

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## NUMBERS 22-25

Harry Potter is a young wizard at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

Harry is a student of magic. He learns to cast spells, consults the dead, uses his magical powers to reach his goals, and plies the art of witchcraft.

Of course, Harry Potter is the fictional creation of author, JK Rowling. And he's become the hero of kids all around the world. Rowling's novels portray Harry, not as evil or satanic, but as a "good" kid trying to do the "right" thing – all the while using the magical powers God has forbidden, to accomplish his goals.

And this is what makes Harry Potter a quandary for Christian parents. On moral issues Harry has a sense of right and wrong, but he's a wizard and a sorcerer who delves into areas God forbids. Spiritually, Harry is evil. Morally, he's a good kid.

In many ways Harry Potter is a modern day Balaam.

Balaam was a wizard, a sorcerer, a soothsayer. Like Harry, he was steeped in the occult... A sorcerer used magic and witchcraft to try and alter the physical world through supernatural means – *even if it meant consorting with a demon.*

Sorcerers in Balaam's day would cast spells and incantations, and conjure up potions to bribe supernatural forces into accomplishing their purposes.

Often people with a need would employ a sorcerer. *It was*

*power at a price.*

And Balaam too was a quandary. He knew of God and His sovereignty. In a sense, he honored God, yet he delved into sinister practices God outlawed.

Deuteronomy 18:10 makes it clear what God thought of Balaam's profession.

"There shall not be found among you... one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord..." Strong words - *and still applicable.*

God wants us to look to Him and Him alone for supernatural wisdom.

Consult your horoscope and you forfeit the counsel of God - tune in the psychic channel and you tune out the Holy Spirit. These are practices we should avoid.

It reminds me of the husband who'd just gotten off the scales at an amusement park. It was one of the coin operated scales that states your weight, and gives out you're fortune. After reading the fortune the wife started laughing, "**Your fortune says that you are handsome, debonair, and wealthy. On top of that, it even has your weight wrong, too!**" You can't trust psychics and fortune tellers.

Today, JK Rowling uses the lure and mystery of the occult to make a buck. Sadly, she compromises any spiritual integrity to sell Harry Potter novels.

And this too was Balaam's downfall. *He went divining for dollars.* He straddled the fence between good and evil to sell his services to the highest bidder.

There's no question God disapproved of Balaam's practices – and eventually judged him - *yet God still used him.* Balaam is given some of the most beautiful prophecies in the Old Testament of the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Balaam is proof God can use anyone – either a soothsayer - *or his donkey.*

Chapter 22 begins, **“Then the children of Israel moved, and camped in the plains of Moab on the side of the Jordan across from Jericho.”** Remember what's happened. Moses and Israel's armies are on a roll. They've defeated two armies east of the Jordan - Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan.

And next on their hit list is the king of Moab – a man named *Balak.*

**“Now Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites.**

**And Moab was exceedingly afraid of the people because they were many, and Moab was sick with dread because of the children of Israel.”** Imagine, an army of three million soldiers camping out in your backyard. Moab was **“sick with dread”**.

**“So Moab said to the elders of Midian, "Now this company will lick up all that is around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field.”** In addition to the sheer size of Israel's army, the

word was out that God had delivered the Hebrews from Egypt.

Balak knew of God's miracles in Egypt - and in the desert. No doubt he had sent spies, and had done reconnaissance on his new neighbor for months.

Balak had a full report on the Hebrews and the power of their God... And he decided he needed help to defeat them. So he calls in the special forces – the secret weapon. Balak sends Moabite messengers to hire him a wizard.

“And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time. Then he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor at Pethor, which is near the River in the land of the sons of his people, to call him, saying: "Look, a people has come from Egypt. See, they cover the face of the earth, and are settling next to me!

Therefore please come at once, 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 whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed." Evidently, Balaam was well known in the local wizard's union. You'd think a king like Balak would hire the very best soothsayer money can buy.

So he sends his messengers to Pethor, a city in Babylon...

When you want a watchmaker go to Switzerland - a cook go to Italy - a car manufacturer go to Germany – a soccer player go to Brazil... but when you want a sorcerer the place to go was Babylon. The tower of Babel was the seat of Satan. Babylon was the birthplace of the occult. It's no surprise Balaam lived in Babel.

