

Shadows Of Christ & His Bride

Lesson #33

Pergamos -Balaam's Oracles #2 & #3

Sept. 4, 2024

Numbers 22-24 comprise a single narrative relating King Balak of Moab's attempt to curse Israel in the name of the Israelites' own deity through the efforts of a well-known Aramean prophet named Balaam, a practitioner of divination.

The story of Balaam and the test of the new Israelite generation at Baal-Peor on the Plains of Moab are the defining events of the Israelites' final months in the desert wilderness.

Background Info: Israel, near the end of their 40 years of wandering, is camped out in the plain of Moab. God has given them great victories over King Og and King Sihon.

Num. 22:3 "So Moab was in great fear because of the people, for they were numerous; and Moab was in dread of the sons of Israel."

When you compare the 4 prophecies, you begin to observe some very interesting relationships.

1. Each subsequent prophecy is longer and more specific than the previous one.
From Balak's perspective, every prophecy gets worse.
2. At the beginning, Balaam's words emphasize the impossibility of cursing the people God has blessed; as these prophecies continue, there is a growing emphasis and specificity regarding the judgment of God on Israel's enemies. Does Balak want God's people cursed? Instead, he finds that he and his people are cursed!
3. There is also a growing emphasis and specificity regarding the blessings that God will bring upon His people, Israel.
4. They ascend and increase in power, details, and distance as Balaam spoke.
5. All the prophecies of Balaam are the outgrowth of God's covenant promises to Israel. Balak's attempts to reverse this covenant will prove futile.

#1 Num. 23:9-10a For from the top of the rocks I see them, and from the hills I watch them.

Indeed, a nation that lives alone, and it will not be reckoned among the nations.
Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel?

Balaam's 2nd Oracle: Numbers 23:13-26

Num. 23:13-14 And Balak said unto him, Come, I pray thee, with me unto another place, from whence thou mayest see them: thou shalt see but the utmost part of them, and shalt not see them all: and curse me them from thence. ¹⁴ And he brought him into the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built 7 altars, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar.

- Still using sorcery and divination

Deut. 34:1 And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, [also called Mt. Nebo]

- Moses looked out over the Promised Land from here before he died.
- Balaam was at this point looking down at the promised people.

God always accomplishes His purposes. When Moses, the spokesman of Israel, had fallen into sin, God in His sovereignty used Balaam, a pagan spokesman, to bless His people, Israel. Balaam's prophecies are reliable because they come from God, who cannot lie, even though the narrative shows Balaam himself to be sinful, lacking discernment, and ultimately desiring Israel's downfall.

Num. 23:15-17 And he said unto Balak, Stand here by thy burnt offering, while I meet the Lord yonder. ¹⁶ And the Lord met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, Go again unto Balak, and say thus.¹⁷ And when he came to him, behold, he stood by his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab with him. And Balak said unto him, What hath the Lord spoken?

Num. 23:18 Then he took up his oracle and said,

'Arise, Balak, and hear; listen to me, son of Zippor!

➤ It is a call to bring himself to complete attention. The Lord is to speak.

Balak is to pay heed to what is uttered, listening to and assimilating what is said.

¹⁹*God is not a man, that He would lie, nor a son of man, that He would change His mind; has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not fulfill it?*

Even when Judah was about to be sent into 70-year exile in Babylon in 586 BC, which was almost 1,000 years after Balaam's oracles, the message of God has been consistent:

Jer. 29:1, 10-11 Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders which were carried away captives, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon; ¹⁰For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. ¹¹ For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. [Hope of Deliverance]

Num. 23:20 Behold, I have received a command to bless;

When He has blessed, I cannot revoke it.

Behold is like a divine highlighter, a divine underlining of an especially striking or important text. It says in effect "Listen up, all ye who would be wise in the ways of Jehovah!"

Num. 23:18-20 An introductory statement in which King Balak was told directly:

➤ The immutable God of Israel had promised to bless His people, Israel.

➤ God would not change His mind. He would not break His commitment to Israel.

➤ Balaam had been given a command to bless Israel. He had no power to do otherwise.

Key: God's ways are not our ways. His thoughts are not our thoughts. [Isa. 55:8-9]

God rebuked Balak and taught him that He does not lie or change His mind like a human.

Isa. 14:24 "The Lord of hosts has sworn, saying, 'Surely, as I have thought, so it shall come to pass, And as I have purposed, so it shall stand'"

Ps. 89:34 "My covenant I will not break, Nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips."

Isa. 46:9-10 "Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like Me,¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning,
And from ancient times things that are not yet done,
Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure.'"

