

BALAAM



Passages to Study: Numbers 22, 23 and 24

Read with the class: Numbers 22:2,5,6,12,13,15,20-35; 23:1-3,5-11

Texts for memorization:

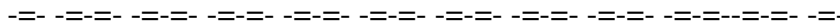
Younger: - Numbers 23:10

Older - Numbers 23:10



OBJECTIVES: To show that:

1. Whoever desires to “die the death of the righteous” must prepare beforehand in this present life by accepting Christ Who is the Life.
2. No one can serve two masters.
3. The love of money can blind one’s eyes to the greater gain to be found in obeying and serving God.
4. God has plans for His people that no human effort can change.
5. God protects His own people from dangers of which they are totally unaware.



SCENE No. 1. VISUAL AIDS: First stage: Balaam’s house with figures of Balak’s messengers and their gifts. Second stage: Replace these figures with more important messengers and their gifts of increased value.

DEVELOPMENT:

- Nearing the end of their pilgrimage, the children of Israel camp in the plains of Moab, facing the place where they will cross the Jordan River.
- Israel’s victory over the Amorites is known in the neighbouring country of Moab.
- Balak, king of Moab, is very afraid for he knows his army is no match for that of the Israelites.
- Balak is unaware that Israel has no intention whatever of going into battle with the Moabites. (Deut. 2:9)
- Balak is a superstitious man who believes a curse pronounced against Israel will assure him of a victory over them.
- Balak the king sends messengers for Balaam, a prophet who lives in Mesopotamia (a word that means “between two rivers”), a country a long distance away from Moab.
- Balaam is promised a reward if he is successful in pronouncing a curse on Israel.
- Though a pagan prophet, Balaam has some knowledge of the true God, and the Lord makes use of him to reveal His purposes as to the future of Israel.

Cmt. As Creator, God can use whomsoever He pleases in the fulfillment of His purposes in the world.

Apl. Use this point to emphasize the sovereignty of God which is one reason to trust in Him.

- Balaam asks for time to consult Jehovah. (Num. 22.9)
- As a prophet, Balaam knows that Israel is a people blessed by God. He has no need to wait for nightfall to consult God about placing a curse on His people.
- Balaam wants the riches that Balak promises. Behind his delay in replying to the messengers is his hope of gaining a reply from God, favorable to his plans.

Apl. We ought not to think that we can involve God in our doubtful enterprises. God will have nothing to do with sin.

- Balaam rejects Balak’s first invitation because God forbids him to go. When the second group of messengers arrives, he tries once again to get permission to go with them.

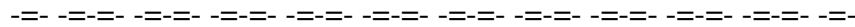
Cmt. This successive sending of “ambassadors”, each more important than the previous, is similar to what is done in diplomatic circles today.

- They talk to him of the riches and honors he can gain, things which are of great interest to Balaam.

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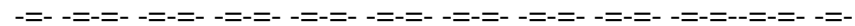
- He knows that God’s will is that he not be involved in this affair, however Balaam takes advantage of God’s permission and leaves for Moab.
- Balaam’s motivation is pointed out in 2 Peter 2:15 and 16.
- Cns.** The love of riches is the root of all evil. (1Tim. 6:10)
- Cmt.** God shows much patience to people who knowingly take a road contrary to His will. He allows them to do so knowing they will find hindrances that should make them turn back.
- Sug.** Teenagers, when they find themselves involved in a problem, often reason mistakenly saying, “But God could have stopped me when I was getting away from Him”. God has given each person the freedom to choose, making each one personally responsible.
- God’s Word contains all that is needed to guide people into the pathway of righteousness. By taking heed to what it says, sinful mistakes are avoided. See Phil. 1:9-11.



SCENE No. 2. VISUAL AIDS: Scene showing the road to Moab, divided into three sections with figures of: **a)** Balaam riding the animal and not seeing the angel ahead, **b)** Balaam striking the animal (on two occasions) and **c)** Balaam kneeling before the angel who has a drawn sword in his hand.

