



A Worship Study Guide for Individuals, Groups and Families: For the week of April 29, 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 22:41-23:26 “Behold, A People”

- **Are you blessed or cursed? How do you know? What things influence your life as blessed or cursed on a daily basis?**

^{22:41} And in the morning Balak took Balaam and brought him up to Bamoth-baal, and from there he saw a fraction of the people.

^{23:1} And Balaam said to Balak, “Build for me here seven altars, and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams.” ² Balak did as Balaam had said. And Balak and Balaam offered on each altar a bull and a ram. ³ And Balaam said to Balak, “Stand beside your burnt offering, and I will go. Perhaps the LORD will come to meet me, and whatever he shows me I will tell you.” And he went to a bare height, ⁴ and God met Balaam. And Balaam said to him, “I have arranged the seven altars and I have offered on each altar a bull and a ram.” ⁵ And the LORD put a word in Balaam’s mouth and said, “Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak.” ⁶ And he returned to him, and behold, he and all the princes of Moab were standing beside his burnt offering.

- **Balak took Balaam to the high places of Baal, where they could see the camp of the children of Israel in the plains of Moab (41). This location’s association with Baal suggests that it was a high place where Canaanite cultic functions were carried out. What did Balaam ask Balak to construct for him there? Why? (1-3)**
- **There is no biblical instruction or precedent for Balaam’s offering; the sacrifices were part of a pagan ritual. Why did God still meet Balaam? (4-5)**
- **We are often tempted to try to impress God or secure his blessing through superstition or sacrifice. What is one way you have seen this happen?**

⁷ And Balaam took up his discourse and said,

“From Aram Balak has brought me,
the king of Moab from the eastern mountains:

‘Come, curse Jacob for me,
and come, denounce Israel!’

⁸ How can I curse whom God has not cursed?

How can I denounce whom the LORD has not denounced?

⁹ For from the top of the crags I see him,

from the hills I behold him;
behold, a people dwelling alone,
and not counting itself among the nations!

¹⁰ Who can count the dust of Jacob
or number the fourth part of Israel?

Let me die the death of the upright,
and let my end be like his!”

- **In Balaam’s first oracle, he mentioned where he is, what he sees, and why he is there (7,9). He also asks a question (8). How would you answer his question?**

¹¹ And Balak said to Balaam, “What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, and behold, you have done nothing but bless them.” ¹² And he answered and said, “Must I not take care to speak what the LORD puts in my mouth?”

¹³ And Balak said to him, “Please come with me to another place, from which you may see them. You shall see only a fraction of them and shall not see them all. Then curse them for me from there.” ¹⁴ And he took him to the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on each altar. ¹⁵ Balaam said to Balak, “Stand here beside your burnt offering, while I meet the LORD over there.” ¹⁶ And the LORD met Balaam and put a word in his mouth and said, “Return to Balak, and thus shall you speak.” ¹⁷ And he came to him, and behold, he was standing beside his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab with him. And Balak said to him, “What has the LORD spoken?” ¹⁸ And Balaam took up his discourse and said,

“Rise, Balak, and hear;

give ear to me, O son of Zippor:

¹⁹ God is not man, that he should lie,

or a son of man, that he should change his mind.

Has he said, and will he not do it?

Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?

²⁰ Behold, I received a command to bless:

he has blessed, and I cannot revoke it.

²¹ He has not beheld misfortune in Jacob,

nor has he seen trouble in Israel.

The LORD their God is with them,

and the shout of a king is among them.

²² God brings them out of Egypt

and is for them like the horns of the wild ox.

²³ For there is no enchantment against Jacob,
no divination against Israel;
now it shall be said of Jacob and Israel,
'What has God wrought!'

²⁴ Behold, a people! As a lioness it rises up
and as a lion it lifts itself;
it does not lie down until it has devoured the prey
and drunk the blood of the slain."

²⁵ And Balak said to Balaam, "Do not curse them at all, and do not
bless them at all." ²⁶ But Balaam answered Balak, "Did I not tell
you, 'All that the LORD says, that I must do'?"

- **Balak took Balaam to another place—the top of Mount Pisgah. What was Balak's motive in taking Balaam here? (13-14)**
- **Once again, Balak and Balaam made a pagan sacrifice, and Balaam went off to a solitary place to hear from the LORD.**

Balaam returned with a word from the LORD to Balak. What did the LORD reveal to Balaam about God's character and purposes? (18-20)

- **Despite all the grumbling, complaining, murmuring, and rising up against the LORD's anointed leaders, what did God reveal about His view of Israel? (21)**
- **How does the LORD view us as believers in Christ? ([Ephesians 1:4](#); [5:27](#), [Colossians 1:22](#))**
- **What did God reveal to Balaam about the future of His people? (22-24)**
- **This week's sermon referenced [Romans 8:31-39](#) and God's gracious final word to His people in Christ. Read this passage aloud, and thank God for what He has declared about Himself and His people in His Word.**

Sermon Notes

This week, Steve Shelby preached on [Numbers 22:41–23:26](#).

- The frustration for Balak continues. When he finally gets Balaam to Moab and sets up the altars, he offers quite a sacrifice. (22:41-23:6)
- In This passage, Balaam largely speaks about two things:
 - In the first oracle, he speaks about the people of God (7-10)
 - In the second oracle, he speaks about God (18-24)
- The uniqueness and power of the people of God resides not in themselves, but in the God who loves them and is for them
- This God sees His people
- The irony in all of this is, "Who are these people?" The people are unique because their God is unique. That is why His words matter so much.
- How can Balaam curse those whom God has blessed?
- This God is not like the God's of Balak
- "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." ([Romans 8:31-39](#))

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