Spurgeon: The immutability of the divine counsel is the safety of the saints. No entreaties of our foes can move the heart of God away from us: we are His chosen, and we shall be so evermore. Every promise is yea and amen in Christ Jesus, and not one single word of the Lord shall ever fall to the ground. Men shift like quicksand, but the Lord is firm as a rock.

Num. 23:21a He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither has he seen perverseness in Israel.
Wiersbe: When God looked upon Israel, He didn't behold iniquity or wickedness and therefore have reason to judge them. They were "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" [Ex. 19:6] even though He had to chasten them for their unbelief and disobedience. Believers today are God's chosen people [Eph. 1:4], hidden in Christ [Col. 3:3], clothed in His righteousness [II Cor. 5:17, 21] and seated with Him in the heavenlies [Eph. 2:4-6]. Because we are "in Christ," God sees us as His own special people [I Peter 2:5, 9-10], and He deals with us accordingly as His children.

Num. 23:21b The LORD their God is with them, and the shout of a king is among them;

- Balaam could see the Glory Cloud of Yahweh that came up from the Holy of Holies.
- Balaam is not talking about a human king.

Num. 23:21b The shout of a king is among them; must be understood as a militaristic threat, implying that the Lord is a Warrior who leads His hosts to victory [Josh. 6:5, 20; Ps. 47:5; Jer. 4:19; 49:2]. Such power renders sorcery and divination harmless. All that remains is for the nations to look on Israel and marvel at God's protecting grace.

Num. 23:22 God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of a wild ox.

Allen: The verbal form [brings them out] describes ongoing action. God is in the process of bringing His people from Egypt. He will soon bring them into their Promised Land.

Balaam said: Because of the Exodus out of Egypt [23:22], Israel had supernatural prosperity [no misfortune or misery, 23:21a], the Lord's presence [21b], and supernatural power [22b].

Num. 23:23 Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob,
neither is there any divination against Israel:

according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!
The people do not need to resort to divination because God provides them with prophecy directly through His chosen seers and prophets.

Amos 3:7 Surely the Lord God does nothing,
unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.

There is no need for the people to resort to hocus pocus because they have God's immediate revelation to relay to them what He will do, when He will do it, and how it will be done.

Spurgeon: It is written, "JEHOVAH SHAMMAH—the Lord is there.

God's presence in the midst of His people is as a wall of fire round about them, and a glory in their midst. The Lord is their light and their salvation, whom shall they fear?

The Results Of His Divine Presence.

1. God Is Leading God brought them out of Egypt Num. 23:22

Tense: "God is bringing them out of Egypt." When God is in the midst of His people, He is leading them. He doesn't just lead us out of Egypt and not continue to lead us.

2. God Is Their Strength. "They have as it were the strength of a wild ox."

Their power which lies in God becomes irresistible, untamable, and unconquerable. Force and energy are with the Lord.

3. God Is Their Safety. "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel." Num. 23:23

Spurgeon: The true safety of the church is not a creed, not an enactment for expelling those who violate the creed. Only the presence of God can protect His people against the cunning assaults of their foes.

When great commanders are known to have come into a camp, what a thrill of joy it causes among their trusty warriors. When the soldiers have been much dejected, it has been whispered in their tents— "The king has come to marshal us, All in his armor dressed," and from that moment every man is cheered up. At the sight of the king, as he rides into the camp, the host raises a great shout. It is a shout of loyal love—they are glad to welcome their leader.

With God's presence, no man's heart fails him, no doubt enters the heart.

"Be strong, and quit yourselves like men," is the word that is passed round, for their king's eye makes them brave and the presence of His Majesty secures them triumph.

Num. 23:24 Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eats of the prey and drinks the blood of the slain.

➤ Young lion = a lion in the fullness of his vigor

The idea is that of being unconquerable because of their fierceness. Tearing off limbs
When the lion rises, it is to do battle. So it will be with Israel.

God is with them, and there is nothing to do but run from their attack.

Deut. 20:12-13 Now if *the city* will not make peace with you, but war against you, then you shall besiege it. ¹³ And when the Lord your God delivers it into your hands, you shall strike every male in it with the edge of the sword."

The idea here is of complete destruction of the foe and the gathering of every bit of the plunder, symbolized by the lions' drinking of the blood.

Along the way God is their strength and guide. The nation was like an ox in its strength and like a lioness and a lion in its determination to catch its prey and kill it. Therefore, no sorcery could succeed against God's people because God was at work in them and through them.

"Oh, what God has done!"

Balak must have been shaking by now. This conveys the truth:

Israel is powerful and will be victorious.

