



Portion:

Title:

SCRIPTURES

- Numbers 22:2-25:9
- Revelation 2:14
- 2 Peter 2:15-16
- Jude 1:1-16
- Leviticus 20:26
- Acts 24:24-25
- Romans 13:13-14

THE INSIDIOUS PROPHET

- Balaam—Insidious Prophet
- A Few things Against You
- Loved for Wrong Doing
- Perverting God's Grace
- You Should Be Mine!
- Tell the Truth
- Provisions for the Flesh

On June 23rd, 2003, I walked down to the pulpit to receive Salvation. I remember that moment as if two minutes ago. The evening prior to my born-again experience, I had an encounter with an older gentleman who challenged me with a handful of questions regarding my eternity. I had very weak answers, if any at all, mostly in the form of questions. I recall waking the next morning as if I had been in a boxing ring for ten rounds with Mike Tyson. One thing was evidently clear that morning; I knew something was off and I could not shake it. I had to get to know the character of the God to whom this gentleman was referring.

*I recall growing up as a Catholic and my view of God was one of intimidating fear, and I believed that God was confined either within the walls of the Church or in Heaven. I feared that if I stepped out of line, He could, at any moment, strike me with lightning and finish me off. I retell this, not to bring attention to my life, but to introduce today's character, **the insidious prophet, Balaam.***

Balaam had a similar problem, his view of Yahweh was also very wrong! He thought that Yahweh was malleable, one who could be bribed or tempted. Balaam believed that he could convince God to change His mind, to break His own Abrahamic covenant and to, instead, fulfill Balaam's own greedy desires.

Boy was he wrong!

THEME: MAIN SCRIPTURE(S) THAT HAS INSPIRED MESSAGE

Then the people of Israel set out and camped in the plains of Moab beyond the Jordan at Jericho. And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. And Moab was in great dread of the people, because they were many. Moab was overcome with fear of the people of Israel. And Moab said to the elders of Midian, "This horde will now lick up all that is around us, as the ox licks up the grass of the field." ***So Balak the son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time, sent messengers to Balaam the son of***

Beor at Pethor, which is near the River in the land of the people of Amaw, to call him, saying, "**Behold, a people has come out of Egypt. They cover the face of the earth, and they are dwelling opposite me. Come now, curse this people for me, since they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them from the land, for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed.**" So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the fees for divination in their hand. And they came to Balaam and gave him Balak's message. And he said to them, "Lodge here tonight, and I will bring back word to you, as the LORD speaks to me." So the princes of Moab stayed with Balaam. And God came to Balaam and said, "Who are these men with you?" And Balaam said to God, "Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent to me, saying, 'Behold, a people has come out of Egypt, and it covers the face of the earth. Now come, **curse them for me.** Perhaps I shall be able to fight against them and drive them out.'" God said to Balaam, "**You shall not go with them. You shall not curse the people, for they are blessed.**" So Balaam rose in the morning and said to the princes of Balak, "Go to your own land, for the LORD has refused to let me go with you." *Numbers 22:1-13*
ESV

Then the **LORD opened the eyes of Balaam**, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his

hand. And he bowed down and fell on his face. And the angel of the LORD said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to oppose you because your way is perverse before me. The donkey saw me and turned aside before me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, surely just now I would have killed you and let her live." Then Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, ***"I have sinned, for I did not know that you stood in the road against me. Now therefore, if it is evil in your sight, I will turn back."*** ***And the angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but speak only the word that I tell you."*** So Balaam went on with the princes of Balak. When Balak heard that Balaam had come, he went out to meet him at the city of Moab, on the border formed by the Arnon, at the extremity of the border. And Balak said to Balaam, "Did I not send to you to call you? Why did you not come to me? Am I not able to honor you?" Balaam said to Balak, "Behold, I have come to you! Have I now any power of my own to speak anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that must I speak." *Numbers 22:31-38 ESV*

OUTCOME: MAIN TAKEAWAY(S) I AM HOPING FOR PEOPLE

You shall be **holy to me**, for I the LORD am holy and **have separated you** from the peoples, **that you should be mine.** *Leviticus 20:26 ESV*

Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. *They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, **who loved gain from wrongdoing***, but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness. 2 Peter 2:15-16 ESV

After some days Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, and he sent for **Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus**. And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, **Felix was alarmed** and said, "Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you." Acts 24:24:25 ESV

Let's Set the Scene: Portion in a blurb

1. This week's Torah reading tells the story of how Balak hires the occult prophet Balaam to lay a curse on Israel. Balaam meets resistance from God, has a conversation with his donkey and ends up blessing Israel instead of cursing them.
2. **Balak Sends for Balaam:** The entire narrative begins in Numbers 22 when Balak, the king of the Moabites offers to hire a "prophet" to pronounce curses over Israel because he was sick with dread over how powerful they had become. He was

certain they would consume all the resources of his land if they were not somehow stopped.

