



Numbers 21-25

Tape #7048
Numbers 21-25
By Chuck Smith

Let's take a look at the bible, Numbers, chapter twenty one. Numbers twenty one.

And when king Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south, heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies; then he fought against Israel, and took some of them prisoners (21:1).

Now, Arad is north of Beersheba, and if you are going to the Herodian, up the back side of the Herodian, you have to go through Arad today. Dwelling in the south, that would be the south part of the land of Israel. It's south of Hebron, but about fifteen miles north of Beersheba. The city of Arad. The king came out against the Israelites, took some of them as captives, prisoners.

So Israel made a vow to the Lord, and they said, If you will indeed deliver this people into my hands, then I will utterly destroy their cities. So the Lord listened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities: so the place was called [utter destruction] Hormah (21:2-3).

So, the king of Arad was destroyed. The Tel of Arad, is there today, and you can visit the site of this ancient city, whose king came out against Israel. There is a modern city there today also, it is near the Tel. The modern city of Arad, has a tremendous bakery with great pastries. My wife knows every good bakery in Israel.

And then they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to go around the land of Edom: and the people became very discouraged along the way (21:4).

Now, here they are, they're right at the border of the land, but they can't go into the land directly, from this point, for whatever reason, and so they now take the journey back towards Egypt, and go around Edom. Because the king of Edom, has forbid them coming through his land. So, they've got to go all the way around. The area today, which would be towards Saudi Arabia, to get around Edom and around Moab, in order that they might come into the land, more or less in the middle of the land of Israel. Remember, when they finally come in, they come in through Jericho. So they attacked the land from the east, coming through Jericho, which is about, well, it's near the north end of the Dead sea, and it's more towards the middle of the land, rather than just coming straight up from the south, through the wilderness and invading the land from the south. They make this circuitous route.

Well, the people got discouraged, and I can understand that. It's nothing but wilderness, it's nothing but desert, you're right on the border, if you could just go right in, it would be fine. But they have to make this circuitous route around Edom. The people became discouraged, and they began to speak against God.

And they spoke against Moses, God's servant, and they said, Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there's no food and no water; and our soul loathes this worthless bread (21:5).

"We're sick of this manna! There's no food, no water and we're sick of this manna. Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die here in the wilderness?" And so they began to murmur again against God and against Moses.

And so the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died. Therefore the people came unto Moses and said, We have sinned, [The confession of their sins. "We have sinned",] for we have spoken against the Lord, and against you; pray to the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. So Moses prayed for the people. Then the Lord said to Moses, Make a fiery serpent, [That is a likeness.] set it on a pole: and it shall be that every one who is bitten, when he looks on it, shall live. So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole, and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived (21:6-9).

Now bronze is a symbol of judgement. The people had murmured against the Lord, and so God had

judged the people with these fiery serpents that were deadly. Their bites were deadly. As the people were being bitten and dying, as the result, they realized that this was a direct judgement from God, against their complaining against God, and against Moses. So they prayed to Moses, and Moses asked the Lord to heal, and the Lord directed him to make this serpent, put it on a pole.

Now it is interesting that that is the symbol of a doctor today. The medical profession has this symbol of a serpent on the pole, because who ever would look upon this serpent on a pole, would be healed. They wouldn't die.

But there is a greater symbolism to this whole thing. When Jesus was talking with Nicodemus, He brought out the true meaning, of which, this was a type. For as Jesus was talking to Nicodemus, Nicodemus asked Him the question, "How can a man be born again, when he is old? Obviously he can't enter a second time, into his mother's womb and be born", and Jesus said, "That's right, that which is born of the flesh is flesh, but that which is born of the spirit, is spirit, don't marvel that I said you've got to be born again". Now in response to the question, "How can a man be born again?", Jesus said, "For as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up".

Now the serpent is a symbol for sin. The brass serpent is a symbol for judgement against sin. And Jesus Christ, upon the cross, bore God's judgement against our sin. "How can you be born again?", he said. Jesus answered, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up. That whosoever believes on him, shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son". So we see here God giving a beautiful symbol, in the wilderness, of that which would transpire later, when God would judge sin, on the cross. There our sins were judged by God, and even as God ordained, "If you want life, you've been bitten by these fiery serpents, they're deadly bites, but if you want life, all you have to do is look at this serpent on the pole, and you can have life".

Now, I can imagine some guy writhing on the ground, in convulsions because he's been bitten by one of these fiery serpents. And his friend said, "Hey man! Quick! Look at the brass serpent that Moses put on the pole, in the camp", and he says, "I don't like brass. I don't understand how that's gonna do me any good". And he's going on and he's convulsing, and his eyes are beginning to roll back, and they say, "Man look! Quick look!". "I don't understand how it works man. I don't want to put my faith in something that I can't understand!" So the guy dies. Now can he blame God that he died? No. He's to blame. No man can blame God because he died for his sins. God has provided the way of salvation, all you have to do is look at Jesus Christ, and believe in Him, and you'll be born again. You'll be saved.