Spurgeon - He foresaw the military prowess of the nation, and foretold the destruction of the Canaanites by Israel, thus in reality blessing the people whom he was invited to curse

Balaam states that Israel has maintained its spiritual integrity, avoided perverseness, and is destined to become a ruling nation. He mentions a great lion and a young lion, a statement similar to Jacob's final words of blessing to his son Judah. Jacob predicted Judah would be as a lion and that the ruler would come from Judah [Gen. 49:9-10].

It is another early indication that Judah will be the lead tribe of the people, and that the blessing upon Judah - meaning that of Messiah - will come about as prophesied.

Num. 23:25-26 And Balak said unto Balaam, Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all.

²⁶ But Balaam answered and said unto Balak, Told not I thee, saying,
All that the Lord speaketh, that I must do?

Focus of 2nd oracle: God as the source of Israel's blessing. God is described as truthful, faithful to fulfill His promises, He is their guardian, and He is powerful enough to slay any enemy. The God of Israel, His nature, and His attributes. Based upon God's covenant and His character, it is certain that the blessings of Israel are certain and secure. Based upon His covenant relationship with Israel, as evident in the Exodus, no nation should dare to oppose the people of God. To do so is to become the enemy of God and to face destruction. If there is a curse to be pronounced, it must be pronounced upon God's enemies, because God's blessings have been promised to His people, Israel.

Oracle #3: Numbers 23:27- Numbers 24:1-14

Num. 23:27 And Balak said unto Balaam, Come, I pray thee, I will bring thee unto another place; peradventure it will please God that thou mayest curse me them from thence.

- He uses the term *ha'elohim*, or "the God."
- It appears that Balak intends to make an appeal to "the God" of all gods.

Num. 23:28-30 And Balak brought Balaam unto the top of Peor, that looks toward Jeshimon.

²⁹ & Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here 7 altars, and prepare me here 7 bullocks and 7 rams.

³⁰ And Balak did as Balaam had said and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar.

- Center of Baal worship in Moab, overlooking the desert
25:3, 5; Deut. 4:3; Ps. 106:28-29; Hos. 9:10

In this location, we have the completion of a marvelous pattern which has developed over these three locations where these three oracles are uttered - Baal, Pisgah [Zophim], and Peor. Balak is not merely attempting to curse Israel arbitrarily, but he is methodically pursuing a path of attempting to find a weakness in Israel which he can exploit between them and their God.

Just as Balak took Balaam to 3 different locations hoping to have an effective curse on Israel, Satan took Jesus to 3 different locations hoping Jesus would "fail" one of the temptations.

Compare Balak's Method with Satan's Temptation of Jesus Christ in Matt. 4

1. *bamoth baal*, or the high places of Baal: Ba'al = owner, lord or master
Looks to the superintending lordship of the people.

Thus, it was an attempt to curse the people, dissolving the spiritual authority over them.

Matthew 4: Satan tempted Jesus to make the stones into bread.

He attempted to destroy the spiritual hierarchy which is found in God.

2. *sadeh tsophim*, or the "field of the watchers," looks to an attempt to curse the people's intellect. As a watchman looks out and discerns who is coming and what type of a threat they are, so that was an attempt to curse their ability to rightly discern what is correct.

Matt. 4: Satan tested Jesus' intellect by misusing Scripture, but which Christ corrected.

3. The third place is *rosh ha'peor*, or the top of the Peor.

This place signifies that which leads to yearning and even to lust.

Thus, this is an attempt to curse Israel's moral underpinnings..

Matt. 4: He appealed to Jesus based on the lust of the flesh by showing Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

Did Balak succeed? Not when Jehovah, the Lord, is in the equation!

Balaam's change at beginning of 3rd oracle.

Num. 24:1 And when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness.

Deut. 3:29 They remained in the valley opposite Beth-Peor = valley of Shittim

Num. 24:2 And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes; and the Spirit of God came upon him.

Note: This unexpected language is used to prepare the reader for the heightened revelation that is about to come from the unwitting messenger.

The oracles are building in intensity and in their depth of meaning.

The layout, as seen in the Numbers 3:14-39 sermon, is that of a giant cross, extending out to the east, west, north, and south, and with the tabernacle directly in the center.

Balaam would see the entire cross from the base - meaning east and extending out from there directly in front of him. With this massive cross directly in his view, it then says...

Num. 24:3 and the spirit of God came upon him. ³ And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said:

- God first put a word in his mouth; then He sent His Spirit [Num 23:5,16; 24:2].

