

The Death of the Righteous

Numbers 22-25

Num 23:10 Who can count the dust of
Jacob or number even a fourth of Israel?
Let me die the death of the righteous,
and may my final end be like theirs!"

The Setup

The wanderings in the wilderness are ending. The Israelites are about to enter the promised land which will happen later under Joshua's leadership. The Israelites have conquered Og king of Bashan and Sihon king of the Amorites.

The Players

Midianites - Abraham's descendents by
Ketura (after Sarah's death)

Moabites - Lot's descendents

Balak - king of the Moabites

Balaam - prophet, presumably of Midian

Num 22:1 Then the Israelites traveled to the plains of Moab and camped along the Jordan across from Jericho.

Num 22:2 Now Balak son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites,

Num 22:3 and Moab was terrified because there were so many people.

Indeed, Moab was filled with dread because of the Israelites.

Num 22:4 The Moabites said to the elders of Midian, "This horde is going to lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field." So Balak

son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time,

Num 22:5 sent messengers to summon Balaam son of Beor, who was at Pethor, near the Euphrates River, in his native land. Balak said: "A people has come out of Egypt; they cover the face of the land and have settled next to me.

Num 22:6 Now come and put a curse on these people, because they are too powerful for me. Perhaps then I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land. For I know that whoever you

bless is blessed, and whoever you curse is cursed."

Num 22:7 The elders of Moab and Midian left, taking with them the fee for divination. When they came to Balaam, they told him what Balak had said.

Num 22:8 "Spend the night here," Balaam said to them, "and I will report back to you with the answer the LORD gives me." So the Moabite officials stayed with him.

Num 22:9 God came to Balaam and asked, "Who are these men with you?"

Balaam does a good thing here. He seeks God's counsel - and example for us.

2Ti 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

2Ti 3:17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

We have God's counsel today. We should consult the Bible.

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Num 22:9 God came to Balaam and asked, "Who are these men with you?"

Num 22:10 Balaam said to God, "Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, sent me this message:

Num 22:11 'A people that has come out of Egypt covers the face of the land. Now come and put a curse on them for me. Perhaps then I will be able to fight them and drive them away.'"

Num 22:12 But God said to Balaam, "Do not go with them. You must not put a curse on those people, because they are blessed."

Num 22:13 The next morning Balaam got

up and said to Balak's officials, "Go back to your own country, for the LORD has refused to let me go with you."

Num 22:14 So the Moabite officials returned to Balak and said, "Balaam refused to come with us."

Num 22:15 Then Balak sent other officials, more numerous and more distinguished than the first.

Num 22:16 They came to Balaam and said: "This is what Balak son of Zippor says: Do not let anything keep you from coming to me,

Num 22:17 because I will reward you handsomely and do whatever you say. Come and put a curse on these people for me."

Num 22:18 But Balaam answered them, "Even if Balak gave me all the silver and gold in his palace, I could not do anything great or small to go beyond the command of the LORD my God.

Num 22:19 Now spend the night here so that I can find out what else the LORD will tell me."

Balak figures everyone has their price, and it begins to work on Balaam.

Balaam had already sought God's counsel and God gave him an answer. That should have been enough.

Balaam says a good thing, but the lure of silver and gold starts to influence him. He wants a different answer from God!

Searching the scriptures is the proper thing to do to find an answer to a question.

However, when we find the answer we must accept it.

It is not right to continue looking, hoping to find a different answer to justify our sinful behavior.

Balaam was deluded.

2Th 2:9 ...the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,

2Th 2:10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

2Th 2:11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false,

2Th 2:12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

If we are determined to believe something, God will allow us to believe it.

Balaam wanted to believe that God had changed His mind.

Num 22:20 That night God came to Balaam and said, "Since these men have come to summon you, go with them, but do only what I tell you."

Num 22:21 Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey and went with the Moabite officials.

Num 22:22 But God was very angry when he went, and the angel of the LORD stood in the road to oppose him. Balaam was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him.

Why was God angry? Didn't he tell Balaam to go?

Parents will sometimes “give in” to their children even though they know better.

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Num 22:22 But God was very angry when he went, and the angel of the LORD stood in the road to oppose him. Balaam was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him.

Num 22:23 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand, it turned off the road into a field. Balaam beat it to get it back on the road.

