

Shadows Of Christ & His Bride

Lesson #36

Doctrine Of Balaam

Sept. 25, 2024

Rev. 2:12-14 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, - [The Compromising Church] 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: ¹³ "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. ¹⁴ But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block [snare, trap] before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.

Apparently, the saints at Pergamum had not heeded Paul's admonition in Romans 16:17. Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances [skandalon] contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.

Stumbling block: #4625 skandalon originally the piece of wood that kept open a trap on which the bait was laid

When touched, it caused the trap to close on its prey.

Skandalon: refers to the "trap" by which a person is drawn into error or sin.

always denotes an enticement to conduct which could ruin the person in question [Lev 19:14, Josh 23:13, I Sam. 18:21]

The amazing prophecies of Balaam are succeeded by the great apostasy at Peor.

Raymond Brown: Behind Israel's idolatrous defection was an opponent more sinister than Balak, one who is always at work to defile and damage God's people— Satan, the deceiver.

Throughout the wilderness journey he had used every possible device to create disruption and devastation in the Israelite camp:

Num. 11:1-6	discontent	12:1	damaged relationships within a leading family		
Num. 12:2	jealousy	14:31	fear	14:4, 10	rebellion
Num. 14:40-45	disobedience	16:1-3	rivalry	16:41-17:5	disloyalty
Num. 20:3-5	quarrelling	21:4-5	irreverence		

At the Moabite border he had failed with his pernicious strategy of sorcery,

but now he was ready with a different device: the allurements of sexual immorality.

Balaam had been using the wrong approach. He was trying to get the unchanging God to change His plans and purposes. That would never happen. God would never go back on His Word.

Balaam said so in Numbers 23:19. So Balaam now devises a devious plan that seeks to "use" God's faithfulness to His Word for his own personal gain.

Since Balaam could not CURSE them, he sought to CORRUPT them!

- All Balaam had to do was to tempt the Israelites to sin in such a way that they would fall under the curse of God as laid out in the law.

In Leviticus 18, very specific laws are set down which regulate the sexual conduct of God's chosen people. Israel is to be careful not to practice the abominations of Egypt, from which they have been delivered, or of Canaan, which they are about to possess.

History had proven that it would be very easy to turn Israel from the right path by rebelling against God's Word, thereby incurring His wrath.

The Plan: Fastest way to destroy Israel: Seduce Them Into Unbridled, Sensual Living

By Dangling The Prostitutes Of Moab Before Men Of Israel

If he can succeed in seducing the Israelites and cause them to engage in sexual and religious adultery, then he knows God must keep His own Word and bring judgment and punishment upon this people. It was perfect! He would use:

- Israel's weaknesses: stiff-necked and prone to wander
- God's strength: He does not change, keeping His Word.

Balaam doubled down on his determination to get rich by enticing people to sin!

- When the Israelite men yield to the seduction of the women, commit sexual immorality and worship idols, their own God will have to punish them.

1. It was a breaking down of their holy separation unto God and consecration to His service.
2. Cause them to abandon their pilgrim character.

Allen: We come to the ultimate rebellion of Israel in the desert. The time is the end of the forty-year period of their desert experience. The place is the staging area for the conquest of the land of Canaan. They are encamped by tribes in the Valley of Shittim and awaiting the instructions to cross the Jordan River and enter The Promised Land, their inheritance. The issue is that of apostasy from the LORD by participation in the debased, sexually centered Canaanite religious rites of Baal worship. It became the bane of Israel's experience in the land. This chapter is an end and a beginning. It marks the end of the first generation. It also points to the beginning of a whole new series of wicked acts that will finally lead to Israel's punishment. This chapter is unique in the record of the experience of Israel in their move from Sinai to Moab-it describes their involvement in the worship of another deity [Exodus 32].

The Deadly Detour at Shittim: A Purifying Purge

The Israelites were waiting for God under Joshua to lead them into the promised land.

