

Title: Terrorists in the Church: Description, Danger & Doom of False Teachers (Part9)

Passage: 2 Peter 2:15-16; Numbers 22-24

Theme: The deadly danger of false teachers in the church

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{Read Passage}

Note "Balaam".

[i] Introduction to Balaam - An OT type of all false prophets

[ii] For that I'm going to ask you to turn to the book of Numbers (22)

Numbers / Pentateuch. Chronicles 40 years of wandering in the wilderness o/s of the Promised land following t/Exodus from Egypt.

[iii] Geography lesson

Out of Egypt (northeastern end of the continent of Africa), the Israelites crossed the Red Sea north of the Gulf of Suez, heading down the Sinai peninsula where Moses receives the 10 Commandments at Mt. Sinai. They travel up the peninsula eventually making their way thru Edom to Moab, which was on the southeastern side of the Dead Sea.

22:1 **THEN the sons of Israel journeyed, and camped in the plains of Moab beyond the Jordan opposite Jericho.**

[iv] Who were the Moabites?

Remember Lot? Lot whom we read about in 2 Peter 2:7?

... righteous Lot ...

... oppressed by the sensual conduct of lawless men

Background to t/Moabites ...

Gen. 19 records the story of the "Sodom-tainted virgin."

2 daughters of Lot conspired to get him drunk & they engaged in an incestuous relationship w/him out of fear that they would die childless.

The firstborn daughter had a son and named him Moab, from which came the Moabites (Ruth was a Moabite).

For the most part, the Israelites looked upon t/Moabites as close relatives.

2 Now Balak [King of Moab, v. 4] the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites.

Amorites were an ancient people who were neighbors to the N. of Moab (their most influential king being Hammurabi, 1792–1750).

What had Israel done to them? That is recorded in 21:21-32. {cite}

[v] Balak sees that the Jews are on the move and he's very concerned

Had no reason to be. The Israelites were instructed to leave them alone in Deut. 2:9.

3 So Moab was in great fear because of the people, for they were numerous; and Moab was in dread of the sons of Israel. 4 And Moab said to the elders of Midian, “Now this horde will lick up all that is around us, as the ox licks up the grass of the field.” And Balak the son of Zippor was king of Moab at that time.

5 So he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor . . .

[vi] Here we are intro for 1st time to Balaam

No doubt he was infamous, not as a prophet much less a p. of YHWH, but as a magician of sorts (not the kind that pulls rabbits from hats).

[vii] Balaam is never called a נָבִיא (prophet) in the OT, but rather "a diviner" or "a soothsayer" Sorcerer

He practiced that which was forbidden by God: Deut. 18:10-11:

10 "There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, 11 or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead.

[viii] Verses 5-11

5 So he sent messengers to Balaam . . . to call him, saying, "Behold, a people came out of Egypt; behold, they cover the surface of the land, and they are living opposite me. 6 "Now, therefore, please come, curse this people for me since they are too mighty for me; perhaps I may be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land. For I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed."

7 So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the fees for divination in their hand; and they came to Balaam and repeated Balak's words to him.

Note, "the fees for divination in their hand . . . "

8 And he said to them, "Spend the night here, and I will bring word back to you as the LORD may speak to me." And the leaders of Moab stayed with Balaam.

9 Then God came to Balaam and said, “Who are these men with you?”
10 And Balaam said to God, “Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent word to me, 11 ‘Behold, there is a people who came out of Egypt and they cover the surface of the land; now come, curse them for me; perhaps I may be able to fight against them, and drive them out.’”

Of course, God knew who they were, but he wanted to hear it from Balaam, perhaps hoping that he would see how ludicrous it was what he was trying to do. *"Let me summon the national God of the Jews to see if He will let me curse His covt. people."* Balaam was a well-known seer, but one gets the impression that he wasn't all that bright.

[ix] Verses 12-18

12 And God said to Balaam, “Do not go with them; you shall not curse the people; for they are blessed.” 13 So Balaam arose in the morning and said to Balak’s leaders, “Go back to your land, for the LORD has refused to let me go with you.”

14 And the leaders of Moab arose and went to Balak, and said, “Balaam refused to come with us.”

15 Then Balak again sent leaders, more numerous and more distinguished than the former. 16 And they came to Balaam and said to him, “Thus says Balak the son of Zippor, ‘Let nothing, I beg you, hinder you from coming to me; 17 for I will indeed honor you richly, and I will do whatever you say to me. Please come then, curse this people for me.’”

18 And Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, “Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do

anything, either small or great, contrary to the command of the LORD my God.

[x] He calls YHWH "his God"

Need to be really careful when it comes to what someone claims. What someone claims (esp. true of OT figures o/s of Israel) isn't necess. true.

