

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## NUMBERS 22-25

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

Of course, Harry is the fictional creation of author, JK Rowling. He's become a hero of kids worldwide. Rowling's novels portray Harry, not as an agent of evil or Satan, but as a "good kid." He's tries to do "the right thing," yet uses spells, and curses, and incantations.

And this makes Harry Potter a quandary for Christian parents. On moral issues Harry has a sense of right and wrong, but he traffics in areas that God forbids.

Harry Potter is a modern-day version of the subject of this morning's chapters, *Balaam the sorcerer!* Like Harry, Balaam was steeped in witchcraft and the occult. He was skilled at swaying spiritual entities to do his bidding. Often folks who wanted to manipulate a situation hired a soothsayer. *It was power at a price!*

And this Balaam was also a quandary. He knew of the Hebrew God and His sovereignty. In a sense, he honored God, yet delved into practices God outlawed.

Deuteronomy 18:10 makes it clear as to what God thought of Harry Potter **and** 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 very applicable!* God wants us to look to Him and Him alone for supernatural wisdom and power. **Consult your horoscope** and you forfeit God's counsel. **Tune into the psychic channel** and you tune out the Holy Spirit. These are the types of practices we're told to avoid.

It reminds me of the man who stepped on the scale at the county fair. The ole timey scale not only weighed you, but revealed your fortune. Well, after reading what it said about her husband, his wife chuckled, "Wow, your fortune says you are handsome, debonair, and wealthy. On top of that, it even has your weight wrong, too!" *Proving you can't trust any kind of fortune teller!*

Today, JK Rowling has used the lure and mystery of the occult to make millions of dollars. Sadly, she's sold out true spiritual orthodoxy to sell Harry Potter novels.

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

There is no question God disapproved of Balaam's trade, and will eventually judged him, *yet God still used him!* God even uses weird-os and madmen like Balaam. In fact, God gave to Balaam some of the most beautiful OT prophecies of the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Balaam is proof that God can and will use anyone - either the 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."* Recall Israel's army is on a roll. They defeated two formidable kings east of the Jordan - Sihon of the Amorites, and Og of Bashan.

*"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."* The Moabite King Balak is watching 2-3 million people camped in his territory - that's 600,000 fighting men. He's *"exceedingly afraid"* and *"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 their sheer size, word had it that the Hebrew God had done miracles to conquer Egypt, and deliver His people. Balak knew he was no match for this new threat. The king needs to call in special forces - bring in a secret weapon. So Balak sends his Moabite messengers to hire 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 (or Babylon.)"*

*And Balak said to him, '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.'*

Balaam had a reputation in the local wizard's union. King Balak seeks to hire the best soothsayer money can buy. So he goes to Pethor, a city in Babylon.

*When you want a watch go to Switzerland - a cook go to Italy - a car maker 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 - birthplace of the occult. This man Balaam was a gentile from the land of idols, 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."*

They made an offer for his 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 is the noble side of Balaam. He wants to pray about it. He actually seeks the Lord, Yahweh, God of the Hebrews.

“Then God came to Balaam and said, “Who are these men with you?” *God actually speaks to Balaam.* Of course, God knew exactly who these men were, but asks Balaam this question to slow life down, to give him time to think, and help him choose wisely.

“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 in his response. The Lord is adamant, **“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.” Here, Harry wants to be *a good guy, 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.” These are 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.’” *Balaam, just name your price!* “Please, come, curse this people for me.” Balak knows his only hope of protection is a supernatural curse, so he’ll cut a deal with the devil if need be. He sweetens his offer.

“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.” Balaam sounds noble... *“a houseful of gold and silver won’t sway me to disobey God,”* but his words are a smokescreen. He is greedy for money. He invites the delegation to spend the night, hoping that God will change His mind.

In the NT, the Apostle Jude, mentions Balaam as he condemns the false teachers of his day, and states, *“(They) run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit.”* Make no mistake, Balaam’s *god* was *gold*. He’ll eventually pack his donkey and go *divining for dollars*.

“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.”

Evidently, the Moabite messengers didn’t lodge at Balaam’s house, but elsewhere. And God’s instructions were clear - Balaam wasn’t to budge unless the men of Moab came calling. Yet, “Balaam rose in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab.” He packed up and moved out. The Moabite delegation never appeared, but Balaam went anyway.

