

## “Serving 2 Masters!”

### I. **INTRO:**

- A. **Story** – When I give our **dogs a bath** in the back yard, they **hate** the cold water from the hose, but **love** the shampoo rub(wiggle) & the towel dry(ears). **But every time** immediately after the towel dry, they **take off** like a bullet, & run & dive, nose 1st on the grass; **then** in the dirt rolling on there backs, fully enjoying their **dog nature!**
1. **Man** has been born with **1 nature**, & it really is all he knows how to enjoy.
  2. Man left to himself will do all he can to please this very powerful **man nature**.
  3. Although, he may at some time in his life try to **imitate** another nature, **but** if he doesn't **actually have** that other nature, **then** it is as phony as **my cockatiel** doing his **chicken impersonation!**
- B. Let's meet a *double-minded* man **who** tries to serve 2 masters; **who** knows God's **directive will**, but chooses His **permissive will** instead; & **who** is best known for being brought up on charges of Donkey Abuse, & for talking to a donkey because it talked to him.
1. As bizarre as the talking donkey part is, *Peter, Jude, & John* treat Balaam as a **historical character** in their writings, a few 1000 years later.

### II. **SERVING TWO MASTERS!**

- A. **MEET THE CAST!** (1-6)
- B. **Balak** - king of Moab (where Ruth's story will play out in the future)
1. Extremely afraid of Israel's number & Israel's God/reputaiton (3).
  2. He allies with Midian.
  3. Balak realizes that physical force would never defeat the Jews, so he resorts to spiritual deception by hiring Balaam to curse Israel.
- C. (5) **Balaam** - **What an enigma!**
1. He's from a **heathen nation**, **yet** he knew the **true God**.
  2. He was a **soothsayer**, **yet** he was able to **predict the future** of Israel.
  3. He **listened** to the Word of God, **yet** turned right around & led Israel into sin & judgement.
- D. **Pethor** - a city in northern Mesopotamia on the banks of the Euphrates river.
1. That Balak sent emissaries such a great distance is evidence of Balaam's considerable **reputation** for supernatural powers.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> New Geneva Study Bible Notes; pg.220

- E. **REFUSING TO GO, VISIT #1!** (7-14)
- F. (7) **The Diviners fee** - everybody has a price...**what would you sell your soul for?**
1. One of my best friends in H.S. sold his soul for **1 month more** of a relationship, with his live in girlfriend. (i.e. That's all it lasted after he choose her over Jesus!)
- G. (13,14) **No way Jose!** - He **1st appears** as a **man of integrity**, who attempts a literal obedience to the will of God.
- H. **DIRECTIVE & PERMISSIVE WILL, VISIT #2!** (15-21)
- I. **Upping the ante!** - more wealth, more honor, won't you reconsider?
1. Wow, I'm really important. They really need my gift.
  2. **Isn't this exactly what Satan does once we have made a definite decision to obey God's Word?**
    - a) **Our battle today is not against flesh & blood** but against spiritual wickedness, & we will **win the victory only if we use spiritual weapons!**
- J. (19) The **problem** here is, of course, that Balaam's 2nd appeal was in essence a request for **God to change His mind!**
1. Balaam knew **God's directive will**. He simply did not want to obey it.
  2. **You and I are often in Balaam's situation**. We know what God wants. **But we want something else so badly that we keep going back to the Lord, asking Him to change His mind.**
    - a) Later, when things **go wrong**, we're likely to say as Balaam did after being warned by the donkey, "**I did not know**"(34).
    - b) **But this is the worst kind of lie** - a lie we tell ourselves. **Down deep we knew all along what God really wanted us to do!**
  3. Let's learn from Balaam not to deceive ourselves, and to choose **God's directive will**, rather than settle merely for **permission**.
- K. Balaam should have said like Daniel (5:17) "**Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another**". But he obviously wanted them deep down inside (contrary to vs.18).
1. **Read 2 Pet.2:15,16 - He loved the wages of unrighteousness.**
    - a) **ESV He loved the gain of wrong doing.**
  2. **Deep in his heart Balaam wanted to go with the messengers because he was greedy of gain.**
  3. **Using religion as a means of getting wealth!** Wow, no one's thought of doing that!

- L. (19,20) This is another time in scripture where God's will was perfectly clear(12) **there was no need to pray!**
1. God **allowed** Balaam to go, **but** He **did not carry divine approval** with him.<sup>2</sup>
  2. **Sometimes God punishes us by allowing us to have our own way! :(**
  3. **So, permission granted, but a limit was set on his speech.**
- M. **An abiding principle** - **Man** is compelled to work out **what is deepest w/in him**, **while** all the way **God** works toward changing that internal condition. (grace)
- N. **DONKEY TALK!** (22-35)
- O. Balaam, a **head full of light** & a **heart full of dark!**
- P. (22) God's mad.
- Q. (23) So intent on his selfish mission, he was not sensitive to God's will.
- R. (28) The story abounds in **comic irony**. The **donkey** was able to see the path better than the **diviner**, & then tell him about it! (2 Pet.2:16)
1. **The most stupid of all beast, was made to speak & reprove one of the wisest of men.** [How many agencies God uses to arrest our evil courses!]
- S. **Dumb donkey** – Another time the Lord used a **rooster** to preach a sermon powerful enough to **break an apostle**...& it only had **2 words in it** (*cock-a-doodle-do; cock-a-doodle-do*)!
1. Mark 14:72 **Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice."**
  2. **Ministering to a heart is "always" the Lords doing!**
- T. (29) Here Balaam is calling for a **sword**, w/o knowing that he was about to see one **pointed at him**.
- U. (32) **Your way is perverse** (contrary) - about sums it up!
1. So there was really no reason to say, "**If it displeases You, I will turn back**".
    - a) He should have just done it. He's still fishin.
    - b) He was **playing with God's will**, seeing how far he could go.
- V. **He was trying to serve 2 masters** - to speak as God told him, **but** to please Balak & pocket his gold.

---

<sup>2</sup> Herbert Lockyer; All the Men of the Bible; pg.64.

- W. Some read this **No on can *serve two* masters**. Yes, he can; he can serve 3 or 4, or 20. The way to read it is this **No on can serve two *masters***. They cannot **both** be masters. He can serve 2, but they **both** can't be his master. Balaam labored to serve 2.
1. When Spurgeon saw the **statue of Lord Byron**, in the library at *Trinity College, Cambridge*; he was told by the librarian, "stand on this side." Looking at **one side**, he saw a fine intellectual countenance; Looking at the **other side**, he had such a scowl, a dreadful look to him, almost **demonic**. "Did the artist mean to do this," Spurgeon asked. "Yes! He wished to picture the 2 characters, the great grand, the almost superhuman genius that he possessed, & yet the enormous mass of sin that was in his soul."
  2. We sure see the split personality of *Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Balaam/Hide!*
- X. **THE MEETING!** (36-40)
- Y. (40,41) God permitted Balaam to meet Balak, who gave him a **great feast**(40) & showed him a **great view**(41).
- Z. **End:**
- AA. The main lesson here is to **find the will of God & obey it**, *regardless of personal desires or subsequent circumstances!*