Num. 25:1a And Israel abode in Shittim...

Abode = #3427 = yashab = settle down; to remain; to dwell

Yashab is translated "married" 6x in the OT. This gives us a sense of the meaning of yashab and the danger in which Israel had placed itself!

- This verb is not the same verb as to "camp" which is what they should have been doing! The verb camped, chanah #02583, is used repeatedly of Israel pitching their tents in camp formation by tribes in their wilderness journey.

But the Holy Spirit does not use *chanah* in this passage which is their last stop before crossing into the Promised Land. Instead, He chose *yashab* to show their intention to remain or dwell. Israel should have "camped" instead of remaining or tarrying!

Unknown to the Israelites, a spiritual attack against them had been waged by the Moabites and the Midianites, who had hired Balaam to persuade God to curse the nation Israel

Num. 25:1-3 And Israel abode in Shittim and the people began:

- To commit harlotry with the daughters of Moab.

They had eaten manna and water, with almost no exceptions. The spices of Egypt were no more. Suddenly the "welcome wagon" arrives at the Israelites' camp. Some friendly neighbors come by to welcome them to the neighborhood and to offer them steak and ale.

J. Ligon Duncan: When they come to your feast, bring some of your prominent, attractive daughters, and have those daughters seduce them and invite them to worship your god. By doing this you will assimilate them into your culture rather than experience them conquering you.

- They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods.

Baal of Peor was the local, heathen god Baal that was worshiped at Peor.

- Prostitution was part of that worship.

This feast, involving idolatry and abominable immorality would be a flagrant violation of Israel's covenant with God.

Num. 25:3 So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor,
and the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel.

Allen: The Hebrew verb joined, tsamad, "speaks of adapting to the worship patterns of a foreign people, an abhorrent concept, such as the false yokings from which Israel was prohibited [Deut 22:10; II Cor 6:14].

Israel's consecration and separation unto God was completely obliterated when the Moabite women committed fornication with the Israelite men, and they ate flesh offered to idols. This scheme appealed to the flesh.

Note: how *quickly* this sin occurs.

how easily the entire nation succumbs to temptation.

how far—how deeply into sin—Israel has fallen.

how little it took to turn Israel from serving God to serving pagan deities. An invitation to dinner, and suddenly Israel finds itself engaged in the worship of false gods.

Result: The Israelite men committed immorality, played the harlot,
and began worshipping the Moabites's gods and eating things sacrificed to idols.

The sexual immorality that preceded the idolatry provided a graphic picture of the underlying spiritual reality. In offering sacrifices to Baal, Israel was abandoning her true husband, the LORD, and was taking up with a foreign lover.

This passage is the first encounter of Israel with Baal.

It forms the death rattle of the first generation.

God's Response: Idolatry and immorality undermine loyalty to the covenant relationship and will be severely punished

The Jews were God's chosen people, set apart from the rest of the nations to serve and glorify Him. They were not to worship the gods of their neighbors or share in their pagan festivities.

Iain Duguid: This was nothing less than the Israelites' total abandonment of their status as the covenant people of God, separated to the Lord and devoted to Him alone.

This event ranks in seriousness with the golden calf incident in Ex. 32:1-10.

It called for similar drastic measures. It also was a foretaste of future apostasies in Israel.

Judges 2:11-13, 19; 3:7; I Kings 11:1-8; 16:29-34; 18:40; II Kings 10:25-29; 11:18; 23:4-20
Num. 25:4 And the LORD said to Moses, "Arrest all the leaders of the people, and hang them up before the LORD in sun [in broad daylight] that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel."

- Leaders have a higher level of responsibility, because they have been given more authority, and because they serve as examples to those who follow them.
- Leaders are responsible to promote righteousness by ridding the nation of the wicked.
- It appears the leaders did little or nothing to deal with the idolatry and immorality of the people.
- The only person who is said to have acted in response to Israel's great sin was Phinehas.

