



World Christian Fellowship

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Jude 08 Error of Balaam

Jude 1:11, *Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.*

Three historic apostate judgments.

- **Israel,**
- **Angels, and**
- **Sodom and Gomorrah.**

Three characteristics of apostate nature:

- **Immorality,**
- **Disobedience/ insubordination, and**
- **Blasphemy/irreverence.**

Three connections to apostate examples:

- **Cain,**
- **Balaam, and**
- **Korah.**

Three who model what these current, contemporary apostates do.

- These current ones have gone the way of Cain.
- They have rushed into the error of Balaam.
- They have perished in the rebellion of Korah.

They have followed the path that Cain followed.

They have followed the path that Balaam followed.

They have followed the path that Korah followed.

Notice the progression.

- They have gone the way of Cain,
- They have rushed into the error of Balaam, and
- They have perished in the rebellion of Korah.

First there is a path they take. Then there is an escalation of their speed, and ultimately their disastrous.

They start out in the way. They go into the error, and they perish in the rebellion.

- Cain is a model of one who disobeyed God.
- Balaam is a model of one who tries to influence others to disobey God.
- Korah who led a full rebellion.

Apostates are the spiritual children of Cain, Balaam, and Korah.

Balaam's legacy could have been that of a great man of integrity, but he was motivated more by the love of profit than the love of being a prophet.

His downfall was greed. He was a man who loved money more than truth. That is the reason he is traditionally called in Judaism **Balaam haRashah (Balam the Wicked)**.

Jewish mysticism links the word bala'am to the related word b'lo'am, which means without nation, indicating that Balaam has been excluded from citizenship in Heaven because of his evil motives.

Proverbs 15:27, *He who is greedy for gain troubles his own house, But he who hates bribes will live.*

Israel had essentially finished their 38-year exile in the wilderness, and then progressed towards the Promised Land. They continued further towards the Promised Land than the previous generation of unbelief had.

When the **Canaanite king of Arad** heard that the Israelites were approaching, he attacked them, taking some Israelites captive. God gave this king and his people into the hands of the Israelites, and they were utterly destroyed (**21:1-3**).

When the Israelites send messengers to **Sihon**, the **king of the Amorites**, asking for his permission to pass through his land, he refuses, assembling his army to wage war against them (Numbers 21:21-23). The Israelites prevail and take possession of his land (21:24-31).

They then capture **Jazer**, defeating and dispossessing the **Amorites** who live there (21:32).

Going up by way of Bashan, the Israelites encounter **Og, the king of Bashan**, who comes out to fight them.

Like Sihon, Og is defeated, and the Israelites possess his land as well (21:33-35).

This spot provided a panoramic view of the promised land. It is from Pisgah that Moses will view the promised land before his death on Mount Nebo.

The Moabites were scared because the Jews had defeated the Moabites' guardians, the **Emori**.

Moab and Midian banded together and appointed a **Balak** as king over them. **Balak** recognized that this was a supernatural power struggle as much as anything else, so he hired Balaam.



Numbers 22:1-6, *Then the children of Israel moved, and camped in the plains of Moab on the side of the Jordan across from Jericho. ²Now Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. ³And Moab was exceedingly afraid*

of the people because they were many, and Moab was sick with dread because of the children of Israel. ⁴So Moab said to the elders of Midian, "Now this company will lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field." And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time. ⁵Then 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! ⁶Therefore 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 was famous for cursing and blessing people.

Extra-biblical materials tell us he became famous when he prophesied about a coming devastation to the land based on knowledge from El and the Shaddai gods.

Balak had a more personal interest:

Balaam had prophesied that Balak would become king. The Midrash claims that Balaam was the pagan equivalent of Moses.

This is meant to be a showdown of powers.

Numbers 22:7-9, *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. ⁸And 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. ⁹Then God came to Balaam and said, "Who are these men with you?"*

Balak asked him to curse Israel in exchange for a reward. Balaam said he needed God's permission.

God asked Balaam who are these men.

God knew who the men were, but God wanted Balaam to know what is in his heart.

Balaam honestly tells God they want him to curse the Israelites so they can drive them out. God's response is very clear!

Numbers 22:12, *And God said to Balaam, "You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed."*

So, Balaam tells the men he can't go, but he doesn't tell them that he's not allowed to curse them. He just says God said no.