But there are some people who refuse to look at Jesus Christ, over such silly things as, "Well I just don't understand it". God didn't call you to understand. God called you to believe. Just to believe His work in Jesus Christ, that He bore God's judgement for your sins.

In years to come, this brass serpent became a relic to worship. It had actually become an idol for the children of Israel. And they would come and worship this brass serpent that Moses made. It became one of the objects of worship in Israel, in years to come, during their time of turning away from God.

So that when Hezekiah became king, one of the first actions of Hezekiah, was to take this brass serpent, and break it in pieces. And he said, "Nehushtan!", which means, a thing of brass. It's not a god. You shouldn't be worshiping this, it's not a god, it's just a thing of brass. But they had made an idol out of it and worshiped it. In the St. Ambrose cathedral, in Italy today, in a case, they have some brass which they say are the pieces of the serpent, that Hezekiah broke. And it is being venerated today. You see people going there and praying, and same problem that was in Hezekiah's day.

Now, why do people set up an idol and begin to worship the idol. They began to worship this brass serpent, because to them it was a reminder of when God had worked in the midst of their problems. This was a work of God, their fathers who were dying by the result of these snake bites, were healed when they looked at this brass serpent. So it reminded them of the past, when God was working among their fathers in a very special way.

But the fact that they began to worship the serpent, was significant to the fact that they had lost that final consciousness of the presence of God, today, within their life. That's what happens to a person when they lose the vitality of the relationship with God. When they lose the consciousness of God working today in

our midst, then you try and grab some relic from the past, that's a reminder of when God once worked. To some people it's a place. "When I was a kid, I went to a summer camp, and I was sitting under a tree, and under that tree, ooh I met God", you know. So you go into life, you get involved, and you get away from God. You lose the sense of the presence of God that you had that time under that tree. When God really manifested Himself to your heart and mind. You begin to long for that experience that has been lost. You say, "I've gotta get back to that camp. I've gotta just drive up there. I've gotta sit under that tree again". So you drive for miles to get back to the camp, and you get out and lo and behold, the tree died.

But the place becomes sacred to people, or objects become sacred. I had a church that I pastored one time, had the ugliest, most decrepit looking pulpit you ever saw! In fact, the church was ugly, and so the pulpit matched the church. We decided to remodel. I was going to build a new pulpit. We bought new platform chairs, and we painted the church and really fixed the thing up to where it was looking halfway decent. This lady came up to me and said, "Don't you dare touch that pulpit! Don't change that pulpit. When brother so-and-so was here twenty years ago, he held this revival, and he made that pulpit. And powerful sermons have been delivered from that pulpit!", you know and was a Nehushtan, a thing of brass. It was just a dumb thing of wood, really. It was ugly. But in her mind, it was sacred. I mean, man, it was like burning a bible or something! In her mind, it was a sacred relic. "All of these powerful sermons, that through the years, have been delivered from that pulpit, and this dear brother made it for the church". So I couldn't stand that thing. It was so ugly.

I went ahead and I built a pulpit, that looks much like this pulpit. But what I did is build it right around the old pulpit. So you go behind the thing, and it was still ugly. Still had the ugly doors behind it and all. But up out in front, it looked nice and modern and new. I just made a piece of furniture right around the podium, and pulpit. She came in on Sunday morning, looked in and saw the new pulpit, and I mean smoke went out! I saw her coming, fire in her eyes. "Brother Smith how could you!" You know, and I mean she was really livid. I said, "Come here, come here, let me show you something", and I took her around and showed her the old pulpit was still there. "Look it's still there. You know, just put a new face on it." She was happy.

But it's sad that people get attached to things. Because "There...", or, "at that time I had a closeness to God. I felt the presence of God", or whatever. So we make shrines, or we make sacred places, or sacred objects that we actually begin to worship. But it's because we lost the consciousness of God's power and presence in our lives today, and the fact that I make a shrine or a sacred place, is indicative of the fact that within I still desire the presence of God, and the power of God in my life. So, I want the shrine because it reminds me of the time when God once moved.

So, the history of the brass serpent.

So the people of Israel moved on and they camped in Oboth. And then they were journeying around Moab, and they came to the other side of the Arnon (21:10),

Which is the river in the wilderness that extends from the border of the Ammorites. And Arnon is the border, is the river that bordered Ammon and Moab. And so...

The Lord said to them there, [verse sixteen] Gather the people together, and I will give them water. Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; all of you sing to it: The well the leaders sank, dug by the nations nobles by the lawgiver, by the lawgiver with their staves (21:16-17).

So, there they dug a well. God gave them an abundance of water, and so, they came around to the top of mount Pisgah which looks towards this wilderness area of what is called the Judean wilderness, it, from Pisgah you can actually see over into the promised land.

Then Israel sent messengers to Sihon, who was the king of the Ammorites. And they said, Let us pass through your land: we will not turn aside into the fields, nor the vineyards; we won't drink the water from your wells: but we will go by the king's high way, [This major intercontinental highway that existed.] until we pass through your territory. But Sihon would not allow Israel to pass through his territory: so Sihon gathered all his people together, went out against Israel in the wilderness: and he came to Hahaz, and fought against Israel. Then Israel defeated him with the edge of the sword, took possession of his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, as far as the people of Ammon, for the border of the people of Ammon was fortified

(21:21-24).

