

## Lesson 28

### The Bronze Serpent and the False Prophet Balaam

Numbers 21:4-9; 22:1-24:25



**Teacher, please remember that the commentary below is intended to help you in your study, not to be read to your students. Make your own list of applications, using the help from the commentary, but don't necessarily try to cover everything! Think of the students in your class, then be prayerfully selective.**

Contents:

1. Preparation
2. Memory verses
3. Theme
4. Lesson introduction
5. Verse by verse commentary (suggested location of activities included)
6. Suggested prayer to close
7. Attention grabbers to choose from
8. Possible Activities to choose from
9. Bible Text (in full, without commentary)

## **1. Preparation**

- 1) Choose memory verse
- 2) Select attention grabber to start off lesson / break the ice - optional, recommended for younger classes. See point 7.
- 3) Suggested activities- optional, recommended for younger children. See point 8.

## **2. Choose memory verse**

JOHN 3:14

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up."

**OR**

2 Peter 2:16

"...but he (Balaam) was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet".

## **3. Themes**

**God provides the only way of forgiveness for us, and once forgiven we are protected by God.**

## **4. Lesson introduction**

**To the teacher:** This is a **combined lesson** on the bronze serpent and the false prophet Balaam. The material covers more than three chapters, and some of the material in the second part is harder to understand for younger children. Be sure to encourage parents to read the material before their children arrive in Sunday school Sunday morning!

The Israelites had just experienced God's faithfulness as He gave them victory over the Canaanites. Yet, after God had flooded them with His goodness, they turned their back on their loving Father and, again, became an unbelieving and complaining people. God would judge them for this attitude, but also give them a unique way out---a way that Jesus would use to illustrate what He has done for us at the cross. We will also see that when God saves us through faith in His promise He also protects us, just as He protected His people Israel in the desert from a man who wanted to harm them.

## **5. Verse by Verse Commentary**

### **Numbers 21:4-6**

Instead of being thankful for the manna, the miraculous food God had provided them, the people, once more began to complain against God and Moses. Although they had witnessed miracle after miracle since God had freed them from bondage in Egypt, they yielded to a heart of utter disbelief: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? Sin has consequences. The Lord sent fiery serpents to punish a people who had given themselves over to complaining and unbelief.

It is vital that we do not turn our hearts against God as did the children of Israel. In such a state, we are testing God (asking for His judgment). The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 10:9, "...nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents." God is holy and must judge sin.

#### **Numbers 21:7**

The people realized they were sinning against God and confessed their sin before the Lord. Moses prayed for the people. He did not rebuke them with a "serves you right" kind of attitude; instead, he lifted them up to the Lord.

#### **Numbers 21:8,9**

It is impossible for sinful man to please a holy God; it is equally impossible for sinful man to resolve his own condition. God, himself, must provide the way of salvation for lost man. God in His love for the Israelites provided a way for them to escape the dreadful consequences of their sin. God provided a bronze serpent for the Israelites. Those who were bitten by the snake needed only to look at the bronze serpent and be healed. Just as the Israelites looked to the bronze serpent in faith, we must look in faith to the cross of Jesus for redemption from our sins. The bronze serpent was a symbol of judgment—that which sentences one to death. So, Jesus took our judgment upon the cross of Calvary when, as the sins of the world were poured upon Him, He became "sin" for us. (See 2 Corinthians 5:21). **God provides the only way of forgiveness for us.**

Are you a Christian? Sin is like a poisonous snakebite. Every one of us has been bitten. The Bible says all have sinned have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Sin causes us to be separated from God—"for the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23a). Yet, God in His great love for us has provided the way of forgiveness—the way of escape from the consequences of our sin. If we will just "look" by faith to Jesus who bore our judgment, we will be saved. In John 3:16 we read, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that who ever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Though the wages of sin is death, "the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23b). **God provides the only way of forgiveness for us.**

The very same people who looked at the serpent and were rescued from death also needed protection by God from a different kind of enemy—a man who would try to curse them. Let's see in the following chapters how God protected the people he had saved from death. . .

#### **Numbers 22:1-4**

The Bible says that we, as Christians, are in a battle—a spiritual battle, fought in the spiritual realm. The enemy seeks our demise. In Ephesians 6:12, the Bible says "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." Yet, the Lord is our protection. **God always protects His children.**

In the next three chapters of the book of Numbers we will meet a man by the name of Balaam who will attempt to put a curse on God's people, Israel. Balak, the King of the Moabites, was very afraid that the Israelites would come and conquer his people. He had watched them as they moved through the land, defeated peoples, and settled near him. He decided he needed outside help to defeat the Israelites.

