

Prophet for Profit

Numbers 22

Pastor Arlyn

Message Transcript

I'm curious if anyone has read ahead for tonight. You know what story we're on tonight? Well, I guess maybe the title screen is dead giveaway, if you know the story. If you don't, you're probably really confused, like, wow, the AV team is really running out of ideas for title screens. But no, there's a reason for that, we're in quite an interesting story.

It's a story that, to me for quite some time was pretty mysterious, and I didn't really understand the purpose for it. And if that's you, I hope that you'll leave here tonight with a different outtake on this chapter, and on this story that we're going to be looking at. Our topic is largely going to be Balaam, you could say Balak, he's the king of Moab. And he is the guy that really starts this whole story that we're going to be reading. But Balaam becomes the centerpiece of the story and we're going to be with him for quite a while. We're gonna be with him in chapter 22, Chapter 23, and chapter 24. That's all Balaam; chapter 22 is the story and then chapter 23, we're going to get two Oracles, two prophecies from Balaam. The first and the second Oracle from Balaam, and then chapter 24, we're going to get the third and the fourth Oracle from Balaam. So four total prophecies, and they are absolutely powerful prophecies, beautiful prophecies about the nation of Israel. And based on what we're going to take a look at tonight, by the time we get to the end of chapter 24, and we read the story of this guy, Balaam, and we read about these powerful prophecies that he gives, we're probably going to be quite confused. What exactly is this guy? Where did he come from? What's he about? What makes him tick? He's a tough guy, really, to get a bead on. And I'm gonna try to help you do that, as best as I can tonight. So let's begin reading in verse one. We know that the nation of Israel now is on the move, they are no longer wandering. They are on the move. They're making progress. They're taking positive steps. And we've been following through their story of warfare. They're not even into the land of Canaan yet, so the conquest of Canaan hasn't begun. That didn't mean the battles didn't start already, they did. And Israel, if you remember, found themselves to be way stronger than they realized the dynamic behind them, the power of Yahweh has overwhelmed them, they realize suddenly, out of nowhere, up from a nation of slaves has come a global superpower, and one after another, we have read, as the nation of Israel has conquered their enemies seemingly with no problem, and no losses of life. A wonderful story as they're getting nearer to the Promised Land getting ready to go in. But we do have about five more months left of their story about five more months before they enter into the land of promise. So chapter 22, is going to give us another very interesting story of something that takes place in Israel's history during those final five months before the conquest of Canaan. Let's begin reading, verse one.

Then the people of Israel set out and camped in the plains of Moab, beyond the Jordan, at Jericho. So again, they're here, and they're actually going to be here for five months. They're not going to move again, until those five months are over and the Lord says, okay, land promise, go get them. God has planted them exactly where he wants them to be, so that he can do his last minute final preparations with them before they take on that task of conquest of Canaan. You might say they're in the batter's box. They're getting ready to hit, they're in the batter's box. So they're on the east side of the Jordan River, so what we just read in verse one is that you have Jericho, you have the Jordan River, and now you have Israel in camps. So they're staring across the river at Jericho, maybe that name Jericho reminds you in your Bible memory of a wonderful story in the nation of Israel's history. Well, that would be the very first city that the Lord has decided to give to the nation of

Israel. It's going to be their first battle, right? And the Lord is going to win that, that's their entrance into the land of Canaan; battle number one, Jericho, and the Lord is going to win that battle with not so much as a fight from the nation. It's just going to be a worship session, an extended worship session, that turns into an incredible victory as the walls of Jericho fall down. So here's Israel staring across the river, at that first location, that they're going to go in and try to take. A fortified city, Jericho, they have no idea what to expect. They don't know the Lord is going to drop the walls, they just know Wow, looks like a tough place to take. And while they're there for five months, we realize this is an exciting part of the story both for the nation of Israel and for us, as Bible students to read. We've read of so much failure, and now we're reading of success. Now we're reading of these stories that really start to show us what God had in mind, for the nation of Israel from the beginning. So here they are ready to go. They're in their location, they're in their spot, the Lord is going to do some final things. And verse two, and Balak, the son of Zippor again, that's the king of Moab, Balak, the son of Zippor, saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. In other words, they watched Israel whoop up on the Amorites.

The nation of Israel is being watched by its enemies, isn't it?

That's just a byproduct of being the light of the world. You know, God sets us up as believers as the light of the world, and he wants to make us visible to the world so that we can win the world to him. But if we're going to be visible to those, that the Lord is trying to reach, the necessary evil there, if you will, the byproduct of that, the negative of that is that we're also very visible to our enemies as well. And I find that usually, it's our enemies that watch us the closest, don't you think? I don't know, I just feel like the people that maybe aren't completely closed off to Christianity, they don't seem to watch us as closely, like what's Arlyn gonna say this week? I find it to be the enemies of God's people that watch God's people, the closest and the reason is that it's because they're always angling us.

