

A Worship Study Guide for Individuals, Groups and Families: For the week of April 22, 2018

Note to Discussion Leaders: Have members read the Bible passage in the group meeting. This is a “worship discussion” guide, and our reflections and applications are grounded in Scripture. Read through this guide before meeting with the group. You do not need to work through the whole guide. Decide which points would be most helpful for the time of meeting together, and use them as a starting point for your time together.

Numbers 22:22-40 “Balaam’s Donkey”

- **What is one way God opened your eyes to see Jesus this past week?**
- **Describe one time this week it was difficult to see Him. Why?**

²² But God's anger was kindled because he went, and the angel of the LORD took his stand in the way as his adversary. Now he was riding on the donkey, and his two servants were with him. ²³ And the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road, with a drawn sword in his hand. And the donkey turned aside out of the road and went into the field. And Balaam struck the donkey, to turn her into the road. ²⁴ Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on either side. ²⁵ And when the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she pushed against the wall and pressed Balaam's foot against the wall. So he struck her again. ²⁶ Then the angel of the LORD went ahead and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right or to the left. ²⁷ When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam. And Balaam's anger was kindled, and he struck the donkey with his staff. ²⁸ Then 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?” ²⁹ And Balaam said to the donkey, “Because you have made a fool of me. I wish I had a sword in my hand, for then I would kill you.” ³⁰ And the donkey said to Balaam, “Am I not your donkey, on which you have ridden all your life long to this day? Is it my habit to treat you this way?” And he said, “No.”

- **Why was God angered, and how did He respond (22)?**
- **Of all those who were with Balaam, who saw the angel of the LORD? How did they respond (23)?**
- **The angel of the LORD stood in opposition against Balaam a second time. What happened (24-25)?**
- **The angel of the LORD stood in opposition against Balaam a third time. What happened (26)? Unaware, what did Balaam do (27)?**
- **The LORD opened the mouth of the donkey and she argued with Balaam. What was the argument about (28-30)?**

³¹ Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand. And he bowed down and fell on his face. ³² And the angel of the LORD said to him, “Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to oppose you because your way is perverse before me.” ³³ The donkey saw me and turned aside before me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, surely just now I would have killed you and let her live.” ³⁴ Then Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, “I have sinned, for I did not know that you stood in the road against me. Now therefore, if it is evil in your sight, I will turn back.” ³⁵ And the angel of the LORD said to Balaam, “Go with the men, but speak only the word that I tell you.” So Balaam went on with the princes of Balak.

- **The LORD opened the eyes of Balaam. What did Balaam see & what was his response (31)?**
- **The angel defended the actions of Balaam’s donkey (33). What did He say about Balaam’s actions (32)? What would have happened to Balaam if it had not been for his donkey (33)?**
- **Now aware of the angel, what did Balaam do (34)? What did the angel remind Balaam to do (35)? ([Numbers 22:20](#))**

³⁶ When Balak heard that Balaam had come, he went out to meet him at the city of Moab, on the border formed by the Arnon, at the extremity of the border. ³⁷ And Balak said to Balaam, “Did I not send to you to call you? Why did you not come to me? Am I not able to honor you?” ³⁸ Balaam said to Balak, “Behold, I have come to you! Have I now any power of my own to speak anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that must I speak.” ³⁹ Then Balaam went with Balak, and they came to Kiriath-huzoth. ⁴⁰ And Balak sacrificed oxen and sheep, and sent for Balaam and for the princes who were with him.

- **Balak, king of Moab, was informed that Balaam was on his way (36). What did Balak ask Balaam (37)? Why? What did he hope to get from Balaam?**
- **What was Balaam’s response to his meeting with Balak (38)?**

- Balak offered a sacrifice. What was the meaning of this sacrifice (39-40)?
- This past Sunday, the congregation sang the ancient Irish hymn, “*Be Thou My Vision*”. [Read](#), [listen](#), or [sing](#) that hymn together. What attribute of God are named in this hymn? Which attribute strikes a particular chord for you today? Why?
- Each Sunday, the Lord summons our congregation to worship Him in the reading of the *Call to Worship*. This past week, we read [Isaiah 35:4-5](#). When God appears to save us, He opens our eyes. Read this passage together to begin a time of prayer together, asking the Holy Spirit to open blind eyes to see Jesus.

Sermon Notes

This week, Steve Shelby preached on [Numbers 22:22-40](#).

- A quick recap:
 - The plains of Moab
 - Balak seeks a well-known religious figure to provide a weapon of mass-destruction
 - God limits what Balaam can do
 - All of this is happening outside of the view and hearing of the people of God
- Apart from a work of grace in our hearts by God, dumb animals are more sensitive to the presence and will of God than we are. Isn't it fascinating that in this passage the donkey sees and perceives and responds appropriately to the presence of the sword-wielding angel of the Lord before the seer does? He's a prophet! He can "see" the future! But he can't see the angel of the Lord with a sword right in front of him. But the donkey can, and she does exactly what an intelligent being would do. The first time, she heads into the field! And the next time she scrunches up against the wall. And then when there's no place to go, she's on the ground. But it's only subsequently that the "seer's" eyes are opened to the presence of the Lord.
- The goodness of God in the Gospel: "Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'" ([Matthew 16:16-18](#))
- What is Balaam's real problem?
 - "you have made a fool out of me" (29)
 - The donkey suffers for the sins and blindness and pride of Balaam. The instrument he would use against his donkey is actually hanging over his head.
- The wisdom of men versus the wisdom of God. Who wins the argument here?

Questions about this week's study guide? Contact Kevin Greene, kevin@wepc.org
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