

Balak and Balaam, Part 2

Numbers 23

Group ¹	C	V	Description
The Prophecies of Balaam	23	1-3	Balaam instructs Balak to prepare burnt offerings
		4-10	God gives Balaam a message for Balak
		11-12	Balak is upset by God's message through Balaam
		13-24	Balak asks Balaam to inquire of God again a second time
		25-26	Balaam is steadfast in speaking what God tells him to speak
		27-30	Balak asks Balaam a third time to curse Israel

Reflections

In this chapter we find Balaam preparing to receive God's message to Balak regarding the Israelites. Balak is upset over Balaam's continual blessing of Israel instead of the curse he had requested and hoped for. Each time Balaam blesses Israel, as God told him to do, Balak takes Balaam to another place a little farther from the main Israelite camp, hoping that Balaam will be able to curse them from there. We have two of the messages in this chapter and the third is in the next. Let's consider the text.

Questions

1. What does Balaam tell Balak to do to prepare to receive God's message concerning Israel? (v 1-3)
2. What does Balaam promise to speak to Balak upon his return? (v 3)
3. What does Balaam tell God when he meets with Him and how does God respond? (v 4-5)
4. How do we know that Balak did as Balaam instructed him while he went to meet with God? (v 6)
5. How does Balaam describe how they got to this point? (v 7)
6. What does Balaam say regarding Israel and God? (v 8)
7. What is the description of Balaam gives of the national attitude and the size of the group when he looks out over them? (v 9-10)
8. How does Balak react to Balaam's message from God? (v 11)
9. What does Balaam remind Balak of in response? (v 12)
10. Why does Balak ask Balaam to go with him to another place? (v 13)
11. Where does Balak take Balaam to and what did they do? (v 14-15)
12. What does Balaam do after the offerings are made? (v 15-17)
13. How does Balaam describe God as he begins to relate God's message to Balak? (v 18-19)
14. What does Balaam remind Balak of with regard to speaking for God? (v 20)
15. How does Balaam describe how God sees Israel? (v 21)

¹ (NASB) "Group" column from the headings in the NASB text.

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16. How does Balaam describe God's relationship with Israel? (v 22)
17. What does Balaam say about Israel and its future? (v 23)
18. How does Balaam describe Israel's fighting prowess? (v 24)
19. What is Balak's reaction to Balaam's message and what does Balaam remind him of, again? (v 25-26)
20. What does Balak then propose that they do, a third time? (v 27)
21. Where did they go and what did they do when they got there? (v28-30)

Conclusion

It is interesting that three times Balak had sent groups to Balaam to convince him to come and curse Israel. Three times Balaam was hindered along the way by an angel sent from God while going to Balak. Now, in this chapter, three times Balak asks Balaam to curse Israel of which two are recorded here and the third in the next. This brings to mind the analogy, stubborn as a mule. Balak refuses to believe the message that Balaam is delivering from God about His desire to bless and to watch over the Israelites as they move forward on their journey.

There and Then: Here and Now

Answer the questions below as you reflect on your own life and this part of our study²: *my LOG vs others SPECK*. Here are some possible responses I've identified from the text that might apply to anyone.

S - Are there *sins* for me to avoid or confess?

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P - Are there *promises* from God for me to claim?

•

E - Are there *examples* for me to follow or avoid?

•

C - Are there *commands* for me to obey?

•

K - How has this passage increased my *knowledge* about God / Jesus / Holy Spirit?

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2 *Navigator Bible Study Handbook* (The Navigators), with additions & Matthew 7:1-5.

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Response to Questions

1. Balak was to prepare seven altars for burnt offerings and a bull and a ram for each altar. Next he was to remain beside the burnt offerings while Balaam went to another place to meet with God.
2. He promises to speak whatever the Lord tells him to speak.
3. "I have set up the seven altars, and I have offered up a bull and a ram on each altar." God gives a message to Balaam for Balak.
4. When Balaam returned he found Balak standing beside his burnt offering, as he was instructed.
5. He recounts how Balak brought Balaam from Aram to Moab and asked him to curse Israel for him.
6. "How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? And how can I denounce whom the LORD has not denounced?" Balaam cannot curse or denounce Israel because God has not cursed or denounced them.
7. Balaam describes the Israelites as "people who dwell apart, and will not be reckoned among the nations." In other words, they are a people who will have their own nation and be among the people groups within another nation. Balaam also describes them as being large in number, so large that they cannot be counted.
8. He becomes angry because Balaam blesses Israel instead of cursing them.
9. Balaam reminds Balak that he has to be careful to speak what the Lord tells him to speak.
10. Balak thinks that if Balaam would be standing in another place where he could only fringe of the Israelite camp that he would be more inclined to curse Israel there.
11. Balak takes Balaam toward the north of their current location to the "field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah."³ There he built seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on them and then waited while Balaam again inquired of the Lord.
12. Balaam goes off by himself again to meet with God and to see if He has a message for him regarding Israel. God meets with him and he returns to proclaim the message to Balak.
13. God is not like a man, who can lie or need to repent. Instead, what He has said He would do, He will do it!
14. Balaam can only speak what God tells him to speak.
15. God see no misfortune or trouble for the Israelites because God is with them and there is a king among them.
16. It was God that brought them out of Egypt and He will fight for them like a wild ox will use its horns to defend and attack its enemies.
17. Balaam acknowledges that there is no omen or divination against Israel. Instead, at the proper time, it will be told to them what God has done for them.
18. They are like a lioness or lion that prepares itself to pounce on its prey.

3 (Barnes)

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19. He asks Balaam to neither bless them or curse them. Balaam responds in the form of a question, that he cannot speak anything but what God tells him to speak.
20. Balak want to travel farther north still to a place where they might find a place where God would allow Balaam to curse Israel from there.
21. The traveled further north to Peor, or Mt. Nebo, overlooking the desert to the east and again Balak built seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on each of them.

Key Words: Old Testament, Torah/Pentateuch, Numbers, Balak, Balaam



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