

The “Doctrine of Balaam”

A Perfect Illustration of When It’s Wrong to Pray

What is the Doctrine of Balaam?

In the letters to the seven *ecclesias* in Revelation, Chapters 2 and 3, Jesus Christ chastened the church in Pergamos by saying the following:

“But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac (Balak) to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.” Rev 2:14

To what was Jesus referring when He spoke of the “doctrine of Balaam”?

Balak was the King of Moab who had called for Balaam, the “prophet”, to come to Moab to curse the Israelites who had camped on the border of Moab on their way to Canaan.

Balaam means “devourer,” and some linguists add “of the people.” Balak’s name also suggested destruction. Balak means “devastator.” Balaam lived at Pethor thought to have been located 400 miles north of Moab on the banks of the Euphrates River, twelve miles south of Carchemish, an important ancient city located on what is now the border between Turkey and Syria. It was the site of an important battle between the Babylonians and the Egyptians, mentioned in the Bible in Jeremiah 46:2.

It is believed that Balaam was from a long line of celebrated diviners, and that he and his family had made their living for several generations cursing or blessing people. It was their family trade. They passed it down, giving their sons names that went along with it, like “Devourer.” Their family reputation had traveled throughout the entire region. Balaam was internationally renowned and may have been considered the best soothsayer in the known world. If anyone wanted

someone cursed, they would send for a *baru* (a diviner or astrological priest) from Balaam's family, since they were the best in the world at cursing people.

Balaam was very well read and knowledgeable in all the methods of cursing and blessing, as well as all the world's gods and goddesses. He probably knew all about what was going on with Israel. He also probably knew of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or at least had heard things about them from local stories or legends as they were important people in their own right. Abraham, a direct descendant of Shem, had come through the area where Balaam and his family lived. Abraham's father, Terah, had died in Haran, a city in Mesopotamia not too far from Pethor where Balaam and his family lived.

Pethor was located on the Euphrates River, slightly South of Carchemish. Abraham probably passed through Pethor on his way to Canaan from Haran.

Also, once Abraham arrived in Canaan, he and his descendants had sent back to the area of Haran for wives: Rebecca for Isaac, and Rachel (and Leah) for Jacob. Thus, the Israelites had ties with the area where Balaam and his family lived.

These *baru* – regardless of the requester's religion or political beliefs, would, for a price, say their incantations, make their sacrifices to some particular god, and then curse the other party in the name of that god.

The Israelites, now approximately 3 million in number, were camping on the borders of Moab. Can you imagine the fear of the King of a nation of small villages looking down from the top of a high hill on a mass of people 3/4 the population of Los Angeles (now 3.8 million)?

Balak, the King of the Moabites, was afraid of these masses of Israelites because he knew that they had conquered the Moabites northern neighbors, the Amorites in a bloody battle. Balak knew the history of the Israelites and how they had been protected by their "god" so he wanted to get the "best in the business" to pronounce curses on the Israelites. And that was Balaam!

"And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites.

And Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they were many: and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel.

And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, No shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And Balak the son of Zippor was King of the Moabites at that time.

“He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people, come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me.

Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land: for I know that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed. Numbers 22:2-6





And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand; and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak.

And he said unto them, Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the Lord shall speak unto me: and the princes of Moab abode with Balaam.

And Balaam Prayed

And God came unto Balaam, and said, What men are these with thee?

And Balaam said unto God, Balak the son of Zippor, King of Moab, hath sent unto me saying,

“Behold there is a people come out of Egypt, which covereth the face of the earth:” come now, curse me them; peradventure I shall be able to overcome them, and drive them out.

And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt NOT go with them; thou shalt NOT curse the people; for they are blessed.

Balaam HAD the answer to his prayer - but not the one he wanted

“And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak, Get you into your land: for the Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you.

And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Balak, and said, Balaam refuseth to come with us.

But Balak, King of Moab, would NOT take “No” for an answer

And Balak sent yet again princes, more, and more honourable than they.

And they came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus saith Balak the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me:

“For I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people

Balaam’s greed and vanity were aroused by the promise of “great honour”

And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.

Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know **what the Lord will say unto me more**.

Balaam already KNEW God's answer from the first time he prayed, but he wanted the honor and the gold and silver from Balak. So Balaam decided to ask God - - - again!

Balaam Prayed a SECOND Time: This was a BIG mistake!

When we already know the answer from God, but insist on praying again for an answer, it is obvious that we don't like the first answer from God – and would like a different answer – usually one that is more pleasing to us.

The Israelites in the wilderness asked repeatedly for flesh food because they “loathed” the manna. (“We loathe this light bread.”) Finally, God gave them what they wanted – Quail: flesh food - to eat “until it came out their nostrils” and thousands of them died, many “with the flesh still between their teeth” (text).

