

Week 9—Numbers 22-24

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

Day 1

1. Read Numbers 22-24. Because this is a longer text, I want to invite you to simply read it over today and make notes of what you notice below. Consider these questions as your guide: what is the main point of this story? What do we learn about God? The Israelites? Where is Jesus in this story?

Day 2

1. Read Numbers 22:1-22a. In chapter 22, what desires and motivations are at work in Balak and Balaam? What actions do these motivations lead to? What can this teach us about our own motivations?

Plains of Moab (22:1)—The Israelites are now back to the staging area to enter the Promised land east of the Jordan and north of the Dead Sea. From here they will launch their attack on Canaan, beginning with Jericho.

The answer the LORD gives me (22:8)—The language here has led some to believe Balaam was a believer in Yahweh, but based on the rest of the narrative and Balaam’s condemnation throughout the rest of Scripture (cf. Josh 13:22; 2 Pet 2:15-16; Jude 11; Rev 2:14) it is more likely he is claiming that he is a spokesman for any and every god. For him, Yahweh would just be another god that he could get divine answers from through his pagan rituals.

2. What discoveries does Balaam make in chapter 22 about the LORD and His people? How does this all point back to God’s covenant/promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3? How does it apply to us today according to Galatians 3:23-29?

3. How do you understand vv. 20-22a? Is there a contradiction between what God grants in v. 20 with His anger in v. 22? Why or why not? What insight does Jude 11 and 2 Peter 2:15 give us into this situation? Are there times in your life where you might use obedience to God for the wrong intentions? When?

Day 3

1. Read Numbers 22:21-41. What would you say is the main point of this section? Where do you see irony in this story? What does God want Balaam to learn (see especially vv. 20, 35, 38)? What can we learn from this?

2. Can you share a time God spoke to you in a surprising way? Write it out below. What did you learn from that experience?

3. How does God normally speak to His people today? How is He speaking to you in your life in the present moment?

Day 4

1. Read Numbers 23:1-30. What does God do with Balaam's "curses?" Which of his three oracles in this chapter are especially meaningful to you? Why?

2. In this series we are learning that this world is not our home. How does this chapter help us to live with courage and faithfulness even in the wilderness times of life in this world?

3. What does it mean that God is Sovereign? Read Romans 8:18-39 and write down every promise we have because He is sovereign. How can knowing that help us through our own times of wilderness?

The shout of the King is among them (23:21)—This is the first explicit mentioned of the LORD's kingship in the Bible. The fact that it is made by Balaam is ironic because it shows that God as Sovereign can use Balaam, a pagan prophet for His own ends.

Day 5

1. Read Numbers 24:1-25. What makes these oracles even more powerful than the previous ones? How is vv. 15-19 different than the others? What do these verses point to? What do the final three oracles tell us about the future?

The Spirit of God came on him (24:2)—As Ronald Allen notes, “This time there is a significant change. Balaam does not go about his normal routine of sorcery. This time “the Spirit of God came on him.” This unexpected language is used to prepare the reader for the heightened revelation that is about to come from the unwitting messenger. The oracles are building in intensity and in their depth of meaning.

I see him...I behold him...A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel (24:17)—Partially fulfilled by David, ultimately this predicts the coming of Jesus, a Messianic ruler. Israel’s future Deliverer will be like a star (see Revelation 22:16) and scepter (see Genesis 49:10) in His royalty and will bring victory over the enemies of His people (v. 19).

2. Read Numbers 25:1-3. Scripture tells us this situation was the result of Balaam’s actions (see Numbers 31:15-16). What does this show us about him and what he learned? What was most important to him? Can you think of any example of this in the New Testament?

3. As the Israelites are on the cusp of entering the Promised Land (cf. 22:1), what is the *main thing* the LORD wants them to learn through this story of Balaam and Balak? What does He want us to learn?

Conclusion

1. What most stood out to you as you studied Numbers 22-24 this week? *Why* do you think this was the case?

2. What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to *do* as a result of this? Be prepared to share with your group!