

# Balaam's Error

Jude 11b

Jude

a study of the epistle



DREAMWORKS  
**SHREK**

**“Woe to them!” (v. 11)**

1. “The Way of Cain”

2. “The Error of Balaam”

3. “The Rebellion of Korah”

## Jude 11b

**11b** for pay they have  
rushed headlong  
into the error of  
Balaam

## Parallel – 2 Peter 2:15-16

**15** forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; **16** but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, for a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet.

# Remember Jude 10?

- These men are compared to “unreasoning animals,” and Peter says that Balaam’s donkey “restrained the madness of the prophet.”
- **In other words, Balaam had even less insight into what God was doing than his animal.**

# “for pay”

- **ESV:** “for the sake of gain”
- **KJV:** “greedily...for reward”
- **NET:** “because of greed”
- **NIV:** “for profit”

**Balaam’s motive is clear: Greed**

# The Error of Balaam

- Balaam's way was to use the spiritual to gain the material for himself.
- His error was thinking that he could get away with his sins.
- The false teachers would likewise perish under God's judgment, just as Balaam did.



## In Addition:

- In Jewish Teaching & the NT, Balaam is the great example of one who taught Israel to sin.
- In the Old Testament, there are two stories about him.
- One is quite clear, and very vivid and dramatic.

# Deuteronomy 23:3-5

**3** No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the Lord; none of their descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall ever enter the assembly of the Lord, **4** because they did not meet you with food and water on the way when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you. **5** Nevertheless, the Lord your God was not willing to listen to Balaam, but the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you because the Lord your God loves you.



## Joshua 24:9-10

**9** Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel, and he sent and summoned Balaam the son of Beor to curse you.

**10** But I was not willing to listen to Balaam. So he had to bless you, and I delivered you from his hand.



# Story #1: Numbers 22-24

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# Numbers 23:18-24

**18** “Arise, O Balak, and hear; Give ear to me, O son of Zippor! **19** “God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? **20** “Behold, I have received a command to bless; When He has blessed, then I cannot revoke it. **21** “He has not observed misfortune in Jacob; Nor has He seen trouble in Israel; The Lord his God is with him, And the shout of a king is among them. **22** “God brings them out of Egypt, He is for them like the horns of the wild ox. **23** “For there is no omen against Jacob, Nor is there any divination against Israel; At the proper time it shall be said to Jacob And to Israel, what God has done! **24** “Behold, a people rises like a lioness, And as a lion it lifts itself; It will not lie down until it devours the prey, And drinks the blood of the slain.”

# Balak to Balaam:



## **R. Dennis Cole says:**

**“Balaam, a pagan sorcerer of Mesopotamian origin, whom one might expect to rebel against the God of Israel—and he does—now becomes the unexpected spokesman of God.”**

**Remember what Jesus said in Luke  
19:40?**



## And Then...Numbers 24:2

“And Balaam lifted up his eyes and saw Israel camping tribe by tribe; and the Spirit of God came upon him.”

## Numbers 24:17-19

**17** “I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; A star shall come forth from Jacob, A scepter shall rise from Israel, And shall crush through the forehead of Moab, And tear down all the sons of Sheth. **18** “Edom shall be a possession, Seir, its enemies, also will be a possession, While Israel performs valiantly. **19** “One from Jacob shall have dominion, And will destroy the remnant from the city.”

# Because of his “Blessing”

Some interpret Numbers 22-24 as portraying Balaam as a positive figure.



## Story #2

# Numbers 25:1-9

## Numbers 31:15-16

**15** And Moses said to them, “Have you spared all the women? **16** Behold, these caused the sons of Israel, **through the counsel of Balaam**, to trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation of the Lord.

## Numbers 31:8

8 They killed the kings of Midian along with the rest of their slain: Evi and Rekem and Zur and Hur and Reba, the five kings of Midian; **they** also killed Balaam the son of Beor with the sword.

# Balaam in the New Testament



## Revelation 2:14-15

**14** But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold **the teaching of Balaam**, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. **15** So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.



# Balaam's Lasting Blasphemy

Revelation 2:14-15 links “the teaching of Balaam” to “the teaching of the Nicolaitians.”



# The Nicolaitians

- Church father, Isidore of Seville (560-636):

“The Nicolaites are so called from Nicolas... [who] abandoned his wife because of her beauty, so that whoever wanted to might enjoy her; the practice turned into debauchery, with partners being exchanged in turn.”

## Scholars say:

The Nicolaitans believed either that commands against ritual sex was part of the Mosaic law (from which they had been freed by Jesus Christ) and it was licit for them, or that they went too far during Christian “love-feasts,” which Jude mentions explicitly in v. 12.

# Who is this Nicolas?

Some think he is all too familiar to the church.

- **Acts 6:5** –

“The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and **Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.**”

## **One Commentator writes:**

**“these heretics had neither formally separated themselves from the Church nor had been excommunicated.”**

**I think it is quite possible that Jude (and Peter for that matter) are addressing the same group of heretics that Jesus (through John) is condemning in Revelation 2:6 & 14.**

## From *Pseudo-Philo*

“Pick out the beautiful women who are among us and in Midian, and station them naked and adorned with gold and precious stones before them. And when they see them and lie with them, they will sin against their Lord and fall into your hands.”

# Jude Sees a Parallel

- Like Balaam, “they have rushed headlong” into wickedness for the sake of money.
- By linking them to Balaam, Jude is also reinforcing that these men were false teachers, probably wandering prophets who “prophesied” to make money.

## In Their Teaching...

The false teachers propagated error for monetary gain, and yet at the same time they were deceived enough to believe their own error.

**Once again, we see a Romans 1 understanding of the reprobate mind.**



## William Barclay:

“Balaam stands for two things. (a) He stands for the covetous man, who was prepared to sin in order to gain reward. (b) He stands for the evil man, who was guilty of the greatest of all sins—the sin of teaching others to sin. So Jude is declaring of the wicked men of his own day that they are ready to leave the way of righteousness to make gain; and that they are teaching others to sin.”



**Next Week:**  
**Korah's Rebellion**

