

Series: "BALAAM: The Prophet Who Tried to Stop Christmas"

Numbers 22-24

## Episode 2: Israel's B.C. Christmas "Blessing"

Numbers 22:36—23:30 AAT

December 11 at 11 AM & 7 PM

Second Wednesday in Advent – 2013

Wednesday Services at 11 & 7; Meals at 12 & 6

**Introduction:** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ! Amen! Our midweek Advent series is called... Last week we learned that Balak enticed Balaam to travel a distance of approximately 500 miles to speak a curse on Israel. Balak communicated to Balaam: "I will very richly reward you and do anything you ask me..." (22:17) Also, Dr. Giessler helped us see an important reality about Balaam; *outwardly* he said: "I can only say what the LORD wants me to say," but *inwardly* he was hoping to receive Balak's rich reward (2 Pet. 2:15). Today is Episode 2... Let's see what happens – *curse or blessing!*

1. **Prophets Speak God's Word:** <sup>36</sup> When Balak heard Balaam had come, he went out to meet him at Ar of Moab, near the Arnon, at the end of the border [*"in the extreme northeastern section of the country"* (Kretzmann, 280)]. <sup>37</sup> "Didn't I send men to you to call for you?" Balak asked Balaam. "Why didn't you come to me? Am I really not able to reward you?" <sup>38</sup> "You see I have come to you now," Balaam told Balak. "But can I really say anything? I can say only what God puts in my mouth." // True prophets speak God's Word *without change or compromise*; false prophets *tell people what they want to hear* (2 Tim. 4:3-4)!
2. **Balak Honored Balaam:** <sup>39</sup> Balaam went with Balak, and when they came to Kiriath-huzoth, <sup>40</sup> Balak [*in order to host a banquet in Balaam's honor*] sacrificed cattle and sheep and sent some of them to Balaam and the princes who were with him. <sup>41</sup> The next morning Balak took Balaam and brought him up to High Places of Baal, and from there he could see the nearest part of the people [of Israel]. // Why was that important? The LSB notes that this "*superstitious technique seemed to require that the*

*curse be uttered from a place where the soothsayer [predictor of the future] saw his victims."* (254) Also, Dr. Kretzmann noted that Balak wanted Balaam to "*see only a small part of the people, lest the sight of the entire host would intimidate the soothsayer and keep him from uttering his curses."* (281)

3. **Balaam's False Show:** <sup>23:1</sup> "Build me seven altars here," Balaam told Balak, "and get seven bulls and seven rams ready for me here [*Balaam hoped to persuade the LORD to allow him to speak a curse*]." <sup>2</sup> Balak did what Balaam told him, and Balak and Balaam sacrificed a bull and a ram on each altar. <sup>3</sup> "Stand beside your burnt offering," Balaam told Balak, "while I'm gone [*stand there like a faithful worshiper*]. Perhaps the LORD will come to meet me, and whatever He shows me I will tell you." Then he went to a bare high place. <sup>4</sup> God met Balaam, who said to Him, "I have prepared the seven altars and sacrificed a bull and a ram on each altar." [*But the LORD ignored Balaam's statement: "He wanted nothing of such sacrifices."* (Kretzmann, 281)]
4. **Balaam's First Attempt:** <sup>5</sup> The LORD put a message into Balaam's mouth. "Go back to Balak," He said, "and tell him as follows." <sup>6</sup> He went back to him and found him and all Moab's princes standing by his burnt offering [*Balak had done what Balaam said*]. <sup>7</sup> Then Balaam spoke his message [it seems that even Balaam may not have known what would come out of his mouth; "*his prophetic utterance [may have been] spoken in a state of ecstasy [while in a trance]*" (Ibid)]:
  - a. "Balak got me from Aram, Moab's king from the eastern hills: 'Come and curse Jacob [*a.k.a. Israel*] for me; come and make God angry with Israel.' <sup>8</sup> How can I curse whom God hasn't cursed? And how can I bring His anger on those with whom the LORD isn't angry? <sup>9</sup> I see them from the top of cliffs, I look at them from the hills. They are a people living by themselves, who do not count themselves among the nations. <sup>10</sup> Who can count Jacob—they're like dust; or number Israel—they're like sand? May I die like the righteous; may my end be like theirs." // The LORD was determined to bless Israel *because He loves you, me, and all!* The LORD blessed

Israel to preserve Israel until the Christ, our Savior, was born! At this time they were “living by themselves,” thus they had “nothing in common with [the] idolatrous beliefs and practices” of other nations (Ibid). Even though Israel had sinned, “Balaam acknowledged that the Israelites were righteous in God’s sight,” (LSB 254) even as we are by grace through faith in Jesus!

