

A Very Simple Survey of the Old Testament

Sunday School Lessons — by Keith R. Blades

Lesson 32: The Story of Balaam: Numbers 22–24

Comprehension Questions & Answers

Q1. Who was Balaam, and why did King Balak send for him?

Answer: Balaam was the top false prophet in Satan's system among the nations surrounding Canaan, known for his ability to bless or curse using the powers of the idol gods. King Balak of Moab sent for him out of fear of Israel, wanting Balaam to curse Israel so that the surrounding nations would unite under Moab and drive Israel away (Numbers 22:5-6).

Q2. What happened when Balaam's donkey saw the angel of the LORD, and how did God use this?

Answer: The donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way with a drawn sword and turned aside three times to avoid him. Each time, Balaam beat her in anger. God then miraculously caused the donkey to speak to Balaam — which 'woke him up' — and God opened his eyes to see the angel. Balaam acknowledged his disobedience, and God then sent him on to Balak to deliver His own message instead.

Q3. What were the four messages God sent through Balaam to Balak?

Answer: The four messages declared: (1) Israel is distinctly God's and under His divine protection — no power can stand against her (Numbers 23:1-12); (2) God's plan and purpose with Israel is unchangeable — nothing from within or without can cause Him to change His mind (Numbers 23:13-24); (3) A vision of Israel's future kingdom on earth, blessed and exalted (Numbers 23:25-24:9); (4) A prophetic declaration of the destruction God will bring upon all who oppose His plan with Israel (Numbers 24:10-25).

Q4. What role was Satan playing behind the scenes through Balak and Balaam's scheme?

Answer: Satan, as 'prince of this world,' was using Balak (one of his kings) and Balaam (his powerful false prophet) to try to assemble a confederacy of nations against Israel and thwart God's purpose with her. The lesson notes that this was Satan's first major attempt of this kind, and it also foreshadows a future time when God will permit Satan to actually assemble such a confederacy against Israel — which God Himself will then destroy.

Q5. What is the deeper significance of the story of Balaam beyond the miracle of the talking donkey?

Answer: It is the record of Satan's first major attempt to oppose God's purpose with Israel through his strength as 'prince of this world.' God used the entire situation to send a clear

message back to Satan and his nations: nothing — no confederacy of kings, no false prophet, no cursing — will ever thwart His plan and purpose with His people Israel.

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