DEVELOPMENT:

- The angel’s appearance was a theophany in which God appears in visible form to man.
- Cmt.** In the Old Testament a theophany was a manifestation of God in some form by which the person received a revelation from Him. With Balaam, He is identified as “the angel of the Lord”. At other times God revealed Himself through physical elements, such as wind and fire. (1Ki.19)
- Even the ass, a stubborn animal, shows greater humility than does the wilful prophet. He also has better vision than has the “man whose eyes are open.” (Num.24:3)
- The animal is given the ability to speak and reprove the prophet.
- Even reproof from such an unusual source does not seem to surprise the prophet until he sees the angel.
- Only then does Balaam realize the mistaken road in which he is traveling.
- Apl.** God is merciful and does not want Balaam to commit such a serious error.
- Having confessed his sin, Balaam is allowed to continue his journey but only after hearing God’s warning repeated.
- Cmt.** God has different ways of turning a person from his sinful ways.
- Sug.** The students should be asked if they have had an experience of being warned not to continue on with a negative or sinful action. The teacher should think of some examples such as a telephone call which interrupts, a message from the Bible that sounds a warning despite the preacher not knowing anything about their problem, or the unexpected arrival of someone or something that hindered their plans, etc.



SCENE No. 3 VISUAL AIDS: On a mountain near the fields of Moab, Balak and his servants, together with Balaam, observe the camp of Israel in the valley below. Add figures of the seven altars which were built as Balaam required.

DEVELOPMENT:

- Balaam and Balak look down over the camp of Israel from each of three different locations.
- Despite Balaam’s desire to gain the riches that were offered him, God cares for His people and Balaam is unable to do anything other than bless them.
- Cns.** Even though God’s people do not know it, there is an enemy nearby who wants to do them harm.

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Lsn. God protects His people even when they are unaware of hidden danger, and therefore have not requested help or protection.

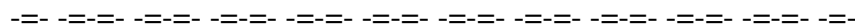
- In His **first “parable”** (Num.23.7-10), Balaam says that “the people shall dwell alone”, emphasizing God’s intention to have a separated people.
- Balaam longs for a death such as the righteous have but is not disposed to live the life of the righteous.
- The second place where they observe the camp of Israel is from the top of Pisga from which Moses will view the Promised Land before he dies.
- In his **second parable** (Num.23:18-24), Balaam stresses the unchanging character of God and His firm intention to bless His people, rendering useless any magic attempted against them.
- Balaam does not lose his desire to gain the prize Balak has promised him. However, he finds it impossible to fulfill the purpose for which Balak brought him to Moab.
- In his **third prophecy** (Num.24:3-9), Balaam speaks to the angry king of Moab about a King who will come forth from Israel.
- Agag was known as a powerful king among the Amalekites and is compared to the coming King. He would be greater than Agag and “his kingdom shall be exalted”.

Cmt. Verse 7, in the first place, is a reference to the reign of David and Solomon but also includes the rule of the Messiah whose kingdom will be a world wide kingdom. (Zech.9:10)

Cns. How could Balaam attempt to curse a people from whom the Saviour of the world would come forth?

- Balaam blesses those who bless Israel and curses those who curse this people. (Num. 24:9)
- Before leaving, having lost the longed for reward, Balaam makes a last prophecy, speaking of a Star that would come out of Jacob and a Sceptre that would rise out of Israel, referring thus to the Messiah God had promised. (Num. 24:17)
- In the end Balaam succeeds in hindering God’s blessing on Israel for a time, but on account of his disobedience, he loses his life. (Num. 31:8)

(Note to the teacher:) Despite the fact that Balak’s promised rewards could not make Balaam curse the people of God, we learn in Num. 31:16 that he was responsible for their corruption, as related in chapter 25.



SCENE No. 4 APPLICATION Figures that represent children doing things that do not please God and others that do the opposite. In the middle of the background a text which reads: “No man can serve two masters”, and below that, “Choose you **THIS DAY** whom ye will serve”. Below this, a large Question Mark (?) with the words, “And You?”

DEVELOPMENT:

- The figures represent different patterns of behaviour and life styles depending upon what a person’s choice has been.
- Balaam wanted to die like the righteous, but during his lifetime he was not willing to live a righteous life.

Apl. Ask the students where they want to go at the end of their lives here on earth. Stress that it is not enough to want to be among the blessed. True faith is seen in the consecrated life. See John 14:23-24.

- Perhaps Balaam did not regard his avarice as a hindrance to the fulfillment of this desire, but his love of money shows that God did not have first place in his life.
- Balaam’s death is referred to in Numbers 31:8, where he is found among the kings who were enemies of God’s people.

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