Motivation: In this passage we discover Balaam, who is regarded in the New Testament (2 Peter 2:15; Jude 11, Rev. 2:14) as a wicked apostle. His negative example is in contrast to the Godly Phinehas of Chapter 25.

I. The Way of Balaam (22:1 - 21)

Peter writes of the “Way of Balaam” in 2 Peter 2:15-16. J. Vernon McGee calls it the way of covetousness. We follow the “way of Balaam” when we know God’s will but pursue a selfish course of conduct. God allowed Balaam to follow this way in order to reveal His glory.

A. The Way of Balaam Is Opposed to God’s Perfect Will” Then God said to Balaam, ‘You are not to go with them. You are not to curse this people, for they are blessed. ’” (12) Believer’s Study Bible

The name ‘Balaam,’ perhaps an intentional corruption, meant ‘devourer of the people.’ His claims to a relationship with YAHWEH (‘the Lord’ in v. 8, 13, 18, 19) were surely false (notice the narrator uniformly refers to the One speaking to Balaam as ‘God’), although the Lord condescended to speak to Balaam and to use him against his will. If the Lord could enable a donkey to speak to Balaam (v., 28); He could use a pagan diviner to speak the inspired Word of God in blessing Israel. Scripture uniformly testifies to his reprobate character (31:8, 16; Deut. 23:3-6; Josh. 13:22; 24:9, 10; Judg. 11:23-25; Neh. 13:1-3; Mic. 6:5; 2 Pet. 2:15; 16; Jude 11; Rev. 2:14). All the people of the ancient Near East believed in the dynamic power of the spoken word. When a word was spoken, it was trusted to release power either for good or for evil. The dynamic power of words also has a place in the Bible (Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11). Isaac could not recall the blessing once the power of it had been released on Jacob (Gen. 27:35), even though the blessing had been secured by treachery. The N.T. maintains the dynamic of the Word in proclaiming that the Word became flesh (John 1:1ff.) and is living (Heb. 4:12).”
B. The Way of Balaam Illustrates God’s Permissive Will “... get up and go with them, but you must only do what I tell you.” (20)

1. Permissive will often involve covetousness – A close study of the text reveals that Balaam seemed to hold out for a better offer. His words sound pious (18) but his actions are condemned in scripture.

2. Permissive will often involve correction – God allows us to do that which will teach us or someone else.

   Believer’s Study Bible, p. 225: 2:22

   “This verse reminds us that God's will was expressed unequivocally in v. 12. Balaam’s greed at the prospect of riches (vv. 16, 18) had caused him to go back to the Lord hoping for an additional word. The Lord gave him permission to go only in order to teach him, the Moabites, the Israelites, and us the emptiness of pagan divination. It also provided the Lord opportunity to issue an amazing prophecy of his great plans for Israel. What follows is one of the most amusing stories in Scripture. Having compared Balaam unfavorably to a witless and obstinate donkey, hired by the fool Balak, the Lord lifted him to the heights of divine revelation and spoke through 'this numb-skulled, money-grubbing, heathen seer' a message of messianic deliverance and greatness.”

3. Permissive will always involve consequences – Learning by your own mistakes is a difficult schooling. Sometimes, however, that is the only way we can learn a lasting lesson. Balaam’s journey had consequences for himself, Israel (31:16) and his employers (23:11).

II. Three Strikes (22:22-27)

“But God was incensed that Balaam was going, and the Angel of the Lord took His stand on the path to oppose him. Balaam was riding his donkey, and his two servants were with him. 23:

When the donkey saw the Angel of the
Lord standing on the path with a drawn sword in His hand, she turned off the path and went into the field. So Balaam hit her to return her to the path.”
Then the Angel of the
Lord
stood in a narrow passage between the vineyards, with a stone wall on either side.

The donkey saw the Angel of the
Lord
and pressed herself against the wall, squeezing Balaam’s foot against it. So he hit her once again.

The Angel of the
Lord
went ahead and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn to the right or the left.