Verse 7, “So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the diviner's fee in their hand, and they came to Balaam and spoke to him the words of Balak.” In other words, they made an offer - the going rate for sorcery services.

“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.” Here’s the noble side of Balaam. He wants to pray about the situation. He seeks the Lord.

“Then God came to Balaam and said, "Who are these men with you?" I’m sure God knew the identity of the men, but God is asking a few questions – slowing down the situation – giving Balaam time to really make a wise decision.

“So Balaam said to God, "Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent to me, saying, 'Look, a people has come out of Egypt, and they cover the face of the earth. Come now, 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." God is crystal clear. There’s no iffy-ness or ambiguity with God. He is adamant. God says, “You shall not go...”

“So Balaam rose in the morning and said to the princes of Balak, "Go back to your land, for the LORD has refused to give me permission to go with you." And here is Harry Potter seeming to be a *good guy* trying to do *the right thing*...

“And the princes of Moab rose and went to Balak, and said,

"Balaam refuses to come with us." But Balak doesn't give up. "Then Balak again sent princes, more numerous and more honorable than they." He sends some higher level officials.

"And they came to Balaam and said to him, "Thus says Balak the son of Zippor: 'Please let nothing hinder you from coming to me; for I will certainly honor you greatly, and I will do whatever you say to me.'" In other words, name your price!

"Therefore please come, curse this people for me.'" Balak knows he's no match for Israel. His only hope is a supernatural curse. Balak is so desperate he's even willing to deal with the devil. He sweetens his offer to Balaam.

Verse 18, "Then Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, "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 therefore, please, you also stay here tonight, that I may know what more the LORD will say to me."

At first, Balaam sounds noble! A houseful of gold and silver won't sway him to disobey God, but Balaam's statement is a smokescreen. He wants the money, so he asks the delegation to spend the night. He's hoping God will change His mind.

In the New Testament, the Apostle Jude, mentions Balaam as he condemns the false teachers of his day. He says, "(They) run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit." Balaam's *god* was *gold*. To make a buck Balaam packs up his donkey and goes *divining for dollars*. Greed caused Balaam to disobey God.

“And God came to Balaam at night and said to him, “If the men come to call you, rise and go with them; but only the word which I speak to you - that you shall do.” Apparently Balak’s men didn’t stay at Balaam’s house, but they were in town.

And God’s instructions were clear - Balaam is not to budge unless the men from Moab come calling... But notice what Balaam does, “So Balaam rose in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab.” He packs up and moves out. The delegation never appeared, but Balaam goes anyway.

And what happens next is intriguing...

Verse 22, “Then God's anger was aroused because he went, and the Angel of the LORD took His stand in the way as an adversary against him.” The Angel of the Lord – the same angel who later kills 185,000 Assyrians in a single night – a *heavenly hit man* - suddenly appears to block the path of Balaam and his burrow.

The Angel of the Lord becomes an adversary to Balaam.

“And he was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him.

Now the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand, and the donkey turned aside out of the way and went into the field. So Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back onto the road.”

Remember Balaam is a spiritist, but his jackass has more spiritual discernment that he does. This is the case with all “spiritists”, “channelers”, “fortune tellers”.

Its interesting Balaam should've thanked his donkey. The donkey avoided a head-on with an angel Balaam doesn't see. I doubt if his car insurance covered angelic collisions. But instead of thanking his donkey – at least giving him a sugar cube - Balaam takes out his frustrations. He beats the burrow that saved his life.

Then the Angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on this side and a wall on that side. And when the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD, she pushed herself against the wall and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall; so he struck her again.” The donkey is again blocked by the angel, but this time he has nowhere to turn. He brushes up against the vineyard wall and bruises Balaam's foot. And once again Balaam beats his burrow.

Verse 26, “Then the Angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. And when the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam; so Balaam's anger was aroused, and he struck the donkey with his staff.”

This time the donkey has nowhere to turn so he collapses - and it so angers Balaam he goes ballistic. He grabs his staff and wails on the donkey. It's a good thing animal control wasn't around or he'd been arrested for cruelty to donkeys.

