



Prophet For Profit

October 1, 2023 Message Notes

TEXT: NUMBERS 22-24

Balaam was a false prophet, diviner, magician – a private contractor paid to get things done. The Lord wasn't pleased with his deceit. Balaam's story of religious deception is complex, disturbing, and way too common – then and now. Too many fall prey to the lies and selfishness of these kinds of individuals. So, how do we tell the difference between a pastor/leader who seeks to faithfully serve and honor the Lord and those who play with some other ulterior motive?



NOTES

If you focus long enough, eventually you will find there is more than meets the eye.

“So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.”

Romans 8:1

The number one issue that caused people to doubt the Christian faith among ‘non-practicing Christians,’ people of ‘other faiths,’ and people of ‘no faiths’ was **religious deception**. 80% of pastors surveyed agreed. (Barna research)

Balaam was a false prophet, diviner, magician – a private contractor paid to get things done.

“‘Stay here overnight. In the morning I will tell you whatever the LORD directs me to say.’ So the officials from Moab stayed there with Balaam... That night God told Balaam, ‘Do not go with them. You are not to curse these people, for they have been blessed!’ The next morning Balaam got up and told Balak’s officials, ‘Go on home! The LORD will not let me go with you.’”

Numbers 22:8, 12-13

“I have blessed them.”

Numbers 22:12

Hypocrites like Balaam know how to use God’s proper name to appear like they know God, but the fruit of their actions reveals their true allegiance.

“But Balaam responded to Balak’s messengers, ‘Even if Balak were to give me his palace filled with silver and gold, I would be powerless to do anything against the will of the Lord my God. But stay here one more night, and I will see if the Lord has anything else to say to me.’”

Numbers 22:18-19

“Do only what I tell you to do.”

Numbers 22:20

The Lord wasn’t pleased with Balaam’s deceit, so He sent an angel to stand in his way and defend God’s people. Initially, Balaam didn’t notice God’s angel... but his donkey did.

Balaam confessed his sin to God and then offered four messages from God to King Balak.

“God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?”

Numbers 23:19



God always makes good on his promise, even going so far as using a false prophet for hire to accomplish his ways.

“I see him (Jesus), but not here and now. I perceive him, but far in the distant future. A star will rise from Jacob; a scepter will emerge from Israel.”

Numbers 24:17

Though Balaam spoke truthful words about God and his people, Balaam’s actions bore a different kind of sampling of deceit and greed.

“While the Israelites were camped at Acacia Grove, some of the men defiled themselves by having sexual relations with local Moabite women. These women invited them to attend sacrifices to their gods, so the Israelites feasted with them and worshiped the gods of Moab. In this way, Israel joined in the worship of Baal of Peor, causing the Lord’s anger to blaze against his people.”

Numbers 25:1-3

Balaam invited these Moabite women into Israel’s camp - for a profit. More than 24,000 men succumbed to Balaam’s deceit.

Balaam’s story of religious deception is complex, disturbing, and way too common – then and now. Too many fall prey to the lies and selfishness of these kinds of individuals.

“These nations did not welcome you with food and water when you came out of Egypt. Instead, they hired Balaam son of Beor from Pethor in distant Aram-naharaim to curse you. But the Lord your God refused to listen to Balaam. He turned the intended curse into a blessing because the Lord your God loves you.”

Deuteronomy 23:4-5

“Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, started a war against Israel. He summoned Balaam son of Beor to curse you, but I would not listen to him. Instead, I made Balaam bless you, and so I rescued you from Balak.”

Joshua 24:9-10

“For I brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from slavery. I sent Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to help you. Don’t you remember, my people, how King Balak of Moab tried to have you cursed and how Balaam son of Beor blessed you instead? And remember your journey from Acacia Grove to Gilgal, when I, the Lord, did everything I could to teach you about my faithfulness.”



Micah 6:4-5

'[False Teachers] have wandered off the right road and followed the footsteps of Balaam son of Beor, who loved to earn money by doing wrong. But Balaam was stopped from his mad course when his donkey rebuked him with a human voice.'

2 Peter 2:15-16

"But I have a few complaints against you. You tolerate some among you whose teaching is like that of Balaam, who showed Balak how to trip up the people of Israel. He taught them to sin by eating food offered to idols and by committing sexual sin."

Revelation 2:14

Like so many religious deceivers and hypocrites, Balaam's words matched all the right play-calls for the team, but his deception scored for the opponent.

How do we tell the difference between a pastor/leader who seeks to faithfully serve and honor the Lord and those who play with some other ulterior motive?

High on the inside - If a leader thinks highly of themselves, walk away.

Low to the outside - If a leader demonstrates humility and care for others, then proceed – but do so with caution.

Listen, watch and test a spiritual leader according to God's Word because you never know - there might be more than meets the eye.

"Do not stifle the Holy Spirit. Do not scoff at prophecies, but test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good. Stay away from every kind of evil."

1 Thessalonians 5:19-22

Ask these questions:

1. Does the teaching align with Jesus' teaching, according to the four Gospels?
2. Does the teacher reflect the character and heart of Jesus in humility and service?
3. Does the teacher bear the fruits of God's Spirit?
4. Is the teacher connected with a church of good repute?

Religious deceivers only know one play and that is: to divide us from one another and then isolate us for their own benefit.

Steps to guard your heart from deception -



It's like a mangrove that provides habitat for countless land/sea creatures, cleanses our water from toxins, helps maintain proper salinity in our oceans, and protects our shorelines from wave erosion/dangerous storm surges.

Mangroves are **interconnected**.

Jesus is the true Vine and invites us grow as mighty and strong branches from his nourishment, to withstand the storms of deception. We also become a safer habitat to help others attach their lives into the Vine. Mangroves flourish together.

“Then Jesus said, ‘Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.’”

Matthew 11:28

Mangroves **cleanse Impurities**.

Being connected to the Vine gives us access to Christ's sanctifying and cleansing Spirit in our lives. Prayer is one way we experience cleansing in our life. When impurities like deceptions and lies splash on us, prayer in community helps us discern what next steps to take.

A-C-T-S for Prayer:

Adoration - We give all our praise to our one true God in Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Confession - We give our sins to God and invite his forgiveness and healing into our lives.

Thanksgiving – “Praise the Lord! I will thank the Lord with all my heart as I meet with his godly people.” – Psalm 111:1

Supplication - We ask the Lord to provide all that we need.

Mangroves offer **protection**.

Reading, studying, knowing, and memorizing God's Word - which Paul calls the Sword of the Spirit, the only offensive weapon given to God's people.

Many don't know how to use God's Word, so we resort to picking up the same weapons that others use against us, and then we wonder why we feel like we're losing our battles.

Disciple means learner, so take your time to learn and grow with God's Word.

We can find ourselves either confused and susceptible or we can win in our faith by going low on the outside, staying connected to the Vine, standing strong like mangroves, and slinging the sword of the Spirit.

If we do this, then we will see that nothing is too hard for God and not even the gates of hell will prevail against his church!