Now Ammon was the area of the present day, Ammon, which is pronounced differently. But in those days it was called Ammon, today it is called Amman, which is the capital of Jordan. So the area from Ammon, towards the river Jericho, or towards the river of Jordan, in the area across from Jericho, from the Jabbok to the Arnon river. If you have a bible map, you can see it. The Arnon river was the borderline of Moab on their south. They took this whole stretch of land from the Arnon to Jabbok. Jabbok comes into the Jordan river, oh about twenty miles or so north of the Arnon. So they now began to possess a part of the land along the Jordan river, on the opposite bank from the promised land. They did not go east any further to Ammon, or Amman, because it was fortified.

So Israel took all these cities: and they dwelt in the cities of the Ammorites, in Heshbon, and all of its villages (21:25).

And there is a proverb that they used to speak about Heshbon, in years gone by. Now in verse thirty three...

They turned and went up by the way to Bashan: so Og the king of Bashan went out against them, he, and all of his people, to the battle at Edrei. And then the Lord said to Moses, Do not fear him: for I have delivered him into your hand, with all of his people, and his land; and you will do to him as you did to Sihon the king of the Ammorites, who dwelt at Heshbon. So they defeated him, his sons, and all of his people, until there was no survivor left: and they took possession of his land (21:33-35).

So they began to move north a little further, as they took then the land, on up Bashan, which was belonging to Og.

Chapter 22

Then the children of Israel moved, and camped in the plains of Moab on the side of Jordan across from Jericho (22:1).

So you that have been over there, isn't it neat? Because you can just picture this in your mind. You know exactly where Jericho is, on the other side of the river is where the children of Israel were camping.

Now Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Ammorites. And Moab was exceedingly afraid of the people, because there were many of them: and Moab was sick with dread, afraid and sick with dread, because of the children of Israel. So Moab said to the elders of Midian, [Now Midian was on up north, even further.] Now this company he said, will lick up all that is around us, as a ox licked up the grass of the field. So Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at the time. And he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor [which means shepherd] at Pethor, which is near the river, [That is on up in the area near the Euphrates river. So he was up there a pretty good distance, up near the Euphrates river, in the area which is today, in the area of Syria, near the Euphrates.] And his message said, Look the people have come from Egypt: they cover the face of the earth, and they are settling next to me (22:2-5):

And they had settled right next to Moab. They had wiped out these two kings north of Moab, and he's frightened and he's just filled with dread, so he sends to Balaam, and his message is...

Come at once, and curse this people for me; for they are too mighty for me: perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land: for I know that he who is blest is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed (22:6).

Now, Balaam is called in the scriptures a soothsayer. But, he is really an enigma, because this man spoke to the Lord, and the Lord spoke to him, and yet he practiced sorcery, he practiced occult type of practices, of divinations using enchantments. He was sort of a witch doctor of sorts. People would hire him to curse their enemies, much as a witch doctor is hired today to bring a curse upon a person's enemy. You can go to a witch doctor and they will go into enchantments, and they'll stick the pins in the little dolls, and bring a curse on your enemies. So these guys were for hire, and you can hire them. Of course you can also hire them to protect you from some guy that's trying to put a curse on you. But, though he had this kind of a sorted background, yet in some kind of a mystical way, he had sort of a relationship with God, which I find very interesting, and yet very strange.

So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with a diviners fee; [That is, you know, the

fee that they had to pay him to do this enchantment.] *and they came to Balaam, and they spoke to him the words of Balak. And he said to them, Lodge here tonight, and I will bring back word to you, as the Lord speaks to me: so the princes of Moab stayed with Balaam. Then God came to Balaam, and said, Who are these men with you? [As though God didn't know.] And Balaam said to God, Balak the son of Zippor, the king of Moab, has sent me saying, Look a people has come out of the land of Egypt, they cover the face of the earth: come and curse them for me; perhaps I shall be able to overpower them and drive them out. And God said to Balaam, You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people: for they are blessed (22:7-12).*

Now there has been suggested, and I think that there is no doubt truth to it, that there is a direct will of God for our lives, and then there is a permissive will of God for our lives. God's direct will for Balaam was expressed in, "Thou shalt not go. Thou shalt not curse them". That's God's direct will for Balaam. Later on we find God saying, "Okay, go with them". I think that was permissive will, not the direct will of God. Indicated even further in the fact that the angel of the Lord stood in the path to hinder him, and was going to kill him. So the permissive will of the Lord, isn't the place you want to be. You can get wiped out in the permissive will of the Lord. It's good to be in the center of God's will for your life. Right in the direct will of God, the direct plan of God for your life.