Allen: Numbers 25 is the nadir, the lowest point, of the Book of Numbers. It is worse than the sins of Numbers 12-14. This is the great sin at the end of the road. Israel's judges are commanded to kill their own people who are engaged in the worship of Baal.

Rebellious people are like a cancer in the body. If they are not excised, they will soon ruin the whole. The call is to kill, to execute, and to do it quickly.

The body count of 24,000, an average of 2,000 from each of the twelve tribes, is the highest ever suffered by the Israelites during their long and painful passage from Egypt to Canaan.

It is even higher than at Kadesh, where 14,700 died in addition to Korah & Co. before Aaron's intercession with incense brought the onslaught of divine plague to a halt [Num. 16:46-49].

The only divine punishment on Israel during Biblical times that slew more was the plague that took the lives of 70,000 as a result of David's census [II Sam. 24:15].

The name "Balaam" occurs 51 times in Num. 22-24. It occurs 2 times in Num. 31.

Num. 31:8, 16 Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword. ¹⁶Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord.

His name does not occur at all in Num. 25

When Balaam was used of God to speak words of blessing on the nation Israel, he received a great deal of prominence. The minute Balaam chose to deliberately oppose Israel and bring the nation under God's wrath, Balaam disappears.

The events of Num. 25 were the fruit of Balaam's labors.

- Surely the wicked vanish; their days of disobedience and of fleshly indulgence are few. Consider: You would think that such a remarkable experience with the living God would have brought Balaam to the place of submission and faith, but it did not. It only shows how close an unbeliever can come to the knowledge of the Lord and still reject the truth

Rev. 2:12-14 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, - [The Compromising Church] 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: ¹³ "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. ¹⁴ But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block [snare, trap] before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.

Note: Pergamum comes from two words, per = the idea of completely, thoroughly,
gamos = marriage

The church at Pergamum: 1. Began to lose their pilgrim character
2. Becoming thoroughly married to the world

Recall: Compromising Church; Constantine is emperor of Roman Empire; All beliefs, even from pagans, are considered "Christian." All must take a pinch of incense; Caesar is lord.

Christ's Commendation: The believers in Pergamos lived in a difficult place, surrounded by pagan influences, yet they held fast to Christ's name, did not deny Him during difficult times, held fast against temptation to compromise. The courage of their faith is evident.

Condemnation: Christ directed His rebuke toward the faithful believers who failed to take action against those who held to the Doctrine of Balaam.

How does a belief become a doctrine that is in conflict with God's Word?

➤ Balaam's Way Balaam's Error Balaam's Doctrine

II Pet. 2:1-3a But false prophets arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. These false teachers will infiltrate your midst with destructive heresies, even to the point of denying the Master who bought them. As a result, they will bring swift destruction on themselves. ² And many will follow their debauched lifestyles. Because of these false teachers the way of truth will be slandered. ³ And in their greed they will exploit you with deceptive words. [They look like a true teacher, but they are not.]

II Pet. 2:15 Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the WAY OF BALAAM the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but was rebuked for his own transgression;

➤ Merchandising one's gifts and ministry for the purpose of making money.
➤ Using the spiritual to gain the material. [I Thess. 2:5-6; I Tim. 6:3-21]

- His readiness to prostitute his high spiritual gifts and privileges for the wages of unrighteousness = being willing to preach something contrary to God's Word for personal gain.

Jude 1:3-4 I now feel compelled instead to write to encourage you to contend earnestly for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.

For there are certain men crept in unawares, ...ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Balaam showed Balak how to get in the back door.

Jude 1:11 Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the ERROR OF BALAAM for reward

- Covetousness; an immoderate love of money

I Tim. 6:10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

- Root of all evil; Bane of religion; source of heresy
- It is insatiable and is not stopped in a false teacher. Think they can get away with it.
- It is a damnable sin and keeps people from being saved. It dishonors God's Word.