They're looking for sore spots that they can poke. They're waiting for us to fall, so that they can dogpile on us. And really the only defense in that situation is to be the real deal with the Lord. And have as few weaknesses as possible. Because if we have weaknesses, the enemy is scoping those out and he will exploit them. I love the story here because Israel has no weakness, or no sore spot to show to the enemy. The enemy is watching them. They're like, wow, this is a formidable group. This is a group, this is an army with no weak spots. And we're in trouble. So you be that kind of Christian too, give the enemy as little material as possible because what you do give him, he will use against you. Verse three, and Moab was in great dread of the people. Moab was in great dread of Israel, because they were many. Now the old generation has passed on. This is the second generation but guaranteed, we're still pushing, if not well exceeding now 3 million plus citizens within the nation, that's a big army. When you have that many people as citizens, you're going to have a big army. And so we read here that Moab was overcome with fear. I love how the New King James Version words this it says that the people were sick with dread of the people of Israel. So they were so afraid of Israel that they made themselves sick over it.

Like so worried to the point that they were throwing up. You ever make yourself that sick with worry? Oh my goodness, I'm so worried, and start to feel nauseated. That's about the point that this group was at, Balak and all of the country there of Moab.

The reason that Israel makes Balak and Moab nervous is because as I mentioned in our study of Numbers chapter 21, two weeks ago, Israel has just whooped up on the Amorites. If you remember it was the Amorites, I told you, that had just recently come in and defeated and overthrew the Moabites and took the majority of their land and now Moab has watched Israel come in and whoop the superpower that had already just recently whooped them. So they're a shell of themselves, and now they see an army even greater than the

one that had defeated them recently. And it's like seeing the hand writing on the wall, and perceiving themselves to be on the brink of extinction. It is that same reason for which our enemies watch over us as closely as they do. They do that because we are a threat to their way of life.

They would never admit it in a million years, believe me, they would never admit it in a million years, but they do fear God. And that means that because they do fear God, they have to take us seriously. We're God's representatives. They're worried sick, that if too many people become Christians, that we might just get so big that we can take over the culture. And then we'll prevent them from being able to groom children into future perverts. Or we might prevent them from accessing their pornography online. Or we might prevent them from murdering their babies or whatever is on the agenda for this week. So we do, we do pose a threat to the world's way of life. And I say, Good, let them panic. I'm sorry, I have no sympathy for those kinds of people. I say let them panic. Because we are the salt of the earth. This is exactly what the Lord has called us to do.

If you're skittish with that role, I think you're in for some tough days ahead. I think you have to be comfortable in that role. That's why God put me here. As a Christian, I'm a light to the darkness in this world. I am salt, along with the rest of the church, I am salt that is supposed to preserve this world from total corruption, from total decay, from putrefaction. So we have to be okay with the bullseye on us as Christians, as believers. Verse four, and Moab said to the elders of Midian, this hoard will now lick up all that is around us as the ox licks up the grass of the field, they're going to eat us alive. We stand about as much chance against Israel as a blade of grass does to a hungry ox, we got no hope they're going to eat us alive.

The truth is that Israel actually poses no threat whatsoever to Moab. Moab doesn't know that but it's true. Balak's worry, as is the case with all worry, is absolutely unnecessary. It's totally unnecessary. Because the Lord commanded the nation of Israel in Deuteronomy chapter two, verse nine, to never attack the Moabites. They were actually descendants of Lot, you can read about that in Genesis chapter 19, verse 37. So Moab was a protected line Moab was actually technically a part of the family. That line was protected, and that land was protected. The Lord is going to tell Israel who to overtake. Moab is not on that list. Moab is on the DO NOT TOUCH protected list. So all Balak had to do here in this story is what?

Nothing. Absolutely nothing. If he does nothing, then there's no problem. And Moab, the whole country is just fine. Israel is eventually going to mosey along. All they have to do is nothing, but if Balak is that worried sick, then I think the second best thing that he could do is just to get together with Moses, sit down and have a talk. You know, Moses, be on the level with me here, what are your true intentions? We noticed that you are throwing out enemies as a parent would diapers. I mean, you're going through city after city and you're winning, you're a powerful force, be honest with us, are we next on the list? And if he would have just done that, if he would have had just an honest conversation with Moses, Moses would have said, No, we're family. We're from the line of Abraham here from the line of Lot, we're family. And besides, the Lord has actually forbidden us to attack you and take your land. You are completely safe with us we Israelites, we support BLM; Balak lives matter. We're totally on board with that. So nothing to be concerned about whatsoever. Makes me wonder how many needless wars are fought just because two leaders of two countries don't sit down and talk it out. Makes me wonder how many wars are fought just because someone has a suspicion or a fear and they think they need to strike first or they're doomed. I wonder how many relationships and just because two people won't sit down and talk it out. You just sit down, shoot straight, listen with no assumptions. We are really good as human beings at creating problems from nothing. You know how the Lord created the earth, He created the earth, everything out of nothing. Well, that's how we make our problems. We create our problems out of nothing. There's no reason for us to be worked up, but we're worked up and our suspicion for our spouse or that family member, or that friend, that suspicion drives us to do things that destroy that

