

The Sin of Balaam

(Numbers 22:1 - 25:3; Numbers 31:16; Jude 1:11, II Peter 2:14-22; Revelation 2:12-17)

1. What has just happened prior to the story of Balaam? (21:21-35)

The Israelites have just defeated the Amorites & Bashan. Balak the King of Moab is afraid, so he sends money to Balaam through tribal leaders, to come and curse the Israelites.

2. Why does Balaam refuse to go to Balak the first time? (22:3,6)

He actually fears God. God tells him not to curse the Israelites for they are blessed, and Balaam conveys that to Balak's messengers.

How does Balak get Balaam to come after all? (22:15-16)

He sends more money through more distinguished leaders. Balaam knows he can't do anything contrary to God's command, but he's tempted by the money, so asks God again (just in case).

Why does God allow Balaam to go? (22:20-22)

God looks for love more than service, and He sees that deep down what Balaam really loves is money. He sometimes answers prayers but sends leanness of the soul with it. (Psalm 106:15)

3. What happened with the donkey and why did God allow it this way? (22:22-35)

(i) The angel of the Lord, visible only to Balaam's donkey, blocked the way, so the donkey turned off into a field.

(ii) The angel of the Lord hedged them in in a narrow path with a wall on either side, so that the donkey jammed Balaam's foot against the wall.

(iii) The angel of the Lord blocked the donkey from turning anywhere else, so the donkey just lay down. When Balaam started beating his donkey, she spoke to him. Balaam is so messed up in his frustration doesn't seem to be that taken aback by the talking donkey.

God allowed this to try to show Balaam just how foolish he was. (II Peter 2:16)

4. How many times does Balaam try to curse the Israelites and with what result? (23:1 - 24:10)

3 times, and all are blessings. The Spirit of God even comes upon him the third time.

5. How does this story end? (24:12-14, 25:1-3)

Balaam claims innocence, that he can't say anything contrary to what God commanded, and departs. The Israelites intermarry with Moab and join them in Baal worship.

What happens to Balaam in the end, and why? (Numbers 31:8,16)

God instructs the Israelites to kill him when they enter the land of Canaan, because he was responsible for instructing the Moabites to entice the Israelites into sin.

6. What are the 3 stages of regression through the love of money as seen in Balaam's example?

(Jude 1:10-11) error

(II Peter 2:14-22) the error soon becomes a way of life

(Revelation 2:12-17) the way of life soon becomes a doctrine that is taught to others

7. What lessons can we learn from the life of Balaam?

Many use godliness for personal gain – to receive money, honor, position, power, etc. True gain from godliness, however, comes only from contentment (I Timothy 6:6). A man can have the Spirit of God initially, but love of money can make him a deceiver who actually turns people *away* from God.