

Balaam's Donkey Talks

Numbers 21:1—24:25



bible verse

COMMITTING TO MEMORY

Ms

main street

May 23, 2010

Proverbs 22:1

A good name is more desirable than great riches.



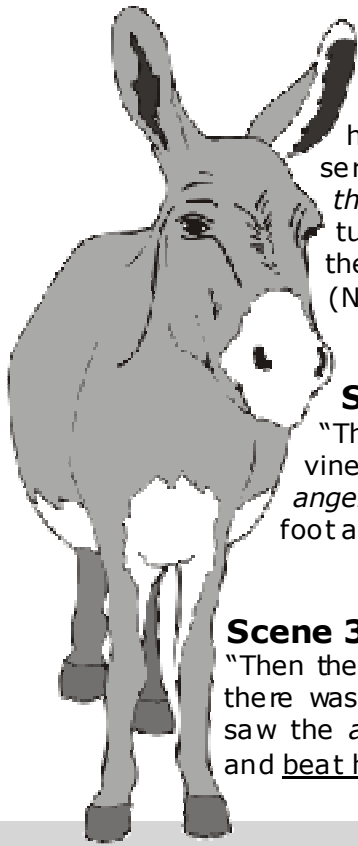
story lesson

BIBLE STORY

This is an interesting story. One would think that this is not a story found in the Bible because it reads more like an Aesop's Fable than a biblical account of an actual occurrence. But nonetheless it is so. Such measures the Lord takes to intervene in human history that we do not understand. It is more likely that these situations are common place in the spiritual realm, but we are not used to them in the physical domain. So, for purposes of enlightenment and understanding, this story opens up the spiritual realm to us in ways that defy all natural logic.

The Israelite people are wandering—wandering in the wilderness. They are currently in the country of Moab near the river Jordan. The king and the people of Moab were filled with dread at the numerous and powerful Israelite people. They were afraid. So to deal with their fear they attempted to hire a “prophet” to pronounce a curse on the people of God (Israel) so that the Moabites could score a major victory over them and wipe them out. Balak, the king of Moab, sent messengers to Balaam son of Beor—a prophet-for-hire—to see if he would accept the contract.

Through a series of moves between the parties and some hard to understand passages about Balaam consulting the Lord (many difficulties with this passage exist), “Balaam gets up early in the morning, saddled his donkey and went with the princes of Moab” (Numbers 22:21). There are three significant instances that follow:



Scene 1:

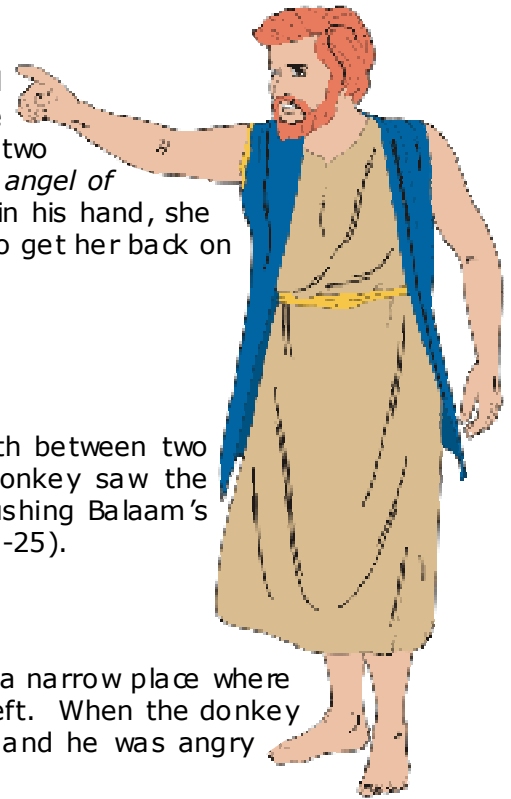
"But God was very angry when he went, and the *angel of the Lord* stood in the road to oppose him. Balaam was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. When the donkey saw the *angel of the Lord* standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand, she turned off the road into a field. Balaam beat her to get her back on the road" (Numbers 22:22-23).