This wasn't Balaam claiming God as His own. He's not repented; he has no desire to become a God-fearer (proselyte to Israel) and follow YHWH.

He's claiming the Israelites God as "another deity to add to his repertoire."

NT antitype of Balaam is Simon t/magician in Acts 8.

Simon believed; he was baptized. He loved to see the miracles and signs that were being performed by Philip & t/Apostles. He wanted to buy into that, offering them money "give this authority to me as well."

That's the antitype of Balaam (we'll see).

[xi] Verses 19-21

19 "And now please, you also stay here tonight, and I will find out what else the LORD will speak to me." 20 And God came to Balaam at night and said to him, "If the men have come to call you, rise up and go with them; but only the word which I speak to you shall you do."

21 So Balaam arose in the morning, and saddled his donkey, and went with the leaders of Moab.

[xii] Verse 22 - The Angel of the Lord

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. Now he was riding on his donkey and his two servants were with him.

The Angel of the LORD is a manifestation of YHWH--likely an appearance of the preincarnate Christ. The Angel of the LORD frequently appears in the Old Testament, identifies himself with God, exercises the prerogatives of God, speaks as God, yet is distinct from God.

Those who encounter Him get this sense that they've been visited, not by an angel, but by God Himself. (Exo 3:2 AOL = God).

Angel of the LORD ceases to appear after the incarnation of JC.

[xiii] Verses 23-30 (humor)

23 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand, the donkey turned off from the way and went into the field; but Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back into the way.

Sword = symbolic of judgment.

24 Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path of the vineyards, with a wall on this side and a wall on that side. 25 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she pressed herself to the wall and pressed Balaam's foot against the wall, so he struck her again. 26 And the angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn to the right hand or the left. 27 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam; so Balaam was angry and struck the donkey with his stick.

28 And the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?"

29 Then Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have made a mockery of me! If there had been a sword in my hand, I would have killed you by now." 30 And the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden all your life to this day? Have I ever been accustomed to do so to you?" And he said, "No."

[xiv] I don't know how God did this or exactly what He did

Did He give the donkey a brief moment of sentience and miraculously transformed the dumb vocal cords, tongue and mouth of the animal to speak as a man would speak?

Was it something that was inaudible to any others around? Or not understandable? Like those who were with Jesus in John 12 (v. 29)? We don't know and we must not get caught up in the minor details to the expense of the main point: (directly relates to 2 Peter) that this unreasoning animal had more spiritual discernment than a famous seer.

"he was so carried away by his greed, that he was not terrified y this marvelous miracle, and replied just as if he had been ing to a man, when God, although He did not change the true nature of the ass into that of a rational being, made it give utterance to whatever He pleased, for the purpose of restraining [the prophet's] madness." [Augustine (quest. 50 in Num.)

31 Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed all the way to the ground.

32 And the angel of the LORD said to him, “Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out as an adversary, because your way was contrary to me. 33 “But the donkey saw me and turned aside from me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, I would surely have killed you just now, and let her live.”

34 And Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, “I have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing in the way against me. Now then, if it is displeasing to you, I will turn back.” 35 But the angel of the LORD said to Balaam, “Go with the men, but you shall speak only the word which I shall tell you.” So Balaam went along with the leaders of Balak.

36 When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the city of Moab, which is on the Arnon border, at the extreme end of the border. 37 Then Balak said to Balaam, “Did I not urgently send to you to call you? Why did you not come to me? Am I really unable to honor you?” 38 So Balaam said to Balak, “Behold, I have come now to you! Am I able to speak anything at all? The word that God puts in my mouth, that I shall speak.”

39 And Balaam went with Balak, and they came to Kiriath-huzoth. 40 And Balak sacrificed oxen and sheep, and sent some to Balaam and the leaders who were with him.

Note, it's Balak, the King of Moab, that makes animal sacrifices. Probably not to his pagan deities, those of Moab, but to YHHW, the God of the Israelites (cf. v. 38) in an attempt to "win Him over."

[xvi] Last verse of chapter 22

41 Then it came about in the morning that Balak took Balaam, and brought him up to the high places of Baal; and he saw from there a portion of the people.

[xvii] Chapter 23 - Balaam has Balak built 7 altars for a burnt offering

[xviii] He then tells Balak in verse 3:

... "Stand beside your burnt offering, and I will go; perhaps the LORD will come to meet me, and whatever He shows me I will tell you."

[xix] Verses 4-6

God meets w/him, tells him *"here's what you will say."*

Balaam returns finding Balak standing beside the burnt offering along with all the leaders of the nation (picture of expectation).

[xix] Verse 7 - Balaam proceeds to bless Israel

7 And he took up his discourse and said,

 "From Aram Balak has brought me,

 Moab's king from the mountains of the East, 'Come curse Jacob for me,

 And come, denounce Israel!

8 "How shall I curse, whom God has not cursed?