And what happens next is interesting... 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’ll later kill 185,000 Assyrians in a single night - *the heavenly hit man* - appears to block Balaam’s path. The sorcerer doesn’t know it, but God Himself and God’s Angel have become his adversary.

Verse 22, “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.” I trust you know there’s another world around us - a hidden world, a spiritual dimension. Balaam is “a seer,” an early wise man or magi. He’s suppose to be aware of the spiritual world, but his jackass apparently has more spiritual discernment than he does. This is the case today with all so-called “*spiritists*,” or “*channelers*,” or “*psychics*.”

Balaam should’ve thanked his donkey for avoiding a head-on collision with the angel he doesn’t see. I doubt his burrow insurance covered angelic collisions. But instead of being grateful to his donkey - *at least giving him with a sugar cube or two* - 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 angel again blocks the donkey’s path. And since the pathway is very narrow the burro avoids the angel by brushing up against the vineyard wall. It bruises Balaam’s foot. *And again he wails at his burro.*

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 - *it angers Balaam*. He goes ballistic! He beats the

burro with his staff. It's a good thing Animal Control wasn't nearby, or he would've been locked up for *cruelty to animals*.

Realize, this failed journey is all Balaam's fault. God told him not to travel with the Moabites except for under specific conditions. That's why God halts his trip. And instead of taking responsibility for disobeying God, Balaam takes out his frustrations and failures on a convenient target. He beats the tar out of his donkey.

And here's my question for you - *has your life taken a detour? Hit a wall? Have your plans gone belly up?* What's your response when your life steers off course?

As with Balaam, God knows when you're headed the wrong direction, and problematic circumstances can be His way of steering you back in line. Yet rather than examine our course, all too often **we beat our burro**.

When a believer gets out of God's will life can get hard. And we tend to take out our frustrations on the nearest accessible target. Folks closest to us take the brunt of our frustrations - our wife, our kids, our co-workers. Here's a thought, **are you a burro beater?**

The old AA saying is true for us all. **"If I am not the problem there can be no solution."** God will resolve your situation only when you stop shifting blame and accept responsibility for your part in the detour. *And 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?'"** God opens the burro's mouth. *Amazing, a talking donkey!*

Recall in the Garden of Eden, Eve had a discussion with a serpent. Evidently, at the time serpents could talk. There are serious Biblical scholars who believe before the fall of man, we could converse with animals. It was when sin entered that communication of that sort ceased. *Think of it, if Adam and Eve hadn't sinned you could carry on a conversation with your hamster.*

Today, at the Yerkes Primate Center here in Atlanta at Emory University scientists are teaching chimpanzees a rudimentary form of speech. Perhaps they've tapped into a latent ability to articulate that God created in all animals... We shouldn't be surprised at a talking donkey, for if God created the mouth; then sealed it at the fall; He can reopen it when it suits Him.

Once a liberal preacher was out to refute the Bible's miracles. He scoffed, **"Just take for example the ludicrous, ridiculous idea that God spoke through the mouth of a jackass."** One little old lady shouted, **"Why pastor that's not such a big deal, God speaks through the mouth of jackass every Sunday in this church."**



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

"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!" He's so mad, at first it doesn't hit Balaam that he's actually conversing 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?" *He's always been an obedient donkey!...* And Balaam answers him, "No." The curtness of his answer indicates it finally dawns on him he's talking to a burro!

But then God does a second, even greater, miracle. Verse 31, "**Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes...**" The one miracle tougher than opening a donkey's mouth is to open the eyes of a proud, greedy, selfish human being. **Yet God can easily do 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. Balaam has been corrected from *below and above*. 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." The angel tells Balaam it was his donkey that actually saved his life!

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 finally repents. He'll turn back, if God asks... but "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 to go with the Moabites, but only speak what God tells him to speak. "So Balaam went with the princes of Balak."

He meets King Balak at the Arnon River, west of the Jordan, on Moabite border. *There Balaam informs King Balak, verse 38, "Now, have I any power at all to say anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that I must speak."* At least he's honest, Balaam has no power to speak of his own. *He is God's mouthpiece...*

The next day King Balak takes Balaam to the altar of Baal - to a high and elevated place - that also served as an overlook of the surrounding territory. From there, Balaam can see the vastness of the tents of Israel...