Understand all this is Balaam's fault. He's to blame, but he doesn't see the role he's playing in his distressing circumstances. And instead of taking responsibility, and being accountable for his own actions, Balaam takes out his



frustrations on the most convenient target. He ends up beating the tar out of his burrow.

Now here's my question... *In recent weeks have you encountered some inconvenient detours? Have you hit a wall? Have any plans gone belly up?*

How do you respond when life steers off course?

As with Balaam maybe God knows you're moving in the wrong direction, and your problematic situation is His way of steering you back in line. Yet instead of taking responsibility for your predicament you too are beating your burrow.

When a person gets out of God's will life gets hard. And often we take out our frustrations on the most convenient target – the someone or something closest to us - usually, the wife, the kids, a co-worker, or a boss. *Are you a burrow basher?*

There's an old AA saying that holds true for everyone. **"If I am not the problem there is no solution."** God will go to work on your situation when you stop shifting the blame and accept responsibility for the part you've played in creating it.

Someone suggested America would be better served if we balanced out the Statue of Liberty on the east coast with a Statue of Responsibility on the west coast. Hey, with freedom and privilege always comes responsibility.

Well, God gets Balaam's attention in a very interesting way.

Verse 28, **"Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?"**

Amazing, God opens the mouth of a donkey. A talking donkey!

Remember in the garden of Eden when Eve had a discussion with a serpent. Apparently, at the time serpents could talk. There are serious Biblical scholars who believe before the fall, man could converse with the animals, but when sin entered the picture that kind of communication ceased. If Adam and Eve had not sinned perhaps you would be able to carry on a conversation with your hamster.

Today, at the Eurkes Primate Center scientists are teaching chimpanzees a rudimentary form of speech. Perhaps they are tapping into some latent ability to articulate that God created in all animals. We shouldn't be too amazed at a talking donkey... if God created the mouth of the donkey - if He then sealed it at the time the fall - then why couldn't He open it when it suited His purposes.

Once a liberal preacher was out to refute the miracles of the Bible...

He scoffed, "Just take for example the ludicrous, ridiculous idea that God could speak through the mouth of a jackass." A little old lady on the frontrow of the church raised her hand, and responded. "Why pastor that's not such a big deal, God speaks through the mouth of jackass every Sunday in this church."

One encouraging lesson we learn from this story is if God can speak through a donkey, then He can speak through any of us! We all can be used by God.

Verse 29, "And Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you

have abused me. I wish there were a sword in my hand, for now I would kill you!" Balaam is so mad, at first it doesn't hit him that he's carrying on a conversation with a donkey...

"So the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden, ever since I became yours, to this day? Was I ever disposed to do this to you?" The donkey pleads his case. He's been an obedient donkey.

Balaam answers his question, "And he said, "No." The curt answer probably indicates it's finally gotten through to Balaam what's really happening to him.

But then God does a second miracle – an even greater miracle...

Verse 31, "Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes..." Hey, the only miracle tougher than opening the mouth of a donkey is to open the eyes of proud, greedy, selfish member of the human race. Yet God is able to perform both miracles!

"And (Balaam) 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. And the Angel of the LORD said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times?"

This was a rough day for Balaam. He gets corrected from above and below.

A donkey questions him and an angel rebukes him. "Behold, I have come out to stand against you, because your way is perverse before Me. The donkey saw Me and turned aside from Me these three times. If she had not turned aside from Me, surely I would also have killed you by now, and let her live."

Verse 34, “Balaam said to the Angel of the LORD, “I have sinned, for I did not know You stood in the way against me. Now therefore, if it displeases You, I will turn back.” Balaam repents. He’s willing to turn back – to do whatever God asks.

“Then the Angel of the LORD said to Balaam, “Go with the men, but only the word that I speak to you, that you shall speak.” Balaam is told to only speak the words that God puts in his mouth. “So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.”

“Now when Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the city of Moab, which is on the border at the Arnon, the boundary of the territory.

Then Balak said to Balaam, “Did I not earnestly send to you, calling for you? Why did you not come to me? Am I not able to honor you?” And Balaam said to Balak, “Look, I have come to you! Now, have I any power at all to say anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that I must speak.”

