

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 12



THE ERROR OF BALAAM—PART 2

Scripture Text: Jude 11

As we review the text, we can see that each character so far has been involved in religious activity. This clearly disproves the thought of, “If it is religious, then it must be good.” Throughout history many things were done by numerous individuals in the name of religion, but that certainly did not mean that they were right or that what they did was based in the truth.

In the previous lesson, one part of the *error of Balaam* was that he prayed about whether to go with Balak’s princes when he already knew the will of God. In this lesson, when *Balaam* could not curse Israel, he conceived something worse with results that were more terrible and disastrous. This second episode is what left its mark on Hebrew thought and teaching.

MEMORY VERSE: *Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.*

—Romans 1:32

Balaam’s Ungodly Counsel

Psalm 1:1 states, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.” When *Balaam* saw that he could not curse what God had blessed, he advised the women of Midian and Moab to seduce the Israelite men and cause them to sin. He did this *for reward*. (The moves that were made in the morning time and the ones being made today have come about from fleshly, carnal reasons and for temporal rewards, rather than from divine guidance.) *Balaam* reasoned that if the Israelites would sin, then the Lord would have to punish them, Balak’s purpose would be served, and he, *Balaam*, would be rich. **Numbers 25:1-2** relates the result of that plan: “And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people . . . and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.”

Three lessons can be learned from these verses. First, ungodly counsel affects not only the ones who receive it but also those they have influence over. Second, close relationships can cause us to do something that we normally would not do. Third, our affiliations with those whose worship and religion is different from the truth can pull us into falsity.

A Spiritual Seduction

In **Revelation 2:14**, Jesus spoke of “the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.” Why did Jude bring up the thought of seduction in connection with apostasy? Because, just as seducers had worked under the council of *Balaam*, there were spiritual seducers working in the first century.

Balaam used women to tempt Israel’s men to commit literal fornication. Satan uses seducing spirits to tempt the saints to commit spiritual fornication. **1 Corinthians 6:18** admonishes us to “flee fornication.” Those who took on seducing spirits in Jude’s day and left the truth and the true church but continued to profess to belong to Christ were, in reality, engaging in spiritual fornication.

The Goal of Satan

Numbers 25:2 says that “the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.” Here the enemies’ original intent is seen. It was to get the Israelites to come down to the level of worshipping “their gods.” This is the true motive of apostates. They will woo you, love you, and show you much kindness; just as Solomon’s strange

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wives did to him. They won his heart first; then they “turned away his heart after other gods” (1 Kings 11:4).

Friend, the enemy’s ultimate goal is your heart! Satan wants to use anyone with a seducing spirit to tempt you so that you will turn to a false system of worship.

Joshua 13:22 says that *Balaam* was slain “with the sword.” His end was physical death. The end of apostasy is spiritual death. Today’s idols may not be of stone, of gold, or of silver. They are more deceptive and damning. Your only defense is the truth. You should love it, obey it, and not deviate from it. Listen to the Spirit of Truth. “He will guide you into [not away from] all truth” (**John 16:13**). Keep your mind and heart focused on the will of the Spirit so that false teachings and fleshly moves do not entrap you.

JUST A THOUGHT

The best things in life are not things.