#### **Numbers 22:5-7**

Balak sent for Balaam who was from Pethor in Mesopotamia, near a river. Balaam was a soothsayer, a diviner or fortune teller. His name means "destroyer of the people" (a name, we shall see later, that fits him well). The elders of Moab and Midian brought him some money to pronounce a curse upon God's people. The spiritual realm is very real, and we must be careful. Things like astrology or fortune telling are modern versions of the soothsayers or diviners of Bible times. The Bible is very clear that, for our own protection, we should stay away from any involvement or practice of such things.

#### **Numbers 22:8-12**

Though the important men from King Balak were offering to pay Balaam to curse Israel, God intercepted and warned Balaam not to curse His people "for they are blessed." We, as Christians, are chosen by God and blessed by Him. No matter what happens to us we know that **God always protects His children**, even if we must go through hard tests.

So Balaam refused the money the first time, but the men returned to ask Balaam again. Although Balaam knew he was not to curse Israel, his greed for the money prompted him to ask God again.

#### **Numbers 22:20-27**

God allowed Balaam to leave with the condition that He could only speak what God told him. Balaam's heart, filled with

greed, aroused God to anger. So the Angel of the Lord stood in the way of the donkey.

The donkey saw the Angel and tried to stop, but Balaam beat her to make her continue. The Angel of the Lord would not let him by. Balaam, intent on his pursuit, became angry and beat the donkey. Balaam's lust (strong desire) for money had blinded him and caused him to desire his will above God's will. The Bible says the love of money is the root of all evil.

Let's not desire possessions above godliness! If possessions are first in our heart, like Balaam we will find ourselves stubbornly opposed to God's will. In 1 Timothy 6:10 we read, "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

#### **Numbers 22:28-31**

So God made the donkey talk! Notice, God will use any means in order to get a person's attention and to protect his people, even a talking donkey. Balaam was so focused and intent on getting his money that he did not see the Angel of the Lord, nor did he take note that his donkey had talked.

Have you ever had a time when God told you not to do something, but you still did it any way? What are some ways that God had to get your attention (teachers, you can share a time in your life when this happened if you like)? God would rather us just listen and obey than force Him to resort to extreme means to get our attention.

The Angel of the Lord warned Balaam not to speak anything other than what God had told him. So Balaam continued on and met Balak. Balak then took Balaam to a place of pagan worship where he intended Balaam to curse Israel.

#### **Numbers 23:1-11**

Balaam offered sacrifices and sought the Lord. God told Balaam what to say. God declared, through Balaam, that you cannot curse someone that God has not cursed. Of course, Balak was upset that Israel had been blessed. His plan had backfired. **God always protects His children.**

#### **Numbers 23:16-25**

Balaam spoke for the Lord again. This time God declared that unlike man, God cannot lie, because He is perfect and righteous. God does not change, nor does His Word. God had blessed Israel; they were His special chosen people; He saw no iniquity in them. God would not allow any curse against them nor any kind of sorcery. **God always protects His children.**

Is it not comforting to know that our Heavenly Father is always watching out for us? We can trust Him to take great care of us. Because of our faith in Jesus Christ, God does not see iniquity in us. Then Balaam said, "It now must be said of Jacob and of Israel; 'Oh, what God has done!'" God had done great things for Israel. He made them numerous and strong, brought them out from slavery in Egypt to a new fruitful land, and gave them the promise of the Messiah.

Each of us, as we reflect on our lives, can say, "Oh, what God has done." God has forgiven our sins through faith in Jesus Christ, given us the hope of heaven, blessed us, protected us, and promised to provide for us. Everyday, with a thankful heart, we can proclaim, "Oh what God has done!"

#### **Numbers 24:1-11**

Balaam went to another place and spoke a third time. Once again, God spoke a blessing through him. Balaam declared God's favor upon Israel. God spoke through Balaam saying that those that curse Israel will be cursed, but those who bless will be blessed. This promise remains true today. We should pray for Israel and their peace; God loves them and has chosen them as His nation. **God always protects His children.** Then Balak was angered and sent Balaam home.