Numbers 22:15-19, *Then Balak again sent princes, more numerous and more honourable than they. ¹⁶And they came to Balaam and said to him, "Thus says Balak the son of Zippor: 'Please let nothing*

hinder you from coming to me; ¹⁷for I will certainly honour you greatly, and I will do whatever you say to me. Therefore please come, curse this people for me.’ ” ¹⁸Then 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. ¹⁹Now therefore, please, you also stay here tonight, that I may know what more the Lord will say to me.”

God already told Balaam not to do it.
Balaam didn't need to ask again.

There are people still do that again.

Those who call themselves Christians knew the answer from God through His Scriptures, yet they will say let me pray about it!

Do not unequally yoked.

Do not get married to unbelievers!

The answer is very clear! Yet people say I will pray and try and get some extra biblical revelation to justify what they are doing is according to the will of the Lord.

Even though Balaam is saying that he will not do anything even if Balak gives him house full of silver and gold(**V18**) Yet he makes them to stay and goes back to the Lord asking again.

Now God is going to use Balaam's desire for money as a means of having God's blessing spoken over Israel.

Numbers 22:20-21, *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."*²¹ *So Balaam rose in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab.*

Two things are strikingly strange about this story, but upon reflection I think they are the key to understanding the kind of man Balaam is.

First one:

God tells Balaam he should go and then "was angry because he was going."

Is God unfair, blaming Balaam for something God Himself told him to do?

Looking at the whole episode, it seems more likely that God is angry not at the mere fact that Balaam goes.

God is angry with Balaam's motives for going.

Remember, Balaam has been promised vast wealth if he will come and curse Israel. Perhaps Balaam is not going with the messengers just because God said he could.

Perhaps he is going with the hope that he can find a way to curse Israel and get rich. The ending of this episode suggests this is the right answer.

If God were angry merely because Balaam was going with the messengers, then when Balaam offers to go back home God would say, "That's right, you go home!"

But instead, God repeats His original instructions. Go with the messengers but say only what I tell you to say.

God took Balaam through this entire terrifying episode with a warrior angel to drive home one point. When you get there, you had better say only what I tell you to.

This strongly suggests that Balaam needed to be warned to say what God told him. Balaam seems to have entertained hopes that he could go off script and pronounce the curses that would make him a rich man.

God makes it abundantly clear that Balaam was not to deviate from God's instructions.

Balaam and the Speaking Donkey.

Numbers 22:23-31, *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. ²⁴Then 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. ²⁵And 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. ²⁶Then 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. ²⁷And 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. ²⁸Then 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?" ²⁹And 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!" ³⁰So 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?" And he said, "No." ³¹Then the Lord opened Balaam's eyes, and he 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.*

Remember the incident took place between God and Moses. God was trying to kill Moses.

Exodus 4:24-26, *And it came to pass on the way, at the encampment, that the Lord met him and sought to kill him. ²⁵Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at Moses' feet, and said, "Surely you are a husband of blood to me!" ²⁶So He let him go. Then she said, "You are a husband of blood!"—because of the circumcision.*

God does not have try to kill anyone.
He warned the leaders to keep the law of God.

Donkey opens the mouth and speaks to Balaam.

Second in this story:

Balaam was a pagan seer, a man who fancied himself an all-seeing master of the divine.

So, God takes Balaam through a supernatural experience with a powerful message, an enacted parable that puts Balaam in his place.

Balaam, the all-knowing seer, cannot see the Angel of the Lord right in front of his face, but his donkey can.

God can make a seer out of a donkey if He wishes, which makes ridiculous Balaam's presumptuous belief in his own power.

Balaam is being put through a divinely orchestrated lesson in humility. Again, it makes sense to assume that Balaam needs that lesson in humility.

Donkey shows us how much Balaam's attitudes need correcting. He needs to be warned again to say only what God tells him to, and he needs to be humbled and shown that his prophetic "gift," to the extent he even has one, is totally dependent on the power of God.

He needs these warnings because he thought he was powerful enough to ignore God and win himself a fortune by cursing Israel.

Balaam had a chance to repent and go back but he did not do it!