 And how can I denounce, whom the LORD has not denounced?

9 "As I see him from the top of the rocks,

 And I look at him from the hills;

 Behold, a people who dwells apart,

 And shall not be reckoned among the nations.

10 "Who can count the dust of Jacob,

 Or number the fourth part of Israel?

Let me die the death of the upright,
And let my end be like his!"

11 Then Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, but behold, you have actually blessed them!" 12 And he answered and said, "Must I not be careful to speak what the LORD puts in my mouth?"

[xxi] What happens next

Balak says, "let's try this again." They go to another location, the top / slopes of Mt. Pisgah, repeat the offerings.

Same result.

[xxii] Balak asks him, verse 18, "What has the LORD spoken?"

18 Then he took up his discourse and said, "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.

25 Then Balak said to Balaam, "Do not curse them at all nor bless them at all!" 26 But Balaam answered and said to Balak, "Did I not tell you, 'Whatever the LORD speaks, that I must do'?"

27 Then Balak said to Balaam, "Please come, I will take you to another place; perhaps it will be agreeable with God that you curse them for me from there." 28 So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor which

overlooks the wasteland. 29 And Balaam said to Balak, “Build seven altars for me here and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me here.” 30 And Balak did just as Balaam had said, and offered up a bull and a ram on each altar.

[xxiii] Numbers 24

24:1 WHEN Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he did not go as at other times to seek omens but he set his face toward the wilderness. 2 And Balaam lifted up his eyes and saw Israel camping tribe by tribe; and the Spirit of God came upon him. 3 And he took up his discourse and said,

“The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor,
And the oracle of the man whose eye is opened;
4 The oracle of him who hears the words of God,
Who sees the vision of the Almighty,
Falling down, yet having his eyes uncovered,
5 How fair are your tents, O Jacob,
Your dwellings, O Israel!

6 “Like valleys that stretch out,
Like gardens beside the river,
Like aloes planted by the LORD,
Like cedars beside the waters.

7 “Water shall flow from his buckets,
And his seed shall be by many waters,
And his king shall be higher than Agag,
And his kingdom shall be exalted.

8 “God brings him out of Egypt,
He is for him like the horns of the wild ox.
He shall devour the nations who are his adversaries,
And shall crush their bones in pieces,

And shatter them with his arrows.

9 "He couches, he lies down as a lion,
And as a lion, who dares rouse him?
Blessed is everyone who blesses you,
And cursed is everyone who curses you."

10 Then Balak's anger burned against Balaam, and he struck his hands together; and Balak said to Balaam, "I called you to curse my enemies, but behold, you have persisted in blessing them these three times! 11 "Therefore, flee to your place now. I said I would honor you greatly, but behold, the LORD has held you back from honor."

This chapter concludes with another prophetic statement by Balaam, including a prophecy of the Messiah in v. 17 (sounds much like the prophecy of Jacob in Gen. 49):

A star shall come forth from Jacob,
And a scepter shall rise from Israel,
And shall crush through the forehead of Moab,

[xxiv] What are we to make of Balaam at this point?

Peter relates him to the false teachers whom he roundly condemns // calls him a man who "loves the wages of wickedness" and accuses him of "madness."

"C'mon Peter, you just finished calling Lot "righteous." This Balaam is spotless, but he doesn't look so bad after all."

Walt Kaiser asks: "was he a saint or a soothsayer?"

[xxv] There's a bigger picture here (more to it than meets the eye)

Both ancient Jewish historians Philo and Josephus refuse to acknowledge Balaam as a true prophet of God. Far from it.

As far as Jewish tradition is concerned, one scholar writes "In the basic sources of rabbinic tradition, Balaam is mainly depicted as rogue." [cited in BibSac 166:664, 398]

The Mishnah claims that Balaam will have no place in the world to come. It's even been suggested that he committed bestiality with his donkey!

No reason to believe that, but it does indicate what the Jews later thought of him. Why?

[xxvi] Two passages that shed further light on him - both in chapter 31

Numbers 31:8 - **And 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.**

Sword indicates a judicial judgment?

Why?

Numbers 31:16 **“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.**

This is the explanation for the "white space" between Num 24 and 25.

{{Read Numbers 25:1-9}}

1 Corinthians 10:5–8 5 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. 6 Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved. 7 And do not be idolaters, as some of them were . . . 8 Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day.

[xxvii] We ask the question: "What was really in Balaam's heart?"

Deuteronomy 23:5 . . . the LORD your God was not willing to listen to Balaam, but the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing . . .

Intent of Balaam's heart was evil. When he couldn't curse Israel, he counseled with Balak to destroy them by means of forbidden inter-marriage with pagan women.