#### **Numbers 24:14-25**

Balaam spoke the words God had put in his mouth, one final time-- this time, about the future of Israel. Balaam prophesied of the coming of Jesus to rule; He also spoke of the future of the nations that Israel had encountered.

What Balak and Balaam intended for evil, God turned around for the good of His people. Balaam desired money above all things. He knew God's will, yet fought God's will. Yet our mighty God used Him to bless His people rather than curse them.

As Christians, we are God's children. God favors us and protects us, just like the children of Israel. Nothing will happen in our life that He does not allow. When God allows difficulty, we can be sure it will be used to work God's good purposes in our life (Romans 8:28). **God always protects His children.**

God will never curse His people. Yet, sadly, the scriptures (Revelation 2:14) tell us that Balaam, still consumed with greed, found a way that the Israelites would bring God's judgment upon themselves. Balaam would later counsel Balak to send the young Moabite women into the camps of Israel and cause them to sin against the Lord.

## **6. Prayer:**

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving for the great salvation that the Lord has provided for us. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.

## **7. Attention Grabbers**

### **Treasure Maps**

Hide several treasures (small prizes, etc.) around the room in plain looking containers; make wild goose-chase maps (maps that lead the children to several places other than where the "treasures" are) leading to them. Divide the class into groups (as many groups as there are treasures), and let them work together to find the treasures. While they enjoy the treasure they have found, tell them how God always makes a way for us to be forgiven, and shows it to us very clearly. It is never too hard to understand or figure out (like a "wild goose chase" treasure map!)

### **Protection**

Bring several things to display on a table in your room. Ask the kids to tell you what all the things have in common. You could bring a shoe, a Band-Aid, an umbrella, a hat, a bottle of sunscreen, a vitamin, a flashlight, a toothbrush, a plastic sandwich bag, etc. Explain to the children that all of these items protect something. Discuss how each item might protect something. Explain that God always protects His children as Balaam finds out in today's lesson.

## **8. Activities:**

### **Molasses Tag**

You will need paper plates, a large (3'x3') sheet of paper, some tickets that you make (maybe 1/8 of a page of construction paper) saying "Molasses Pass," two scarves or pieces of fabric. Play this unique game of tag by choosing 2 people to start out as "it." Give them each a scarf for tagging (absolutely no popping). They only have to touch someone with the scarf for them to be tagged. Tagged kids have to go sit on the pancakes (paper plates you have separated and placed on the floor in the corner of the room).

Explain that your game begins in the wintertime when cold molasses moves very slowly; in the summer time molasses moves very quickly. They must listen closely for the changing of the seasons as you call them out. When it is winter, they must move as slowly as you show them. Anyone moving faster will be a fly in the molasses and taken out of the game immediately. Be prepared for the flies with one large square sheet of paper for them to stand on, this is the "fly paper." You call out at intervals "summertime" and "wintertime," after the fly paper gets a few flies, give them the "molasses passes" which lets them get back into the game. The former flies may give their passes to flies that are waiting. Play several rounds if possible. Getting the free pass to re-enter the game was an undeserved gift since they broke the rules of the game, just like God's forgiveness is undeserved but He always provides it.

### **Savory Serpents**

Bring a large bowl containing a few inches of water for hand washing (or wet wipes). Choose bread dough or cookie dough for the serpents, both may be purchased ready made. Cover tables with clean plastic table cloths, spread a clean plastic table cloth on the floor or let each child work on a cookie sheet. Give each a portion of dough (sprinkle work surfaces with flour) and show them how to roll a long snake. Give each a generous sheet of foil and show them how to roll it up into a stick shape for the pole. Wrap the serpent on the pole. Give them a plastic bag or plastic wrap for transporting their creation home to the oven and also baking instructions.

### **How Much Is It?**

Create an "old general store" by taping some items on the wall or dry erase board that will be the "for sale" items. Be sure to include a chair. Cut some pictures out of magazines of nice things that the kids in your class would be interested in (really interested in, like the latest toys, bikes or maybe a pony). In class choose a volunteer to be the storekeeper, give him an apron, feather duster and a "cash box." The rest of the class may watch and listen. Tell the storekeeper that he may sell any of the items in his store except the chair. It is grandma's favorite chair when she comes to visit and she asked that family to never sell it. The teacher is the customer who asks how much the individual items are, and then the teacher asks how much the chair is. The storekeeper will then say "not for sale!!" Then you should try to entice the storekeeper by saying "not even if I give you this nice new toy?" "or this?" (Show another picture). Then point out the compromise of Balaam who wanted to do right but loved riches more than he loved God.