Num 22:24 Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path through the vineyards, with walls on both sides.

Num 22:25 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, it pressed close to the wall, crushing Balaam's foot against it. So he beat the donkey again.

Num 22:26 Then the angel of the LORD moved on ahead and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn, either to the right or to the left.

Num 22:27 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, it lay down under Balaam, and he was angry and beat it with his staff.

Num 22:28 Then the LORD opened the donkey's mouth, and it said to Balaam, "What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?"

Num 22:29 Balaam answered the

donkey, "You have made a fool of me! If only I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now."

Num 22:30 The donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden, to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?" "No," he said.

Num 22:31 Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with his sword drawn. So he bowed low and fell facedown.

Num 22:32 The angel of the LORD asked him, "Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me.

Num 22:33 The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If it had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now, but I would have spared it."

Num 22:34 Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned. I did not realize you were standing in the road to oppose

me. Now if you are displeased, I will go back."

Num 22:35 The angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but speak only what I tell you." So Balaam went with Balak's officials.

Num 22:36 When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the Moabite town on the Arnon border, at the edge of his territory.

Num 22:37 Balak said to Balaam, "Did I not send you an urgent summons? Why didn't you come to me? Am I really not

able to reward you?"

Num 22:38 "Well, I have come to you now," Balaam replied. "But I can't say whatever I please. I must speak only what God puts in my mouth."

Num 22:39 Then Balaam went with Balak to Kiriath Huzoth.

Num 22:40 Balak sacrificed cattle and sheep, and gave some to Balaam and the officials who were with him.

Num 22:41 The next morning Balak took Balaam up to Bamoth Baal, and from there he could see the outskirts of the

Israelite camp.

At this point, the angel and the talking donkey have evidently convinced Balaam to repent.

Next chapter.

Num 23:1 Balaam said, "Build me seven altars here, and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me."

Num 23:2 Balak did as Balaam said, and the two of them offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

Num 23:3 Then Balaam said to Balak, "Stay here beside your offering while I go aside. Perhaps the LORD will come to meet with me. Whatever he reveals to me I will tell you." Then he went off to a barren height.

Num 23:4 God met with him, and Balaam said, "I have prepared seven altars, and on each altar I have offered a bull and a ram."

Num 23:5 The LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth and said, "Go back to Balak and give him this word."

Num 23:6 So he went back to him and found him standing beside his offering, with all the Moabite officials.

Num 23:7 Then Balaam spoke his message: "Balak brought me from Aram, the king of Moab from the eastern mountains. 'Come,' he said, 'curse Jacob for me; come, denounce Israel.'

Num 23:8 How can I curse those whom God has not cursed? How can I denounce those whom the LORD has not denounced?

Num 23:9 From the rocky peaks I see them, from the heights I view them. I see a people who live apart and do not consider themselves one of the nations.

Num 23:10 Who can count the dust of Jacob or number even a fourth of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and may my final end be like theirs!"

Num 23:11 Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I brought you to curse my enemies, but you have done nothing but bless them!"

Num 23:12 He answered, "Must I not speak what the LORD puts in my mouth?"

Num 23:13 Then Balak said to him, "Come with me to another place where you can see them; you will not see them

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Num 23:12 He answered, "Must I not speak what the LORD puts in my mouth?"

Num 23:13 Then Balak said to him, "Come with me to another place where you can see them; you will not see them

all but only the outskirts of their camp.
And from there, curse them for me."

Num 23:14 So he took him to the field of Zophim on the top of Pisgah, and there he built seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

Num 23:15 Balaam said to Balak, "Stay here beside your offering while I meet with him over there."

Num 23:16 The LORD met with Balaam and put a word in his mouth and said, "Go back to Balak and give him this word."

Num 23:17 So he went to him and found

him standing beside his offering, with the Moabite officials. Balak asked him, "What did the LORD say?"

Num 23:18 Then he spoke his message: "Arise, Balak, and listen; hear me, son of Zippor.

Num 23:19 God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?

Num 23:20 I have received a command to bless; he has blessed, and I cannot

change it.

Num 23:21 "No misfortune is seen in Jacob, no misery observed in Israel. The LORD their God is with them; the shout of the King is among them.

Num 23:22 God brought them out of Egypt; they have the strength of a wild ox.