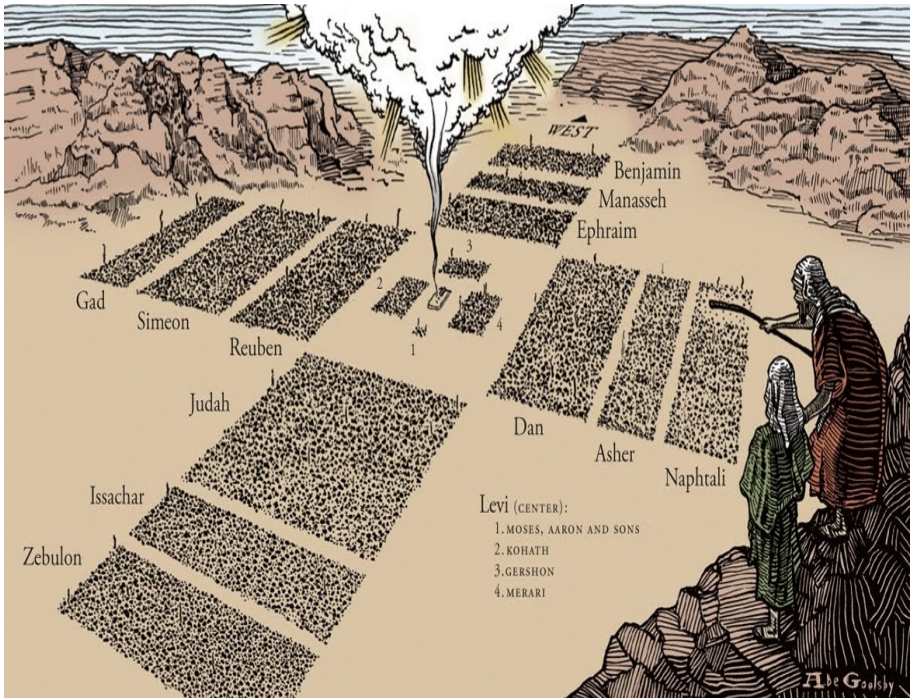
In Moab, King Balak took the prophet Balaam up to a high place called Bamoth Baal, from where he could see all of Israel, and told him to curse the Israelites.

Numbers 22:41, *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.*

What did Balaam see from Moab?

Perfect cross.

All Balaam could do is to bless Israel.



Four times Balaam wanted to curse but end pronouncing the blessing upon Israel.

Blessings of Israel by Balaam.

1. Numbers 23:7-10, Bamoth Baal
2. Numbers 23:18-24, Mount Pisagah
3. Numbers 24:3-9, Mount Peor
4. Numbers 24:15-25,

Numbers 24:25, *So Balaam rose and departed and returned to his place; Balak also went his way.*

They both departed to their respective place.

Numbers 25:1-3, *Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. ²They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. ³So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel.*

What happened?

Numbers 25:9, *And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand.*

Balaam could not pronounce the curse on Israel.

Then how come Israel got punished by God?

Where did the idol and immorality come inside the camp of Israel?

Balaam was a non-Israelite, but his prophetic gift and his spiritual experiences were genuine.

They were not imagined, nor phony, nor satanic counterfeits. Seven significant facts about Balaam:

- God came to Balaam and spoke to him. (**Numbers 22:9 & 20**)
- God met him. (**Numbers 23:4**)
- God put a word in his mouth. (**Numbers 23:5, 12, 16**)
- The Spirit of God came upon him. (**Numbers 24:2**)
- Balaam heard the words of God and saw the vision of the Almighty. (**Numbers 24:4**)
- He knew the knowledge of the Most-High. (**Numbers 24:16**)
- He prophesied the truth about Israel's destiny, including the coming of the Messiah as "a Star out of Jacob." (**Numbers 24:17**)

If that were the only information we had about Balaam, we might wonder why he is considered a false prophet. It sounds like Balaam had a real connection to God, a genuine prophetic gift, so what was the problem?

But where had they gotten the idea to trick Israel in this way?
From Balaam!

Numbers 31:16, *Look, these women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the Lord in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord.*

Moses urges Israel, at God's instruction, to be ruthless to the Midianites, who had deliberately tricked Israel into the idolatry which had brought about the plague from God.

It was Balaam's love for money that caused him to forsake the right way, the way in which he had been walking with God before this offer of wealth came from King Balak.

The way of Balaam is forsaking that which you know to be true and right for the sake of earthly wealth.

The error of Balaam is thinking there will be no consequences for abandoning the right way. The doctrine (or teaching) of Balaam is teaching God's people to do things that God has commanded them not to do, in an effort to manipulate the circumstances to benefit you.

Balaam is the archetype of the typical false prophet.

When Christians hear the term "false prophet," they usually think a false prophet is one of two things.

He might be just a pretender, an actor, a con artist running a scam, someone with no spiritual powers, someone just using psychological tricks on gullible people.

Or, he might be someone with real spiritual powers, but his powers are demonic. All his visions, revelations, and demonstrations are the workings of demons, not the work of the Holy Spirit.