I think that sometimes we settle for God's second best, because of our failure to come up God's first best, for our lives. I do believe that God will draw you to the highest level that you will allow Him to and He'll do the best for you on that level. But I believe that you can stop the work of God at any place or platoon within your life. God doesn't force you against your will, you see. You are still a free moral agent. He will not draw you any higher than what you will allow Him to draw you. But God will draw you as high as you will allow Him to draw you, then He'll do the best for you on that plane. But, many times we limit what God is wanting to do for us, because we sort of put on the brakes and we say, "Okay this is good enough, I don't want to go any further", and we live in an area that God allows us to increment??? that. But it isn't what God's direct plan for your life is. I think that it is vital that we seek the direct will of God and follow the direct will of God for our lives.

God's direct will was expressed to Balaam when He said, "Thou shalt not go, thou shalt not curse them". Now, his violating this direct will of God, is pushing it till God permitted him to go, ended up with disaster for Balaam. For not only did he go, but he ended up advising the king so wickedly, that he brought a curse upon the people of God, and as a result, Balaam lost his life. So, there is that direct will of God. Push, whine, cry, beg, plead, and God will say, "Okay, if that's what you want. But that's not what I desire, but go ahead". But it's always to our hurt, to settle for second best, because you see, God's direct plan for your life is the very best thing that can happen to any of you. You push for your way, and you'll suffer disastrous consequences. So, Balaam was pushing for his way, as we come down the story.

So the elders of Moab came back to Balaam, and came back to Balak, and they said, [or he came to them and said,] the Lord's refused to let me go with you. He hasn't given me permission, so I can't go. SO they came back to Balak, and said Balaam refuses to come with us. So Balak again sent princes, more numerous and more honourable than they. [So more princes, but they were really more prestigious kind of guys.] And they said to him, thus says Balak the son of Zippor, Please let nothing hinder you from coming to me, for I will certainly honour you, or enrich you greatly, and I will do whatever you say to me: therefore, please come, and curse these people for me (22:13-17).

So Balaam is being pressured by the king, and he is being enticed really, because the king says, "Hey, I'll enrich you man, and I'll do anything you want, just please come".

Then Balaam answered and said to the servants, though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more. Now please stay here tonight, and I'll inquire of the Lord again (22:18-19).

Now interestingly enough, as Balaam starts into this whole experience, he seems to be pretty pure about it. "Look the guy can give me his whole house full of silver and gold, but I can't go beyond what God says. I can't go beyond the will of the Lord." And his motives were pretty pure in the beginning. But we find that he did go beyond the word of the Lord, but it was greed that got hold of him. When he saw the riches

disappearing, when he saw the king withdrawing all of these riches, and all, greed got hold of him, and he decided to go on beyond the word of the Lord.

So he went before the Lord again, and God said to Balaam, If the men come to call you, rise and go with them; but only the word which I speak to you, that shall you do (22:20).

“So, I warn you, don’t do anymore than just the word that I speak to you. Don’t go beyond my word”. Again, when God warns us of something, we better pay attention. Because that’s the area where there’s going to be trouble. A lot of times we think, “Hey, I don’t need a warning God. I’ve got that area covered, and I’m okay.” But if God warns you, you better take heed, because God doesn’t warn you needlessly. How many times God has warned me of something, and I say, “Oh Lord, that’s no problem, I can handle that”, And that’s where I get hit, that’s where I get snared. Ignore the warnings of God. Or think that they’re not necessary, not necessarily ignore them, I say, “Well, I have no problem there Lord, thanks anyhow. I appreciate it, but...”. But it’s in those areas where God warns you that you’re gonna fall if you don’t heed the warning of God.

So Balaam rose in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab (22:21).

Now it says that, “The men come and call you”, it doesn’t say that they came and called. He was just, “Hey, that’s all I need, just a crack in the door”. Zip he’s up in the morning, bright and early, ready to go.

God’s anger was aroused because he went: [See, it wasn’t God’s direct will. Balaam was pushing. It wasn’t God’s direct will. He was angry because he went.] and so the angel of the Lord took his stand in the way as an adversary against him. And as he was riding on his donkey, his two servants were with him. Now the donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the path, with a drawn sword in his hand: and the donkey turned aside out of the path, and went into the field: so Balaam struck the donkey, and got it back on the path. Then the angel of the Lord stood in the narrow path between the vineyards, where there was a wall on either side, and when the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she pushed herself against the wall, and crushed Balaam’s foot: [Sort of trying to get away from the angel, and pushed up against the wall, and Balaam’s foot got crushed.] so he struck her again. Then the angel of the Lord went further, and stood in a narrow place, where there was no place to turn either to the right or the left. And when the donkey saw the angel, she lay down under Balaam: so Balaam’s anger was aroused, so he struck the donkey with a staff. Then the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, What have I done to you that you’ve struck me three times (22:22-28)?

Now, here’s where bible critics really begin to have some real problems, and they point out that donkeys lack vocal chords, and that voice box. So that it is a physical impossibility for donkeys to speak. You’d have to be a pretty dumb donkey to know that! Of course donkeys can’t speak. But notice what it says, “The Lord opened the mouth of the donkey”. Now God can do anything, and I have no problem with a donkey talking, if God caused the donkey to talk. Doesn’t give me any problem at all. I think God can make rocks talk. Jesus said, “If my disciples would, at this time, hold their peace, these very rocks would cry out!”. I see no problem at all with God doing whatever He wants to do. If He wants to speak through a donkey, then He can speak through a donkey, and let me tell you that isn’t the last time He did it! He still speaks through donkeys today.

