

Balaam’s Strange Prayer

Numbers 23:10

INTRODUCTION:

- A. A man with a curious mixture of good and evil.
1. Balaam’s name is mention 59 times in the Bible . . . Three times in the NT
 - a. Peter speaks of false teachers who “have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam.” **2 Peter 2:15**
 - b. Jude peaks of backsliders who "have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit" (**Jude v. 11**).
 - c. To the church at Pergamos Jesus revealed in **Revelation 2:14** that they had some members who held the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality.”
 2. **REVIEW THE STORY OF BALAAM.** Numbers 22-24
- B. **Numbers 23:10** – *“Who can count the dust of Jacob, Or number one-fourth of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, And let my end be like his!”*
- C. It is very possible that one’s prayer life resembles very little of one’s daily life.
- D. Such is the case with Balaam.
- E. Balaam’s prayer is strange in the sense that it was so different from his life.
- F. Let’s examine a couple points Balaam made in his prayer.

THE PRAYER ITSELF WAS A VERY GOOD PRAYER

- A. It was a realistic prayer.
1. It acknowledged the reality of death.
 2. **Psalm 90:10** – “The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.”
- B. It was an informed prayer.
1. Many know death is coming, but fail to see the difference between the death of a righteous man and a sinner.
 - a. **Hebrews 9:27** – “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.”
 - b. **Matthew 10:28** – “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”
 2. Any informed person would want to die the death of the righteous

Revelation 14:13 – “Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, ‘Write: ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.’”
- C. It expressed the most important concern a person can have.

1. We often ask for many things, some not too important.
2. **John 8:21** – “Then Jesus said to them again, ‘I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come.’”
3. **Mark 8:36-37** – “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

THE PRAYER WAS STRANGE BECAUSE HE WANTED TO DIE THE DEATH, BUT DIDN’T WANT TO LIVE THE LIFE

- A. He had the wish, but not the will. **James 2:14-17** – “What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. ”
- B. He had the desire, but not the determination. Matthew 19:16-26
- C. He wanted to be a saint in heaven, but didn’t want to live as a saint on earth.
- D. He prayed for the reward of the righteous, but “loved the wages of Unrighteousness.” **2 Peter 2:15** – “They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.”
- E. He prayed for riches in heaven, but his eyes were on the riches of the world.
 1. **Jude 11** – “Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.”
 2. **Matthew 6:19-21** – “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”
- F. He prayed for what God could give him, but wanted what Balak had to offer More. **Matthew 6:24** – “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”
- G. He prayed that in death he might be counted with the righteous, but in life, he Was willing to be numbered with the wicked.
- H. He prayed for himself to be saved, but caused others to be lost. **Numbers 31:16** – “Look, these women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD.”
- I. His death came from the hands of those he was sent to curse. **Numbers 30:16** - They killed the kings of Midian with *the rest of* those who were killed —

Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. **Balaam the son of Beor they also killed with the sword.**”

CONCLUSION:

- A. Balaam spoke then . . . But in retrospect I wonder what he might have been thinking afterwards. **What came out of his mouth did not come out of his heart.**
1. I know what people are saying behind my back: "There goes Balaam, the best prophet money can buy!" But it could be worse: They could be talking about how a four-legged creature made a donkey out of its two-legged rider! (22:7,22-31)
 2. On my recent assignment in Israel, of course, I wasn't paid a cent. Talk about sheer frustration! There I was, standing on the hills of Jordan, looking out over the Israelite camp on the Plains of Moab. My assignment seemed simple enough: Pronounce a curse on Israel. But that was far easier said than done! When I opened my mouth to blast out against the "chosen nation," instead of curses I heard words of blessing come forth! Well, I may have been frustrated, but those who had hired me were absolutely furious! (Numbers 22-24)
 3. But all is not lost. I was able to instigate some sexual involvement between some Israelite men and Moabite women. While I couldn't curse them, I did manage to corrupt them! In fact, rumor has it that more than 20,000 Israelites were killed by their God for this little escapade. Not a bad day's work for a prophet who never got paid! (Numbers 25:1,9; 31:16; Revelation 2:14)
 4. But I'll have to admit to being a little worried; things are just too quiet around here. What if Israel survives all this? What if they destroy Moab as I unwillingly predicted they would? Worse still, what if they come looking for me? (31:8)
 - a. **Numbers 30:16** - They killed the kings of Midian with *the rest of* those who were killed — Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. **Balaam the son of Beor they also killed with the sword.**”
 - b. **Joshua 13:22** – “”In addition to those slain in battle, **the Israelites had put to the sword Balaam son of Beor** who practiced divination.”
- B. **Spiritual lessons from Balaam:**
1. God has many ways of humbling us when we stubbornly refuse to do his will. (Numbers 23:22-30).
 2. We should not let the love of money cause us to misuse our God-given abilities (2 Peter 2:15; Jude 11).
 3. When Satan and his servants fail to defeat us one way, they may attack us on another front (Numbers 24:10; 25:1-3; 31:16; Revelation 2:14).

4. When the wicked call you they generally have evil intentions for you.
5. Live the life of the righteous and you will be prepared to die the death of the righteous and be positioned to receive the reward of the righteous.

C. Balaam’s was a strange prayer, but a very common one.

D. We can’t live wrong and die right . . . We can’t ignore Christ now and find Him favorably after later.

F. To die a Christian, we must live as a Christian . . . And I hope you are doing that.

G. God’s Plan for Man’s Salvation

Sermon idea from Steve Higginbotham