

Balaam

My name is Balaam. You may have heard of me. I believe that in your day, there are two sayings that could be applied to my life. "Every man has his price," is one and "Just say no" is another. I have been allowed to communicate directly with you – don't be alarmed, it is fine when God initiates it! But that distinction is an illustration of the subtlety of the enemy of our souls, the master deceiver, who is in rebellion against his Maker and deals in counterfeit miracles.

I was a prophet and truly heard from the LORD God of Israel. But I also dabbled in sorcery. It was common practice – everybody did it. I believe that in your day, some believers in the One True God also use devices such as dowsing rods for certain tasks, like finding water. It is considered a harmless natural gift, a "natural power," but let me tell you that it can be a gateway to grave danger. I'll explain my terrible sin, which did not seem like a sin at all when I did it.

I was contacted by the elders of Moab and Midian, skilled in flattery, offering the standard fee for divination. They had been sent by Balak, king of Moab, to ask me to curse a people that had come out of Egypt and covered the land. I asked the delegation to wait overnight so I could consult the LORD. So far, so good, although I probably should have known those people were the descendants of Jacob. The report of their miraculous escape Egypt was well known.

The LORD gave me an answer and did not reprove me for my ignorance. He clearly told me that this people were blessed. I told the delegation I could not go with them for any money. End of story, right? But they were persistent and came back with the promise of even greater reward. Think carefully about what I said to them: "Even if Balak gave me his palace filled with silver and gold, I could not do anything great or small to go beyond the command of the LORD my God. Now stay here tonight as the others did, and I will find out what else the LORD will tell me."

Did you catch that? I acknowledged that I could not counter the Lord but asked them to wait while I asked again. Did I think He would change His mind? I was asking LORD's permission to break His clear command!

But then it looked like He *did* change His mind! The Lord said I was to go with them but only do what He said to do. Did I take the money? Well, I will let you take a guess, but you know the answer because The LORD revealed to later prophets that my besetting sin was greed.

I obeyed that last order but soon found out that I was in for a major surprise and would either learn my lesson or die as a just punishment for my duplicity. Picture this. I am riding my donkey, meditating on the possible outcome of this unusual assignment when the beast stops for no good reason. I tried the usual methods for restarting a stalled donkey, all without success. In fact, the stupid beast began crushing my feet against the walls beside the road. That made me really angry.

Guess what happened next? Unbelievably, the beast spoke. A dumb donkey prophesied to the foolish prophet that an angel with a sword barred the way. A prophet would be expected to notice things like that. Well, I bowed before the angel expecting to be sent home. Incredibly, the Lord wanted me to continue with the men, but only do and say what He told me.

That began a series of three bull and ram sacrifices, each with 7 of each animal on each of 7 altars followed by a blessing of Israel. Why did the LORD ask that? I think for Balak it finally convinced him that I would not curse God's chosen people. For me? By the third time, I had given up my sideline sorcery and was given a heartfelt, clear vision and message. A fourth vision declared the fate of Israel's enemies.

So how did Balak finally get his curse on the people of Israel? They cursed themselves! The men began to engage in ritual prostitution for the worship of Baal. As a result, a plague killed 24,000 and was only stopped by an execution.

When Israel took vengeance on Midian, I was also killed. I had been a flawed prophet all along and clearly did not succeed in communicating God's righteousness to the people I lived among.

How are you doing in the situation you have been given? Are you hearing from God? Are you single-mindedly and whole-heartedly following His will?

Numbers chapters 22-25 and 31, 2 Peter, Jude, ***Between Christ and Satan***, Kurt Koch, Kregel Publications