### **“His Truth Shall Be Your Shield and Buckler”**

Based on Psalm 91:4, make a small shield by cutting a shield shape out of cardboard and letting the kids cover with aluminum foil. Gluing string to the cardboard before covering with foil could make further decoration. Remind the children that the Lord will always protect us.

### **9. Bible text (NIV):**

**Numbers 21:4** They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea,<sup>4</sup> to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; <sup>5</sup> they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!”

<sup>6</sup> Then the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. <sup>7</sup> The people came to Moses and said, “We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us.” So Moses prayed for the people.

<sup>8</sup> The LORD said to Moses, “Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.” <sup>9</sup> So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.

.../...

### **Balak Summons Balaam**

**Numbers 22:1** Then the Israelites traveled to the plains of Moab and camped along the Jordan across from Jericho.

<sup>2</sup> Now Balak son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites, <sup>3</sup> and Moab was terrified because there were so many people. Indeed, Moab was filled with dread because of the Israelites.

<sup>4</sup> 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.”

So Balak son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time, <sup>5</sup> sent messengers to summon Balaam son of Beor, who was at Pethor, near the Euphrates 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. <sup>6</sup> 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 land. For I know that whoever you bless is blessed, and whoever you curse is cursed.”

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> “Spend the night here,” Balaam said to them, “and I will report back to you with the answer the LORD gives me.” So the Moabite officials stayed with him.

<sup>9</sup> God came to Balaam and asked, “Who are these men with you?”

<sup>10</sup> Balaam said to God, “Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, sent me this message: <sup>11</sup> ‘A people that has come out of Egypt covers the face of the land. Now come and put a curse on them for me. Perhaps then I will be able to fight them and drive them away.’”

<sup>12</sup> But God said to Balaam, “Do not go with them. You must not put a curse on those people, because they are blessed.”

<sup>13</sup> 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.”

<sup>14</sup> So the Moabite officials returned to Balak and said, “Balaam refused to come with us.”

<sup>15</sup> Then Balak sent other officials, more numerous and more distinguished than the first. <sup>16</sup> They came to Balaam and said:

“This is what Balak son of Zippor says: Do not let anything keep you from coming to me, <sup>17</sup> because I will reward you handsomely and do whatever you say. Come and put a curse on these people for me.”

<sup>18</sup> But Balaam answered them, “Even if Balak gave me all the silver and gold in his palace, I could not do anything great or small to go beyond the command of the LORD my God. <sup>19</sup> Now spend the night here so that I can find out what else the LORD will tell me.”

<sup>20</sup> That night God came to Balaam and said, “Since these men have come to summon you, go with them, but do only what I tell you.”

## **Balaam’s Donkey**

<sup>21</sup> Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey and went with the Moabite officials. <sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> 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.

<sup>24</sup> Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path through the vineyards, with walls on both sides. <sup>25</sup> 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.

<sup>26</sup> 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. <sup>27</sup> When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, it lay down under Balaam, and he was angry and beat it with his staff. <sup>28</sup> 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?”

<sup>29</sup> 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.”

<sup>30</sup> The donkey said to Balaam, “Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden, to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?”

“No,” he said.

<sup>31</sup> Then the LORD opened Balaam’s eyes, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with his sword drawn. So he bowed low and fell facedown.

<sup>32</sup> The angel of the LORD asked him, “Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me. <sup>33</sup> The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If it had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now, but I would have spared it.”

<sup>34</sup> Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, “I have sinned. I did not realize you were standing in the road to oppose me. Now if you are displeased, I will go back.”

<sup>35</sup> The angel of the LORD said to Balaam, “Go with the men, but speak only what I tell you.” So Balaam went with Balak’s officials.

<sup>36</sup> When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the Moabite town on the Arnon border, at the edge of his territory. <sup>37</sup> Balak said to Balaam, “Did I not send you an urgent summons? Why didn’t you come to me? Am I really not able to reward you?”

<sup>38</sup> “Well, I have come to you now,” Balaam replied. “But I can’t say whatever I please. I must speak only what God puts in my mouth.”