So Balaam went with Balak, and they came to Kirjath Huzoth. Then Balak offered oxen and sheep, and he sent some to Balaam and to the princes who were with him. So it was the next day, that Balak took Balaam and brought him up to the high places of Baal, that from there he might observe the extent of the people.” He takes Balaam to a lookout where he can see the people of Israel.

Now in the next two chapters, Numbers 23-24, Balaam utters four prophecies – fascinating prophecies laced with references to the Messiah... Four times Balak hopes the

soothsayer will curse Israel – instead, each time he blesses them.

“Then Balaam said to Balak, "Build seven altars for me here, and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams." And Balak did just as Balaam had spoken, and Balak and Balaam offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

Then Balaam said to Balak, "Stand by your burnt offering, and I will go; perhaps the LORD will come to meet me, and whatever He shows me I will tell you." So he went to a desolate height. And God met Balaam, and he said to Him, "I have prepared the 7 altars, and I have offered on each altar a bull and a ram."

Then the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, "Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak." So he returned to him, and there he was, standing by his burnt offering, he and all the princes of Moab. And he took up his oracle and said:

"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!" That was his job.

But Balaam gets trumped. He says in verse 8, "How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? And how shall I denounce whom the LORD has not denounced?"

Even a soothsayer – *even when he's on the clock* - has to admit that any supernatural or demonic power he has is subject to the power of God.

Balaam can't curse anyone that God intends to bless. This is why I don't believe a Christian can be cursed. Ephesians

1:3 tells us that if trust in Jesus, God has “blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ...”

In verse 9 Balaam continues his prophecy, “For 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-fourth of Israel?” In other words, the number of his armies is so vast.

“Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my end be like his!”

Obviously, this is not what Balak thought he’d purchased. He gets double crossed. He hired Balaam to curse Israel, instead Balaam blesses Israel.

“Then Balak said to Balaam, “What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, and look, you have blessed them bountifully!” So he answered and said, “Must I not take heed to speak what the LORD has put in my mouth?”

Then Balak said to him, “Please come with me to another place from which you may see them; you shall see only the outer part of them, and shall not see them all; curse them for me from there.” He tries to get a different result from a new angle.

“So he brought him to the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered a bull and a ram on each altar. And he said to Balak, “Stand here by your burnt offering while I meet the LORD over there.”

Then the LORD met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, “Go back to Balak, and thus you shall speak.” So he

came to him, and there he was, standing by his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab were with him.

And Balak said to him, "What has the LORD spoken?"

Then he took up his oracle and 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? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? Behold, I have received a command to bless; He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it." God promised to bless Israel. He's not going to change His mind in midstream. God's promises are sure. God never, ever lies. Romans 11:29-30 comes to mind, "For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable."

"He has not observed iniquity in Jacob, nor has He seen wickedness in Israel."

And oh my, it's not that it hasn't been there. God just chose not to see Israel's sin. And this is what He does with us. The New Testament term "justified" means *to treat someone just-as-if-I'd never sinned*. And we are justified in Christ!

God knows you've sinned and failed Him – He just doesn't treat us as such. He provides us the same acceptance and access and love as He shows His own Son.

"The LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a King is among them. God brings them out of Egypt; He has strength like a wild ox. For there is no sorcery against Jacob, nor any divination against Israel." Again, no one can curse the man or

group God chooses to bless! Evil curses are powerless against God's people.

**“It now must be said of Jacob and of Israel, 'Oh, what God has done!'”**

Israel was a testimony to the mercies of God. A nation of slaves – it was a miracle. And Balaam knows the purpose of the nation is to bring God glory. When people looked at Israel God intended for them to say, **“Oh, what God has done!”**

And this is God's intention for us. When people look at our lives, or at our church – *from where we've been to where we've come* – God wants those people to say with astonishment, **“Oh what God has done!”**

**Look, a people rises like a lioness, 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, **“Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all!”** In other words, if you're not going to bless them, okay - but don't turn around and bless them.

**“So Balaam answered and said to Balak, "Did I not tell you, saying, 'All that the LORD speaks, that I must do'?"** Balaam is doing only what he said he'd do.

