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A Biographical Study of Balaam

Harold Willmington

Liberty University, hwillmington@liberty.edu

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Balaam

CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY

- I. The foolish prophet
 - A. God's warning
 1. Balaam was a Midianite prophet.
 2. He resided at Pethor, a city of Mesopotamia (Num. 22:5).
 3. He was offered a bribe by Balak, king of Moab, to curse Israel (Num. 22:4-8).
 4. He refused the first bribe after being warned by God not to receive Balak's money (Num. 22:9-13).
 5. However, after the second attempted bribe, he was allowed by the Lord to accompany Balak's messengers to Moab (Num. 22:14-20).
 - B. God's wrath
 1. An unseen angel
 - a. En route he incurred the wrath of God and was nearly killed by the angel of the Lord who stood in the pathway with a drawn sword (Num. 22:21-28).
 - b. At first, only his donkey saw the angel and was beaten by Balaam when the frightened animal bolted from the path (Num. 22:22-27).
 2. An unusual animal
 - a. The Lord opened the donkey's mouth, and it protested the brutal treatment handed out by Balaam (Num. 22:28-30).
 - b. Finally, Balaam saw the angel and was severely rebuked by him (Num. 22:31-33).
 - c. Balaam acknowledged his sinfulness, but was commanded by God to continue the trip to Moab (Num. 22:34-35).
- II. The frustrated prophet
 - A. The occasions—Upon meeting Balak, the false prophet from Pethor attempted to pronounce a divine curse upon Israel on six separate occasions (Num. 22:39—24:25; Deut. 23:4-5; Mic. 6:5). Each time, however, when he opened his mouth to utter bad things against Israel, God filled it with blessings instead (Num. 22:39-24:25; Josh. 24:9-10; Neh. 13:2).
 1. First blessing—Numbers 23:7-10
 2. Second blessing—23:18-24
 3. Third blessing—24:3-9
 4. Fourth blessing—24:15-19
 5. Fifth blessing—24:20
 6. Sixth blessing—24:21-24
 - B. The overview—At least six key prophecies were uttered by Balaam during these futile attempts to curse Israel.

1. The aloofness of Israel (Num. 23:9)
 2. The population increase of Israel (Num. 23:10)
 3. The faithfulness and power of God enjoyed by Israel (Num. 23:19-24)
 4. The victories of Israel (Num. 24:8-9)
 5. The coming Messiah of Israel (Num. 24:17-19)
 6. The defeat of the enemies of Israel (Num. 24:20-24)
- III. The filthy prophet—Unable to curse them, Balaam attempted with some success to corrupt them by encouraging sexual relations between Israelite men and Moabite women (Num. 25:1-3; 31:16).
- IV. The fallen prophet—Balaam was eventually killed by the advancing Israelite armies (Num. 31:8).

THEOLOGICAL SUMMARY

- I. Balaam's spiritual condition—Joshua said Balaam had practiced divination, i.e., the occult (Josh. 13:22).
- II. Balaam spiritual example—Three New Testament authors referred to Balaam.
 - A. Peter spoke of the way of Balaam (2 Peter 2:15). He sold his gift to the highest bidder.
 - B. Jude spoke of the error of Balaam (Jude 11). Balaam falsely concluded God could be forced into condemning Israel because of the sins of that nation.
 - C. John spoke of the doctrine of Balaam (Rev. 2:14). In essence, this says if you can't condemn your enemy, then corrupt him.

STATISTICS

Father: Beor (Num. 22:5)

First mention: Numbers 22:5

Final mention: Revelation 2:14

Meaning of his name: "Pilgrim" or "lord of the people"

Frequency of his name: Referred to 61 times

Biblical books mentioning him: Eight books (Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Nehemiah, Micah, 2 Peter, Jude, Revelation)

Occupation: Prophet turned soothsayer (Num. 22-24; Josh. 13:22)

Place of birth: Pethor (Num. 22:5)

Circumstances of death: He was killed with the sword by the Israelites (Josh. 13:22).

Important fact about his life: He attempted to curse Israel (Num. 23-24)