3. **First Contact:** Balak sends elders from Moab and Midian with the “**diviner’s fee**” to pay Balaam to come to him and to curse Israel, as he is certain that whomever he blesses is blessed, and whomever he curses is cursed.
4. **God tells Balaam:** “You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed.”
5. He tells the elders that Yahweh has not given him permission to go back with them.
6. **Second Contact:** The next day Balak sends “princes” more numerous and more honorable than his previous messengers and tells them to tell Balaam to let nothing hinder him from coming and cursing Israel. He promises Balaam great riches if he would do so!
7. Balaam tells Balak’s entourage that no matter how many riches Balak could offer him, he “could not go beyond the word of Yahweh, to do or say anything outside of Yahweh’s will.” But in surprising fashion he does tell the “more honorable princes” to hang out over night and that he will **go check if Yahweh** has anything different to say.
8. Yahweh must not have been too happy that Balaam has even given this a second thought, so He gives him very specific

instructions that, through a series of supernatural events, will ultimately end with Balaam learning a critical lesson; NEVER second-guess God!

9. Yahweh instructs Balaam to go with the men if they come call on him again, but to include this stipulation; he will deliver ONLY the word which Yahweh speaks.
10. As we witness what happens on Balaam's journey, it would seem that Yahweh needed to teach him a lesson, very likely because he told these men he would go in and inquire of the Lord, again, about Balak's request, even though Yahweh had ALREADY SPOKEN. He should have known that there was no need to ask again.
11. **A Talking Donkey and an Angry Angel:** Yahweh is not happy with Balaam, so he sends an angel to oppose his going. And to reiterate, Yahweh told him to go, apparently as an accommodation for his second-guessing, and as a means to teach him a lesson! The donkey can see the angel with a drawn sword ready to hack Balaam to death. First the donkey turns to go around the angel, then she crushes his foot against the wall on the side of the path, both diversions prompting Balaam to beat the donkey to go forward. The third time the donkey just lays down in response to the angel completely blocking the path forward and Balaam strikes the donkey with his staff.

12. Then the LORD opens the mouth of the donkey, and she asks Balaam, *“What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?”*
13. Balaam answers the donkey, *“Because you have abused me. I wish there were a sword in my hand, for now I would kill you!”*
14. The donkey talks back again to Balaam; *“Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden, ever since I became yours, to this day? Was I ever disposed to do this to you?”* Balaam responds again; *“No.”* This is hysterical. Instead of being awed that a donkey is actually talking in the first place, Balaam engages in an argument and threatens her. He literally is trying to reason with a donkey. So, who is the real jack ass here?
15. It takes a supernatural change in vision for Balaam to see what is going on, so **the LORD opens Balaam’s eyes (like Saul/Paul after his road to Damascus take down)**. Now he sees the Angel (probably the pre-incarnate Messiah) with His drawn sword in hand; and the angel explains how the donkey likely saved him from being killed.
16. Balaam now realizes that this is all because he should have never second-guessed God’s answer in the first place. *“I have sinned, for I did not know You stood in the way against me. Now therefore, if it displeases You, I will turn back.”* Then the

Angel of the LORD said to Balaam, *“Go with the men, but only the word that I speak to you, that you shall speak.”*