<sup>39</sup> Then Balaam went with Balak to Kiriath Huzoth. <sup>40</sup> Balak sacrificed cattle and sheep, and gave some to Balaam and the officials who were with him. <sup>41</sup> The next morning Balak took Balaam up to Bamoth Baal, and from there he could see the outskirts of the Israelite camp.

## Balaam's First Message

**Numbers 23:1** Balaam said, "Build me seven altars here, and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me." <sup>2</sup> Balak did as Balaam said, and the two of them offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

<sup>3</sup> Then Balaam said to Balak, "Stay here beside your offering while I go aside. Perhaps the LORD will come to meet with me. Whatever he reveals to me I will tell you." Then he went off to a barren height.

<sup>4</sup> God met with him, and Balaam said, "I have prepared seven altars, and on each altar I have offered a bull and a ram."

<sup>5</sup> The LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth and said, "Go back to Balak and give him this word."

<sup>6</sup> So he went back to him and found him standing beside his offering, with all the Moabite officials. <sup>7</sup> Then Balaam spoke his message:

"Balak brought me from Aram,  
the king of Moab from the eastern mountains.  
'Come,' he said, 'curse Jacob for me;  
come, denounce Israel.'

<sup>8</sup> How can I curse  
those whom God has not cursed?  
How can I denounce  
those whom the LORD has not denounced?

<sup>9</sup> From the rocky peaks I see them,  
from the heights I view them.  
I see a people who live apart  
and do not consider themselves one of the nations.

<sup>10</sup> Who can count the dust of Jacob  
or number even a fourth of Israel?  
Let me die the death of the righteous,  
and may my final end be like theirs!"

<sup>11</sup> Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I brought you to curse my enemies, but you have done nothing but bless them!"

<sup>12</sup> He answered, "Must I not speak what the LORD puts in my mouth?"

## Balaam's Second Message

<sup>13</sup> Then Balak said to him, "Come with me to another place where you can see them; you will not see them all but only the outskirts of their camp. And from there, curse them for me." <sup>14</sup> So he took him to the field of Zophim on the top of Pisgah, and there he built seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

<sup>15</sup> Balaam said to Balak, "Stay here beside your offering while I meet with him over there."

<sup>16</sup> The LORD met with Balaam and put a word in his mouth and said, "Go back to Balak and give him this word."

<sup>17</sup> So he went to him and found him standing beside his offering, with the Moabite officials. Balak asked him, "What did the LORD say?"

<sup>18</sup> Then he spoke his message:



“Arise, Balak, and listen;  
hear me, son of Zippor.

<sup>19</sup> God is not human, that he should lie,  
not a human being, that he should change his mind.

Does he speak and then not act?

Does he promise and not fulfill?

<sup>20</sup> I have received a command to bless;  
he has blessed, and I cannot change it.

<sup>21</sup> “No misfortune is seen in Jacob,  
no misery observed<sup>[g]</sup> in Israel.

The LORD their God is with them;  
the shout of the King is among them.

<sup>22</sup> God brought them out of Egypt;  
they have the strength of a wild ox.

<sup>23</sup> There is no divination against<sup>[h]</sup> Jacob,  
no evil omens against<sup>[i]</sup> Israel.

It will now be said of Jacob  
and of Israel, ‘See what God has done!’

<sup>24</sup> The people rise like a lioness;  
they rouse themselves like a lion  
that does not rest till it devours its prey  
and drinks the blood of its victims.”

<sup>25</sup> Then Balak said to Balaam, “Neither curse them at all nor bless them at all!”

<sup>26</sup> Balaam answered, “Did I not tell you I must do whatever the LORD says?”

### **Balaam’s Third Message**

<sup>27</sup> Then Balak said to Balaam, “Come, let me take you to another place. Perhaps it will please God to let you curse them for me from there.” <sup>28</sup> And Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, overlooking the wasteland.

<sup>29</sup> Balaam said, “Build me seven altars here, and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me.” <sup>30</sup> Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

**Numbers 24:1** Now when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he did not resort to divination as at other times, but turned his face toward the wilderness. <sup>2</sup> When Balaam looked out and saw Israel encamped tribe by tribe, the Spirit of God came on him <sup>3</sup> and he spoke his message:

“The prophecy of Balaam son of Beor,  
the prophecy of one whose eye sees clearly,  
<sup>4</sup> the prophecy of one who hears the words of God,  
who sees a vision from the Almighty,<sup>[i]</sup>  
who falls prostrate, and whose eyes are opened:

<sup>5</sup> “How beautiful are your tents, Jacob,  
your dwelling places, Israel!