And in the next two chapters, 23-24, Balaam utters four fascinating prophecies of Israel's future. Four times King Balak asks the soothsayer to curse Israel, but each time Balaam blesses God's people instead. He even laces his prediction with some of the clearest and most wonderful predictions of Messiah in the OT.

Numbers 23:4 tells us, "God met Balaam, and he said to Him, 'I have prepared the seven 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 commission, but Balaam has been trumped by God, for 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?"

*I love this!* Even a high-priced soothsayer - one that'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 under an evil curse. Ephesians 1:3 says if we trust in Jesus, God has "blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ..." *No curse against you can succeed, if God has agreed to bless!*

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?' Israel is "*alone* (or *unique*) *among the nations*." They have been chosen by God. The number of his armies is vast...

But this is not what King Balak thought he was buying. He feels double crossed. He hired this sorcerer to curse Israel, instead ole Harry is uttering blessings.

Verse 11, "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... 'Must I not take heed to speak what the LORD has put in my mouth?' *He is God's mouthpiece.*

Yet King Balak tries it again. Maybe a new view will yield a different result. "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. 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.' Again seven bulls and rams.

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..." The phrase denotes that what he's about to utter is originating **not** from him, but from a spiritual source. He may've closed his eyes or entered a trance. *He's speaking now from elsewhere.*

And he speaks powerful words, "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 and what He says He does. God's promises are sure. The introduction to Titus announces, "God, who **cannot lie.**"

Then he says of God, "He has not observed iniquity in Jacob, nor has He seen wickedness in Israel." *And oh my, not that it wasn't there, but God chose not to see their sin.* This is what He does for us. The NT term "justified" means "to treat me just-as-if-I'd never sinned even when I do." And we are justified in Christ!

God knows we've sinned and failed Him, He just doesn't treat us as such. In Christ He provides us the same access and acceptance He shows His own Son.

Verse 21, "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." The OKJ translates it "unicorn." Others render it, "rhinoceros." It's a animal strong and mighty like our God! "For there is no sorcery against Jacob, nor any divination against Israel." No one can curse the individual or group God blesses! Evil curses are impotent against His people.

"It now must be said of Jacob and of Israel, 'Oh, what God has done!' A people in bondage, a nation of slaves, has escaped the clutches of mighty Egypt and its gods. It was all a testimony to Yahweh's strength and mercy. And now when people look at Israel God intends for them to say, "Oh, what God has done!"

And this is God's intention for us. When people look at our lives, or on our church, God wants them to say with admiration, "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." *Israel is like a lion!*

And that's when Balak said to Balaam, "Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all!" *Stop! If you're not going to curse them, at least don't 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 only doing what he said he would 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 21 bulls and rams have been offered. Add Balaam's fee, and this is a sizable expenditure Balak is making, and so far he has nothing to show for it... *yet he tries again.*

Numbers 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 had used some sort of witchcraft, perhaps a spell or curse. Now he realizes how silly that is in light of the powerful God who 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 time we're told God's Holy Spirit comes upon Balaam. Which means just because His Spirit comes upon us, even with a spiritual gift, don't mistake His willingness to use us for His approval of our conduct and character. Balaam is far from pleasing to God, yet God's Spirit still uses this man.

"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..." *Remember, God opens eyes that were formerly closed.*

"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." He looks to the future and sees God prospering Israel.

"His king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted." Agag was the title of the Amalekite king. It was not a personal name, but a title, like Caesar was to Rome, or Mr. President is 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 will one day make Israel *king of the jungle*. "Blessed is he who blesses you, and cursed is he who curses you." A line that harkens back to God's promises to Abraham.

And notice each of Balaam's forecasts have gotten *better for Israel* and *worse for Balak and Moab*. In the first prophecy, Balaam fails to curse Israel. In the second, he blesses Israel. Now in the third prophecy, Balaam actually curses his temporary 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.” *“Balaam, YOU'RE FIRED! I had big bucks to pay you, but your own God has held you back.”* Don't let anyone say that! God doesn't hold anything back from His children. Psalm 84:11 tells us *“no good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly.”*

“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'?" “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.” Before Balaam goes home he has a parting shot, a fourth brilliant prophecy.