A man or a woman in either of those two categories is certainly a false prophet.

However, the most dangerous false prophets are in neither of those two categories. The most dangerous false prophets are those in the category of Balaam.

Remember, Balaam was not just an actor with no real prophetic gift, nor did he receive his visions and revelations from demons.

- His prophetic gift was real,
- He received his visions,
- He received revelations from God,
- God came to Balaam,
- God spoke to him,
- God met him,
- God put a word in his mouth,

- The Spirit of God came upon him,
- Balaam saw the vision of the Almighty,
- Balaam knew the knowledge of the Most-High,
- He prophesied the truth about Israel and,
- The Messiah who would be “a Star out of Jacob.”

A false prophet like this is the most dangerous false prophet because he starts out as a true prophet with a true spiritual gift.

2 Peter 2:15-16, *They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;¹⁶ but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man’s voice restrained the madness of the prophet.*

Peter affirms some of the same things we deduced from Numbers.

- Balaam was motivated by greed, by a desire for wealth and him “loved the wages of unrighteousness.
- The episode of the donkey was a rebuke against Balaam for his greed.
- The donkey “restrained the madness of the prophet”.
- Balaam was mad to think that he could somehow prevail over God and earn great wealth by cursing

Israel, and it was only after the episode of the donkey that he realized it was impossible.

Revelation 2:14, *But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.*

Even if he has a history of genuine spiritual experiences from God, he is a false prophet if he goes the way of Balaam and runs after the error of Balaam and teaches the doctrine of Balaam.

It is important for Christians to remember that Balaam is the poster boy for false prophets.

Yes, we need to beware of being led astray by con artists who use psychological manipulation, or by devil worshippers, pagan priests, and New Age Nature Boys. However, the Bible does not emphasize these sorts of false prophets as much as false prophets like Balaam.

So, what is the error or the wandering of Balaam?

Selling out or exploiting God's people for financial gain.

Satan's strongest and most successful weapons against us is the love of money.

This has been true from the earliest days of Christianity until now.

A ministry accompanied by powerful supernatural signs—especially miracles of healing—can almost always become a means of making money.

Paul contrasted his ministry with that of many of his Christian contemporaries.

2 Corinthians 2:17, *For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.*

Even in Paul's day many Christians were using their ministry to make money!

Money in itself is not evil. It is not necessarily sinful to be wealthy. By nature, money is neutral. It can be used either for good or for evil. But when we begin to love money, then we are caught in Satan's snare.

1 Timothy 6:9–10, *But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

We need to understand the difference between spiritual gifts and spiritual fruit.

Gifts represent ability, but fruit represents character.

A gift comes through a single brief impartation, but fruit comes through a slow process of development.

Receiving a spiritual gift does not change a person's character. If a person was proud or unreliable or deceitful before receiving a spiritual gift, that person will still be proud or unreliable or deceitful after receiving it.

Receiving such a gift does, however, increase a person's responsibility, because it increases the influence he can have on others. It also carries with it a temptation to see "success" in the Christian life in terms of exercising spiritual gifts rather than in terms of developing a godly character.

Paradoxical as it may seem, the more gifts a person receives, the more attention he needs to pay to cultivating fruit.

Balaam had a clear vision of the blessed end that awaits the righteous is shown by his prayer.

Numbers 23:10, *“Who can count the dust of Jacob, Or number one-fourth of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, And let my end be like his!”*

Yet Balaam’s prayer was not granted.

He was executed in God’s judgment upon the Moabites, whose money had tempted him to align himself against God.

The fate of Balaam provides a graphic illustration of the teaching of Jesus.

Matthew 7:21–23, *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²²Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ ²³And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’*

Simply stated, there is no substitute for obeying God. That alone assures us of a place in heaven.

Balaam did was seduce the people of Israel into immorality and idolatry.

Balaam then represents two things:

The covetousness of the false teacher who loves money.

The apostate who influences others to sin.

Balaam was a step beyond Cain.

- Cain just sinned.
- Balaam collected the crowd to sin.

- A single man's sin, the way of Cain.
- Balaam example of a man who was able to influence a whole group of people to sin.

Of course, there are many modern Cains, modern false teachers, false Christians, apostates who have their own self-style religion, their own self-invented religion, their own spin on Christianity, their own wave interpreting the Bible, or literally denying the Bible and inventing their own insights.

We have plenty of Balaam's out there, seducing people to go after lies, to go after false gods, to go after false religions so they can make money. They do it for the filthy profit's sake.