Num. 24:4 The oracle of the one who hears the words of God,

who sees a vision from the Almighty, although falling flat on the ground with eyes open:

Balaam realized that God intended to bless Israel.

This time, Balaam didn't go off to look for omens but stayed, and the Spirit of God came upon him. Balaam's eyes were opened, he heard the Word of God, and he saw a vision from the Almighty. In this third oracle, Balaam described 8 specific ways God would bless the Israelites. The emphasis is on the contentment of God's people in their own land. The fruitfulness of Israel
Num. 24:5-6 How pleasant are your tents, Jacob, Your dwelling places, Israel!

- This is certainly not referring to the individual tents. A tent is a tent. It is referring to their layout - the order, structure, and beauty of the cross which stood before him.
- Layout includes the central figure, the Shekinah glory cloud symbolizing God's presence.

Num. 24:6a As the valleys are they spread forth...

The 4 branches which extended out from the sanctuary were like valleys. In the center is Life. From that point, Life extended to the farthest reaches of Israel.

Isa. 40:4a Every valley shall be exalted [in Christ's Millennial Kingdom].

Num. 24:6b Like gardens beside a river,

The tents of Israel were so ordered & structured that together each branch appeared to be a garden all its own. In the Septuagint, the word for gardens is the word paradeisos = park, paradise = used to describe the Garden of Eden.

Num. 24:6c Like aloes planted by the Lord: Speaks of the lignum or wood aloes.

It is a tree 8' to 10' tall which has a sweet smell and provides shade

Psa. 45:8a All Your [the Lord] garments *are scented* with myrrh and aloes and cassia,

Num. 24:6d Like cedars beside the waters. Cedar is also an aromatic wood. And as the aloes were planted by the Lord, signifying order and beauty in their arrangement, these cedars are "besides the waters," implying great health and beauty.

In the Millennial Kingdom, the land of Israel will be rebuilt and reinhabited by the covenant people. The land will become highly productive and fruitful, even like the Garden of Eden.

Ezekiel 36:8 But you, mountains of Israel, will grow your branches and

bear your fruit for my people Israel, for they will arrive soon.^l

Ezek. 36:30 I will multiply the fruit of the trees and the produce of the fields,

so that you will never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations.

Ezek. 36:34-35 The desolate land will be plowed, instead of being desolate in the sight of everyone who passes by. ³⁵ They will say, "This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden; the ruined, desolate, and destroyed cities are now fortified and inhabited."

Blessings 1-3 Their homes and land will be beautiful. Their homes and lands will be fruitful.
Their resources will be abundant.

Israel will become a kingdom: Num. 24:7a He will pour the water out of his buckets,

and their descendants will be like abundant water;

Water was the source of physical refreshment and blessing in the hot and arid Near East.

Water was like "gold" in the arid middle east. Israel is described as having an abundance.

Israel's seed would enjoy the richest blessing.

Isa. 35:1-10 the "desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose" and "waters shall burst forth in the wilderness."

Sailhamer: "In an ironic reversal of the evil intended by Pharaoh's order to cast the seed of Abraham into the river, Balaam's third oracle uses the well-watered gardens that spread out along the banks of a river to speak of the abundance of Israel's 'seed.'

A literal reading of Balaam's remark in Num. 24:7 is 'Their seed is in the abundant waters' . . .

Thus, what was once the intended means for the destruction of the promised seed, that is, the 'abundant waters,' has now become the poetic image of God's faithfulness to His promise."

The "Valley of Shittim" or "Valley of Acacias" mentioned in a prophetic vision in the book of Joel is a region that receives water from a spring in the temple:

Joel 3:18 "And it shall come to pass in that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with water; and a fountain shall come forth out of the house of the LORD and water the Valley of Shittim."

In this Messianic picture, Christ Himself is the fountain who "shall come forth from the house of the LORD and water the Valley of Shittim." The flowing streams of living water will reach far and wide, flowing to the Gentiles and to the most remote regions of the world.

God's grace is an overflowing fountain that will never run dry.

Israel will become a kingdom: Num. 24:7b And his king shall be higher than Agag,
And his kingdom shall be exalted.

Blessing #4: It predicts a future descendent of Jacob who will be a king with an exalted kingdom. The Masoretic Text (MT) states that the "king shall be higher than Agag," but the Septuagint (LXX) preferably reads, "He shall be higher than Gog," the future enemy of Israel.

- Ezekiel 38; cf. Num. 24:14, 17

Magog goes back to Genesis 10:2 as a son of Japheth. Gog and Magog are found as the great enemies who will come against Israel as noted in Ezekiel 38 and Revelation 20.

