

Checkin' Out My Walk
#7 - Pergamos - Part III - Doctrine of Balaam

III. Condemnation

Rev. 2:14-15 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 (snare, trap) before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.
¹⁵ Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

Problem: They were being soft and tolerant to error and false doctrines.

Some in the church have wed the world, compromised their beliefs and you're allowing it.

A. Those who hold the Doctrine of Balaam

Case Study of A False Prophet

Background: 1. The Israelites have already rebelled against God at Kadesh-Barnea.

2. The wandering period in the wilderness, along with the setting down of certain laws, is described in chapters Numbers 15-19.

3. In Numbers 20, the second generation of Israelites sets out toward Moab, the launching point for Israel's invasion of Canaan.

4. Along the way Israel comes to the wilderness of Zin.

5. Israel is making its way to Pisgah, a ridge near the top of Mt. Nebo.

6. 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).

7. The Israelites prevail and take possession of his land (21:24-31).

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

9. 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.

Balak's Big Mistake - Numbers 22

Num. 22:1 The children of Israel moved and are camping in the plains of Moab on the side of the Jordan across from Jericho. Note: The Israelites will encounter a different kind of enemy: Hidden in the mountain heights and able to call upon the evil one to assist him.

Scared To Death: Numbers 22:2-3 Now Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. ³ And Moab was exceedingly afraid of the people because they were many, and Moab was sick with dread because of the children of Israel.

Num. 22:4 Balak conspires with the Midianites.

The Moabites and the Midianites conspired together to recruit a man who had connections with the spiritual underworld, and who could therefore arrange to have a curse put on the Israelites. Balaam, from Pethor, a city located along the Euphrates River, (v. 5) had a

reputation for success in divination (receiving hidden knowledge, especially the future) and in incantation (use of occult power to grant blessing or cursing). Prophet for Hire

Note: The distance between Pethor (Pitru) and the plains of Moab would be over 370 miles. The journey would take an estimated 20-25 days, hence the 4 journeys = about 90 days.

Num. 22: 5-6 Look, a people has come from Egypt. They cover the face of the earth, and are settling next to me! ⁶ 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."

1. King Balak sends messengers to Balaam with offer > pay him if he will come curse Israel.
2. Balaam is interested, but needs to consult with God first. The elders spend the night.

Num. 22:9 Then God came to Balaam and said, "Who *are* these men with you?"

- a. They were the emissaries of Balak, the king of Moab.
- b. They represented nations and governments opposed to the nation Israel.
- c. They were seeking to persuade Balaam to curse the very people God had blessed.

In the light of this, what were these men doing in Balaam's house, as his guests? To invite one to be a guest in your home was to grant them the highest level of intimacy and fellowship.

The Apostle John instructs that false teachers not be shown such hospitality:

II John 1:9-11 Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.

If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.

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

Gen. 12:3 I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you;

4. V. 13 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."

Note: He doesn't tell them the reason. Israel CANNOT be cursed; God has blessed them.

5. King Balak makes a 2nd effort.

He sends more people and ups the offer if Balaam will just come to Moab and curse Israel.

6. *No matter how much you offer me, I can't go against God. But just in case* He's changed his mind, Balaam decides to consult with God again. They spend the night.

7. V. 20 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.

Note: God still hasn't given him leeway to curse Israel.

8. The next morning, Balaam saddles up his donkey and goes to meet the Moabite men.

9. Num. 22:22 God is angry. Balaam is determined to do his own will; gives in to the covetousness in his heart. He is running ahead of God and refusing to obey God's clear directions. God clearly told Balaam to wait until the Moabites came to him.

10. He sends the Angel of the Lord to stand in the roadway and block him.

Balaam had set himself in opposition to God.

Truth :To deliberately and purposefully oppose the will of God is to make God your adversary.

11. Num. 22:35 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." So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.

12. Num. 22:36-24:25 Balaam tries 4 times to curse Israel, but he always speaks blessings.

13. After the 4th failed attempt, Balaam will change his tactic.

The Doctrine of Balaam > Teaching Contrary To The Revealed Word Of God

Philosophy: If You Can't Curse Them; Corrupt Them

Remember John's words in Rev. 2: Balaam taught Balak to put a stumbling block before Israelites so they would eat things sacrificed to idols and commit sexual immorality.

Num. 25:1-3 Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, (Unknown to the Israelites, a spiritual attack against them had been waged by the Moabites and the Midianites, who had hired Balaam to persuade God to curse the nation Israel.) and the people began:

(1) To commit harlotry with the women of Moab.

