

Balaam - No. 1 *by Charles E. Wigg*

Balaam is a very interesting character, and he is held up to us in the scriptures in both Old Testament and New, as a warning. He is a perfect example of the cunning of Satan, and his ability to completely deceive the unsuspecting amongst God's people.

Balaam was a false prophet, and is called a soothsayer in Josh. 13:22. The lexicon says that the Hebrew word means a Diviner, (one who uses and communicates with evil spirits). Yet he claimed that Jehovah was his God, and that he could never go against His command. This should be a solemn warning to us, lest we too are beguiled, as was Eve our mother. (2Cor. 11:3-15.) Balaam's deception was so complete, that even today there are Bible Teachers who still regard him as a genuine, even if a fallen and misguided prophet of God.

Believers tend to be so gullible today, and so many are willing to accept the wild claims made by heretics and presumptuous men as genuine. They tend to judge by their feelings, and by the hallucination of what seems to be the blessing experienced by mass-movements. The only way to test the spirits as we are commanded in 1John 4:1-3. Is to observe what they emphasize. To see whether they constantly exalt the person and work of Christ. Or whether they exalt the person who is their medium of communication. Whether those who make such claims are after money, fame or popularity. The only way to assess whether a thing is right or wrong, is not by what people claim, nor by our feelings but by what the word of God says.

Balak the king of the Moabites was faced with a very great problem: The people of Israel, God's people were camped in the plains of Moab. There was a very great crowd of them, probably more than two millions. They had conquered kings who were more powerful than himself and he knew that he could not defeat them with his army. They were a spiritual people, and he knew that if he were to defeat them, it would have to be in the spiritual realm.

He had heard of a very powerful soothsayer, who had power to cast spells, and to pronounce curses, and his spells and curses seemed to work. Though Balaam lived in Mesopotamia, a very great distance from his own place, his fame as a sorcerer had spread throughout the Middle East. He felt that he must bring him to the land of Moab. He hoped that he would be able to curse the people of God, because only then would he be able to destroy or to conquer them. It seemed also that he was on good terms with the Midianites, who like the children of Moab, were descendants of, or relatives of Abraham. I say this because it says that Moab consulted with the Elders of Midian, as if they were also sojourning with the Moabites.

At their council meeting it was decided to send messengers to Balaam, with the rewards of divination, (witchcraft or black magic), in their hands. They went also with flattering words, (false prophets love to be flattered and applauded), to try to fetch the powerful man to Moab. The Elders of Moab and Midian made the long journey to Pethor, and made their proposal to the great man. Balaam saw the rewards in their hands, and his wicked heart coveted that. He loved the rewards of unrighteousness. However Satan (whose servant he was) must have revealed to him that the people that they wished him to curse, were no ordinary people; they were Jehovah's own people.

Balaam had a craven fear of Jehovah, because he had some knowledge of His awesome power. His fear of Jehovah was not based on love for Jehovah, not even on reverence or respect for the mighty God.. He was afraid of what may happen to him if he dared to go against the word or will of that Almighty God. However he requested the elders to stay overnight, so that he may see if Jehovah would speak to him, and what He may say. Perhaps this was the only time that he had ever sought permission from Jehovah to do anything, but this was a special case, as these were a special people.

During the night God came to Balaam and asked him who the visitors were, and what was their errand. We may ask, "did not God know who they were, and for what purpose they had come?" Of course He did, Israel were His people, He was concerned for their welfare, He had set His love upon them. He had gone after them to redeem

Balaam - No. 1
by Charles E. Wigg

them, which He did by the blood of the Passover Lamb. In asking these questions God was searching the heart of this wicked man, and revealing it for all mankind to see, ever afterwards.

Balaam stressed the importance and dignity of the men and their mission. After all, they were the descendants of Abraham and of Lot. He used all his cunning to try to gain God's permission to go with them, and thus to receive the rewards of unrighteousness which he loved. He also stated that they had come out of Egypt, which he knew to be a pagan land, and which God had already visited in judgement. However to his great disappointment, Jehovah refused to grant the permission that Balaam had hoped for. And revealed to him that those people were under His blessing and protection. Balaam was not to curse them, because God had blessed them.

The following morning, with great disappointment he had to tell the Elders, that God had refused him permission to go with them.. The Elders returned with the message that Balaam had refused to come with them. Perhaps Balaam knew that his refusal would in time reap him a greater reward. It turned out just as he had perhaps hoped. More honourable princes were sent, and a greater number of them. They were instructed to offer even greater rewards, and promotions. Balak in effect was offering a blank cheque to Balaam, a cheque drawn on the Royal Bank of Moab.

Though doubtless greatly attracted by the rewards offered, yet Balaam professed to belong to Jehovah, (which he did not). He told that no matter how great the rewards offered, yet his craven fear of the Almighty Jehovah would prevent him from doing what he really wished to do. Still he would have one more try, to see if Jehovah would relent. No doubt Satan (his master), had heard God pronounce judgement on the unbelieving people when they rebelled at Kadesh Barnea. Perhaps God would change His mind! He clung to that hope.

God came to Balaam again during the night. He did not ask Balaam again who the men were, or for what purpose they had come. But grudgingly gave him permission to go with them, but warned him that he was to say only what God gave him to say, or the consequences would be terrible, for Balaam.

Now Balaam was happy, he rose up in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab. The glitter of the rewards the gold, the honour danced before his eyes, and made him unaware of the terrible dangers that confronted him.