So Balaam, and of course, I get amused at this, because Balaam talked back to the donkey. Now that, I have a hard time with! That God could cause the donkey to talk, but the guy that talked back to the donkey! I mean what would you do if a donkey started talking to you? You know, he’s so mad, he answers the donkey back! And he said, “You...”, he accused the donkey of abusing him. Donkey abuse!

He said, I wish I had a sword in my hand, because I’d kill you! So the donkey said to Balaam, Am I not your donkey, that you have ridden ever since I became yours till this day? [And he used pretty good language!] and was I ever disposed to do this to you? [“Has this been my disposition? Have I ever been disposed to do this to you before?”] and Balaam said, No. [Still talking with the donkey. I love it!] So then the Lord opened Balaam’s eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand: and he bowed his head, and fell flat on his face. [Suddenly he saw what the donkey had been seeing.] And the angel of the Lord said to him, Why have you struck your donkey these three times? behold,

I've come out to stand against you, because your way is perverse before me (22:29-32):

This angel of the Lord, I believe is Jesus Christ. One of the manifestations of Jesus in the old testament. Notice, "Your way is perverse before me". In our new King James, the me is capitalized, signifying deity.

The donkey saw me, and turned away from me these three times: and if she had not turned aside from me, surely I would've killed you by now, and I would've let her live. And Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, I have sinned; for I didn't know that you stood in the way against me: now therefore, if it pleases you, I'll turn back. Then the angel of the Lord said to Balaam, Go with the men: but the word that I speak to you, that you shall speak. [So the second warning, "You're only to speak the words that I give to you. Only that is what you're supposed to speak."] So Balaam went with the princes of Balak. Now when Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he came out to meet him at the city of Moab, which is on the border of the Arnon, and the boundary of the territory. Then Balak said to Balaam, Did I not earnestly send for you calling you? why didn't you come to me? am I not able to honour you? how come you didn't come the first time? ["I'm able to make you a rich man.] And Balaam said to Balak, Look, I have come to you now: have I any power to say anything? the word that God puts in my mouth, I must speak. So Balaam went with Balak, and they came to Kirjath Huzoth. Then Balak offered oxen and sheep, and sent some to Balaam, and to the princes who were with him. And so it was the next day, that they took Balaam up to one of the high places of Baal, and from there he might observe the extent of the people (22:33-41).

Chapter 23

And Balaam said unto Balak, Build seven altars for me here, prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams. So they offerings on each altar. And he said, Stand by the burnt offering there, and I'm going to go over here: and inquire of God. So the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, Return to Balak, and thus shall you speak. Balak the king of Moab has brought me from Aram, from the mountains of the east, Come curse Jacob for me, and come denounce Israel. How shall I curse, whom God has not cursed? and how shall I denounce, whom the Lord has not denounced? From the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: there a people dwelling alone, not reckoning itself among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, or number one forth of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my end be like his (23:1-10)!

So, rather than curse, "Man", he says, "Who is like Israel and Jacob, My! Let me die the death of... I want to be like him. My end be like him".

Then Balak said to Balaam, What have you done to me? I brought you to curse my enemies, and, look, you bless them bountifully. And Balaam said, Must I not take heed to speak what the Lord has put in my mouth? ["I mean, I can't, all I can do is tell you what God says.] So Balak said to him, Please come with me to another place, from which you may see them: and you shall see only the outer part of them, and not see them all: and maybe you can curse them from there. So he brought him to the field of Zophim, at the top of Pisgah, and there again they built the seven altars. Balaam said to Balak, Stay here and I'll go over and talk to God. And so he came back, and he said, Rise up Balak and hear; listen to me, son of Zippor: God is not a man, that he should lie; nor a son of man, that he should repent: has he said, and will he not do it? or has he spoken, and will he not make it good (23:11-19)?

Now he is declaring some very important things about the character and nature of God here. Good doctrine. "God is not a man, that he should lie, nor the son of man, that he should repent." There are passages of scripture in the old testament that bring confusion. Because there are passages that, from a cursory observation, it would seem that God changed His mind. In fact, there are passages such as at the time of Noah, where it said, "And it repented the Lord, that He made man". The problem that we are dealing with, is one of linguistics.

You see, we have words by which we can express human actions, human feelings, human emotions. And because we all have human actions, human feelings, human emotions, we can communicate with these words. We understand them. "Yes, I had that happen to me. Yes I understand that word. I understand that emotion. I understand that activity. I changed my mind, I had a change of heart. I was going to do

something, but I changed my mind". So I know what it is to change your mind. Now when we move from the human level of the finite man, to the divine level of the infinite God, our problem is that we don't have an infinite vocabulary. Or a vocabulary that can describe infinity. We are out of the realm of language now. We are also out of the realm of our understanding, because I cannot understand infinity. I cannot understand how God thinks. It's in a dimension that's far beyond me. I don't even know if God does think, I don't know if you have to think, when you know everything. The bible says, "Known unto Him is everything from the beginning". There's nothing that God doesn't know. So when you have that kind of knowledge, you don't have to work out a plan, like we often work out a plan and say, "Now boy, I hope this works!" Because with God, He already knows in advance what's gonna take place. There's never any guesswork in the planning of God. Thus there are never any mistakes, and thus never any need to change.