What is God's Wrath?

God defines His “wrath” in Romans, Chapter 1:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness:

Because that which may be known of God is manifest to them; for God hath shown it unto them...

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain (futile) in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

“Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things

Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves.”
Romans 1:18-24

God's “wrath” means that He gives us over to our own desires, as He did with Balaam. God had already given Balaam a clear and direct answer. But Balaam

lusted after money and fame, so Balaam asked God a second time, hoping for a different answer.

And Balaam did get a different answer – but one that would eventually lead to his death!

God's second answer to Balaam was (in present-day language), "You obviously want to go, even though I have told you not to go. If you insist on going – then go. But it will turn out very badly. You should have listened to my first answer."

And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do.

"And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab.

God reveals His wrath against Balaam

"And God's anger was kindled because he (Balaam) went: and the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his donkey, and his two servants were with him.

"And the donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and the donkey turned aside out of the way, and went into the field: and Balaam smote the donkey, to turn her into the way.

The donkey was obviously smarter than Balaam. The donkey's eyes were opened to see the angel with the blazing sword. But Balaam was blinded by his desire for money and fame.

But the angel of the Lord stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side.

And when the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she thrust herself against the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall: and he smote her again.

And the angel of the Lord went further, and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left.

And when the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the donkey with a staff.

And the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou has smitten me these three times?”

Balaam was so focused on fame and fortune that it didn't even dawn on him that his donkey, a mere animal, was actually speaking to him! Balaam even answers his donkey, still not grasping the fact that he's conversing with an animal.

And Balaam said unto the donkey, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee.

As a diviner and soothsayer, Balaam should at least have recognized his good luck in having a real “talking donkey” that could have provided him a fortune. Instead he wanted to kill the donkey because his pride was damaged: “You have mocked me.”

And the donkey said unto Balaam, Am not I thy donkey, upon which thou has ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? Was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he (Balaam) said, Nay.

Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand; and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face.

And the angel of the Lord said unto him, wherefore hast thou smitten thy donkey these three times? Behold, I went out to be an adversary unto thee because thy way is perverse before me.

And the donkey saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive.

The donkey that Balaam had hit three times had actually saved his life. And God again tells Balaam, through the angel, that he (Balaam) is going against the will of the Lord.

And Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, I have sinned: for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it be evil in thine eyes, I will get me back again.

And the angel of the Lord said unto Balaam, Go with the men: but only the

word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.

God gives Balaam one more chance to do what is right with the Lord. But, as we shall see, Balaam fails God so miserably that it will result in his death.

“And when Balak heard that Balaam was come, he went out to meet him unto a city of Moab, which is in the border of Arnon, which is in the utmost coast.

And Balak said unto Balaam, Did I not earnestly send unto thee to call thee? Wherefore camest thou not unto me? Am I not able indeed to promote thee to honor?

And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I am come unto thee: have I now any power at all to say anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that shall I speak.

And Balaam went with Balak, and they came unto Kirjath-huoth (meaning a city of streets).

And Balak offered oxen and sheep, and sent to Balaam, and to the princes that were with him.

And it came to pass on the morrow, that Balak took Balaam, and brought him up in the high places of Baal, that thence he might see the utmost part of the people.

In Chapter 23 of Numbers, we are told that Balaam offered many animal sacrifices: seven oxen and seven rams on seven different altars. Then God came to Balaam, and put a word in Balaam’s mouth, and said,

“Return unto Balak, and thus thou shalt speak

And he returned unto him, and lo, he stood by his burnt sacrifice, he and all the princes of Moab.

And Balaam took up his parable and said, “Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel.

How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? Or how shall I defy, whom the lord hath not defied?

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.

Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!

And Balak was obviously angry. Balak had hired Balaam to curse Israel, but instead Balaam had blessed Israel.

And Balak said unto Balaam, What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and behold, thou hast blessed them altogether.
Numbers 23: 5-11

Balak took Balaam to two additional different places to see the multitudes of Israel and asked him to curse Israel. But again, both times, only blessings came out of Balaam's mouth.

But ever anxious to please Balak, Balaam devised a different strategy in hopes of gaining honor, gold and silver from Balak. And unfortunately, this plan worked.

We are told in Numbers 31:14 that

“. . . through the counsel of Balaam” the Israelites committed trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor (the mountain of Moab) and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord.”

Balaam counseled Balak to act neighborly and extend peace to Israel; to send his young women and temple prostitutes among the Israelite men and let nature take its course. Balaam informed Balak that the God of Israel detests idolatry, and the Israelites could curse themselves before God with their own sin. Once they began to fraternize with the pagan Moabite women they would begin committing fornication, indulging their flesh, and soon drift into the Moabite temples of Baal, where they would commit idolatry and become a curse to God.