relationship. As human beings, we need to get way better at that. We need to get way better at just sitting down, shooting straight with one another, opening it all up, listening with an open heart, and letting those problems those issues or even those baseless fears be dispelled by just some good open honest conversation.

Verse Four, reading on, so Balak, the son of Zippor who was king of Moab at the time, verse five, sent messengers to Balaam, the son of Beor at Pethor which is near the river in the land of the people of Amaw, to call him saying, Behold, a people has come out of Egypt, they cover the face of the earth, there's lots of them, and they are dwelling opposite me, verse six, come now, curse this people for me, since they are too mighty for me, perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them from the land. So Balaam, if you'll put a hex on these people, I might have a shot of beating them at war. If they're cursed, maybe they won't fight as well and I can overcome them. So he says, For I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed. So, Balak goes to Balaam for help. And here we are, Balaam, this very unusual person in the scriptures. Again, it's the guy that is tough to get a bead on, it's a guy that's tough to figure out, it's a guy that is tough to really adequately title with a great deal of certainty. It's tough to really find out what makes this guy tick, he is referred to as a prophet in Second Peter, chapter two, verse 16, but he is not a prophet in Israel. I don't even think he's a Jew. So that's the first oddity about this guy, he's a prophet, but he's not in the nation of Israel at all, probably not even a Jew. In fact, his name Balaam means not of this people.

I think that would make it tough fitting in in life, if that was the meaning of your name, not of this people. I just imagine him at like a dating meet and greet with the name tag that says, I don't belong. That's the meaning of his name, I don't belong. I just really don't belong anywhere. I'm kind of a loner, a rogue, I do my own thing. I'm kind of my own man.

So anyway, he's a prophet, but he's not a prophet in Israel. And here are a few other things that we know about Balaam. Anytime that Balaam is mentioned in the New Testament, he is cast in a very negative light, he is upheld for us as an example, that we should definitely not follow. So we are warned in the New Testament, to avoid the way of Balaam, that's second Peter chapter two, verse 15. We are warned in the scripture to avoid the error of Balaam, that's Jude chapter one, verse 11. And we are warned in the scripture to avoid the teaching or the doctrine of Balaam, and that's Revelation chapter two, verse 14. Now on top of that, we know he's cast in a negative light in the New Testament, but we have to admit, for some reason, this guy is a really big deal. There is more written about Balaam in the Bible than there is written about Mary, the Earthly Mother of Jesus, and as far as first person writing, so not third person writing, you know, writing about, but as far as first person writing goes, Balaam wrote more than any of the apostles with the exception of Paul, and maybe Peter, I don't know it's kind of a toss up. So there's more scripture written, prophetic scripture written by Balaam in God's word, than almost all of the apostles. So that's a crazy thought to us, right?

Balaam is found in 59 different verses in the Bible, and he's talked about in eight different books of the Bible. He's all over the place in the scripture from beginning to end. So yeah, the guy is a big deal. But I think what really helps us to kind of pin down who this guy is, and perhaps reveal to us His spiritual status, is what we read about in Joshua 13:22, where Joshua tells us the source of this prophet Balaam's prophecy. Joshua, according to him, it was divination, divination. In other words, he had his spiritual senses opened so that he could communicate in the spirit realm. But he didn't so much care about who he was communicating to, or with. God, the true God this week, false gods, demonic spirits next week, didn't matter to him who he was speaking to in the supernatural realm, so long as it would help him to accomplish whatever his given purpose was, at the time.