Agag, or the "Highest," will be topped by the King of Israel. It is a prophecy of the coming of Messiah who will be above all other kings.

Num. 24:7b And his kingdom shall be exalted.

Balaam's spiritual eyes were opened to the future Millennial Kingdom of Jesus Christ which will cover the world, and to which all kingdoms will be subservient.

The king certainly points to Jesus Christ who is "higher than the kings of the earth" [Ps. 89:27].

During the reign of Jesus Christ over the promised messianic kingdom, the land of Israel will become like the garden of Eden [Isa. 35].

Num. 24:8a God brought him forth out of Egypt,

He hath as it were the strength of a unicorn, wild ox.

Bringing one out of Egypt implies great strength like a wild ox.

- The strength of God in Christ is untamable and matchless.

Num. 24:8b He will devour the nations who are his adversaries,

And will crush their bones and pierce them through with his arrows.

Smash Them With His Arrows: to shatter, wound, pierce-through. The Hebrew indicates that after His victory, He will break His own arrows because they will no longer be needed.

Isa. 2:4 "He shall judge between the nations and rebuke many people;

They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks;

Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore."

Num. 24:9a He crouched, he lay down like a lion,

and like a great lion: who dares to rouse him?

Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.

In Num. 23:24 [Oracle #2], the lion rises and goes forth to devour. Now, the lion crouches and lies down in victory, having devoured. This reflects both Israel and Messiah.

Israel went forth as a lion, but only in Christ is the victory won.

The Most High himself, their divine vindicator, guide, and king, who with a strong arm brought them forth out of Egypt, so that same God would make them victorious over all their enemies, so that consequently every form of opposition would be vain.

This would constitute an appeal to Balak to halt in the dangerous path in which he was treading.

Part of the Messianic prophecy by Jacob... Lion = Judah, the tribe of David and Jesus Christ.

Genesis 49:9-10 Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up.

He couches, he lies down as a lion, And as a lion, who dares rouse him up?

The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,

Until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

After over 450 years, the words are applied to the future king from the house of Jacob.

Blessings #5-8 Their Deliverer is God Himself.

Their strength is like an ox.

Their victory over enemies will be complete.

Their courage & security are assured.

Key: Their blessings are guaranteed by the promise of God.

Balaam's 3rd oracle, contrasted to the 2nd oracle, purposefully uses similar descriptions of the subject. Note an interesting difference: the pronoun goes from plural to singular.

Israel	King
Num. 23:18-24	Num. 24:7-9
God brings <u>them</u> out of Egypt.	God brings <u>him</u> out of Egypt.
God is for <u>them</u> like the horns of the wild ox.	God is for <u>him</u> like the horns of the wild ox.
<u>Israel</u> is like a lion.	The <u>king</u> is like a lion.

Rydelnik: "The writer's strategy was intended to establish a pattern or a type:

what God will do for Israel, He will also do for the future king of Israel."

Just as God brought Israel out of Egypt, God will bring Israel's Messiah out of Egypt. Matt.2:15

The Balaam oracles are an inner Biblical commentary on Israel's exodus from Egypt.

This can also be seen in the beginning of the Balaam narrative which is linked to the beginning of Exodus 1-2. In both these texts, foreign rulers [Pharaoh/Balak] see the numerical growth of the people of Israel which is a blessing of the Abrahamic covenant. Gen. 15:5

Then in fear, they attempt to prevent its fulfillment three times. Ex. 1:11-14,19, 22; Num. 24:10

In the immediate sense, this is speaking of Israel, entering Canaan and destroying the nations which currently occupied the land. The prophecy looks forward to Messiah who will subdue all nations. They will either come to Him in peace or be consumed by Him in pieces.

As He eats up the nations, so He shall devour them, making bare their bones.

➤ It signifies that all their strength will be consumed by Him.

This would soon be fulfilled in part by Joshua as Israel conquered the Promised Land.

It will one day be fully fulfilled when Messiah returns to devour the nations who are His and Israel's adversaries!

The verbs crush and shatter recall the prophecy of Daniel of the Stone, the Messiah who would return and crush His enemies and all of Israel's enemies...

Dan. 2:34-35 Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay and brake them to pieces. ³⁵ Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

The conquest of Canaan is over. Their enemies have been defeated. Israel is enjoying the abundance of God's provision in "the land of milk and honey." The Promised Land is a paradise with an abundance of water, an important commodity in the East.

Israel's dwelling places are situated like beautiful flowers and trees in a garden.

Beauty and bounty are seen in the land because of the blessing of the Lord.

Dan. 2:44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.