But, it would appear from our level, that God is on a particular course, and I would take that course and as I follow it to its conclusion, I would say, "Well now this is where the path is going to lead God, and this is what's gonna happen", and then God turns the course. Well how can I describe God turning from what to me, is an obvious course? I have to use human language. So I say, "Well God changed His course", no God didn't change His course. But that's the only way that I can describe it because to me it appears that the course was changed. It would seem that God is gonna bring judgement, He didn't bring judgement. God repented, and didn't bring judgement. Well no, God wasn't gonna bring judgement, it appeared as though He was gonna bring judgement, but now, He didn't bring judgement, so it would appear that God changed.

So again, because we have to describe God with human language we run into the problem of semantics, and linguistics, and we have to use just the language that we can relate to. But there's no way that that really defines the activities of God. The truth about God, and the nature of God is, "That He is not a man that He should lie, nor is He the son of man, that He should repent". What God says, goes. "Hath He not said it, and shall it not be?"

Now he's talking about this business of cursing the people, God said, "I won't curse them, they're my people!", and so the king's saying, "Curse them, maybe you can curse them from this direction", and he comes back to the king, with this prophecy in which God's nature is declared. "God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent. Hath he not spoken, and shall he not do it?" "Has he not spoken, and shall He not make it good?"

Behold, I have received the command to bless: he has blessed; and I can't reverse it. [Who am I that I can reverse what God has done? Now, he says here, to me a fascinating thing!] *He has not observed iniquity in Jacob (23:20),*

Wow! That to me is amazing. Because Jacob is filled with iniquity! But God doesn't observe it. I like that! David liked that. David said, "Blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Oh how happy is the man to whom God does not impute iniquity". Who is that happy man to whom God does not impute iniquity? That man who is trusting and relying upon Jesus Christ. Yes I sin, yes I come short of the glory of God and I would be lying if I said differently. "If a man says he has not sinned, he is only deceiving himself, the truth isn't in him".

But even as with Jacob, God does not observe iniquity in me. Why? Because I'm His child. I'm trusting in Jesus as my Lord and Savior. Glorious! My position in Christ in the grace of God. Now does that mean, "Hey alright I can go out and do whatever I want!", No, no, no, no, no. No excuse for W.D. Willful disobedience. But it's good to know that I stand in the grace of God. This is an amazing statement, God declares, "I have not seen iniquity in Jacob, I've not observed it. Nor has he seen wickedness in Israel".

In the new testament we read, "Love covers a multitude of sins". It's good to know that God loves you so much, you that are in Christ, you that are trusting in Jesus. God loves you so much. His love just covers a multitude of sins. "So there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus". That's the key! In Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ who died, yea rather is risen again, who is at the right hand of the Father, making intercession for us." I love this. God said, "I haven't observed any iniquity in Jacob, I haven't observed any sin. I haven't seen any sin in Israel".

The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. God brings them out of Egypt;

and he has strength like a wild ox. For there is no sorcery against Jacob, there is not any divination against Israel: it now must be said of Jacob and of Israel, O what God has done (23:21-23)!

Now here's a guy that's been hired to curse the people.

Look, he said a people rises like a lion, and lifts itself up like a lion: it shall not lie down until it devours the prey, and drinks the blood of the slain. Then Balak said to Balaam, Don't curse them at all, or don't bless them at all. [You know, enough! Keep quiet!] So Balaam answered and said to Balak, Did I not tell you, saying, All the Lord speaks, I must do? So Balak said to Balaam, Please now come on, let's take another chance, another place: perhaps it will please God that you may curse them for me from there. [Now here he's just said, God isn't a man whose gonna change, not a man and I can't do anything, and the guy's still trying.] So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, which overlooks the wasteland. And he said, Build the seven altars here, [So he built the seven altars.]

Chapter 24

And he saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, so he did not go as other times to seek to use sorcery, [An interesting thing here. He, on the other occasions was seeking to use sorcery, and God interrupted.] but he just set his face toward the camp of Israel. [Toward the wilderness.] And Balaam raised his eyes, saw Israel encamped according to their tribes; and the spirit of God came upon him. And he took up his oracle, and he said, the utterance of Balaam the son of the shepherd, the utterance of a man whose eyes are open: The utterance of a man who hears the words of God, who sees the vision of the Almighty, who falls down with his eyes open wide: How lovely are your tents, O Jacob, and your dwellings, O Israel! They're like valleys that stretch out, they're like gardens by the river's side, like aloes planted by the Lord, like cedars beside the waters. He shall pour water from his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. God brings him out of Egypt; he has the strength of a wild ox: he shall consume the nations his enemies, he shall break their bones, and pierce them with arrows. He bows down, he lies down as a lion: and as a lion who will rouse him? Blessed is he who blesses you, and cursed is he who curses you. Then Balak's anger was aroused, and he struck his hands together: and he said, [Shut up!] I called you to curse my enemies, and, you have bountifully blessed them these three times. Now therefore flee to your place: For I said I would greatly enrich you; but, in fact, the Lord has kept you back from the riches (24:1-11).