Scene 2:

"Then the *angel of the Lord* stood in a narrow path between two vineyards, with walls on both sides. When the donkey saw the *angel of the Lord*, she pressed close to the wall, crushing Balaam's foot against it. So he beat her again" (Numbers 22:24-25).

Scene 3:

"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. When the donkey saw the *angel of the Lord*, she lay down under Balaam, and he was angry and beat her with his staff" (Numbers 22:26-27).

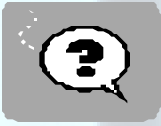


So for purposes of recall, the angel of the Lord was mentioned six times all together with two mentions in each scene. Also in each scene, the donkey gets beat by Balaam.

Then the most remarkable thing happens: the donkey speaks. "What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?" (Numbers 22:28). Now if I was Balaam, I probably would have fallen over right then and there!! But Balaam responds to his donkey: "You have made a fool of me! If I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now" (Numbers 22:29). And quite reasonably so. A donkey is meant to serve you, right? And if the creature does not do its job properly, then it is punished (probably not killed, but punished). But then the donkey answered Balaam back: "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?" (Numbers 22:30). A fairly reasonable set of counter questions. "No," Balaam said.

Then another really remarkable thing happened: "the Lord opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with his sword drawn" (Numbers 22:31). Oops! The donkey was right! There was a series of interchanges between the angel of the Lord and Balaam, ending with the command of the angel to go with the princes of Moab and only speak what I tell you to speak (Numbers 22:35).

The donkey saved Balaam's life (Numbers 22:33). Now it is not often that beasts save the lives of humans, but once in a great while, the spiritual realm invades the physical one and weird and unusual things happen. One does not trifle with the angel of the Lord lightly, nor when it stands in your way. The donkey obeyed the angel of the Lord.



questions

REMEMBERING

1. What was Balaam's job?

He was a prophet for hire

2. Why did Balak want Israel to be cursed?

He was afraid of them

3. Who did Balaam end up blessing?

The Israelites

4. Who stood in the road to oppose Balaam?

The angel of the LORD

5. What did Balaam's donkey do the first time she saw the angel of the LORD?

Turned off the road and into a field

6. What did Balaam do when his donkey went off the road?

"He beat the donkey to get her back on the road" (Numbers 22:23).

7. What did Balaam's donkey do the second time she saw the angel of the LORD?

"...she pressed close to the wall, crushing Balaam's foot against it" (Numbers 22:24).

8. What did Balaam do when his donkey crushed his foot?

He beat her

9. What did Balaam's donkey do the third time she saw the angel of the LORD?

She laid down under Balaam

10. What did Balaam do when his donkey laid down under him?

"...he was angry and beat her with his staff" (Numbers 22:27).

11. What happened after Balaam beat his donkey the third time?

The donkey spoke

12. When the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, what did he see?

"...the angel of the LORD standing in the road with his sword drawn

13. Who saved Balaam's life?

His donkey



life application

MAKING IT REAL

In this account it seems like Balaam is the butt of some divine joke on his behalf. But later in Scripture we see the effect of Balaam son of Beor's oracles on the nation of Israel. Moab leads the people of Israel into immorality and sin. Balaam, though he could only be used as the Lord willed, was a wicked pawn in the scheme of the world. A wicked man on a fool's errand spells trouble with a capital 'T'. However, the Lord can use even the most cunning of circumstances to get our attention. How open are our eyes to the spiritual realm that is around us. Our prayer should be: help me Lord to see what is unseen rather than what is seen.

The Back Pew - Jeff Larson



"Ok.. ENOUGH! Whacking me on the head is not helping. Where I once saw ONE angel in my path.. now I see TWO!" **Numbers 22:21-35**



coloring sheet

ON THE NEXT PAGE



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