



Church of God Sunday School

THE STORY OF BALAAM

Numbers 21:21 — 31:16

As Israel continued to travel toward the Promised Land, God gave them great victories over two mighty kings—Sihon (*SAY-hon*), king of the Amorites (*AM-uh-rights*), and Og, king of Bashan (*BAY-shuhn*). Soon Israel came to the land of the Moabites (*MO-uh-bites*). The people of Moab were afraid of the Israelites, "because they were many."

Balak (*BAY-lak*), the king of the Moabites, had a plan. He sent messengers to a prophet of Midian (*MID-ee-uhn*) known for his accurate prophesies of blessings and curses. This man's name was Balaam (*BAY-luhm*). Balak gave his messengers presents to give to Balaam if he would come and curse the Israelites.

When Balaam heard Balak's request, he asked the messengers 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 told Balaam not to go with the messengers. He was not to curse the people of Israel, "for they are blessed."

The next morning, Balaam told the men that God had refused to give him permission to go with them. So the men returned and told Balak that Balaam would not come 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 to do whatever Balaam asked 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, saddled his ass (donkey), and went with the Moabite men.

No doubt, Balaam thought everything was going fine! However, the Lord was angry with Balaam for going with the men. "And the angel of the LORD stood in the way." The angel stood with a sword in his hand! Balaam could not see the angel. But the donkey could! She turned aside into the field, to get out of the angel's way. Balaam hit the animal, to turn her back into the path.

As Balaam approached a vineyard, the path had walls on both sides. Once again, the angel stood in the path. To get away from the angel, the donkey moved to one side and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall. Balaam was so mad! He hit the animal again!

Then the angel of the Lord went ahead of Balaam again and "stood in a narrow place." When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord for the third time, "she fell down under Balaam." Balaam's anger was greatly stirred, and he beat the animal with his staff.

God took over then. He caused the donkey to start talking—not braying, but talking—in Balaam's own 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 donkey then asked Balaam if she had ever done anything like that before. Balaam said no, she had not. Then God opened Balaam's 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 donkey 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



the words which God gave him. So, Balaam continued on "with the princes of Balak."

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 (*KIHR-ee-ath-HOO-zote*), where Balak offered sacrifices.

The next day, they went to the high places of Baal. (Balak was an idol worshiper.) There Balaam could look down on the greater part of the Israelite camp. Balaam told Balak to build seven altars and prepare seven rams and seven oxen for sacrifices, one for each altar. Balaam then went to a high place to talk to the Lord.

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 (*PIZ-gah*). He built altars and offered more sacrifices. Again, 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 told Balaam not to curse or bless Israel, but Balaam said, "All that the LORD speaketh, that I must do."

But Balak did not give up. He said to Balaam, "Come . . . unto another place; [maybe] it will please God." Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor (*PEE-or*). For the third time, Balak built altars and sacrificed offerings. 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 place.

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 wanted the reward, the honor, and the riches for himself! He wanted it 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 to Balak. 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 true worship and convinced them to bow down to their false gods. And through the friendship of the Moabites and the Midianites, the Israelites did become involved in the terrible sin of idolatry! Many people of Israel 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*  
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Connect the dots to see the animal that talked to Balaam





The Angel of the Lord Speaks to Balaam