"Man you could've been a wealthy man, just follow my instructions you could be a rich man today. But the Lord has kept you from the riches. Now, get out of here!"

So Balaam said to Balak, Did I not speak to your messengers, and I said though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the Lord, to do either good or bad of my own will: but what the Lord says, that I must speak? And now, indeed, I am going unto my people: come and I will advise you to what these people will do to your people in the latter days (24:12-14).

"Here's what's gonna happen now, down the road. I'll advise you of what's gonna take place in the future." So now he prophesies. And first of all he introduces himself in the prophecy, and it's the way the previous prophecy ran, in the beginning here.

Balaam the son of Beor, the utterance of a man whose [first of all] eyes are open: [Spiritually, "I can see and understand"] the utterance of him who hears the words of God, and [he] knows the knowledge of the most High, ["I understand God.] who sees the vision of the Almighty, who falls down with eyes wide open: I see him [That is, the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior, Jesus.] I see him, but not now: I behold him, but not near: [The Messiah is going to come. He's going to establish God's kingdom, but it's going to be a ways down the road. It isn't now, it isn't near. It isn't eminent, it isn't immediate.] But a star shall come out of Jacob, [The wise men said, "We have seen a star in the east, we've come to worship him". Peter said, "Until the day star arise in your heart". And the last words of Jesus quoted in the bible, in Revelation, chapter two, "I am the root and the offspring of David, I am the bright and morning star". "The star shall rise out of Jacob. None other than Jesus. "I am the bright and the morning star". The last word Jesus said in the bible was star. Actual quote of Jesus.] a Scepter [or king] shall rise out of Israel, and he will batter the brow of Moab, and destroy all the sons of tumult. Edom shall be his possession, Seir also [his enemies] shall be a

possession; while Israel does valiantly. Out of Jacob one shall have dominion and destroy the remains of the city. Then he looked on Amalek, and he took up his oracle and said, Amalek was first among the nations; but shall be last until he perishes (24:15-20).

Now, I'm going to broaden out on this, as we go through the bible, but let me just say, at this point, that Amalek in the scripture is always a type of the flesh. It's a type of the flesh. It's the first and it's the last to go. The flesh is the last thing to go. Now, that is why when Saul was ordered by Samuel, to go down against the Amalekites, what was the order to do? Utterly destroy them all. Don't leave anything alive. God's verdict for the flesh is utter destruction. What did Samuel do? He kept some of them alive. He kept alive Agag. You remember when the children of Israel were in captivity, during the time of Esther, this fellow Haman was angered, because Mordecai refused to bow. He went to the king and he said, "Hey, you know you've got a rebellious group of people in your kingdom, let's appoint a day in which we destroy them all." Haman who? Haman the Agagigite, he was an Amalekite. The people who weren't utterly destroyed. The flesh wasn't utterly destroyed, so it came back and almost destroyed Israel. Amalek, a type of the flesh. "First among the nations, the last, until he buries it.

The last thing is the flesh. God help us, we have to deal with it. We live in a body of flesh, and as long as we're living in this body of flesh, we're gonna have problems with our flesh. But God never intended that man be ruled by his flesh. He intended that man be ruled by the Spirit. "And if you by the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the flesh, you will live. And if you walk in the Spirit, you will not fulfill the desires of your flesh."

So he then looked at the Kenites, and took up the oracle, and said, Firm is your dwelling place and your nest is set in the rock. Nevertheless Cain shall be burned, and how long until Asshur carries you away captive. And he said, Alas who shall live when God does this! The ships shall come from the coasts of Cypress, and they shall afflict Asshur, and afflict Eber, and so shall Amelek, until he perishes. Then Balaam rose, and departed and returned to his place: and Balak went to his way (24:21-25).

But, Balaam, before he left, made a fatal mistake. He went beyond the word of the Lord. It doesn't tell us here, but it does tell us in other passages, that Balaam then advised and counseled the king to befriend these people. In fact this next short little chapter here, is where they follow the advice, now of Balaam. "Invite them into your places of worship. You can't go against them, you can't curse them. So, join them, and invite them to your places of worship. Let your young girls go down, as prostitutes and get the guys involved in sexual immorality. Introduce your gods to them, because the God that they serve, wants them to serve Him only. He will not allow them to divide their devotion with other gods. If they turn and begin to worship other gods, He will curse them, He will chastise them, because they're His people. So, I can't do anything, but here, I want the loot, so here's what you can do". And he advised the king with this ungodly counsel.

