

Numbers 23:1-30 **Balak & Balaam – Seven Altars**

1 Then Balaam said to Balak, "Build seven altars for me here, and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams." **2** And Balak did just as Balaam had spoken, and Balak and Balaam offered a bull and a ram on each altar. **3** Then Balaam said to Balak, "Stand by your burnt offering, and I will go; perhaps the LORD will come to meet me, and whatever He shows me I will tell you."

So he went to a desolate height. **4** And God met Balaam, and he said to Him, "I have prepared the seven altars, and I have offered on each altar a bull and a ram." **5** Then the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, "Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak." **6** So he returned to him, and there he was, standing by his burnt offering, he and all the princes of Moab. **7** And he took up his oracle and said:

"Balak the king of Moab has brought me from Aram, From the mountains of the east.
Come, curse Jacob for me, And come, denounce Israel!"

8 "How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? And how shall I denounce whom the LORD has not denounced? **9** For from the top of the rocks I see him, And from the hills I behold him; There! A people dwelling alone, Not reckoning itself among the nations.

10 "Who can count the dust of Jacob, Or number one-fourth of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, And let my end be like his!"

11 Then Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, and look, you have blessed them bountifully!" **12** So he answered and said, "Must I not take heed to speak what the LORD has put in my mouth?"

13 Then Balak said to him, "Please come with me to another place from which you may see them; you shall see only the outer part of them, and shall not see them all; curse them for me from there." **14** So he brought 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** And he said to Balak, "Stand here by your burnt offering while I meet the LORD over there."

16 Then the LORD met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, "Go back to Balak, and thus you shall speak." **17** So he came to him, and there he was, standing by his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab were with him. And Balak said to him, "What has the LORD spoken?" **18** Then he took up his oracle and said:

"Rise up, Balak, and hear! Listen to me, son of Zippor!

19 "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? **20** Behold, I have received a command to bless; He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it.

21 "He has not observed iniquity in Jacob, Nor has He seen wickedness in Israel. The LORD his God is with him, And the shout of a King is among them. **22** God brings them out of Egypt; He has strength like a wild ox.

23 "For there is no sorcery against Jacob, Nor any divination against Israel. It now must be said of Jacob And of Israel, 'Oh, what God has done!' **24** Look, a people rises like a lioness, And lifts itself up like a lion; It shall not lie down until it devours the prey, And drinks the blood of the slain."

25 Then Balak said to Balaam, "Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all!" **26** So Balaam answered and said to Balak, "Did I not tell you, saying, 'All that the LORD speaks, that I must do'?"

²⁷ Then Balak said to Balaam, "Please come, I will take you to another place; perhaps it will please God that you may curse them for me from there." ²⁸ So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, that overlooks the wasteland. ²⁹ Then Balaam said to Balak, "Build for me here seven altars, and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams." ³⁰ And Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bull and a ram on every altar. NKJV

Facts Revealed:

- ❖ Balak like so many people today, refused to take no for an answer, and continued to hope that the persistence of man might change the mind of God.
- ❖ **From the high places of Baal,** Thinking that God is impressed with animal sacrifice, at Balaam's instructions, Balak built seven altars (seven being the number of completeness) and to offer a bull and a ram (both are animals God had required for acceptable sacrifice in the Law He had given Israel) on each of the seven altars.
 - ❖ This is a case of a pagan who worshipped Chemosh [Numbers 21:29], attempting to please and influence the God of Israel by using a "form" of worship he perceived that Yehowah had prescribed for His people, in order to impress God and persuade Him to change His mind from a blessing to a curse against Israel.
 - ❖ Balak failed to realize the truth about God or the spirit required to please Him.
 - ❖ Balak did not know that God has no pleasure in the blood of animal sacrifices. [Isaiah 1:11]
 - ❖ The only sacrifices God is pleased with is the sacrifice made by the clean and holy hands of His people out of loving obedience to God's commandments, all of which pointed forward to the ultimate Sacrifice God was to give in the death of His Messiah our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, which is the fulfillment of God's plan for our redemption.
- ❖ God is not impressed by the pretentious works of sinful men.
- ❖ Balaam went to seek an answer from God by his sorceries. [Numbers 24:1]
- ❖ God came to Balaam, not because of Balaam's sorcery, but because God wanted to reveal His plan for Israel in the message Balaam was to bring back to Balak.
 - ❖ First He acknowledged the motive behind the inquiry.
 - ❖ Balaam could not curse the people whom God has not cursed, nor denounce whom God has not denounced.
 - ❖ The people he has seen from the tops of the hills are a people who will dwell alone, not counting themselves among the nations.
 - ❖ The descendants of Jacob will be numberless in multitude.
 - ❖ Balaam would be pleased to die in righteousness with his end like one of God's people, thus indicating that he knew the end God had intended for Israel.
- ❖ Balak did not get the curse against Israel he had hired Balaam to deliver, but instead, Balaam had spoken a bountiful blessing on Israel.
- ❖ Balak continued his attempt to persuade God to change His mind, thinking a view from a different angle might change the perspective of the prophet whom Balak thought was in control of the blessings and curses he pronounced.
 - ❖ Even today, people believe that all concepts of God originate from men, because they do not believe that God Whom they have not seen even exists.
 - ❖ Therefore they believe that whatever is credited to a deity is always man's doing.
 - ❖ They believe in magic and in many other supernatural happenings, as done by man through some human controlled practice or form, therefore they ask men to change the end result to align with their own will.
 - ❖ So Balak took Balaam to the **top of Pisgah** where he built another seven altars and offered similar sacrifices on each of them.

- ❖ Balaam seems also to believe that by persuasion he might influence God to change His mind.
 - ✧ Balaam went again to seek an answer from God by his sorceries. [\[Numbers 24:1\]](#)
- ❖ God again came to Balaam to add to the blessing of Israel and give additional information about Himself and His intention for the people of Israel.
 - ✧ El (God) is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent. This corrects the opinion that God is the figment of man's imagination.
 - ✧ God will certainly do exactly as He has said.
 - ✧ The command to Balaam is to bless. God has blessed and Balaam cannot reverse it.
 - ✧ God has not found iniquity in Jacob, nor has He seen wickedness in Israel (they are purged of sin by God Himself at this point).
 - ✧ Yehowah Elohey is with him. The shout of a King is among them. (This speaks of the presence of Yehowah Who is in the process of fulfilling His promise to Abraham and is dwelling among His people).
 - ✧ El is the One Who brings them out of Egypt.
 - ✧ He has strength like a wild ox.
 - ✧ No sorcery can come against Jacob. No divination can come against Israel
 - ✧ It can only be said about Jacob and Israel, "Oh, what El has done."
 - ✧ Look, a people rises like a lioness, and lifts itself up like a lion; It will not lie down until it devours the prey and drinks the blood of the slain. (God intends that Israel shall accomplish His judgment against the sinful inhabitants of the Promised Land before it settles down to rest comfortably).
- ❖ Balak now realizes that He cannot buy a curse against Israel from Balaam, and all he can expect is for Israel to be blessed, so he responds, "Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all." It is a little late for the latter.
- ❖ Balaam responded:
 - ✧ Did I not tell you, saying, "All that Yehowah speaks, that I must do?"
- ❖ But still, Balak demonstrates his strong humanistic tendency and persistent hope that yet somehow he might be able to find a way to get Balaam to curse Israel. Balak is not yet fully convinced of the error of his thinking, that all concepts of God are from the imagination of man, so he makes one last attempt to persuade Balaam to change his mind.
 - ✧ Balak then took Balaam to the top of Peor that overlooks the wasteland in the hope that from there he could finally persuade Balaam to curse Israel.
 - ✧ On the instruction of Balaam, Balak again built seven altars on each of which he offered a bull and a ram.
 - ✧ It is amazing the expense people will expend and the effort they will put into their attempt to persuade God by their own works or actions to grant their own desires.
- ❖ It is important to realize that God is not there just to meet all our requests just to please us whom He created, but we are expected to find the Will of God and to do what He desires.
 - ✧ Let us not seek to please ourselves, but to be found pleasing in the sight of God.