

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

The Wilderness

BALAAM'S DONKEY

Numbers 22-24

Elementary Lesson

Year One, Quarter Three, Lesson Five

[0300]

AIM: to use the story of Balaam's donkey to teach my students that if you don't do things God's way you may wind up looking silly

OBJECTS TO HAVE: A picture of a donkey
A picture of an angel
A stick
Your Bible

POINT OF CONTACT: How many of you know what sound a donkey makes? Let me hear you do your best donkey impersonation. Very good.

Have any of you ever been to the county fair? If you were at the county fair, walking around the livestock area, and you saw a donkey, and you heard that donkey make that sound, you wouldn't be surprised at all would you? Because that's the normal sound that a donkey makes.

But what if you were in the livestock section of the county fair, and you saw a donkey, and all of the sudden that donkey said, "Hey! How's it going? Are you enjoying the fair?" It would be a little weird, wouldn't it? A talking donkey! Today I am going to tell you about a man in the Bible who had a donkey talk to him!

LESSON: The Bible tells us about a wicked king named *Balak*. Balak was the king of a country called *Moab*. One day King Balak looked out his window, and he saw a huge group of people coming in his direction, down in the valley. He sent his servants to find out who they were. His servants came back and said, "Your majesty, those are they Israelites."

King Balak said, "The Israelites! I've heard about them. I don't like them. I've got to do something to get rid of them." But King Balak had heard about the God of the Israelites, and how their God was very powerful. So he thought and thought about how to beat them. Suddenly, King Balak remembered that he knew of a very godly man named Balaam. Balaam lived not very far away. King Balak knew that Balaam's God was also very powerful. What King Balak did not know was that the God that Balaam served was the God of Israel. Balak decided to send some of his men over to Balaam's house, to try to get him to come and curse the people of Israel for him.

So one day, Balaam was in his house, when suddenly and unexpectedly, there came a knock on his door. Balaam opened the door and saw some men that he did not know. He said, "Can I help you?"

These men said, "We have been sent by Balak, King of Moab. King Balak has an important message for you. King Balak would like you to come and pronounce a curse upon some people."

Balaam said, "What do you mean?"

The men continued. "Just outside of the land of Moab there is a large group of people camping. They are the people of the nation of Israel. They have come from Egypt, and they are traveling through this wilderness. King Balak is worried that they will cause us trouble. He believes that if you will pronounce a curse on them, that they will leave us alone."

Balaam said, "The people of Israel are God's chosen people. I cannot curse them if God does not want them to be cursed. Stay here with me tonight, and tomorrow I will tell you what God says."

That night Balaam prayed and asked God what he should do. God answered and said, "Do not go with these men. Israel is my people, and they are blessed. You must not curse them."

The next morning Balaam gave the men his answer. "My God says I must not go with you."

The men went back to King Balak and gave him Balaam's answer. But Balak would not accept that answer; so he sent some men who were even more important than the first men, and they knocked on Balaam's door again. They

said, “King Balak says you MUST come. He says that he will make you a very important man in his kingdom, and he will pay you a lot of money.”

Now, here is where Balaam made a big mistake. Balaam said, “Stay here tonight, and I will ask God again.”

Why was this a big mistake? Because God had already given His answer. God’s Word does not change. When God says something, His Word stands.

Balaam asked God again that night if he could go with these men. God was angry that Balaam was asking, because God has already given Balaam his very clear answer. But because God wanted to teach Balaam an important lesson, God told him to go with the men.

So the next morning, Balaam got on his donkey, took two of his servants with him, and went with Balak’s men. As they were riding along, God sent His angel to stand in Balaam’s way. Balaam could not see the angel blocking the path, but Balaam’s donkey could see him. So when the donkey saw the angel, he left the path and went out into the field. Balaam hit the donkey, and he got back on the path.