Now, in the thirty first chapter, of the book of Numbers here, we read in eighth verse, "Where Balaam the son of Beor, was killed with the sword". You remember that he said, "Oh that I might die the death of the righteous!", but he didn't Balaam the son of Beor was killed with the sword, when Moses conquered the Midianites. They kept some of the women alive, when he came back to Moses, with the spoils of war.

So they killed all the men, but they brought the women and the children. And Moses said, verse sixteen, "Look, these women, caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the Lord, in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of Israel. These are the women that through the counsel of Balaam", (that's the key), and of course when you get into the new testament, in II Peter, he talks about Balaam also, in II Peter, chapter two, verse fifteen. As he talks about these false teachers. He says, "They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loves the wages of unrighteousness".

The king had offered him the wages for cursing the people, he couldn't do it directly, so he did it indirectly, because he loves the wages of unrighteousness. The book of Jude tells us, "Woe unto them for they have gone the way of Cain, they have run greedily in the error of Balaam, for profit". So, the greed of Balaam, as he gave this wicked advice for profit. Then, finally, in Revelation, chapter two, verse fourteen, as

God speaks to the church of Pergamos, He said, "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 before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed of idols, and to commit sexual immorality".

So Balaam gets his notice all through the bible. Micah speaks about him, as does, Nehemiah. We find him appearing in the book of Judges, and also in the book of Joshua, and also in the book of Deuteronomy. I mean this guy made quite an impression on the people of God, because of the plague that he brought against the people of God. Not getting God to curse them, but yet bringing the people into the snare of their own flesh. Knowing the weakness of their own flesh, knowing that's the place to get them. "You can't destroy them by direct assault, come in, in a subtle way, get them involved in immorality, get them involved in the things of the flesh, because the place of the flesh is the place of a person's weakness".

That's where Satan comes to destroy you. In the area of the flesh. He knows your place of weakness, and he can destroy you in the area of the flesh. Now, the interesting thing is that, that's exactly the area where Balaam was destroyed. It was his flesh lusting after the loot, and the rewards that the king had offered, that brought his destruction. Yet he knew that, that was a weakness, "That's the place to attack them, in the area of the flesh, that's the weak point, attack there", and that's where he was attacked and destroyed. And that's where Satan actually attacks most of us. In the area of the flesh, is the area that we have to guard against. That's the area that he attacks. If I'm walking in the Spirit, if I'm living in the Spirit, I'm living above, a life of victory. It's when I get into the flesh when I have my problems. So, "Walk in the Spirit, you'll not fulfill the lusts of the flesh".

Chapter 25

So, Israel remained there in the Acacia??? grove, the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. And they invited the people [The Moabites] they invited them to the sacrifices of their gods: and the people ate, and bowed down to their gods. So Israel was joined to the Lord of Baalpeor: and the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel. And the Lord said to Moses, Take all the leaders of the people, and hang the offenders before the Lord, out in the sun, ["Just hang those offenders out there in the sun.] that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel. So Moses said to the judges of Israel, Every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baalpeor. ["Every one of them that were involved in that little scene down there, kill them!"] And, indeed, one of the children of Israel [at the very time] came and presented to his brothers, a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all of the children of Israel, who were weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting (25:1-6).

Here were these guys weeping over the fact that this evil has been introduced to the camp, and here comes this guy, showing off this gal. And he heads into the tent with her. Here, these guys, mourning and weeping over this whole thing.

And so Phinehas, who was the grandson of Aaron the high priest, threw Eleazar. Phineas grabbed his javelin went in, and did the two in. And so the plague was stopped from among the children of Israel [eight b] and so those died in the plague were twenty four thousand. [That died in this plague, as a result of the vicious counsel of Balaam, to the king Balak.] And Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of the priest, has turned back [God said] my wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with my zeal among them, and so I did not continue to consume the children of Israel in my zeal. Wherefore say, Behold, I give to him my covenant of peace: And it shall be to him and his descendants after him, of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel (25:7-13).

So the priesthood passed through Phinehas, as a covenant to God and to his descendants, because of his zeal for purity and righteousness, within the camp. So it gives the name of the Israelite that was killed and all, and the gal who was killed with him.

And then the Lord said to Moses, Harass the Midianites, and attack them: For they harassed you with their schemes, by which they seduced you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi, [That was the name of the gal who was slain.] the daughter of the leader of the Midian, their sister, who was killed in the day of the plague because of Peor (25:14-18).

So we see the vicious counsel of Balaam, it's effect upon the people of God, as we come to the end

of chapter twenty five. So, next week we continue on with twenty six through thirty one.

Now may the Lord help you to absorb all you heard. That it might soak in and sink in. Take root in our hearts. That we might come to a richer understanding of the knowledge of God, and the ways of God, that we might walk in His path. That we might walk after the Spirit. That we might crucify the old man with his affections and lusts. That we might live the new life in Christ. That glorious life where God does not observe iniquity, or see the failure. But only sees us in the perfection of His Son. Walking in the Spirit, oh God help us. May this be a week of victory, in Christ, as He gives us victory over our flesh, and over the life of the flesh. Through the power of the living Savior. In Jesus' name.