(2) They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and

(3) 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.

This feast, involving idolatry and abominable immorality would be a flagrant violation of Israel's covenant with God. Israel's consecration and separation unto God was completely obliterated when the Moabite women committed fornication with the Israelite men, and they ate flesh offered to idols. This scheme appealed to the flesh.

How Does This Relate to Pergamos? Some in this church: We don't need to be separate.

We can mix the old patterns, the old morals, the old idolatry with the new Christianity.

You can be a Christian and worship idols, commit fornication with a heathen priest, priestess at the temple or priest. You can attend the debauchery, the orgies, the festivals and the feasts and still pay your homage to Jesus. "You need to be friendly to Rome. What harm is there in putting a pinch of incense on the altar and affirming your loyalty to Caesar?"

Antipas refused and was martyred. Others took the easy way out. Jesus accused Pergamos of sinning, committing spiritual fornication by saying, "Caesar is lord." Of course, the compromise made them welcome in the Roman guilds and protected them from Roman persecution, but it cost them their testimony and crown.

It doesn't do any harm! You don't need to be exclusive in your separation from the world.

WAIT! Our Lord called for a clean break!

Warning: There are ALWAYS seducers, those who come in and entice God's people to break from the separation and mingle with the world. God absolutely condemned such a union in

Israel. The Lord Jesus Christ condemns such a union in Pergamos.

II Cor. 6 Paul says, "What fellowship has light with darkness, what concord has Christ with Belial? Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."

In the church at Corinth, people were eating things sacrificed to idols and committing acts of immorality. At the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15, the Apostles sent out a message to the churches and said, "Don't eat meat offered to idols:"

(1) It sucks you back into idolatry. (2) It is an abuse of your Christian freedom.

(3) It makes weaker brothers stumble. (4) It conjures all the old life patterns.

The Council of Jerusalem also said "Do not commit fornication." Stay away from all immorality. They were really mandating the public orgies occurring in pagan life.

Note: This issue was settled long ago, having been discussed and mandated from the council of Jerusalem. Yet some decades later are teaching God tolerates this.

Challenging the Apostles' Teaching: People today are challenging the principles of New Testament apostolic doctrine. They water it down in whatever way you like: critical ways, cultural ways, ways that reflect our modernity today, or our pluralism.

Question: What caused the Israelites to depart from the one true and living God who had delivered them from Egypt? Why did they begin serving false gods and follow the idolatrous ways of the Moabites?

Remember: 2nd generation had seen MANY die due to rebellion and unbelief. God has just given 2 major victories over Sihon & Og. They are about to embark on the conquest of the Promised Land.

Question: When are we very vulnerable to the enemy? Just after a victory!

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.

God would not allow Balaam to curse Israel. Only beautiful prophecies filled with blessings flowed from his lips when he was called into Moab by Balak. He was trying to get the unchanging God to change His plans and purposes. God would never go back on His Word.

Balaam had said so himself in Numbers 23:19 > "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?

Note: When the roaring lion approach failed, he turned to deceit and laid a trap.

Balaam devises a devious plan that seeks to "use" God's faithfulness to His Word for his own personal gain. God had promised to bless Israel, but His blessings under the Law were conditional. Israel would be blessed as they obeyed God's commandments.

In Leviticus 18, very specific laws are set down which regulate the sexual conduct of God's chosen people. Israel is to be careful not to practice the abominations of Egypt, from which they have been delivered, or of Canaan, which they are about to possess.

The Israelites have shown themselves to be fickle people, whose hearts can easily be turned from God. If he can succeed in seducing the Israelites, and cause them to engage in sexual and religious adultery, then he knows God must keep His own Word and bring a curse upon this people. It was perfect! He would use:

1. Israel's weaknesses (stiff-necked and prone to wander) and
2. God's strength (He does not change, keeping His Word) against Israel and for Balak and the Moabites.

Here was a sure-fire, indirect way to bring about the same objective Balaam had failed to accomplish directly.

Thus he taught or advised Balak to tempt Israel in marrying the daughters of Moab.

1. This would defile their separation.
2. Cause them to abandon their pilgrim character.

It was a teaching that promoted a breakdown in separation from the world;

a breaking down of their holy separation unto God and consecration to His service.

