



# Church of God Sunday School

## THE STORY OF BALAAM

Numbers 22-25; 31:1-8, 16

On their journey to the Promised Land, the Israelites came to the land of the Amorites. Moses sent messengers to Sihon, the king of the Amorites, asking for permission to pass through his land. Sihon would not allow it. Instead, he gathered his people and fought with Israel. God gave Israel a great victory. They took the cities of the Amorites and dwelt there for some time.

Then the Israelites came to Bashan. Og, the king of Bashan, and his men went out to battle with the Israelites. God gave the Israelites another victory. (See Numbers 21:21-35).

As the Israelites continued to journey, they came to the land of the Moabites. Balak, the king of the Moabites, had heard of the Israelites. He and all the Moabites were afraid of them. Balak went to the elders of the Midianites to get help. The elders of the Midianites and the elders of Moab went to Balaam. Balaam was a prophet of Midian known for his accurate prophesies of blessings and curses. Balak wanted Balaam to come and curse the Israelites.

Balak told the messengers to tell Balaam, "Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me . . . , and that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land: for I wot [know] that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed." Balak also gave them rewards to give to Balaam if he would curse the Israelites.

The messengers came to Balaam with the rewards and asked him to curse Israel. Balaam asked them to stay overnight. During the night, God asked Balaam, "What men are these with thee?" Balaam told God why they had come to him. God said, "Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed." The next morning, Balaam told the men that God had not given him permission to go with them. The men went back to Balak. They told Balak that Balaam had refused to return with them.

Balak was not discouraged by Balaam's reply. He sent more men, men who were more important than the first men. Balak also offered Balaam greater rewards. Balak promised to promote Balaam to great honor and do whatever Balaam asked him to do if he would only come and curse Israel.

Balaam's answer was, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more."

But Balaam was really tempted by the rewards. He asked the men to stay overnight to see what God would say. (He was hoping that God might change His mind!) That night God *did* tell Balaam to go with the men. But Balaam was to speak only what God gave him. The next morning, Balaam got up early. Very eagerly, he got ready. He saddled the ass and went with the Moabite men. Balaam thought everything was all right.

However, the Lord was angry with Balaam for going with the men? (Why was God angry with Balaam for going when He had told him to go?) God sent an angel to stand in Balaam's way. The angel stood with a sword in his hand! Balaam could not see the angel. But the ass could! She turned aside, to get out of the angel's way. Balaam hit the animal, to turn her back into the way.

The angel went a little farther down the path and stopped where the path led through a vineyard. There was a wall on both sides of the path. To get away from the angel, the ass moved to one side and, accidentally, crushed Balaam's foot against the wall. Balaam was so mad! He hit the animal again!

God took over then. He caused the ass to start talking—not braying, but talking—in Balaam's language! Balaam understood what she said: "What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?"

Instead of being surprised that the animal was talking to him, Balaam was so mad that he answered her back: "Because



thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee."

The ass then asked Balaam if she had ever done anything like that before. Balaam said no, she had not.

Then God opened Balaam's eyes (his spiritual eyes). He saw the angel standing in the way, with his sword drawn. Balaam bowed his head and fell flat on his face.

The angel told Balaam that he would have killed him and spared the animal if the ass had not turned away from him. Balaam realized his sin. He said he would go back. Instead, the angel told him to go on with the men, but he was still to speak only that which God gave him.

Balak went out to meet Balaam. Balak assured Balaam that he would promote him to honor. But Balaam said he could only say what the Lord put in his mouth. Together they went to Kirjathhuzoth, where Balak offered sacrifices. He was an idol worshiper.

The next day, they went to the high places of Baal. There Balaam could look down on the greater part of the Israelites. Balaam told Balak to build seven altars and prepare seven rams and seven oxen for sacrifices. Balaam said, "Stand by thy burnt offering, and I will go: peradventure the LORD will come to meet me: and whatsoever he sheweth me I will tell thee." Balaam then went to a high place.

God met Balaam and told him what to say. Balaam returned to Balak and said, "How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the LORD hath not defied?" Then he blessed Israel.

Balak was *not* happy. He said: "What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them altogether."

Then Balak took Balaam to the top of Mount Pisgah. He built altars and offered more sacrifices. Balaam went to meet with the Lord, while Balak waited by the burnt offering. The Lord told Balaam what to say. Balaam came back to Balak and said that he had received the command to bless Israel. He could not change what God had said.

Then Balak said, "Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all."

But Balaam said, "Told not I thee . . . , All that the LORD speaketh, that I must do?"

Finally, Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor. Balak built altars and sacrificed offerings again. That time, Balaam did not try to find the will of God. He already knew that God would not change His mind. When God's Spirit came on him, he looked upon the tents of Israel and spoke a parable that blessed them.



Balak was so angry at Balaam that he clapped his hands together really hard! Then he said to Balaam, "I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times." Balak told Balaam to leave and hurry back to his people.

But Balaam turned to Balak and told him that first he would prophesy to him of all that the Israelites would do to the Moabites and to others. After Balaam finished prophesying, he went back to his home. Balak went to his own place.

But Balaam still coveted the reward; that is, he earnestly wanted to have honor and riches for himself! He wanted a reward so much that his evil mind came up with an evil plan. He would not have to curse the Israelites, and he could make Balak happy too!

Balaam gave evil counsel. Because of Balaam's evil counsel, the Moabite women and the Midianite women became friendly with the Israelite men. The women worked to draw the Israelite men away from the true worship and bow down to their gods. And, through the false friendship of the Moabites and the Midianites, the Israelites did become involved in the terrible sin of idolatry! Many people died for taking part in this sin.

And what about Balaam? When war was declared between the Israelites and the Midianites, Balaam was on the side of the Midianites, and he was killed!

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**MEMORY VERSE:**

*"The word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do"*  
*(Numbers 22:20).*

# Connect the dots to see the animal that talked to Balaam





## The Angel of the Lord Speaks to Balaam