- b. <sup>11</sup> “What did you do to me?” Balak asked Balaam. “I got you here to curse my enemies, and look, you blessed them.” <sup>12</sup> “Must I not faithfully tell what the LORD puts in my mouth?” he answered him.
5. **Balaam’s Second Attempt:** <sup>13</sup> “Please come with me to another place,” Balak told him, “where you can see them [Balak implying that a better view may work better]. You will see only a part, and not all of them. From there curse them for me.” <sup>14</sup> He took him to the Field of Watchers on top of Pisgah, where he built seven altars and sacrificed a bull and a ram on each altar. <sup>15</sup> Then Balaam told Balak, “Stand here by your sacrifice while I go to meet Him over there.” <sup>16</sup> The LORD met Balaam and gave him a message to tell, and He added, “Go back to Balak and tell him this.” <sup>17</sup> He came to him and found him standing by his sacrifice, and Moab’s princes with him. “What did the LORD say?” Balak asked him. <sup>18</sup> Then he spoke his message:
- a. “Come, Balak, and listen; Hear me, Zippor’s son. <sup>19</sup> God is not a man who lies or a mortal who changes His mind. When He says something, will He not do it? When He promises, will He not keep it? [People change their promises, but not the LORD! There is a parallel between His Divine faithfulness and unchangeableness! We change because we are unfaithful, so we need to be saved!] <sup>20</sup> You see, I was told to bless--He has blessed, and I can’t change it. <sup>21</sup> No sorrow is in store for Jacob; He sees no misery for Israel [“...the Lord [had] found no criminal wickedness, no moral and spiritual rottenness of a kind that would be followed by a curse...” (Kretzmann 282)]. The LORD their God is with them, and His royal majesty is among them. <sup>22</sup> When God took them out of

Egypt, they had the strength of a wild bull. <sup>23</sup> There can be no omen against Jacob nor incantation against Israel. Now it is said of Jacob and of Israel: ‘What has God done!’ <sup>24</sup> What a people! They [the descendants of Israel] stand like a mature [full grown] lion and have the bearing of a lion that doesn’t lie down till it eats the prey and drinks the blood of the slain.” // “In short, Israel, with the true God on his side, was invincible... The words of blessing given Judah (Gen. 49:9) were hereby transferred to the whole people.” (Ibid.) Jesus Himself is the ultimate fulfillment – as in our stained glass window!

- b. <sup>25</sup> Balak told Balaam, “If you won’t curse them, then don’t bless them!” <sup>26</sup> “Didn’t I tell you,” Balaam answered Balak, “I must do everything the LORD says?” // Most people would put these words in this order: blessing, nothing, curse. We want God’s blessing, but we would certainly choose nothing before a curse. But we have a problem: *There is no in between!* Jesus said: “He who is not with Me is against Me...” (Mat 12:30 NAS)
6. **Balaam’s Third Attempt:** <sup>27</sup> “Come,” Balak told Balaam, “I’ll take you to another place; perhaps God will think it’s right if from there you curse them for me.” [Balak was spiritually blind; he could not comprehend God’s Word (1 Cor. 2:14)!] <sup>28</sup> So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, which overlooks the wasteland [“with an unobstructed view over the entire country, also the wilderness.” (Ibid.)]. <sup>29</sup> “Build me seven altars here,” Balaam told Balak, “and get seven bulls and seven rams ready for me here.” <sup>30</sup> Balak did what Balaam told him, and he sacrificed a bull and a ram on each altar.

**Conclusion:** So what’s going to happen? Balak is afraid of Israel, *thus willing to pay any price to have them cursed!* Furthermore, Balaam is greedy for money, *thus wanting to please Balak!* So will Balaam succeed in stopping Christmas? *Please join us next Wednesday for the exciting conclusion! Amen!*