

Cups and Swords

Balaam and the Angel

Numbers 22:22

“But God was angry because he was going, and the angel of the Lord took his stand in the way as an adversary against him.”

This is truly my favorite story. It’s funny, sad, and interesting. In 1 chronicles 4:9 we have what is called the Prayer of Jabez. Bruce Wilkerson (a pastor) wrote a little book on this one tiny section of the Bible. It made him millions. Why? Because within a list of names called a genealogy. These lists in the Bible are boring. People tend to skip over them. Yet, this writer found the prayer of Jabez right in the middle. Many Christian leaders hate this prayer because it was a gimmick book. Really? Maybe it proves that reading the Bible is how you find little gems like Jabez.

My point is that Numbers 22 is a story of Balaam a seer. Yet, it sits within other different types scripture like the Jabez story. People tend to ignore Numbers because it’s history, prophesy, and laws. Yet, this section of Numbers is rich with all sorts of fun stuff like the talking donkey. I believe this section is important to the Bible. This Balaam is mentioned here in Numbers 22. Yet, his death is also mentioned in Joshua 13:22. Why bother? This man is mentioned all through the Bible as an example of what not to do. He did not listen to God.

Yet he is here just like Jabez his here in the Bible. We also have an angel of the Lord with a sword. Balaam death is by the sword too. I do not think that is a mistake. Balaam was asked to not go with certain men by God. Balaam was tempted and finally went with them. His path was impeded by an angel with a sword. The best part is his donkey. It’s funny that Balaam and the donkey get into a philosophical conversation. The donkey saw the angel but Balaam could not.

Revelation 2:14

“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.”

Balaam was contacted by God to be more than he saw in himself. Yet, the Bible is clear that Balaam just did not get it. he could not see God before him. I guess the path of Balaam was restricted because of his pride and blindness. There is a saying that those who live by the sword, die of the sword. Balaam lived with false teachings. He refused to go deep with God. That lead him down a bad path. A path a donkey would not trod. A path blocked by an angel with a sword.

What’s it all mean?

It appears as if God told Balaam to go. It appears that God told Balaam to stay. Which is it? I feel that the Bible is terribly consistent. God gave Moses orders to strike the rock for water. Yet, he went too far in frustration. Abraham was told he would have a child. Yet, he became impatient and went too far. For Balaam it’s the same thing. God gives us all the choices we could have. Then we choose. David was offered three choices of punishment from God. He chose a fourth to have his punishment from God

rather than men. That's the key. The Sword in this story is a warning. The path in this story is a way. Possibly the way, but sometimes we take the path too early.

For us, it means we need to look for God in the signs. The donkey saw it. Eventually Balaam saw it. These things sometimes take time and maturity to see what God is doing. Usually, we are too impatient. We have our own ideas. We know how things work. Yet, God works in mysterious ways. He is patient and does not regard time like we do. How do we discern what to do? I feel the path is always there. It's about when, why, and how to walk it.

I was listening to a show on Solomon's wisdom. The preacher said Solomon gained head knowledge but not spiritual wisdom. Maybe that's it. We judge what we know and see. Spiritual wisdom judges what God knows and sees. It looks at the path through fresh, Godly eyes. A blocked pathway does not mean yes or no. Sometimes it means wait. David should have gone to war but he waited and committed adultery. Abraham should have waited before sleeping with Hagar. Sampson should have waited to gain a wife. The path is there, but how will you tread on it? you don't want it to end with a sword as Balaam did.