17. Balaam goes back to Balak and reports that he can only declare what Yahweh puts in his mouth. And Balak tries to pay him off again.
18. **Balaam’s First Prophecy:** Balak takes Balaam up to the high places of Baal so he can see the extent of Israel.
19. Balaam goes off to seek Yahweh’s word and comes back with this. Balak is begging him to curse Jacob and denounce Israel! But instead this is his proclamation; *“How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? And how shall I denounce whom the LORD has not denounced?”*
20. Balaam declares a blessing over the multitude and magnitude of Israel and Balak is irate. Balaam affirms, *“Must I not take heed to speak what the LORD has put in my mouth?”*
21. **Balaam’s Second Prophecy:** Balak seeks another perspective and asks Balaam to come to a different high place, a vantage point that will not allow him to view the entire extent of Israel’s encampment! Maybe if he only sees part of them he will prophesy something negative over them.
22. Yahweh meets with Balaam and does give him another word, but Balak will not like it! He is told that unlike man, God does not lie. What he has declared is true and He will make good on

His word. He will NOT reverse the blessings. Israel will devour anyone who gets in the way!

23. Balak is distraught and tries to compromise. "Okay, Let's do this instead. Neither curse them, nor bless them!" But Balaam will not relent; he is steadfast and will only speak what Yahweh says.
24. **Balaam's Third Prophecy:** "Let's try yet another spot for another perspective so you can curse them for me!" Balak begs. In that moment Balaam realizes that the truth is actually quite simple; *"It pleased Yahweh to bless Israel"* so he will not seek anymore words to the contrary. He looks out over Israel and **the Spirit of God comes upon him.** And he declares the ultimate blessing. He blesses Israel's dwellings, abundance, and seed of the future. He acknowledges their strength and their certain conquest over nations and their enemies. In the end he says, **"Blessed is he who blesses you, and cursed is he who curses you."**
25. Balak is furious. He was willing to pay Balaam a king's ransom to do his bidding and instead he did the EXACT OPPOSITE. Get out he demands! And Balaam simply reminds him that he told Balak's people right from the start that he would not go beyond what Yahweh tells him!
26. And worse yet, now Balaam tells Balak all that Yahweh has in store for his people and the surrounding area.

27. **Balaam's Forth Prophecy:** *"A Star shall come out of Jacob; A Scepter shall rise out of Israel..."* and batter the brow of Moab; Edom and Seir shall be a possession; Out of Jacob One shall have dominion; Amalek shall perish; and Kain shall be burned.
28. **Israel's Harlotry in Moab:** Even with all the blessings, the portion finishes with Israel committing **harlotry with the women of Moab**; making sacrifices and bowing down to their gods, and eating their unclean foods.
29. The LORD tells Moses to hang the leaders of the people out in the sun to quench His fierce anger. Righteous **judges are told to kill the men who were joined to Baal, and the slaughter begins.**
30. One harlot comes with her Israelite benefactor and is found weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. And Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, rises up and thrusts a javelin through both of them. This righteous action ends the carnage of Yahweh's judgment.
31. If you'd like to see last year's teaching on this Torah Portion, you can see it here: [Flexible Prophets for Hire](#)

STAY AWAY FROM TEMPTATIONS...

1. Curse this People; Fees for Divination

(a) Come now, *curse this people for me*, since they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them from the land, for I know that ***he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed.***" So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the ***fees for divination in their hand***. And they came to Balaam and gave him Balak's message. *Numbers 22:6-7 ESV*

- 1) **Temptation #1–Flattery:** The first topic to take notice of here is that Balak uses flattery as a lure to grab Balaam's attention.
- 2) **Temptation #2–Material Gain:** The second topic to take notice of here is that Balak uses material gain as another lure. Offering Balaam wealth to a degree that his financial situation would be severely impacted was overwhelming seductive to Balaam.
- 3) **Temptations are individualized:** Not everyone is tempted the same way or by the same means. It is tantamount to note though, that everyone, regardless of current Spiritual stature, will be challenged with temptations that are alluring on an individual basis. Temptations are not blanketed, they are individualized.

- 4) What should be your approach when those temptations come near?

MAKE SURE TO BE CONVINCING WHEN TURNING DOWN TEMPTATIONS

1. No don't go! Balak won't take no for an answer!

- (a) God said to Balaam, "***You shall not go with them. You shall not curse the people, for they are blessed.***" So Balaam rose in the morning and said to the princes of Balak, "Go to your own land, for the LORD has refused to let me go with you." So the princes of Moab rose and went to Balak and said, "Balaam refuses to come with us." ***Once again Balak sent princes, more in number and more honorable than these.***
Numbers 22:12:15 ESV

- 1) Balaam returns to relay God's message to Balak's people.
- 2) It is possible that Balaam's reply to their request was not convincing enough to turn them away for good.
- 3) We can surmise that thought by his wishy-washy behavior through the rest of the story.
- 4) Each and every time Balaam was given the opportunity to put an end to the back and forth, he kept stringing Balak along with the hope that Yahweh could be convinced to change His answer.