Back to 2 Peter ==>

III. The Character of False Teachers (10-22)

A. They drink deeply at the well of sin (10a)

B. They despise authority (10b)

C. They are both bold and arrogant (10c-13a)

D. They are like unreasoning animals in their ignorance (12)

E. They sin in broad daylight (13a)

F. They are con-men in the fellowship of the saints (13b)

G. They are driven by unlawful desires (14a)

Lit "Having eyes full of an adulteress"

Brings us where we left off last time ==>

H. They are greedy (14b-16)

"Experts in greed"

1. Stated in v. 14

2. Illustrated (15-16)

a. Introduced by the first 8 words of the verse

Forsaking the right way they have gone astray . . .

(1) Idea of following a right way / correct way / the way / true way

Very common.

Note the connection to the last part of v. 14: "Accursed children!" ==>

Matthew 7:13–14 13 “Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. 14 “For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.

To be a disciple is to follow in "The Way of Christ"

After all, He called himself "The way the truth and the life" (John 14:6)

Cf. 1 Peter 2:21

The early Xn movt. was known as "the way" - used 5x in Acts (cf. Paul referring to the fact that it was considered a 'sect' in Acts 24:14).

Hosea 14:9 9 Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; Whoever is discerning, let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right, And the righteous will walk in them . . .

Proverbs 2:13 warns about those who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness;

That is what these men did. Why Peter calls them "accused children" in v. 14.

Forsaking the right way they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the [son] of Basor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.

b. Here we have something very interesting: Why does Peter refer to Balaam as "the son of Basor"?

Most of your translations have "Beor" (that's what we read in the OT). But the wealth of MS evidence supports Basor.

(1) Why does Peter change a well-known name to an unknown one?

(a) Different views on this:

i. Peter made a mistake

(silly - he would have been very very familiar with this account).

ii. Basor was how a Galilean would pronounce the word

Would reflect that Peter wrote this. He was a Galilean. And in Matt 26:73 he is noticed by his accent.

iii. Basor was a Place not a Person ("son of" isn't in the text)

Was a town called Bosor located in Syria. Balaam is associated with this region.

Last option (I like this one - can't be sure) ==>

iv. Play on words with the Hebrew word for flesh

Basor has 3 consonants, right? BSR

Same in the Grk text, Betta, Sigma, Rho

Hebrew word for "flesh" has the same 3 consonants: Bet; Samek; Resh.

Or B + S + R

Peter is notorious for turning a phrase or using a play on words.

May be that Peter, instead of referring to Balaam as "The Son of Beor" turns the phrase to call him, "Balaam, the son of [sinful] flesh."

That would fit the context. The false teachers, just like their counterpart, were driven by their flesh. They were greedy

Sensual (v. 18).

The account in Numbers testifies to Balaam's true character since he was slain fighting against Israel (Num 31:8), and the sexual sin at Baal Peor in which the Midianites snared Israel was attributed to Balaam's advice. [Schreiner, 353-54]

. . . But he was rebuked for his own lawlessness:

Word, only used here, refers to a legal accusation. Not mere rebuke, but a legal charge.

a dumb donkey, speaking with the voice of a man, restrained the insanity of the prophet.

But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and destroyed, reviling in their ignorance, will also be destroyed in their corruption.

Philo writes of the account in Numbers: "For the unreasoning animal showed a superior power of sight to him who claimed to see not only the world but the worlds' Maker" [Moses 1.49, 272]

Balaam's donkey had more reason than he did!

The teachers 2 Peter opposes were, according to him, "unthinking animals." Thus they are also like Balaam, who was rebuked by a dumb animal, which is perhaps one step lower than being such an animal oneself. They have "eyes full of adultery," and Balaam counseled sexual entrapment. The parallels are striking. And the implication is that just as Balaam perished in the divine judgment on Midian (Num 31:154-17), so these teachers will perish when the judgment of God falls upon them. [Davids, 242-43]

Interesting - one of the Jewish Targums commenting on Numbers 22:30: *"And the donkey said to Balaam: 'Where are you going, wicked Balaam.? You lack understanding! What! If you are not able to curse me who am an unclean beast, and die in this world and who do not enter the world to come, how much less are you able to curse the sons of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob, on whose account the world was created from the beginning, and for whose merits it is remembered before them?'"* [Targum Neof., cited in G. Green, 287]

Balaam joined the 2 foremost attributes of false teachers together: greed // immorality.

For the sake of money, he led the Israelites into cultic prostitution with the Midianites.

Same w/those of whom Peter writes here in chapter 2.

No wonder John picks up on this theme in Rev. 2 (Pergamum) ==>
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.

Terrorists in the Church: Description, Danger & Doom of False Teachers

2 Peter 3:17–18 17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness, 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ . . .

A dog barks when his master is attacked. I would be a coward if I saw that God's truth is attacked and yet would remain silent. --John Calvin