

God's Everlasting Covenant presents The Error of Balaam

But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts, they too will perish. They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you. With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed - an accursed brood! They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness. But he was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey - a beast without speech - that spoke with a man's voice and restrained the prophet's madness. (2 Peter 2:12-16)

Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion. (Jude 11)

To the angel of the congregation in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. I know where you live - where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me...Nevertheless, I have a few things against you; you have a people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality...Repent therefore! Otherwise I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. (Revelation 2:12-16)

Have you ever wondered about what the error of Balaam is spoken of in the above verses? That's what we're about to discover. Paul, Jude and Yeshua had some pretty severe things to say about those who follow the way of Balaam. Since it appears in both the Tanakh and is mentioned three times in the Messianic Writings, this student believes it a very serious matter. Indeed, it is critical for us to understand what it means.

We first meet Balaam in the book of Numbers 22-25:3. The reader should take the time to stop and read the text in order to become familiar with the passages. If you are already familiar with it, at least open your Bible to the passage.

For some context, remember that the children of Israel had just defeated the King of the Amorites and Og, King of Bashan. They were becoming well known in Canaan and were striking terror in the hearts of their enemies because of their military campaigns. So Balak, King of Moab, sent messengers to summon Balaam. Now Balaam was not a prophet of the Lord like Isaiah, or Jeremiah. Balaam practiced divination, which was a form of witchcraft. So Balak sends the elders of Moab and Midian to ask Balaam to curse the Israelites because he was afraid that the Israelites would become too powerful and destroy his people and land. There was

an offer to pay him, and so Balaam says he will ask the Lord. Now, it is important to mention here that the Moabites didn't have anything to fear from Israel, for they were the people of Lot's descendants, and the Lord had told Moses (Deuteronomy 2:17-19) to pass by Moab and the land belonging to the Ammonites because he had given it to the descendants of Lot, in honor of His covenant with Abraham. So, God comes to Balaam and tells him not to go with the men Balak has sent, and not to put a curse on Israel for they are blessed. Balaam tells Balak's princes that he could not go with them. The men return to Moab. Then Balak sends more men, more numerous and distinguished than the first time. And you can bet the king upped the ante as far as payment was concerned. To Balaam's credit, he initially refuses and restates what he said before...then he tells them to spend the night while he goes and checks with the Lord once more. This time, the Lord tells Balaam to go with them, but only to say what He tells him.

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." Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey and went with the princes of Moab. But God was very angry when he went, and the angel of the Lord stood in the road to oppose him. (Numbers 22:20-22)

Have you ever wondered why the Lord told him to go and then got angry? Well, we can't see what's really going on here unless we look at the Hebrew. The key is the word *with*. In verse 20, the Lord tells him he can go *with* them, but he can't curse Israel. In verse 21, the Hebrew tells us Balaam was losing his resolve and strongly implies he was weakening. And by verse 22, when it says the Lord was very angry with him that he *went*, it was because Balaam was intending to curse Israel. He wanted the money, and he was justifying it in his mind.

The story continues and demonstrates God's unconditional commitment to uphold His covenant. We learn that the Lord will use any means at His disposal to prevent harm coming to His people, Israel, even causing a donkey to speak when Balaam won't listen. Balaam finally repents and agrees that he will only speak what the Lord tells him. Balak proceeds to take Balaam to three different locations, but each time Balaam blesses Israel. Finally, Balaam prophesies about the Messiah, and how His kingdom will one day completely destroy Moab. Balak is furious and sends Balaam home.

Now, that seems to be the end of the story, but there's an important part that the account in Numbers leaves out. We have to go Numbers 31 to find out what else happened before Balaam went home.

They were the ones who followed Balaam's advice and were the means of turning the Israelites away from the Lord in what happened at Peor, so that a plague struck the Lord's people. (Numbers 31:16)

If we read the entire chapter, we find that sometime between the end of Balaam's prophecies or oracles and his return home, he counseled the King of Moab that there was one way to curse Israel, and that was if they sinned. He told him to send in the Moabite and Midianite women to seduce the men away from obeying the Lord. His counsel to Balak was evil, counseling these nations to go against their covenant with God and commit immorality with Moab. And we find in Numbers 25:1-3, that is exactly what happened. God ended up sending a plague and 24,000 people died. Balaam's advice placed a stumbling block before God's people and caused them to turn away from the Lord. This is a grave sin, and we are warned against it by Jude, Paul and Yeshua in the Messianic Writings.

In order to bring into full realization what the error of Balaam is, let's think about the story of Joseph for a minute. Joseph, who was a type of Messiah in the Scriptures, was lost to his father, Jacob, at the hands of his brothers. He was thrown into a well and held captive until a mob of slave traders came by on their way to Egypt. His brothers sold him and then convinced their father that he had been killed by a wild animal. After many years, there is a famine in Canaan and Joseph's brothers make the long journey to Egypt to purchase grain so they can survive. They end up meeting Joseph, and the first time they see him, they don't recognize him. Have you ever thought about why? Because he looked like an Egyptian. The second time, they have to return for more grain and their brother, Judah, who they had to leave the first time for collateral they would return. This time, Joseph pulls off his Egyptian makeup, so to speak, and reveals himself. The parallels to Yeshua's first and second coming are clear. But, may I suggest to you that one of the reasons that Yeshua's brothers don't recognize Him is because He is dressed in Egyptian clothing. Christianity has hijacked the Jewish Messiah. We've 'gentilized' Him to the point that His brothers do not recognize Him. We need to get Yeshua out of his "Egyptian clothing" and present Him as a Jew to His people. The 'church' has cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel today, just as Balaam did.

In the Tanakh, fornication is likened to idolatry, serving other gods. Many Israeli's are atheists today, but many are turned off by the Christian Jesus because so much evil has been done to the Jews in the name of Christianity. From their viewpoint, the Holocaust was committed by Christians. Bush claims to be a Christian, yet he is pushing Israel to break her covenant with the God of Israel by giving away her land. This is placing a stumbling block before the children of Israel. This is the act of seducing Israel to commit adultery and fornication with other

gods by breaking their covenant with Him. If you support a Palestinian state, you yourself are participating with the nations in dividing God's land, which was given to Israel. You are holding to the teaching of Balaam, just like Yeshua said to the congregation of Pergamum in Revelation. This is called 'madness' by Peter.

If you don't believe this, then let's look at another verse in the Tanakh.

I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will enter into judgment against them concerning my inheritance, my people Israel, for they scattered my people among the nations and divided up my land. (Joel 3:2)

The nations are trying to divide the land of Israel today! Our politicians are currently involved in this. This is a big no-no! God will judge America for casting a stumbling block before the children of Israel. Remember also the letter that was sent to Bush by some 50 evangelical churches in 2007 declaring their support for the Palestinian state and dividing the land. This is the error of Balaam. Please understand we are not saying that we should not have compassion for the Palestinians and care about their suffering. But their destiny, like all the nations, will be found by belief in the Jewish Messiah, and by standing alongside the people and land of Israel. We must not be seduced into following the way of Balaam. That is, if we don't want Yeshua fighting against us.

Otherwise I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. (Revelation 2:12-16)

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