Let me share the background of this passage:

Moses and the people of God had just defeated the Amorites. The Moabites knew that the children of Israel had moved and were now camped in the plains of Moab, and they were afraid.

- The reason they were afraid is that the Amorites had defeated them in battle and if they could defeat the Amorites, it would be nothing for the children of God to defeat them also.
- It would be like a football team who had just lost to a team 49 to 0. They learn that the next team they are to face has beaten the team they have just lost to 56 to nothing. How can they expect to beat such a team?
- No wonder the Moabites were afraid!
- But, they didn't have to be afraid, for the Moabites were descendants of Lot and Israel was forbidden by God to attack Moab.
- But Balak, the King of Moab, didn't know that Israel was forbidden to attack them.

- Balak heard about Balaam, who was known as the “cursing prophet.”
- As a false prophet, Balaam practiced magic and divination and he was good at his job.
- See Num. 22:5-6

I. The Description of Balaam
Clarence Macartney called Balaam an “Angelic Devil.”

- That sounds like a contradiction in terms – an Angelic Devil?
- But he was a strange mixture of good and evil … of light and darkness. In one place he looks like a true prophet of God; at the next you wonder how he could stoop so low.

Look at his angelic side for he had some fine, noble qualities.

1. He was a brilliant man with great oratory power. Folks spoke of him as the “silver tongue” or the “golden mouth.”

2. He had a high concept of righteousness. (Called God by His covenant name.)
   He had the knowledge in his head concerning what was right.

3. He had well-defined convictions. Numbers 22:15-18
4. He possessed an amazing knowledge of God – prayed to God – sought after His will.
   Numbers 23:10b

5. He seemed eager for divine guidance. Numbers 22:5-14

It sounds like Balaam has his theology straight and wanted to live for God. But Balaam has a dark side … the devil in him.

- Balaam had prayed about the matter of placing a curse on the people of God and heard God's “No”. Then he was offered more money, and so, he goes back to God and asked God a second time to allow him to place a curse on the people of God.
- This time he was not asking to know what was right, he was asking God for permission to do what he knew was wrong.
- Can you imagine: “Please, God. I know it is wrong to curse your people, but would you let me do it anyway?”

- He wants to stay on good terms with Balak AND God!
- He wants to please himself without displeasing God!
- So he asked God to let him do what he knows is wrong to do.
How does he go about it? He prays; God says “No”. He keeps praying and praying and praying until he convinces himself that what he once knew was wrong is now right. (See 22:8-12, 19)

Look at this: On his knees, he succeeds in blinding himself – lying to himself that it is all right to curse God’s people.

He becomes disloyal to his own conscience and a civil war forms within.

* When you play loose with your conscience, you kill its conformation.

When one seeks to do right, he sees clearly; when he knows what is right and tries to justify doing wrong, you kill your ability to hear God clearly.

Matt. 6:22-24

I've had folks tell me that they have prayed about an affair, and God told them it was all right. Go ahead.

I've had believers tell me they've prayed about marrying an unbeliever, and God said to go ahead.

II. The Depravity of Balaam

- God had told Balaam not to go, to … Balaam says, “I've prayed; I'm praying!”
- God says, “All right, go. But when you open your mouth to curse my people, blessings will come forth from your mouth.” See Numbers 23:11.

But something strange happens as Balaam goes. See Numbers 22:21-34

- You say, “Now, preacher, do you really believe that donkey talked to Balaam?” Yes!

- God spoke through a Bush to Moses

- God spoke through a Fish to Jonah

- God spoke through a Rooster to Peter

- Who do you think made that donkey to start with?

- God put the voice box in you and me.

- He put the cock-a-do-ado in the rooster

- The meow in the cat; the bow-wow in the dog

- And he can cause a donkey to speak if He wants to!
- He is a God of power … He opened the Red Sea; gave manna from heaven; gave water from a rock; it's no problem for Him to speak through a donkey.

- 2 Peter 2:16 says it wasn't even a smart donkey; Peter calls it a Dumb Donkey.

- Here's a strange thing: Balaam wants to curse the people of God for money and Numbers 22:19 says Balaam wanted to kill the donkey!

- He's standing there having a conversation with a donkey … like it's normal … and he wants to kill it!

- There's no telling how much a talking donkey would bring!

- That donkey could see and hear better than Balaam.

- The donkey was saying, “Stop! Don't keep going in the direction you're going! There's danger ahead!”

- God may not be using donkeys today, but He's saying to us, “Stop! You're going the wrong way – direction – as a nation! There's danger ahead! Turn around! Repent!”

III. The Disgrace of Balaam

- Even after all that Balaam experienced with his donkey, Numbers 25 says Balak took Balaam three different places, made three different sacrifices before God, trying to persuade God to change His will and let Balaam place a curse on God's people.
- Balaam had a triple witness that told him what to do: His conscience, his donkey, the Angel of the Lord; but the gold was too great for him to resist.
- His donkey made a better choice than did stubborn Balaam!
- Balaam couldn't curse the people with his mouth, but he could curse them with seduction!
- Balaam says, “I can't curse Israel, but I'll tell you how to get them to bring a curse upon themselves. Get the women of Moab to offer themselves to the men of Israel and when they yield, a plague will come upon them.”
- Notice Numbers 25:9 24,000 died in the plague
- What a disgraceful thing for Balaam to do!

IV. The Death of Balaam

- Numbers 23:10 “Let me die the death of the righteous. And let my end be like his!”

    But he lived contrary to what he was asking.


- Three New Testament writers describe Balaam:
(1) 2 Peter 2:15-16 The madness of the prophet.
- Balaam had resisted God so long that “he came apart from right thinking.”
- His sin and stubbornness had brought him a form of insanity.

(2) Jude 11 The error of Balaam.
- He encouraged others to sin while at the same time seeking to gain monetarily from their error.

(3) John – Revelation 2:14 The doctrine (teaching) of Balaam.
- He got God's people to compromise their values and standards.
  - He did not die the death of the righteous. In fact, not even Judas is condemned with the sharp language that was used of Balaam.

Three truths we learn from Balaam:

1. A person may have dealings with God without trusting Him as their personal Savior.
2. You may know God's will and not do it.
3. If you are to die the death of the righteous, you must live the life of the righteous.

Return To: Dumb and Dummer Sermon Menu

Return To: Miscellaneous Sermon Menu

Return To: Lowell F. Johnson Master Sermon Menu