Jude 1:12a These are the ones who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, *like shepherds caring only for themselves*;

- "hidden reefs" = hidden rocks which speak of their unseen danger.
- Profess to know Jesus Christ; to represent Him & have insight on Truth!
- They don't mind their own self-destruction in the propagation of their lies.

Jude's Appeal: Engage in the war on spiritual terrorism! Be vigilant; alert; be discerning

I Tim. 4:1-2 Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

² Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

- They have NO conscience about what they do.

The Doctrine of Balaam Pervert the grace of God into a license for immorality.

Attempt to turn Christian liberty into a freedom to be promiscuous
One can be fully cooperative with the world and still serve God.

I Pet. 1:2

Teaches compromise: Forget you are called to be separate and holy.

Matt. 5:13

Makes believers indistinguishable from the unbelieving world.

Gal. 5:9

Belief: "A little sin" doesn't hurt.

I Tim. 6:5

Compromise is ok if there's financial or personal benefit involved.

Rom. 1:32

Compromise your convictions for the sake of popularity, money,
Sexual gratification; yield to fleshly desires

Balaam sold out the children of Israel for money in his pocket.

- You can violate your separated position and get away with it.
- His argument: You are God's chosen people.
- He turned the grace of God into lasciviousness. [Jude 1:4]

Balaam represents two things:

- the covetousness of the false teacher who loves money
- the apostate who influences others to sin.

Matt. 7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing,
but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

False Teachers: Those who speak the TRUTH but do not live it.

Those who speak lies and manipulate. Teach us to compromise.

They use the right words, but they draw people away from God's Word and
they will be bound up in sin.

What allows me to be drawn in to the doctrine of Balaam? I allow certain people to become
overly important and overly influential in my life and sway me away from the Word of God.

F. W. Robertson: "Brethren, beware. See how a man may be going on uttering fine words,
orthodox truths, and yet be rotten at the heart."

Chapell: The church's greatest mistakes occur when the people of God honor what a leader
says without examining that instruction in the light of Scripture. Be a Berean.

Truth: When believers don't train themselves in God's ways, they are vulnerable to those
who have trained their hearts in covetous practices.

How Does This Relate to Pergamos? Some held to the belief: We don't need to be separate.

We can mix the old patterns, the old morals, the old idolatry with the new Christianity.

You can be a Christian and worship idols, commit fornication with a heathen priest, priestess at
the temple. You can attend the debauchery, the orgies, the festivals and the feasts and still pay
your homage to Jesus. What harm is there in putting a pinch of incense on the altar and
affirming your loyalty to Caesar?

Antipas refused & was martyred. Others took the easy way out.

Their compromise made them welcome in the Roman guilds and protected them from
Roman persecution, but it cost them their testimony and crown.

It was a question of being soft and tolerant to error. Stumbling blocks were being put before
the people to circumvent God's commands of separation and holiness by seduction to fulfill the
lust of their flesh. They so valued their freedom and were so proud of their tolerance, that
they allowed subtle heresies and moral compromise to creep in and create cracks in their
armor. They pushed the envelope of liberty over the edge to license.

Truth: Compromise is Planned Failure!

There is a great difference between a church that reaches out to unbelievers and tries to expose them to the Gospel, and a church that welcomes ungodly people into membership and leadership. There's a great difference between a church that shows love to gay people and couples living together without benefit of marriage, and one that ordains such people to ministry."

Swindoll "While Ephesus understood how to love the sinner and reject the sin, Pergamum chose to love the sinner and accept the sin! They compromised doctrine and morality for the sake of peace and unity in the church. They took Christian love and grace to an extreme."

Balaam was so despicable to God that he is mentioned in 8 books of the Bible.