**“Then Balak said to Balaam, "Please come, I will take you to another place; perhaps it will please God that you may curse them for me from there.”**

**So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, that overlooks the wasteland.**

**Then Balaam said to Balak, "Build for me here seven altars,**



and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams." And Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bull and a ram on every altar." By now Balak has offered 21 bulls and rams. In addition was Balaam's contract. He's make a sizable investment in seeing Israel cursed. Again, Balak hopes a change of scenery will help...

Chapter 24, "Now when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he did not go as at other times, to seek to use sorcery, but he set his face toward the wilderness." Evidently, in his two previous attempts Balaam attempted some means of witchcraft. He sprinkled a potion or cast a spell. Now it hits Balaam how silly that all seems in light of the awesome power of God that has restrained him.

"And Balaam raised his eyes, and saw Israel encamped according to their tribes; and the Spirit of God came upon him." This is amazing. The third time Balaam tries to curse Israel, Balaam is filled with the Holy Spirit.

This brings up an important point, just because a person evidences some spiritual gift doesn't mean that's evidence of a holy life or a spiritual maturity.

The Corinthians exhibited a smorgasbord of spiritual gifts, but at the same time they were immoral, cliquish, divisive, and carnal. Hey, just because I have the gift of teaching, or gift of tongues, or any other spiritual gift – it doesn't mean God is pleased with me. Just because He uses me doesn't mean I have His approval.

"Then (Balaam) took up his oracle and said: "The utterance

of Balaam the son of Beor, the utterance of the man whose eyes are opened, The utterance of him who hears the words of God, who sees the vision of the Almighty, who falls down, with eyes wide open: "How lovely are your tents, O Jacob! Your dwellings, O Israel!

Like valleys that stretch out, like gardens by the riverside, 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." Balaam seems a prosperous nation.

"His king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted." Agag was king of the Amalekites. The word Agag was a title – not one person. Agag was to Amalek... what Caesar was to Rome, or Mr. President was to America.

Verse 8, "God brings him out of Egypt; He has strength like a wild ox; He shall consume the nations, his enemies; He shall break their bones and pierce them with his arrows. 'He bows down, he lies down as a lion; and as a lion, who shall rouse him?' God intends to make the nation Israel the king of the jungle.

"Blessed is he who blesses you, And cursed is he who curses you." Notice each prophecy has gotten better for Israel and worse for Balak and the Moabites.

In the first prophecy, Balaam fails to curse Israel.

In the second prophecy, Balaam blesses Israel.

Now in the third prophecy, Balaam actually curses his employer, Balak.

"Then Balak's anger was aroused against Balaam, and he struck his hands together; and Balak said to Balaam, "I called

you to curse my enemies, and look, you have bountifully blessed them these three times! Now therefore, flee to your place. I said I would greatly honor you, but in fact, the LORD has kept you back from honor." In other words, "YOU'RE FIRED!" You had a shot at earthly honor and wealth, and it was Jehovah, the God of Israel, who messed it up for you.

"So Balaam said to Balak, "Did I not also speak to your messengers whom you sent to me, saying, 'If Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the LORD, to do good or bad of my own will. What the LORD says, that I must speak'?" Balaam had admitted his limitations.

"And now, indeed, I am going to my people. Come, I will advise you what this people will do to your people in the latter days." Balaam has a parting shot...

The fourth prophecy is extremely intriguing... It was uttered in the year 1405 BC, but it contains a prediction of both the first and second comings of Jesus.

Balaam looks into the distant future. He sees a person rising above the landscape of Israel's future. Balaam looks 3400 years into the future.

Verse 15, "So he took up his oracle and said: "The utterance of Balaam the son of Beor, and the utterance of the man whose eyes are opened;" Twice Balaam has identified himself as "the man whose eyes are opened." They weren't always open.

For awhile they were blind to the angel blocking his path,

but now he can see.

“The utterance of him who hears the words of God, and has the knowledge of the Most High, Who sees the vision of the Almighty, Who falls down, with eyes wide open: “I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near...” Here Balaam sees Jesus... *but not now, not near*. He sees Jesus 1400 years into the future.

