

Title: "How shall I curse whom God has not cursed?"

Text: Numbers 23:1-12

INTRODUCTION

1. Balaam
 - a. He was chastised by the Angel of the LORD
 - b. His words to Balak

And Balaam said to Balak, "Look, I have come to you! Now, have I any power at all to say anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that I must speak."
Numbers 22:38

2. Balak
 - a. He still hoped that Balaam would curse Israel for him
 - b. He took Balaam up to the high places of Baal to observe the extent of the people

THE WORSHIP OF BALAK AND BALAAM

¹ *Then Balaam said to Balak, "Build seven altars for me here, and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams."*

² *And Balak did just as Balaam had spoken, and Balak and Balaam offered a bull and a ram on each altar. ³ Then Balaam said to Balak, "Stand by your burnt offering, and I will go; perhaps the LORD will come to meet me, and whatever He shows me I will tell you." So he went to a desolate height. ⁴ And God met Balaam, and he said to Him, "I have prepared the seven altars, and I have offered on each altar a bull and a ram."*

Numbers 23:1-4

1. Elaborate and costly worship was offered by Balak and Balaam
 - a. Balak was to build seven altars
 - b. He was to prepare seven bulls and seven rams

- c. Balak and Balaam offered a bull and a ram on each altar
 - d. Balak was to stand by his burnt offering and wait
 - e. Balaam would go to a desolate height, perhaps God would meet him
2. The silence of God in response to the worship offered
- a. Balaam spoke to God about the worship that was offered
 - b. But there was no acknowledgement of the worship offered at all
 - c. This silence from God indicates that this worship was not accepted
3. Reasons why this worship was not accepted
- a. The whole system of worship was wrong
 - b. God would not accept worship just because it is elaborate or costly
 - c. God would not accept worship from those who are wicked or perverse in their way

THE LORD PUT A WORD IN BALAAM'S MOUTH

⁵ Then the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, "Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak."⁶ So he returned to him, and there he was, standing by his burnt offering, he and all the princes of Moab.

⁷ And he took up his oracle and said...

Numbers 23:5-7

1. The LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth

"Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak."

Numbers 23:5

- a. The word put in Balaam's mouth was not told to him ahead of time
- b. The word would only be given when he returned to Balak

2. He took up his oracle
 - a. This oracle was the word of the LORD given to him
 - b. He could only take it up
 - c. He had no power to say anything outside the word of the LORD

Numbers 22:38

A WORD OF BOUNTIFUL BLESSING

1. The disclaimer from Balaam (personal)

⁷ And he took up his oracle and said:

*“Balak the king of Moab has brought me from Aram,
From the mountains of the east.
‘Come, curse Jacob for me,
And come, denounce Israel!’*

⁸ “How shall I curse whom God has not cursed?

And how shall I denounce whom the LORD has not denounced? Numbers 23:7-8

- a. Balak had brought him here to curse Israel
 - b. He now saw that he could not curse whom God has not cursed
 - c. He could not denounce Israel when God had not denounced them
2. The declaration of blessing (from the LORD)

*⁹ For from the top of the rocks I see him,
And from the hills I behold him;
There! A people dwelling alone,
Not reckoning itself among the nations.*

*¹⁰ “Who can count the dust of Jacob,
Or number one-fourth of Israel?*

Numbers 23:9-10a

- a. With physical sight, Balaam saw Israel's present state
- b. With prophetic sight, Balaam caught a glimpse of Israel's future
 - i. Israel would be blessed on its own
 - ii. It would have no need to reckon itself among the nations
 - iii. Israel would conquer many nations, leaving "dust" in its trail
 - iv. It would be mighty and numerous
 - v. Not even one-fourth of Israel can be counted!

3. A personal statement from Balaam

*Let me die the death of the righteous,
And let my end be like his!"*

Numbers 23:10b

- a. He wanted to die the death of the righteous
- b. He wanted to be among the "blessed" in death
- c. But this was not to be for Balaam
- d. He would continue in wicked ways until his death cf. Numbers 31:8

4. Balak's response to Balaam

Numbers 23:11-12

- a. Balak saw that Balaam had declared a bountiful blessing upon Israel from God
- b. Balaam's response
 - i. He had no power to speak on his own cf. Numbers 22:38
 - ii. He could only speak what the LORD had put in his mouth

RELEVANT LESSONS FOR US

1. Worship
 - a. Wrong systems of worship must be rejected
 - b. God will not accept worship from those who are wicked and perverse in their way
2. The Word of God
 - a. To learn to receive the Word of God as it is
 - b. Do not add to it, nor take from it cf. Deuteronomy 4:2
3. The Blessing of God
 - a. Once God has blessed, no one can curse or denounce it
 - b. When God blesses, we have every reason to be confident of the future