

“I just know, before this is over, I’m gonna need a whole lot of serious therapy. Look at my eye twitchin”.

# Talking Donkey

Numbers 22

Bridges Group

July 24, 2011



# Table Time!

- If you could own only one movie in your collection, what would it be?
- What is one ability you have lost since becoming an adult?

# Numbers 22:1-3

- Read “The People of Israel marched on and camped on the Plains of Moab at Jordan-Jericho. 2 Now Balak son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites, 3 and Moab was terrified because there were so many people. Indeed, Moab was filled with dread because of the Israelites.” 4 The Moabites said to the elders of Midian, “This horde is going to lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field.”

# What's the Issue(s)?

1. What does Balak experience here?
  2. What is it about first impressions that are so important to our understanding of situations?
- **Read** So Balak son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time, 5 sent messengers to summon Balaam son of Beor, who was at Pethor, near the River, in his native land. Balak said: “A people has come out of Egypt; they cover the face of the land and have settled next to me. 6 Now come and put a curse on these people, because they are too powerful for me. Perhaps then I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the country. For I know that those you bless are blessed, and those you curse are cursed.

# Balak

- King of Moab
- A man of faith – see verse 6b
- A man of influence and wealth
  
- Who does Balak represent as we examine this story?

# Divine Conversation

- 7 The elders of Moab and Midian left, taking with them the fee for divination. When they came to Balaam, they told him what Balak had said. 8 “Spend the night here,” Balaam said to them, “and I will bring you back the answer the LORD gives me.” So the Moabite princes stayed with him. 9 God came to Balaam and asked, “Who are these men with you?...”
- 12 But God said to Balaam, “Do not go with them. You must not put a curse on those people, because they are blessed.”

# Balaam and the LORD

- Balaam is universally condemned in Scripture for moral, ethical and religious faults .
- Verse 22:8 states, “the Lord gives me” . The language here and in v. 18 (“the Lord my God”) has led some to believe that Balaam was a believer in the Lord, God of Israel. Based on the subsequent narrative, however, it seems best to take Balaam’s words as claiming to be the spokesman for any god. (see 31:7-8 , 15-16 and note on 31:8 ; Dt 23:3-6 ; Jos 13:22 and note ; 24:9-10 and note on 24:10 ; Ne 13:1-3 ; Micah 6:5 ; 2Pe 2:15-16 ; Jude 11 ; Rev 2:14 and note ).
- In fact, his name is so bad that he’s referred to in the bible and none of it is good. He seems to be a “prophet” but one that is not too credible.

# Continuing Story

- As Balaam sits on the verge of accepting the king's assignment, God intervenes, warning Balaam not to curse the Israelites."
- "The next morning Balaam got up and said to Balak's officials, "Go back to your own country, for the LORD has refused to let me go with you."
- Q: What do we find out about Balaam's power and influence? Source? Balaam is reminded here to do the right thing!

# READ verses 22:22-25

- “But God was very angry when he went, and the angel of the LORD stood in the road to oppose him. Balaam was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. 23 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand, it turned off the road into a field. Balaam beat it to get it back on the road. 24 Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path through the vineyards, with walls on both sides. 25 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, it pressed close to the wall, crushing Balaam's foot against it. So he beat the donkey again.”

# Who is Blind Here?

- Famous story – how might you end this story if you had to write the last part? Let's read on.
- Read “26 Then the angel of the LORD moved on ahead and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn, either to the right or to the left. 27 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, it lay down under Balaam, and he was angry and beat it with his staff. 28 Then the LORD opened the donkey's mouth, and it said to Balaam, "What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?" 29 Balaam answered the donkey, "You have made a fool of me! If only I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now."

# Who does Balaam represent?

- What is Balaam concerned about at this point in the story? What is the result?
- Who is Balaam here?
- Who is controlling the Donkey? Therefore who might he represent in the story?
- The donkey says, “You know me! Is this normal? I’m talking to you!”
- Again and again the innocent donkey pays the price for Balaam’s blind state. How or why does this happen? He is innocent? Who usually pays the price?

# Endings

- Finally God opens Balaam's eyes. He sees the Angel of the Lord. He sees the sword in the hand of the Angel of the Lord. And Balaam does what the bible says will happen when we meet the Lord. He falls face down and basically says woe is me. Actually his words are; "I have sinned!"
- Why do you think he admits he is a sinner? Who has he encountered?

- Balaam, this powerful prophet, realized that something must be wrong. A simple donkey saw the revelation of an angel. He did not. He realized in an instant that there are experiences he should have been able to grasp. He should have known better. If he didn't it was not a donkey's fault. It was not an angel's fault. It was his fault. He realized then and there that it was he who was lacking.
- Lessons Learned? What should Balaam have known about the Israelites?
- When we see tragedies, world calamities what are our responses?
- "What you have done for the least of these you have done for me." Matthew 25

Donkey sez,  
"God bless  
and see you  
next week!"