“A Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter shall rise out of Israel, and batter the brow of Moab, and destroy all the sons of tumult.” The Bible teaches that Messiah was a descendant of Jacob. In Revelation 22:16 Jesus calls Himself “the morning star”. The word “scepter” means *ruler*. Messiah is to be a king.

Some scholars see in this prophecy a reference to the star of Bethlehem that pointed the way for the Babylonian magi to find their way to Jesus’ birthplace.

It’s interesting that the wise men were descendents of Balaam – another group of Persian soothsayers and sorcerers. I’m sure they studied Balaam’s prophecies.

“Edom shall be a possession; Seir also, his enemies, shall be a possession, while Israel does valiantly.” Messiah’s victory over both Moab and Edom look to His second coming. This prophecy points to both His first and second advent.

“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."

Then he looked on the Kenites, and he took up his oracle and said: "Firm is your dwelling place, and your nest is set in the rock; Nevertheless Kain shall be burned. How long until Asshur carries you away captive?"

Then he took up his oracle and said: "Alas! Who shall live when God does this? But ships shall come from the coasts of Cyprus, and they shall afflict Asshur and afflict Eber, and so shall Amalek, until he perishes."

Balaam takes up his oracle, or his prophetic gift, and machine guns all the nations in the surrounding area. He predicts that they all will fall to Israel.

Some of these prophecies will probably be fulfilled in the last days.

Balak has tried four times to curse Israel, and he's paid for four blessings.

Verse 25, "So Balaam rose and departed and returned to his place; Balak also went his way." But as Paul Harvey might say... Stay tuned for the rest of the story!

Chapter 25:1, "Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel."

Always remember, the best commentary on the Bible is the Bible. And that's true here. Revelation 2:14 says something interesting about Balaam. He "taught Balak to put a stumbling

block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.” Hey, God wouldn’t let Balaam curse Israel, so Balaam told Balak what to do so God would curse them Himself.

*“Just send a few beautiful babes down into the camp – a few of your temple prostitutes – and the Hebrews will sell their soul for a few moments of sexual pleasure.”* And that’s exactly what Balak did. The Hebrews were seduced by the women of Moab. They committed adultery, and were led into idolatry.

And Balaam was right. He earned his paycheck after all.

Though God forced him to bless Israel – he was no blessing to Israel. He taught Balak how to draw the Israelites into sin, and God curse them.

Verse 4, **“Then the LORD said to Moses, “Take all the leaders of the people and hang the offenders before the LORD, out in the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel.”** So Moses said to the judges of Israel, **“Every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baal of Peor.”**

God wanted to punish the idolaters and make them examples.

Verse 6 tells us, **“And indeed, one of the children of Israel came and presented to his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.”** This was a brazen act of open, defiant rebellion.

Now when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand; and he went after the man of Israel into the tent..." Here's a side bar – since this is the only time in the Old Testament this particular word for tent appears, some believe the man took the pagan prostitute into the Tabernacle - into God's tent.

"And (Phineas) thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her body. So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel. And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand."

This was sin. It was rebellion. *As a priest it was Phineas' duty to see to it that they got the point.* It took decisive action from Phineas to stop the plague.

Sometimes a situation gets so desperate somebody has to say, "*enough is enough*", and do something drastic to stop a rebellion against God.

Verse 10 tells us, "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal." Phinehas understood the severity of the situation. He hit the nail on the head. And God commended his bold action.

Guys, there comes a time in our family, in our church, in our community, in our country when we need to take an "*enough is enough*" attitude. We need the zeal of the Lord... *for us, let's not take life, but to spread the words of life.*

Verse 12 rewards Phinehas with a special covenant, "Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace; and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.'" Because of his willingness to take a stand for God, the High Priesthood of Aaron will pass through his son, Phinehas.

Verse 14, "Now the name of the Israelite who was killed, who was killed with the Midianite woman, was Zimri the son of Salu, a leader of a father's house among the Simeonites. And the name of the Midianite woman who was killed was Cozbi the daughter of Zur; (no relation to Bill Cosby, by the way) he was head of the people of a father's house in Midian.

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "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, the daughter of a leader of Midian, their sister, who was killed in the day of the plague because of Peor."