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;” Again, Balaam identifies himself as the man who's eyes were opened. “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...” This is amazing, it's 1405 BC, but Balaam looks into Israel's future, and spots a man towering above history's landscape. He looks 3400 years into the future to see the coming of Jesus, Israel's Messiah. *“I see Him, but not now, I behold Him, but not near...”*

“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.” Messiah is *“a star.”* He's *God's night light*. In Revelation 22:16 Jesus calls Himself *“the morning star.”* He's the first star of the breaking dawn.

To us a star is a celebrity - a famous person. But the ancients looked to the stars for navigation and guidance. This is who Jesus should be to us, not just a name to celebrate, but the Lord we know and follow.

People have also seen in this passage a reference to the star of Bethlehem that led the first century magi to Jesus. The magi who first saw the star, related it to Israel's King, because of the prophecy of Balaam. The Babylonian wise men were Balaam's understudies.

And He's also *“a scepter”* or *ruler*. Jesus is king! The scepter was the King's rod or symbol of authority. Until you bow to Jesus and surrender your will to His you're not seeing Him clearly. He's both *a star* and *a scepter*!

There's also a focus on Jesus' second coming in this prophecy, *“Edom shall be a*

possession; Seir also, his enemies, shall be a possession, while Israel does valiantly." Messiah's victory over Edom and Moab will be fulfilled at Jesus' return. For "Out of Jacob One shall have dominion, and destroy the remains of the city."

In the remainder of Chapter 24 Balaam again takes up his oracle, or prophetic gift, and like a machine gun mows down the nations of the surrounding area - the Amalekites, Kenites, Assyrians... Prophecies that will be fulfilled in the last days at Jesus' second coming.

Now King 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 radio commentator, Paul Harvey, use to say, "and now for the rest of the story!"

Numbers 25, "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." For the first time Israel worships the idol Baal.

*How did this happened?* Well, here is where the best commentary on the Bible is the Bible. Numbers 31:16 tells us, "These women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the incident of Peor..." Revelation 2:14 says it clearer, that Balaam "taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality." God didn't let Balaam curse Israel, but Balaam wanted the money, so he told Balak what to do so God would curse them Himself. Balaam said, "Just send a few gorgeous babes into the camp - a few temple prostitutes, or Sports Illustrated swimsuit models - and the Hebrews will sell their soul for a few moments of pleasure." That's what King Balak did... He seduced the Hebrews with the charms of the Moabite women.

To cozy up to these gals the Hebrew men bowed to false gods. Their *adultery* led to *idolatry*. In the end, Balak didn't have to curse Israel, God cursed them Himself. Ultimately, the sorcerer earned his paycheck.

Here's our lesson... Our greatest enemy isn't Satan, or demons, or an world. *Satan can't curse who God blesses*. Our biggest enemy looks at us in the mirror each morning! Our own sin will cause God to judge us!

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 punished the Hebrews who followed

Baal. He made an example.

“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. 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...” The Hebrews are repenting of their sin, *when one of them fails to read the room*. He appears with a pagan prostitute. Since this is the only time in the OT this word “*tent*” appears, some think it refers to God’s tent, the Tabernacle. This would’ve been a shameless act. Defiling the holy place would call for drastic action!

Verse 8, “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.” As priest, Phineas’ job was to oversee the Tabernacle. He couldn’t allow this couple to defile the holy place, “*enough is enough.*” *It was his duty to make sure they got the point!...* Here’s an example of body piercing in the Bible. Phineas, gets a two for one. But it’s His decisive action that stops the plague.

Verse 10, “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.” God commends Phineas for his bold action.

There comes a time in a family - in a church - in a community, - in a nation when someone has to say, “*enough is enough.*” A believer has to be zealous with God’s zeal... *not to take a life, but to stand up to sin!* Let’s mimic Phineas - *not his violence, but his zeal!*

And God rewarded Phinehas with a special covenant, verse 12, “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 Phineas’ stand for God, the High Priesthood will pass from Aaron’s son, Eleazar; on to **his son**, Phinehas.

The last few verses in Chapter 25 identify the brazen couple that sinned as *Zimri* and *Cozbi*. Verse 16 says this incident created a long-running hostility between Midian and Israel, “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...” From now on Midian will be Israel’s enemy. But remember your #1 enemy: not a donkey, a Balaam, or a Balak - *it’s a you!*