A little further down the road, where the path passed between two big rocks, the angel of the Lord appeared again. The donkey stopped, and leaned against one of the rock walls, crushing Balaam’s foot. Balaam hit his donkey again. The donkey went on down the road, and the angel of the Lord blocked the path again. This time the donkey knelt down on the ground in the middle of the path, and refused to move. Balaam grabbed his stick and hit the donkey again. When Balaam hit the donkey, the most unbelievable thing happened—THE DONKEY BEGAN TO SPEAK! God opened the donkey’s mouth so he could talk like a person. That donkey looked at Balaam and said, “What have I done to you that you’ve hit me three times?”

It was an amazing thing that this donkey talked to Balaam with a human voice. But it was just as amazing that Balaam wasn’t even startled. He spoke right back to the donkey and said, “I hit you because you keep on stopping!

The donkey said, “I’ve been your donkey for a long time! Have I ever failed you before?”

Balaam hung his head and said, “No.” What a silly thing for a man to be having a conversation with a donkey.

And then the Lord opened Balaam’s eyes so that he could see the angel of the Lord in the path. When Balaam saw the angel of the Lord he fell down on his face in fear.

The angel spoke and said, “You’d better be glad that your donkey stopped, because if he had kept on going, I would have killed you and let your donkey go free. You have rejected the Word of the Lord in going to work for King Balak. But go now...and instead of cursing my people, you bless them!”

Balaam was so ashamed. He had made a fool of himself in front of his own servants, and in front of King Balak’s messengers.

Balaam and his donkey teach us a very important lesson: when we ignore God’s Word, and we try to do things our own way, even though we know what God says, then we are dumber than a donkey. Dumber than a donkey! A donkey is not known for being very smart. But even a donkey knows the importance of doing things God’s way. I don’t want to be dumber than a donkey. Do you? Of course not.

So when God’s Word says, “**Children, obey your parents,**” we should do it. If we don’t, we are dumber than a donkey.

When God’s Word says, “**Tell the truth,**” we should do it. If we don’t, we are dumber than a donkey.

When God’s Word says, “**Stay away from sin,**” we should do it. If we don’t, we are dumber than a donkey.

Shortly after that time when Balaam finally decided to obey God, Balaam stood on a mountain and looked down on the people of Israel. Three times King Balak asked Balaam to curse the people of Israel. But instead, three times Balaam blessed the people of Israel. God used Balaam after he got right with God. Balaam learned from the example of his donkey: don’t go against God’s Word.

Let’s learn our memory verse. **Colossians 3:1 - If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.**

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BALAAM'S DONKEY

Numbers 22-24

Teen and Adult Lesson

Year One, Quarter Three, Lesson Five

[0300]

Teacher, choose one of the following truths to expand upon in teaching this portion of Scripture to your teen/adult class. Teach and apply the truth that you choose using statements and illustrations that are most helpful and applicable to your students.