- 5) How convincing are you in turning down temptations?
- 6) Do you giggle and laugh your way through a subject matter that requires a resounding “NO!”?
- 7) Do you try to keep your feet at the edge of the precipice to prove something? What and to whom?
- 8) When Yahweh tells you “**You Shall Not...**” How do you respond? Do you continue to seek your own desires instead of submitting to His Word?

DON'T BE A PHONY

1. **Perhaps Yahweh will meet me, even when I am doing my own thing!**

(a) And Balaam said to Balak, "Build for me here seven altars, and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams." Balak did as Balaam had said. And Balak and Balaam **offered on each altar a bull and a ram**. And Balaam said to Balak, "Stand beside your burnt offering, and I will go. Perhaps the LORD will come to meet me, and whatever he shows me I will tell you." And he went to a bare height, *Numbers 23:1-3*
ESV

- 1) At the request of Balaam, Balak must have thought they were now getting somewhere with Balak's request. He (Balak) must have perceived in his mind that Balaam was

preparing this offering to a god who could be persuaded, which is not an uncommon belief in sorcery.

- 2) Balaam was a Mesopotamian Baru. A Baru was a priest who would use the entrails of a sacrificed animal to determine the will of their gods. This method is commonly known as hepatoscopy. It is believed by some that this practice was originally initiated by the Chaldeans.
- 3) The practice of hepatoscopy was the reading of the markings in the different chambers of the liver. These markings would be representative of different deities and the priest would be the one to interpret them.
- 4) Balaam takes advantage of Balak's lack of knowledge, and understanding of Yahweh, to portray that he's getting somewhere with what Balak has requested.
- 5) In presenting these altars, Balak feels that:
 - a) #1—he is a part of the bribe process
 - b) #2—there is hope for the request coming to pass
- 6) We can shame Balaam for trying to fool Balak and Yahweh. But how about us? What things do we do in front of others that appear to make us look as if we have some better or stronger relationship with Yahweh, but if we were to peel back the onion, we might find something else?

- 7) If your relationship with Y'shua is in disrepair, don't fake it!
Fix it!
- 8) Don't be like Balaam!

WHEN SEEKING YOUR OWN AGENDA, YAHWEH WILL LET YOU EXERCISE YOUR FREEWILL

1. One way or the other, Yahweh's word will be upheld!

(a) Then Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you stood in the road against me. Now therefore, if it is evil in your sight, I will turn back." And the angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but speak only the word that I tell you." So Balaam went on with the princes of Balak. *Number 22:34-35 ESV*

- 1) The story of Balaam speaking to his donkey is one of the most humorous stories for many different reasons. However humorous it might be, we can get sidetracked by the humor and overlook the deeper meanings of what the Spirit of God conveys through this event.
- 2) After several attempts by Balaam to change Yahweh's conviction as to the fate of the Children of Israel, he finds himself in a face-to-face encounter with the Angel of the Lord. After a physical confrontation with his donkey, he

realizes that the entire event has been prompted by a Spirit who is more powerful than he realized.

- 3) But, after a conversation with the Angel of the Lord, not much changed. Balaam is told **“Go with the men”** thereby establishing an amazing principle not realized by many.
- 4) When you seek your own outcome, even though God has told you many times over not to do it, and told you through several different means, **He will let you go your way because He will not violate your freewill!**
- 5) Our freewill does not trample on His Sovereignty, it can't. So if you are in the camp that stands on that thought, we are at odds with how God's Sovereignty and man's *freewill* work together, one with another.
- 6) In John 1:12 we read, “But as many as **received Him, He gave** to them authority to become the children of God, to those who believe on His name,” *John 1:12 MKJV*
 - a) In “received Him” we can see the **freewill** of the person
 - b) In “He (Yahweh) gave” we can see the **Sovereignty of God** visibly at work.
- 7) So it is not contradictory, it is not controversial, to see how God permits people to exercise their *freewill* in order for them to enjoy Him forever or to forever live separated from Him.

