

SHARE THE BIBLE LESSON

WEEK 36

God blesses Israel through Balaam

Numbers 22:1–24:25



DAY 1

Balak wanted Balaam to curse Israel • Numbers 22:1–40

READ

Numbers 22:1–40

EXPLAIN

The truth of Numbers 22:1–40

Balak, the king of Moab, was afraid that Israel would conquer Moab (22:4). He sent messengers to the false prophet Balaam, asking him to curse the Israelites, but Balaam refused (22:5–6, 13). So Balak sent additional messengers with the promise of enormous riches (22:15–17). That night, God gave Balaam permission to go, but He didn't give permission to curse the people. However, God became angry with Balaam as he went on his journey (22:22). When the angel of the LORD came to confront Balaam, only Balaam's donkey knew the angel was there. Three times the angel of the LORD appeared to his donkey, and each time Balaam beat his donkey (22:23–27). When Balaam finally saw the angel, the angel told him that the donkey had saved his life by turning aside these three times (22:33). The angel repeated God's command to go to Moab and told him to speak only what God commanded (22:35). Upon his arrival, Balaam confessed, "Have I now any power of my own to speak anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that must I speak" (22:38).

ASK

1. Why did Balak want Balaam to curse Israel?
He was afraid that Israel would conquer Moab (22:4).
2. What did Balak promise Balaam in exchange for cursing Israel?
Balak promised Balaam enormous riches (22:15–17).
3. What did God tell Balaam he could speak?
Balaam could speak only what God commanded.

DISCUSS

1. Talk about the wickedness of accepting a bribe.
2. Discuss the dangers of hanging around those who desire to do evil.

DAY 2

God elected Israel and promised to bless Israel •
Numbers 22:41–23:12

READ

Numbers 22:41–23:12

EXPLAIN

The truth of Numbers 22:41–23:12

At the beginning of the next day, Balaam and Balak went to a high place. From here Balaam could see all the people of Israel (22:41). God met Balaam and “put a word in Balaam’s mouth” (22:5). Balaam told Balak exactly what God had said to him. Balaam could not curse Israel, because they were God’s **elect**, His chosen people (Exod 19:5–6). Instead, Balaam’s first oracle blessed Israel by reaffirming God’s choice. Israel was without equal among the nations (23:9). Balaam was so impressed with the magnificence of God’s blessing of Israel that he desired to be blessed like Israel (23:10). Unfortunately, Balaam did not die the death of the upright; he was killed by the sword as part of Israel’s revenge against the Midianites (31:8). Balaam is like those who see God’s blessing in the Church and enjoy Christian fellowship for a time but never truly repent of their sins and therefore never share in God’s blessing. It is terribly sad when such people depart from the faith, but the truth is they never were saved (Heb 6:1–8; 1 John 2:19).

ASK

1. Why was the king of Moab afraid of Israel?
The king of Moab, Balak, had seen how Israel had destroyed the Amorites in Numbers 21:21–35.
2. What did Balaam’s first oracle teach Balak about God?
God elected Israel and promised to bless Israel (22:41–23:13).
3. What did Balaam think about God’s blessing?
Balaam was so impressed with the magnificence of God’s blessing of Israel that he desired to be blessed like Israel (23:10).

DISCUSS

1. Explain that God chose Israel as His special people.
2. Describe the type of person Balaam illustrates.

DAY 3

God would make Israel to be a strong nation • Numbers 23:13–26

READ

Numbers 23:13–26

EXPLAIN

The truth of Numbers 23:13–26

Balak asked Balaam to try and curse Israel again, but this time from a different location. Balak offered sacrifices, and Balaam waited alone for God (23:15–16). Balaam returned after God had told him what to speak and again blessed the people. Although Balak had been trying to persuade God to change His mind concerning Israel, Balaam said, “God is not a man, that

He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent” (23:19). God’s blessing of Israel was irrevocable. There was nothing Balaam could do to reverse God’s blessing; Balaam’s sorcery and divination were of no help against the true God (23:20, 23). The LORD was with Israel as her king (23:21b). Anyone opposed to Israel would be as helpless as a lion’s prey because the LORD Himself was with Israel, strengthening the nation (23:24). After Balaam blessed Israel for the second time, Balak was infuriated (23:25).