When the donkey saw the Angel of the
Lord
, she crouched down under Balaam. So he became furious and beat the donkey with his stick.

" (22:22-27)

A. The Way of Balaam destroys Pride HCSB, p. 260, 22:23-27 “The words when the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD are filled with irony, especially when used three times in this context. This renowned ‘seer of the gods’ could not see what his lowly donkey saw. Furthermore, this donkey was a female, placing the animal in an even lower status when compared to the relative value and usefulness of male donkeys. Balaam beat her into submission, though she was ultimately more submissive to God than the one whom God was sending to pronounce blessing upon Israel.”

B. The Way of Balaam Is Surrounded by Peril - The incident of the angel, the talking donkey and Balaam is a vivid illustration of the danger one walks through when undertaking a mission not in the center of God’s will. (22:22)

1. The “seer” had worse vision than the donkey. (23)

2. The sentence (of God’s judgment) caused Balaam to lash out at an innocent party (23, 25, 27, 28, 32).
3. The sin of Balaam allowed God to correct him (34) Believer’s Study Bible, p. 226: 22:31
“The famous ‘seer’ from Mesopotamia could not see until YAHWEH opened his eyes; the great
prophet ‘did not know’ (v. 34) until YAHWEH revealed it. Note that the opening of Balaam’s
eyes was as much a miracle as the opening of his donkey’s mouth (v. 28).”

III. Two Questions (22:28-30)

“Then the Lord opened the donkey’s mouth, and she asked Balaam, “What have I
done to you that you have beaten me these three times?” Balaam answered the donkey, “You made me look like a fool. If I had a sword in my hand, I’d kill
you now!”
But the donkey said, “Am I not the donkey you’ve ridden all your life until today? Have I
ever treated you this way before?”
“No,” he replied.
” (22:28-30)

IV. One View (22:31-35, cf. 36-42)

“Then the Lord opened Balaam’s eyes, and he saw the Angel of the Lord standing in
the path with a drawn sword in His hand. Balaam knelt and bowed with his face to the
ground. The Angel of the Lord asked him, “Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? Look, I came out to
oppose you, because what you are doing is evil in My sight.

The donkey saw Me and turned away from Me these three times. If she had not turned away from Me, I would have killed you by now and let her live.”

Balaam said to the Angel of the
Lord
“I have sinned, for I did not know that You were standing in the path to confront me. And now, if it is evil in Your sight, I will go back.”

Then the Angel of the
Lord
said to Balaam, “Go with the men, but you are to say only what I tell you.” So Balaam went with Balak’s officials.

“Balaam’s repetition of the words of divine instruction – I must speak only the message God puts in my mouth (cp. vv. 20, 35) – shows that what is about to come from him is divine revelation. Balaam’s ability to influence the coming events was less than that of his donkey.”

V. Revelation from God (23:1-24:25)

Just as God spoke through a donkey, He now speaks through a pagan seer to bless Israel with four declarations:

A. A Chosen People “it does not consider itself among the nations” (23:9) The first prophecy concerns the uniqueness of Israel. Balaam is so impressed that he desires to be one of them, “Let me die the death of the upright; let the end of my life be like theirs.” (23:10) Balak was totally underwhelmed by what his house full of silver and gold (22:18) had purchased (23:11).

B. A Clean People “He considers no disaster for Jacob; He sees no trouble for Israel” (23:21) This saying is difficult to accept following as it does on the heels of the fiery serpents (21:6) and preceding the idolatry of Baal-Peor (25:1 ff). Such a statement can only be
understood in the context of God’s covenant love. Just as David was a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22) even though he was guilty of murder, lying and adultery, so Israel was pronounced clean by God through His unconditional covenant promises. In much the same way, we accept God’s righteousness through faith and trust in God’s covenant in Jesus Christ. Though we are guilty of sin (I John 1:8), we take on God’s righteousness through Jesus (I Peter 1:19).

C. A Conquering People “He will feed on enemy nations…” (24:8) This prophecy looked forward to Israel conquering the Promised Land as well as the Messiah conquering the nations (Ps. 47:3; Phil 2:10).