Num 23:23 There is no divination against Jacob, no evil omens against Israel. It will now be said of Jacob and of Israel, 'See what God has done!'

Num 23:24 The people rise like a lioness; they rouse themselves like a lion that does

not rest till it devours its prey and drinks the blood of its victims."

Num 23:25 Then Balak said to Balaam, "Neither curse them at all nor bless them at all!"

Num 23:26 Balaam answered, "Did I not tell you I must do whatever the LORD says?"

Num 23:27 Then Balak said to Balaam, "Come, let me take you to another place. Perhaps it will please God to let you curse them for me from there."

Num 23:28 And Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, overlooking the wasteland.

Num 23:29 Balaam said, "Build me seven altars here, and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me."

Num 23:30 Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

God has already spoken twice on this subject at this point.

Balak will try again.

How many times do we keep trying to obtain God's approval for something amiss in our lives?

Num 24:1 Now when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he did not resort to divination as at other times, but turned his face toward the wilderness.

Num 24:2 When Balaam looked out and saw Israel encamped tribe by tribe, the Spirit of God came on him

Interesting.

Did the sacrifices have anything to do with God speaking through Balaam, or did God just do that anyway?

Balaam blesses Israel a third time.

Num 24:10 Then Balak's anger burned against Balaam. He struck his hands together and said to him, "I summoned you to curse my enemies, but you have blessed them these three times.

Num 24:11 Now leave at once and go home! I said I would reward you handsomely, but the LORD has kept you from being rewarded."

Num 24:12 Balaam answered Balak, "Did I not tell the messengers you sent me,
Num 24:13 'Even if Balak gave me all the silver and gold in his palace, I could not do anything of my own accord, good or bad, to go beyond the command of the LORD--and I must say only what the LORD says'?"

Num 24:25 Then Balaam got up and returned home, and Balak went his own way.

Balak and Balaam parted ways, but that is not the end of it.

Remember that silver and gold?

Num 25:1 While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, Num 25:2 who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate the sacrificial meal and bowed down before these gods.

Num 25:3 So Israel yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor. And the LORD's anger burned against them.

Later, regarding Midianite women...

Num 31:14 Moses was angry with the officers of the army, the captains of thousands and the captains of hundreds, who had come from service in the war.

Num 31:15 And Moses said to them, "Have you spared all the women?

Num 31:16 "Behold, these caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation of the LORD.

Balaam could not pronounce a curse on Israel, so he found another way to be of service to Balak.

Balaam didn't counsel Israel, he evidently counseled Balak!

“Entice Israel to abandon their God with your women. Now, about my fee...”

Rev 2:12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write...

Rev 2:14 ...I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit *acts of immorality*.

2Pe 2:13 ... They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you,

2Pe 2:14 having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children;

2Pe 2:15 forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the *son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

Despite some of the good things that Balaam said, he evidently was lured into a life of unrighteousness.

The scriptures do not speak favorably of him.

Evidently, the thought of silver and gold began to gnaw at Balaam from early on.

Jas 1:14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.

Jas 1:15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

Num 23:10 Who can count the dust of Jacob or number even a fourth of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and may my final end be like theirs!"

Num 23:11 Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I brought you to curse my enemies, but you have done nothing but bless them!"

Num 23:12 He answered, "Must I not speak what the LORD puts in my mouth?"

Num 23:13 Then Balak said to him, "Come with me to another place where you can see them; you will not see them

Balak wanted to “die the death of the righteous”.

What about “living the life of the righteous”?

How many are willing to do that?

1Co 6:9 Or do you not know that the
unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom
of God?

1Pe 4:18 AND IF IT IS WITH
DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS
SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE
GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER?

Mat 5:19 "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 5:20 "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Rom 10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for *their* salvation.

Rom 10:2 For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.

Rom 10:3 For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.

Rom 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Rom 1:17 For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS *man* SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

Rom 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

Mat 6:31 "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?'

Mat 6:32 "For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

Mat 6:33 "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

2Co 5:21 He made Him who knew no sin
to be sin on our behalf, so that we might
become the righteousness of God in Him.

Are you willing to become righteous and
live a righteous life?

2Co 5:21 He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Are you willing to become righteous and live a righteous life?

You will die.

Will you die the death of the righteous?