DAY 3 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

ASK 

1. What did Balak want Balaam to do?
Curse the people of Israel.
2. What did God teach Balak and Balaam through Balaam's second oracle?
God would not change His mind. He would make Israel to be a strong nation (23:14–26).
3. Could Balak or Balaam do anything to stop God's blessings?
No. God does not lie or change His mind (23:19).

DISCUSS 

1. Make a list of the ways that God is different from man.
2. Explain how God's unchanging character is a blessing to all those who love Him.

DAY 4

God would give Israel both prosperity and victory • Numbers 23:27–24:14

READ 

Numbers 23:27–24:14

EXPLAIN **The truth of Numbers 23:27–24:14**

Balak stubbornly clung to the hope that God would change His mind, urging Balaam to try to curse Israel again (23:27). After Balaam looked up and saw Israel, the Spirit of God came upon him (24:2). Revealing the extent of His power, the Spirit of God actually spoke through the false prophet (24:3–9). Again Balaam blessed Israel. He proclaimed the beauty of Israel, likening Israel to valleys, gardens, cedars and aloes planted by the Lord (24:5–6). Balaam also prophesied about Israel's future king, whose "kingdom shall be exalted" (24:7). God had already promised Israel a king (Gen 17:6–8; 35:11; 49:10), and Balaam affirmed these promises, which ultimately are fulfilled in Jesus. Balaam also affirmed God's promise that whoever blessed Israel would be blessed and whoever cursed Israel would be cursed (24:9; cf. Gen 12:3). Balak understood that Balaam had just pronounced God's curse on him and warned Balaam to flee (24:10). However, before he left, Balaam had three more prophecies to utter from the LORD (24:20–24).

ASK 

1. Did Balak continue to try to get God to change his mind?
Yes. He urged Balaam to try to curse Israel a third time (23:27).
2. What did God teach through Balaam's third oracle? (1) *Balaam proclaimed the beauty of Israel;* (2) *prophesied about Israel's future king (24:7); and* (3) *affirmed God's promise that whoever blessed Israel would be blessed and whoever cursed Israel would be cursed (24:9; cf. Gen 12:3).*
3. What was Balak's response to Balaam's third oracle?
Balak was angry and warned Balaam to flee (24:10–11).

DISCUSS 

1. Discuss why it was pointless for Balak to try to get God to change His mind.
2. Describe how God's promise that whoever blesses Israel will be blessed and whoever curses Israel will be cursed has been proven accurate through history (24:9; cf. Gen 12:3).

DAY 5

God would raise up the Messiah from Israel to rule the nations •
Numbers 24:15–25

READ

Numbers 24:15–25

EXPLAIN

The truth of Numbers 24:15–25

Balaam had prophesied of the coming king in his third prophecy, and he returned to that theme in his last prophecy (24:17). Although the king was not yet present, Balaam looked to the king's arrival in the future (24:17a). He referred to the king by two metaphors, the “star” and the “scepter.” God already had promised that “the scepter shall not depart from Judah” (Gen 49:10). Like the scepter, the star was a symbol of royalty. The future king would have dominion over Moab, Edom, and Seir (24:19). Balaam was ultimately looking forward to Jesus, “the bright morning star” (Rev 22:16; cf. 2:28; 2 Pet 1:19). Jesus will fulfill this prophecy when He returns and establishes His millennial kingdom (Rev 19:11–20:6). Balaam also prophesied the defeat of the surrounding nations (24:20–25). The ever faithful God would not withhold His blessing from Israel; likewise, just as God promised, those who cursed Israel would be cursed themselves.

ASK

1. What theme did Balaam return to in his fourth oracle?
The theme of a coming king.
2. Do you think Balaam could curse Israel?
No. What God has blessed, no man can curse. God used Balaam to bless Israel.
3. What did God promise through Balaam's fourth oracle?
God would raise up the Messiah from Israel, and He would rule the nations (24:15–25).

DISCUSS

1. Discuss what the “star” and the “scepter” represent about the coming King.
2. Read Revelation 19:11–21:8 and note the placement of the millennial kingdom among future events.