Note: Pergamum comes from two words, per, which has the idea of "completely, thoroughly," and gamos, "marriage." The church at Pergamum:

1. Began to lose their pilgrim character
2. Becoming thoroughly married to the world

James 4:4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

I Peter 2:11 Beloved, I beg *you* as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,

The second generation of Israelites had been wandering in the wilderness for nearly 40 years. They had eaten manna and water, with almost no exceptions. Suddenly the "welcome wagon" arrives at the Israelites' camp. Friendly neighbors come by to welcome them to the neighborhood and to offer them "steak and ale."

Did the Israelites realize: *to share such a meal with the Moabites was to join them in the worship of their gods?* Sexual immorality was contrary to Israel's religion because it offended a holy and righteous God.

The Canaanites incorporated sexual immorality into their religion, as an "act of worship." How clever Satan is, to take what God has condemned as contrary to religion, and make it a vital part of religious worship.

By participating in the pagan sacrificial meals, and by engaging in sexual relations with the Moabites as an act of worship, the Israelites both committed sexual immorality and engaged in spiritual harlotry. The judgment of God fell upon His people because of these sins. He sent a plague which killed 24,000 Israelites.

The Doctrine (Counsel) of Balaam had to do with the sins committed by the Israelites in view of their covenant relationship with God. Our covenant can't be broken. Faulty thinking led to: Consequently we (the Israelites) could sin with immunity.

However, such was not the case. It was true:

1. The covenant established between God and Israel could not be broken.
2. Israel's position as firstborn could not be changed.

NOT TRUE: Israel could sin with immunity.

1. God's wrath was manifested because of the sins of His people.
2. Thousands of Israelites who succumbed to the doctrine (counsel) of Balaam were killed and fell short of the goal of their calling.

For people in Pergamos to offer the pinch of incense was a compromise of his faith. To eat things sacrificed to idols meant to engage in the feasting and orgies of the various idolatrous temples. Some were teaching > it's ok.

The teaching or doctrine of Balaam was a perversion of the Christian doctrine of liberty.

False teachers were teaching God's grace gave His people the freedom to sin.

Jude called it "turning the grace of God into lasciviousness." (v.4) Any teaching that makes it easy and permissible to sin is false doctrine which is compared to a cancerous growth in: II Tim. 2:17 Regarding message of Hymenaeus & Philetus who spread the resurrection had already past: And their message will spread like cancer...who have strayed from the truth...they overthrow the faith of some.

The cancer of compromise weakens our witness and saps our spiritual strength.

Then we wonder why we are blunt instruments for the Lord!

Does The Doctrine of Balaam Affect Me?

Christians know — as their counterparts in the church in Pergamos —

1. We have been saved by grace through faith.
2. Nothing can alter our salvation or destination.
3. We now possess eternal spiritual life, which can never be taken from us.
4. Because of the unchangeable nature of the life that we presently possess, many reason we can conduct our lives in any manner we choose, and it will make no difference.

However, just like the Israelites who were called and saved for a specific, revealed purpose, Christians have been saved for a specific, revealed purpose.

1. Every Christian is enrolled in a race. (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)
2. Every Christian is engaged in a conflict (Ephesians 6:10-18)
3. The goal set before every Christian is to win the race, be victorious in the conflict.

God has made provision for Christians so at the end of the race they might say with Paul, II Tim. 4:7-8 *I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race, I have kept the faith; Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness* which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

The enemy, Satan, is doing all within his power to bring defeat in the lives of Christians. Satan's main objective in the present warfare is to prevent Christians from qualifying for crowns and thus positions of rulership with Christ in His coming kingdom. God is presently bringing into existence a new order of *sons* to replace the order now ruling in the heavens. The incumbent rulers — Satan and his angels — are doing all within their power to retain their present governmental control over the earth.

The main facet of the doctrine of Balaam being promulgated in churches today is the teaching: Future blessings and rewards have been set aside for every Christian solely on the basis of Christ's finished work on Calvary and the Christian's positional standing "*in Christ.*" In this respect, all Christians — regardless of their conduct during the present time — will receive crowns and positions of power and authority with Christ in the kingdom.

However, that which is clearly taught throughout the Word of God is to the contrary. The Israelites did not sin with immunity. Neither can we.

Truth: Sin in the camp of Israel resulted in the death of 24,000 Israelites who fell short of the goal of their calling.

II Sam. 1:10 I am an Amalekite (type of the flesh)...And I took the crown that was on his head and the bracelet that was on his arm

II Tim. 2:4-5 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. ⁵ And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.

Rev. 3:11 Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

Never Turn Grace Into A License To Sin