

Thursday 26th November

Numbers 22: 1-20

Key Verse 22: 5-6

*5 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. 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 land. For I know that whoever you bless is blessed, and whoever you curse is cursed."*

We now skip to the last of the 40 years in the wilderness as the Israelites are camped on the plains of Moab poised to enter the promised land. They, by now, had become a formidable community and the King of Moab was worried. He knew he couldn't defeat the Israelites in battle so he sends for a pagan sorcerer called Balaam, whose profession it was to get paid for the kind of magic Balak was after! Balaam must have had a good reputation for success as Balak sends his messengers on a 3-week journey to summon him. (This they did twice, so 3 months travelling in total)

God's blessing on Israel was on trial. Would Balaam be able to put a curse on God as he had done elsewhere in the past? Notice that it was God who came to Balaam. God already had planned how he was going to use Balaam to convey his message to the Moabites.

Following their night time meeting Balaam only tells the messengers half of what God had told him. He tells them he can't go but doesn't say he can't curse them!! Balak therefore assumes he is holding out for a higher fee and in v17 Balak duly responds.

Then we get what initially seems like an admirable response from Balaam. (v18) We, however, have to bear in mind the New Testament view of Balaam (2 Peter 2:16). He had a superficial view and knowledge of God but it is unlikely that he fully turns to God despite the positives we read about him here. (More on this tomorrow)

Balaam is a pagan yet God uses him! God does not confine himself to using the godly and upright to fulfil his purposes! He used Pharaoh, the Babylonians and Cyrus, it is still happening today. God is achieving his purposes through unbelievers even if they don't know it.

We can trust in God's sovereignty, knowing that his will is being accomplished.