

The Doctrine of Balaam

Revelation 2:12-14

Introduction: In the book of Revelation, Jesus speaks to church in Pergamos where the Lord commends them for holding fast to His name and not denying His faith. They were able to do this in a place so full of evil it is described as a place where Satan dwells. This is no small honor. It shows that Christ appreciates those who hold to His name and who hold to His system of faith.

Yet, He censures them because they have “*those who hold the doctrine of Balaam*” (Rev. 2:14). Not all who worshipped at Pergamos held to this doctrine but some in their fellowship were guilty and the church was condemned by Christ for retaining them.

Since the church at Pergamos was condemned for retaining those who held the doctrine of Balaam, it behooves us to know as much about this doctrine so we don't become guilty ourselves.

I. Balaam was an Old Testament character and a **prophet of God** (Num. 22-24).

A. God had just brought the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage and they had pitched their tents in the plains of Moab. The king of the Moabites was Balak and the presence of the Israelites greatly disturbed him (Num. 22:1-3).

B. Balak was afraid that the Israelites would plunder his lands (Num. 22:4).

C. Balak was also observant. Balak knew God was with them and he was powerless to defeat God's people. So Balak's plan was simple. Corrupt the Israelites and God would leave them to their own demise.

D. To this end, Balak called for Balaam (Num. 22:5-6).

E. Balaam was a prophet for hire (Num. 22:7-8). They brought his fee.

1. Balaam knew what Balak requested was wrong.

2. To curse God's own children through the exercise of prophetic power would be rebellion against God.

3. If Balaam had sternly rebuked the messengers and Balak for such a request that would have been the end of the matter.

4. However, wealth and honor was offered and Balaam hesitated.

Knowing the answer God would give, he in essence said, “well let me ask anyway.”

a. Think of the presumption of this thing. A minister of God, going before God on a matter that would only antagonize God whom he consults!

b. Balaam entertains the princely guests as if this was an honorable mission.

F. During the night Balaam consults God (Num. 22:9-12).

1. Notice God's instructions in verse 12. Was there any doubt that God forbid this evil? Could God have been any more direct? Was there any ambiguity to the command? Not a sentence ever spoke to man by God was ever more plain.

2. Balaam understood it! The next morning, Balaam sent the messengers away (Num. 22:13-14).

G. Yet, Balak tries again (Num. 22:15-17). What part of "no" did Balak not understand?

1. Remember Balaam hesitated.

2. Balaam left the notion open that he could be bought by not forthrightly condemning the messengers for this evil request.

a. It is no different today. If a new Christian were asked to take a drink with the guys again and he replies, "I can't, I'm a Christian," without the conviction that he means it, though he resisted for the moment, we know the attack will be renewed. It would just be a matter of time before the evil one gets his way.

b. Therefore, Balak tries again but this time he ups the anti.

H. Notice Balaam's response to the second request (Num. 22:18-19).

1. He states that no amount of money could cause him to go against God's word. But what does he do? "Well maybe I could find out **more** from God concerning this matter." Hello Balaam!

2. If Balaam understood that he could not go beyond what God said, he certainly must be trying to change God's word.

3. This is the doctrine which Balaam is noted for. It is all wrapped up in the word "more." The Lord told him in no uncertain terms his command but Balaam wasn't content with that. God's word did not suit him. His heart was set on going. So Balaam was going to consult God again to find out **more** in hopes of getting an answer **more** in harmony with his own desires.

I. This time Balaam hears what he wanted to hear (Num. 22:20-21).

1. It seems that God has contradicted Himself doesn't it? He first said "no" then he said "go."

2. Balaam's heart was bent on going. He was unwilling to respect what God had told him from the start. He desired to trifle with God's word. He was not satisfied with God's word. So God said go if you must. (Remember Judas Iscariot?)

J. Let there be no doubt, God was not happy with Balaam (Num. 22:22).

1. Balaam was only pleased with God's word when it coincided with his own will.

2. It is as though 2 Thess. 2:11-12 was written for this occasion. It is not because man does not have the truth that God would give them up but because man does not have the love for the truth!

K. An angel of the Lord was sent to directly influence Balaam not to do this evil (Num. 22:22-35).

1. The angel told Balaam his way was perverse (Num. 22:32).

2. Balaam responds by acknowledging his mistreatment of the donkey and digs himself a deeper hole (Num. 22:33-34). Hello Balaam! “If it displeases you?” The angel just said he would have preferred to kill Balaam. It is obvious the angel is displeased.

3. Yet, Balaam is still bent on having it his way so the angel says “go” (Num. 22:35).

L. As the rest of the story unfolds, Balaam and Balak make three efforts to curse the Israelites and all three times God causes a blessing to be uttered (Deut. 23:3-5).

II. The lesson we should learn is don't wrestle with God's word (2 Pet. 3:16)!

A. Balaam's way was to twist God's word to his own benefit (2 Pet. 2:15-16). Notice by him doing so he was considered mad. Balaam was out of his mind because he loved the wages of unrighteousness. Those who forsake the truth, go astray by following Balaam's way. What way? **The way which causes a man to look past the obvious commands of God and twist God's word to benefit himself.**

B. Mark 16:16 says very simply, “*He who believes and is baptized will be saved...*” But man says, this does not suit him; it is not in harmony with his desires. So he goes to find out **more** what God's word might say. So after searching he comes to Acts 16:31 that says, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your household.*” He declares this is precisely the thing he wants. God said it so that suits him just fine. Thus he gets the answer to suit him just like Balaam.

C. Another person will read Acts 2:38 and question if God meant that or did he mean John 3:36 after searching God's word for more information. You see, John 3:36 suits a person more readily when you ignore other clear commands. Are those in the religious world just participants in the doctrine of Balaam?

D. An man given to alcohol is converted to Christ reads 1 Cor. 6:10 and learns that drunkards will not inherit heaven. So he goes to God's word to find out **more** and comes across Mark 7:18-19.

E. I could go on with such illustrations on how man perverts the teachings of God on many subjects like instrumental music in worship, benevolence, divorce and remarriage, forsaking the assembling, kitchens in church, church sponsorship,

withdrawal of family members, etc. Could it be that the doctrine of Balaam is within the Lord's church today?

Conclusion: The church in Pergamos was warned by Christ of those who hold the doctrine of Balaam. Balaam was a false prophet who used God's word to cast stumbling blocks before the children of Israel. Such stumbling blocks that he convinced people that eating things sacrificed to idols and committing sexual immorality was somehow permissible.

I have no doubt he used God's word to his advantage when teaching people such things. We must be on guard against Balaam's doctrine even within the church!