

Monday 30th November

Numbers 24: 1-25

Key Verse Num 24: 17

“I see him, but not now;

I behold him, but not near.

A star will come out of Jacob;

a sceptre will rise out of Israel.

He will crush the foreheads of Moab,

the skulls of all the people of Sheth.

Our final study in Numbers sets the scene for advent!

Balaam finally realises the awesomeness of what he is up against! His normality in sorcery is overwhelmed by what he sees in the wilderness, the work of God Almighty among the tribes of Israel. (vs1,2) Rather than just the message in his mouth (previous two oracles), the Spirit of God comes upon this pagan and he speaks the Word of God!

These could not be Balaam's own words. He speaks of the blessings Israel have received from God. V5 uses the word, 'beautiful' which is translated from the same word used in 10:29 when Moses said to Horab, 'the Lord has promised good (beautiful) things to Israel!

Balaam uses words in v9 that Jacob used when he was blessing his sons in Gen 49: 9. In this he blesses the line of Judah and says that from it a King will arise. (v10 sceptre = king)

The picture of the land spoken of in Balaam's second oracle points us forward to what we possess in Christ! We no longer belong to an earthly place but we are citizens of God's country and part of his family. This also points to our future in the new heaven and Earth.

The whole gospel is contained in these 4 oracles of Balaam. First we have the promise of God to Abraham (23:10). He will make them numerous nation and give them a special place. (Gen 15:18)

Second, Balaam speaks about the redemption of his people as he brings them out of Egypt (23:22), a picture of redemption through the cross! Having redeemed his people, God remains present with them. (v21) This is, for us, accomplished by the Holy Spirit. Third, Balaam speaks of God's provision for his people in both this world and the world to come.

Then in the 4th oracle, Balaam speaks of a future powerful King. This would have pointed initially to David (2 Sam 8:2) but ultimately to King Jesus. The words used in v17 are a reflection of the God's words to the devil in Gen 3:15, a victory Christ won on the cross.

As we go into the period of advent, this key verse are words prophesied by Balaam that prompted the Magi to travel to Bethlehem to see the King of Kings (Mt 2: 1,2). The words sceptre and star signify the birth of a king.

I never cease to be amazed by God's word! Through Balaam's prophesies to an ungodly people we see God's sovereignty, his mercy and how he has shaped history to be a picture of what he can do for any individual.

How we long for unbelievers to see God in the same way! The Spirit of God came on Balaam and he saw God in a different but accurate way! This Christmas let's plead with God to do the same for those we care for! Pray that once God's Spirit has come upon them that they don't just, 'get up and go home' (v25).

Balaam died as an enemy of God (31:8)!!!