Numbers 22, Deut. 23:4-5, Josh. 24:9-10, Neh. 13:2, Mic. 6:5, 2 Pet. 2:15, Jude 1:11, Rev. 2:14 Balaam represents deceptive pastors, evangelists, and ministers who use their positions of authority to manipulate their congregations to gain personal wealth. They subjugate the people to Satan's authority by teaching compromise with the world which always neutralizes the church and results in a weakened and powerless form of Christianity. The church loses its pilgrim perspective and adopts the viewpoint, values, priorities, and pursuits of the world.

We see Christianity in the sad condition of Israel at Shittim. Separation is given up completely. Judgment will be visited ere long upon apostate, adulterous Christianity as it fell upon Israel.

Key: The Israelites were called and delivered from Egypt for a specific, revealed purpose.

Ex. 19:4-6a Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. ⁵ Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is mine: ⁶ And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.

Key: Just like the Israelites who were called and saved for a specific, revealed purpose, Christians have been saved for a specific, revealed purpose.

Rom. 8:28-29 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. ²⁹ For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

I Cor. 9:24-27 Every Christian is enrolled in a race. [Heb. 12:1-3]

Eph. 6:10-18 Every Christian is engaged in a conflict.

Truth: Believers are obligated to:

Stand up for TRUTH

Eph. 4:25

Stand up for Righteousness

Prov. 23:20

Rom. 14:22

Stand up for Goodness

II Pet. 1:5

Matt. 5:16

Whether others want to hear or not.

John 4:16-18; 8:11

Acts 24:24-25

God is presently bringing into existence a new order of *sons* to replace the order now ruling in the heavens. The incumbent rulers — Satan and his angels — are doing all within their power to retain their present governmental control over the earth.

One facet of Balaam's doctrine being promulgated in churches today is the teaching: Future blessings and rewards have been set aside for every Christian solely on the basis of Christ's finished work on Calvary and the Christian's positional standing "*in Christ*."

In this respect, all Christians — regardless of their conduct during the present time — will receive crowns and positions of power and authority with Christ in His kingdom.

The enemy, Satan, is doing all within his power to bring defeat in the lives of Christians. Satan's main objective in the present warfare is to prevent Christians from qualifying for crowns and thus positions of rulership with Christ in His coming kingdom.

Peter gives an excellent commandment for believers today.

I Peter 1:17 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance, ¹⁵ but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; ¹⁶ because it is written: "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay *on earth*;

conduct [aorist imperative - Do this with a sense of urgency]

Strength is definitely required to live the Christian life. However, not the strength that comes through self-exertion; but the power that comes from yielding to God, who strengthens those who acknowledge their weakness and dependence on Him.

Andrew Murray: Do not strive in your own strength.

We need to jettison self-dependence and depend wholly on the Holy Spirit Who Alone can give us the desire and the power to conduct ourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth; [Phil. 2:13]

II Chron. 16:9 For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect [completely His] toward Him.

Phil. 3:13-14 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, ¹⁴ I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

II Tim. 2:4-5 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please Him who enlisted him as a soldier. ⁵ And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.

God has made provision for Christians so at the end of the race they might say with Paul,

II Tim. 4:7-8 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: & not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.

Truth: The Israelites did not sin with immunity. Sin in the camp of Israel resulted in the death of 24,000 Israelites who fell short of the goal of their calling.

The Christian needs to live in the Word, the two-edged sword, which penetrates and transforms us by the renewing of our mind with the mind of Christ. Rom. 12:1-2; I Cor. 2:16

Includes keeping our focus on eternal treasures. Matt. 6:19f; I Pet. 1:12

The alternative is divine discipline on the basis of that same Word, which, if neglected, results in our discipline according to the warnings and principles of Scripture. [John 15:1f; Heb. 12:5f]

While initial faith that is genuine brings one into union with Christ, it is the continuation of an active faith from living in the Word, feeding on the things of Christ, that overcomes and leads us into the abundance and sufficiency of Christ's life with great reward both now and in the future.

Rev. 3:11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

The King is coming for a bride who has made herself ready and is watching for His return.