9:5, Psalm 72:17, Isaiah 19:25, Acts 3:25, and Galatians 3:8. How does this promise apply to you personally?

**e. Thursday – Balak's Response**

- i. Read Numbers 24:10-14.
- ii. How is Balak's response to Balaam different after the third message than it had been for the first two messages?
  - 1. Beyond just the repeated refusal (inability) of Balaam to do what Balak wanted him to do, what was there in Balak's third message that would probably have angered Balak?
  - 2. Given what Jesus taught about our thoughts being the foundation from which sin grows, what might we conclude about his attempt to curse Israel? Do you think he had reached a point where he deserved to be cursed?
- iii. How does Balaam's response to Balak's anger compare with what he had told the king earlier? Why do you think Balaam is so consistent in the face of Balak's anger and implied threat ("flee")?

- iv. After seeing Balaam's interactions with Balak and reading his messages it is easy to view Balaam as a "good guy". Read Numbers 31:7-16, Joshua 13:22, Jude 11, and Revelation 2:14. Given these passages what must we conclude about Balaam's true nature?
- v. In the New Testament another sorcerer tries to use money to obtain what only God can give. Read the account of Simon in Acts 8:9-24. In what ways are the two accounts similar?

f. **Friday: – Balaam's Fourth Message**

- i. Read Numbers 24:14-19.
- ii. How does Balaam introduce his fourth message in a fundamentally different manner than the first three? Who is initiating this message?
- iii. Balaam begins this message as he does the third. What purpose do the first two verses accomplish? Who is responsible for the message that is being presented?
- iv. How does Balaam show that this is a prophecy about future events in verse 17?
- v. A star was a common reference to royalty in ancient times. How does its use here provide a direct bridge to Jesus Christ (see Matthew 2:2)
- vi. Verses 17-19 describe a conquering king.
  - 1. Who would have been the near-term fulfillment of such a prophecy?
  - 2. To what extent does the prophecy fit with your understanding of Christ's kingship? How does 1 Corinthians 15:24–26 clearly show Jesus in this role?
  - 3. What can we conclude about Israel's relationship with her enemies based on this fourth message?

g. **Saturday:**

- i. Finish the week's study by reading Matthew 4:8-10 and 28:18-20.
- ii. In what way was Jesus' third temptation like the temptation Balaam experienced? How was His response different from the response of Balaam?
- iii. In quoting Deuteronomy 6:13 what two acts does Jesus say God commands us all to do? How do those acts relate to the Great Commission? Is it possible to obey the Great Commission without obeying Deuteronomy 6:13?
- iv. Much has been written and taught about making disciples, but Jesus seems to boil it down to a single core principle in His prayer for us in John 17:20-23. What does Jesus say is necessary?

**4. Application:**

- a. Spend time this week thinking, and praying, about the role money plays in your spiritual life. Are there cases where money plays an inappropriate role in how and why you do things? If the Holy Spirit convicts you of any be sure to confess and repent.
- b. The King is coming – and it could be today. Are you confident that you have done everything He would want you to do to prepare? Have you been as serious about making disciples as the reality of the situation the lost will find themselves in demands?

**5. Prayer Points:**

- a. Adoration – Psalms 8:1 and 29:1-2
- b. Confession – Proverbs 28:13 and 1 John 1:8-10
- c. Thanksgiving – Psalms 95:1-2 and 100:4-5
- d. Supplications –Matthew 21:22 and John 16:19