

## **PAY-A-PRAYER**

**Request:** “Could you give an example of a hedonistic reversionism prayer?”

This request came out of a lesson on hedonism reversionism taught on Tuesday night (4/29/08) entitled, “Drawing near to God”, which was taken from James 4:1-10.

“You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives (kakos) [evil intentions], so that you may spend it on your pleasures (hedone).” (James 4:3)

As I thought about this request, I remembered the story of Balaam in Numbers 22. King Balak of Moab hired Balaam, a famous Midianite diviner, to get the God of Israel to pronounce a curse upon Israel (Num.22-25; 31:7-8).

**Pay-a-Prayer** was in practice before **Dial-a-Prayer**. Balaam was a famous international diviner for hire in the 15<sup>th</sup> century BC (Deut.23:4-5).

In our lesson text, Peter used Balaam as an example of a prophet who exploit others out of hedonism / greed (2 Pet.2:1-3, 13-16).

<b>This lesson will study five aspects of Balaam’s sorcery of Pay-A-Prayer out of hedonism greed.</b>
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**1. King Balak was provoked to solicit the hire of Balaam because he believed that Israel was taking territories by conquest (Num.22:1-2).**

Israel had just conquered two important Amorite kings and were headed his way. The Moabites had an alliance with the Midianites who suggested hiring their famous prophet to pronounce a curse upon Israel so that Israel could not win in battle (Num.22:4-7).

**2. King Balak is an example of how false assumptions lead to false interpretations that lead to false expectations which lead to false applications.**

King Balak had researched Israel national and legal identity. He had studied the Abrahamic and the Mosaic Covenants looking for some way to curse Israel. He found the blessing-curse clause in the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen.12:1-3) and the blessing-curse of Mosaic Covenant (Deut.28).

“Now, therefore, please come, curse this people for me since they are too mighty for me; perhaps I may 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.” (Num.22:6)

**3. What is interesting is that the same bible would have explained the national and legal identity of the Moabites with God (Gen.19:36-37).**

King Balak would have discovered that the Moabites came from an incestuous family background (Lot and his oldest daughter) (Eph.2:12).

King Balak would have discovered that the Moabites were under a curse (Deut.23:1-4).

#### **4. In his hire, Balaam offered two prayers**

He had an unforgettable experience with a talking donkey and gave five prominent oracles and yet failed to bring a curse against Israel. In fact, he pronounced a blessing.

“Then Balak said to Balaam, ‘What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, but behold, you have actually blessed them.’” (Num.23:11)

After the donkey experience Balaam was warned by the angel of the Lord:

“But the angel of the Lord said to Balaam, ‘Go with the men, but you shall speak only the word which I shall tell you.’” (Num.22:35)

The Lord told Balaam during the second oracle that no sorcery would work against Israel:

“For there is no omen against Israel, nor is there any divination against Israel; at the proper time it shall be to Jacob and to Israel, what God has done.” (Num.23:23)

It was during the fourth oracle that the Lord gave a prophecy of the star that led the Wise Men to Jesus through Balaam (Num.24:17; Matt.2:1-12).

Balaam wasn't paid because he didn't pronounce a curse upon Israel (Num.24:10-25).

#### **5. However, Balaam negotiated a new contract with Balak against Israel:**

“Behold, these caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation of the Lord.” (Num.31:16)

“While Israel was at Shittim, the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab. For they invited the people to sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel joined themselves to Baal of Peor, and the Lord was angry against Israel.” (Num.25:1-3; Ps.106:28-31)

“And those who died by the plague were 24,000.” (Num.25:9)

“Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Be hostile to the Midianites and strike them.’” (Num.25:16-17)

As a result of this counsel of Balaam, Peter and John used him as a prototype of the worst form of corrupt false teachers (2 Pet.2:13-16; Rev.2:14; Acts 15:20-21, 29).

During the war with Midianites, Israel killed Balaam (Num.31:7-8; Josh.13:22).

Later Moses was buried in the land of Moab opposite Baal-Peor: “But no man knows his burial place to this day.” (Deut.34:6; Jude 9-11)