<sup>6</sup> “Like valleys they spread out,  
like gardens beside a river,  
like aloes planted by the LORD,  
like cedars beside the waters.

<sup>7</sup> Water will flow from their buckets;  
their seed will have abundant water.

“Their king will be greater than Agag;  
their kingdom will be exalted.

<sup>8</sup> “God brought them out of Egypt;  
they have the strength of a wild ox.  
They devour hostile nations  
and break their bones in pieces;  
with their arrows they pierce them.

<sup>9</sup> Like a lion they crouch and lie down,  
like a lioness—who dares to rouse them?

“May those who bless you be blessed  
and those who curse you be cursed!”

<sup>10</sup> Then Balak’s anger burned against Balaam. He struck his hands together and said to him, “I summoned you to curse my enemies, but you have blessed them these three times. <sup>11</sup> Now leave at once and go home! I said I would reward you handsomely, but the LORD has kept you from being rewarded.”

<sup>12</sup> Balaam answered Balak, “Did I not tell the messengers you sent me, <sup>13</sup> ‘Even if Balak gave me all the silver and gold in his palace, I could not do anything of my own accord, good or bad, to go beyond the command of the LORD—and I must say only what the LORD says’? <sup>14</sup> Now I am going back to my people, but come, let me warn you of what this people will do to your people in days to come.”

### **Balaam’s Fourth Message**

<sup>15</sup> Then he spoke his message:

“The prophecy of Balaam son of Beor,  
the prophecy of one whose eye sees clearly,  
<sup>16</sup> the prophecy of one who hears the words of God,  
who has knowledge from the Most High,  
who sees a vision from the Almighty,  
who falls prostrate, and whose eyes are opened:

<sup>17</sup> “I see him, but not now;  
I behold him, but not near.  
A star will come out of Jacob;  
a scepter will rise out of Israel.  
He will crush the foreheads of Moab,  
the skulls <sup>[k]</sup> of <sup>[l]</sup> all the people of Sheth. <sup>[m]</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Edom will be conquered;  
Seir, his enemy, will be conquered,  
but Israel will grow strong.

<sup>19</sup> A ruler will come out of Jacob  
and destroy the survivors of the city.”

### **Balaam’s Fifth Message**

<sup>20</sup> Then Balaam saw Amalek and spoke his message:

“Amalek was first among the nations,  
but their end will be utter destruction.”

### **Balaam’s Sixth Message**

<sup>21</sup> Then he saw the Kenites and spoke his message:

“Your dwelling place is secure,  
your nest is set in a rock;  
<sup>22</sup> yet you Kenites will be destroyed  
when Ashur takes you captive.”

## Balaam’s Seventh Message

<sup>23</sup> Then he spoke his message:

“Alas! Who can live when God does this?”<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Ships will come from the shores of Cyprus;  
they will subdue Ashur and Eber,  
but they too will come to ruin.”

<sup>25</sup> Then Balaam got up and returned home, and Balak went his own way.

### Footnotes:

1. [Numbers 21:2](#) The Hebrew term refers to the irrevocable giving over of things or persons to the Lord, often by totally destroying them; also in verse 3.
2. [Numbers 21:3](#) *Hormah* means *destruction*.
3. [Numbers 21:4](#) Or *the Sea of Reeds*
4. [Numbers 21:14](#) Septuagint; Hebrew *Waheb*
5. [Numbers 21:15](#) Or “I have been given from Suphah and the ravines / of the Arnon<sup>15</sup> to
6. [Numbers 22:32](#) The meaning of the Hebrew for this clause is uncertain.
7. [Numbers 23:21](#) Or *He has not looked on Jacob’s offenses / or on the wrongs found*
8. [Numbers 23:23](#) Or *in*
9. [Numbers 23:23](#) Or *in*
10. [Numbers 24:4](#) Hebrew *Shaddai*; also in verse 16
11. [Numbers 24:17](#) Samaritan Pentateuch (see also Jer. 48:45); the meaning of the word in the Masoretic Text is uncertain.
12. [Numbers 24:17](#) Or possibly *Moab, / batter*
13. [Numbers 24:17](#) Or *all the noisy boasters*
14. [Numbers 24:23](#) Masoretic Text; with a different word division of the Hebrew *The people from the islands will gather from the north.*