- I. OUR FIRST REACTION TO EVERY DECISION OUGHT TO BE, WHAT DOES GOD SAY TO DO? 22:1-14. Balaam's initial reaction was correct: "let me see what God wants me to do." That is how each of us ought to respond to "new territory" decisions, that is, decisions that we have never faced before, or decisions that we have never subjected to God's Will before. We ought to be willing to invest the time and effort to seek God's face by searching His Word, and through intense prayer.
- II. JUST BECAUSE THE DEAL IS SWEETENED DOES NOT MEAN THAT GOD'S PRINCIPLES HAVE CHANGED. Numbers 22:15-19. Here is where Balaam made his mistake. King Balak's offer changed. He essentially wrote Balaam a blank check. *I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me.* 22:17. But God's principles do not change. Did Balaam expect God to say, "Oh wow! I can't let you pass up a chance like that; so I am willing to let my principles slide this time." God's principles cannot be negotiated. Balaam should have stood his ground and said, "Sorry men, but God gave me His answer, and that's not going to change." As Satan offers more to us for rejecting God's will, we often work harder to find justification for ignoring God's Word.
- III. BEWARE: GOD MAY GIVE YOU HIS PERMISSION WITHOUT GIVING YOU HIS BLESSINGS. Numbers 22:20-21. If you press God after he has shown you His will, you may find the "peace" to do what you want to do. But that does not mean that God's will has changed; it simply means that He has given His permission for you to take the hard road. But it is still the hard road, and it will still be painful. God will still be your God on that road, but you will not enjoy His blessing as you did before. Balaam serves as a warning to us, a warning against pressing for our own way.
- IV. IT IS GOD'S GRACE AND MERCY THAT BLOCKS US FROM SELF-DESTRUCTION. Numbers 22:22-27. Even after Balaam stubbornly persisted in getting his way, God still went to great lengths to prevent Balaam from violating God's Word and his own conscience. The man who had justified GOING with the king's men, could also find a way to justify cursing God's people. God knew that he was on course for destruction. Not only was God working to keep Balaam from cursing the people of God; he was also working to keep Balaam from becoming a sellout, from making the mistake that he would regret for eternity. By the time this whole incident was over, Balaam had blessed Israel, not cursed them, and Balak would not give Balaam any reward. Numbers 24:10-11, 25.
- V. WHEN WE IGNORE GOD'S WORD, WE HAVE LESS PERCEPTION THAN A DONKEY. Numbers 22:28-35. How much of Creation can see things that we cannot see? A donkey could see the clear intercession of God, trying to prevent Balaam from committing a horrible trespass; but Balaam, the "prophet," could not see God at work.

BALAAM'S DONKEY

Numbers 22-24

[0030]

God Turns a Curse into a Blessing

I. Balak Hires Balaam to Curse the Israelites *Chapter 22*

1-13 Balaam obeys God, refuses Balak's first offer *vs. 10-12*

14-21 Balaam accepts Balak's second offer *vs. 18-21*

22-35 Balaam's donkey verbally rebukes Balaam *vs. 27-31*

36-41 Balak takes Balaam to the site *vs. 41*

II. Balam Blesses the Israelites *Chapter 23*

1-12 Balaam blesses Israel at the first site *vs 7-8*

13-30 Balaam blesses Israel at the second site *vs 23*

III. God Opens Balam's Eyes *Chapter 24*

1-11 Balaam blesses Israel at the third site *vs 3-5*

12-25 Balaam prophesies regarding Israel and other nations *vs 17-18*

Colossians 3:1

*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above,
where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.*

Balaam's Donkey

Numbers 22-24

[0300]

Match the answer from the right column that best fits the clue in the left column.
Write the LETTER of the correct answer in the SPACE beside the matching clue.

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| _____ <i>Wicked king of Moab</i> | A BALAAM |
| _____ <i>Knocked on Balaam's door</i> | B MOSES |
| _____ <i>God's chosen people</i> | C THE DONKEY |
| _____ <i>The man God put in charge of Israel</i> | D BLESSED THEM |
| _____ <i>Told Balaam not to go with Balak's men</i> | E GOD'S WORD |
| _____ <i>Stood in Balaam's way</i> | F BALAK'S MEN |
| _____ <i>Beat his donkey when the donkey wouldn't move</i> | G ANGEL |
| _____ <i>Spoke to Balaam</i> | H ISRAEL |
| _____ <i>Instead of cursing Israel, Balaam did this</i> | I BALAK |
| _____ <i>Never changes</i> | J GOD |

*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above,
where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.*

COLOSSIANS 3:1

Balaam's Donkey

Numbers 22-24

[0300]

The answers to today's puzzle

- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| <u>I</u> <i>Wicked king of Moab</i> | A BALAAM |
| <u>F</u> <i>Knocked on Balaam's door</i> | B MOSES |
| <u>H</u> <i>God's chosen people</i> | C THE DONKEY |
| <u>B</u> <i>The man God put in charge of Israel</i> | D BLESSED THEM |
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