THE DOCTRINE, THE ERROR AND THE WAY OF BALAAM

1. The Teachings of Balaam

- (a) But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the **teachings of Balaam**, who **taught Balak** to cast a stumbling-block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication.

Revelation 2:14 ESV

- 1) In the Book of Revelation 2:14, the Church of Pergamum is chastised for being tolerant of the “Doctrine of Balaam”.
- 2) His name is also invoked in other areas of Scripture.
 - a) As a matter of fact, the name of Balaam is mentioned fifty nine times throughout Scripture, more times than the Disciples and Mary the Mother of Christ.
 - b) His name is referenced in eight different Books of the Bible all in the same essence “Don’t be like Balaam!”
- 3) Balaam was not successful in his plight to curse the Children of Israel. He did however provide insight to Balak as to how to get the Children of Israel to commit sin against God, by falling into sexual immorality with Moabite and Midianite women.
 - a) Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the **way of Balaam**, the son of Beor, **who**

loved gain from wrongdoing, but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness. 2 Peter 2:15-16 ESV

- b) Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to ***Balaam's error*** and perished in Korah's rebellion. These are *hidden reefs at your love feasts*, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever. It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, ***and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.***" ***These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.*** Jude 1:11-16 ESV

- 4) Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.
- 5) But, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. *Romans 13:13-14 ESV*
- 6) If as the Body of Christ we would listen to the advice the Apostle Paul presents in Romans 13:13-14, all of Christianity would be able to advance the Kingdom as God desires it to advance.

CLOSING

1. It is rather evident that the ***Doctrine, the error and the way of Balaam*** can be easily recognized in the writings of Scripture.
2. Moreover, it is easily recognizable in any of our very own behaviors?
3. It is always so much easier to recognize ungodly behaviors in someone else's life rather than our very own. Why is that? I'd venture to say it is because we like judging others rather than judging ourselves first. God desires that His children always walk blameless lives and that the Word they read is not just for passing time, it is not just to have His Spirit reveal a shortcoming and walk away forgetting that which they have seen.

4. The challenge here is that the errors Balaam made can be so easily duplicated, because at the root of it all is greed, Balaam's desire was for a large financial payoff. He negotiated his way into a position he thought he could handle. Is that not also a risk for Christians?
 - a) **Example:** How many times have you witnessed believers (maybe you), start a dating relationship with an unbeliever with the intention to marry that person and in the process bring that person to Salvation?
 - b) I know the comparison might seem different to you at first glance, but at the root they are the same, they are both based on selfishness. If your desire was to see that person saved with nothing to gain on your end, I would agree the example falls flat.
5. In the end, God will allow you to enjoy the fruits of your decision making process; He will allow you to make use of your **freewill**. Don't be amazed, surprised or upset when those decisions backfire if your ultimate reasons are similar to those of ***the Insidious Prophet, Balaam!***
6. ***Seeking His Kingdom.***

QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

1. **Everyone can be tempted by something?**

- A. What tempts you?
- B. What should be your approach when those temptations come near?

2. **Are you wish-washy when facing temptation?**

- A. How convincing are you in turning down temptations?
- B. Do you giggle and laugh your way through a subject matter that requires a resounding “NO!”?
- C. Do you try to keep your feet at the edge of the precipice to prove something? What and to whom?
- D. When Yahweh tells you “**You Shall Not...**” How do you respond? Do you continue to seek your own desires instead of submitting to His Word?

3. **What things do you do in front of others that appear to make you look as if you have a solid relationship with Yahweh?**

- A. What would we really find if we peeled back the layers of the onion?

4. **Do you believe that Yahweh’s sovereignty tramples on your free will?**

- A. Discuss how God’s sovereignty and man’s free will work together.

5. But, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. (Romans 13:13-14)

A. If the Body of Christ heeded this advice from the Apostle Paul, how would it contribute to the advancing of the Kingdom as God?

6. It is always so much easier to recognize ungodly behaviors in someone else's life, rather than our very own.

A. Why is that?

B. The errors Balaam are so easily duplicated; can you recognize a similar pattern of behavior in your own life?

C. Describe and discuss those behaviors and decide what you will change!