D. A Christ-Producing People “A star will come from Jacob, and a scepter will arise from Israel” (24:17)

J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible, vol. 1p. 514: “Have you ever stopped to wonder where the wise men learned to look for a star? How did they associate a star with a king born over in Israel? Why would they make such a long trek?

About 1500 years after this prophecy was given, we find coming out of the east, the land of Balaam, a whole company of wise men. Apparently, this prophecy of Balaam was retained, since Balaam was considered an outstanding prophet in the east, and the wise men knew his prophecy. When they saw the remarkable star, they remembered that Balaam had said, ‘... There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel...’ (Num. 25:17) When the wise men came to Jerusalem, their question was, ‘Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east and are come to worship him’ (Matt. 2:2). When we add to these Scriptures the prophecy of Daniel (and Daniel likewise had prophesied in the east) which gives the approximate time that the Messiah would come, we see that the coming of the wise men to Jerusalem is very understandable.

The thing that makes it very remarkable is that Israel, the people who had the Old Testament with all the prophecies of Christ’s coming, was not looking for Him – with the exception of a very small minority, such as Anna and Simeon. When this company of wise men (there were probably nearer three hundred than three!) converged on Jerusalem, the entire city, including Herod the king, was stirred. Their coming adds a thrilling dimension to the Christmas story. And it is quite interesting to trace it to this old rascal, Balaam.”
V. Relapse into Idolatry (25:1-18)

In this chapter we begin to see why Balaam is so roundly condemned throughout scripture while appearing thus far to be a prophet of God.

A. Idolatry as A Result of a Plot – Elsewhere in scripture, Balaam is described as one who "loved the wages of wickedness" (2 Peter 2:15), "rushed to profit" (Jude 11), and enticed "the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality." (Rev. 2:14)

B. Idolatry Must be Punished “Take all the leaders of the people and execute them…” (4) Putting something in the rightful place of God carries a price. If you want to find the idols in your life, see what takes priority of your time, money and passion.

C. Idolatry Stopped by Phinehas “Phinehas. . .has turned back My wrath” (11) The extent of the idolatry is revealed in verse 9 “...those who died in the plague numbered twenty-four thousand”. Here is an excellent illustration of one man, Phinehas, standing up for what is right. Despite the overwhelming opposition, Phinehas took dramatic action and is commended by God for his zeal (11). The reward of standing up for God is clearly demonstrated (13).
Application:

1. **Diverting** from God’s revealed will leads to a path of danger.

2. **Declaring** God’s truth does not make the declarer (teacher, preacher) right with God.

3. **Deceiving** God’s people is the Devil’s changeless plan (Eph. 6:11; 2 Cor. 2:11)

Adult Leader Pack: Item 9 Handout: Adversaries Along the Journey

Illustrator: p. 86 “Balaam: All We Know”

Notes: **You may access David’s Lesson Preview in MP3 format at: [www.hfcbiblestudy.org](http://www.hfcbiblestudy.org)**

Dates: 12/24 – Christmas Eve Services; 12/24-25 – Christmas Holidays (church offices closed); 12/29 – NO LBS; 12/31 - New Year's Eve.

2020:

1/1
– New Year’s Day – offices closed;
1/6-9
– Daniel Fast;
1/15
– Midlink preview;
1/17-19
– LIFT Weekend;
1/22
– Midlink 1 thru 2/26;
1/26
– Fitness EXPO;
1/31
Numbers Lesson 5: “God’s Call”

Written by David Self
Monday, 23 December 2019 00:00 -

– Midnight Madness;
  2/7
– Night to Shine;
  2/9
– First Camp;
  2/14-15
– Superstart Preteen Conf.;
  2/16
– MIYCO;
  2/21
– Marriage Matters;
  2/23
– Parent Commitment;
  2/29
– Senior Adult Rodeo Hoedown;
  3/7
– Men’s Conf. Iron Sharpens Iron;
  3/7-19
– RUSHMORE.