Balak took Balaam's advice, simply stepped aside and allowed "peace" to take its course. The seductive foreign policy worked flawlessly and became a famous satanic strategy throughout the Bible.

Within a very short time, Israel degraded its own position from unconquerable to self-defeated and completely vulnerable. Not only did they drive off the protective presence of God through their fornication, but they also brought an insatiable plague upon themselves through their idolatry. Twenty-four thousand

men had already died from the plague, and they seemed to be no letting up, despite their cries of repentance. Sin had conquered what Satan's scheming could not.

And Israel Abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.

And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.

And Israel joined himself unto Baal-Peor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.

A prominent Israelite named Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites took a Midianitish woman named Cozbi, the daughter of Zur, who was the head over his Midianite people, into his tent. These were very prominent people in their respective nations, and this act was done brazenly, in front of every body:

“... in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.” Numbers 25:6

Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, who was the son of Aaron the priest, saw it and rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand.

“And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.” Numbers 25:8

Subsequently, the Israelites declared war against the Midianites for their seduction and idolatry.

And they warred against the Midianites, , , and they slew the five kings of Midian: and Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword.” Numbers 31:7,8

And that is the end of the saga of Balaam, a man who should not have prayed when he already knew God's answer.

Never pray when you already know God's answer

Recently I was contacted by a young man, a friend of mine, who wanted my advice on a job offer he had received. In this economy he had had trouble

finding work, not uncommon these days. He has a job, but it's fairly low pay. He has been offered a job, at a much higher pay, but there are two things that concern him: 1) the job is with a private contract company for Homeland Security, and 2) he will have to carry a gun.

He told me he has been praying for God to give him an answer about whether or not to accept the job.

But as I counseled him, there is no need to pray. He already knows the answer. He is a Christian and he knows that God does not approve of killing. When one carries a gun, he is ready and willing to kill, and thus is no longer under God's protection. It's not a difficult decision to make if you want to follow God's will. The Bible says, "Thou shalt not kill."

But he wants to keep praying because he wants a different answer than he already knows is the right one.

The Doctrine of Balaam continues

The Doctrine of Balaam has continued for thousands of years, particularly in the Organized Church of today.

Balaam was hired by King Balak of Moab to curse the Israelites. God would not allow Balaam to curse Israel. Every time he tried to curse Israel, God put blessings for Israel in his mouth.

Balaam wanted to please Balak who had hired him. So he set up a plan to incite God's anger toward the people of Israel. He advised Balak to send some of the most beautiful women in his kingdom into the Israelite camp to draw the men of Israel into unclean and idolatrous practices.

Balaam knew that if the Israelites adopted pagan ways God would not bless them as He had done previously. And so, the Israelites let the pagans influence them, instead of standing firm on the sure Word of God and His Holy Law.

Satan has used this 'trick' time and time again. The ecclesia at Pergamos had committed spiritual fornication in allowing people to compromise the Word of God – allowing pagan ideas to be adopted into the ecclesia (Rev 2:14). Both 2 Peter 2:15 and Jude 11 also refer to people who have rebelled against God and are compared to Balaam.

Many churches of today have accepted pagan practices, believing they are "Christian" – including:

- a) Worship on the pagan day of the sun god – Sunday – rather than “the Lord’s day,” the Saturday Sabbath.
- b) Belief that the spirit of the dead remains alive and goes to heaven – Spiritualism
- c) Promotion of Harry Potter books teaching Christian children and young adults (and others) how to become witches and cast spells – outright Witchcraft
- d) Belief in a killer God – who will torture His children in hellfire either forever, or for “as long as they deserve.” This is the doctrine of the pagan god Molech.
- d) Promotion of homosexuality – something God clearly forbids in His Word, yet there are those who distort the Bible immensely in order to feign God’s approval.
- e) Believing that the days of creation were long periods of time, rather than six literal days, “And the evening and the morning were the first day. . . second day. . . , third day. . . etc. – thus paving the way for a belief in evolution, and the earth being billions of years old.
- f) Believing that dinosaurs were “pre-historic” and thus never lived with man. Yet Job 40:15-19 says:
- “Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee; he **eateth grass** as an ox (vegetarian)
- Lo now, his strength is in his loins, and his force is in the navel of his belly.
- He moveth his **tail like a cedar** (cannot be an elephant or a hippopotamus)
- His bones are as strong pieces of brass; his bones are like bars of iron
- He is the chief of the ways of God.”
- g) Even many Christian book publishers print Bibles that contain maps showing the route of the Israelites during the Exodus as NOT going through the Red Sea, but around it.

h) Some churches don't even believe that Jesus died on the cross, nor that the Bible is inerrant.

Unfortunately, the serious apostasy in Christianity proves that the "Doctrine of Balaam" is alive and well in the "Christian" churches of today!