So who is this guy? What is he? I think, using New Testament terminology, using Old Testament terminology, I think the best thing to do with this guy would be to call him a seer, or a diviner because that's occultic

language that sort of identifies him as yes, he can see in the spirit realm, he can communicate with supernatural forces, but he's not necessarily the Lord's prophet. But since Peter has called him a prophet, I just want to be safe and state it plainly, that just because someone is referred to as a prophet in the Bible, it does not mean that they are a faithful prophet. And it does not mean even that they are God's prophet. If I were to define this guy with terms, I would use terms like this wicked Prophet, or false prophet and false prophet, doesn't mean inaccurate Prophet. Oh, you made a prophecy, you got it wrong, false prophet. No false prophet means a prophet, that refers to false gods in order to receive those prophecies. So I guess the reason that some people suggest that Balaam is a true prophet of God is because it is going to seem like that a lot as you read through Balaam's story. I mean, you can't help but think that at times. First of all, is going to seek Yahweh, he's going to seek the one true God, he's going to call him by name, he knows the covenant name of God, the tetragrammaton, YHWH, Yahweh. And their conversation is going to seem very master servant like. This guy is going to at least try to give off the appearance of obedience to God. And God, it seems, is very interested in working with this guy, and correcting this guy and steering this guy. Balaam is even going to confess in this chapter, that Yahweh is his Lord. So if we just go by what this guy says, he is a prophet of Yahweh. And if you want to say that, that's fine for you to say that I can argue both sides of this, but if you understand him to be a prophet of Yahweh, just make sure you do understand, he's not one of the Lord's good ones, if he is one of the Lords at all.

I guess one of the most challenging facts about this guy's life is that we find out when we get to Numbers, chapter 24, verse two, that the way these prophecies come from Balaam is the same way that prophecies come from the New Testament prophets. We read in Numbers, chapter 24, verse two, that the Spirit of God came upon Balaam. And then he prophesied. We call that in the New Testament, the baptism of the Holy Spirit. So that's a verse that boy, sure makes it sound like he's a prophet of God, doesn't it? Just not a very good one, not a very faithful one. But I could argue, that just because all of those things are true about Balaam, that still does not necessarily mean that he's a prophet of God. God can use anyone that he wants to. And if God is going to prophesy through someone, guess what, there's only one way for that to happen, and that is for the Holy Spirit to come upon that person. So the unwitting prophecy of Caiphias, that too came from the Holy Spirit, was Caiphias saved? No, he didn't even know he was prophesying truth. God used an unbeliever, a wicked man in his heart to make that prophecy. I think, my belief, is that that's what God does through this false Prophet Balaam. He uses him in this moment to convey a message and to do a work. But indeed, he is not a true prophet of the Lord. So back to the text here, verse six, Balaam has a reputation for knowing and doing the supernatural. He's a guy that if you wanted to curse someone, or bless someone, you could come to him, you could pay him and he could get the job done for you. Jay Vernon McGee calls him a prophet for profit, and that describes my title for this evening's message. In honor of the late Jay Vernon McGee, titled that message, prophet for profit, that's what he is, is a prophet for hire. That's one of the terrible things about him, he's consumed with greed, you're gonna see it here, and every time it's mentioned about in the New Testament, you're gonna see that as well. His issue was that he was greedy for gain. He was a prophet for hire, whatever you wanted him to do, whatever God he had to go through to get it done. He was the guy for the job, you pay up, and he would provide you a supernatural service.

Verse 7, So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the fees for divination in their hand, they have his paycheck, they're ready to pay this guy. And they came to Balaam and gave him Balak's message, verse eight, and he said to them, lodge here tonight, and I will bring back word to you as the Lord speaks to me. So the princes of Moab stayed with Balaam. And Balaam seeks the Lord that evening, while those Travelers Rest. Again, notice the word Lord here is in all caps, anytime you see it translated in all caps, you

know, that is the covenant name of God, Yahweh. So he uses God's covenant name. Clearly this guy Balaam knows the God of Israel. He knows enough about the God of Israel to know him by name.

But just because he knows the God of Israel in that sense, that doesn't mean he knows the God of Israel, in the salvation sense. Why is he praying to Yahweh, then? Why not just go to the other gods if he's a diviner? Well, it's because he plans to curse the nation of Israel and the way that occultic diviners and soothsayers and seers and false prophets work was that whatever God effected whatever it is that you needed to be affected, then you had to go to that God. He wants to curse the nation of Israel, so he knows who Israel's God is. And that's why he goes to Yahweh he goes to Israel's God, to seek that permission. Might sound ridiculous, but hey, this guy is used to the occultic realm. And you think those false gods, those gods that have demonic spirits behind them, weren't always up for turning on their own people. I think they were. Demonic spirits don't care about the people that follow and serve them. He doesn't know that about the Lord. Was Yahweh, the exclusive God that He prayed to? Again, Joshua, chapter 13, verse 22, no, he wasn't, this guy would go to any supernatural being that could help him to accomplish whatever it was that he needed to accomplish at the time. Verse nine, and God came to Balaam and said, Who are these men with you? And of course, we know that's not a question because the Lord didn't know the answer. When the Lord answers questions that he obviously knows, the reason for those are self discovery. He's given Balaam an opportunity to get God's point, which is you don't really know who these guys are, do you? You don't know who it is that you're even letting stay in your house. Anyone that throws some money at you, you're willing to entertain but you're mixed up with the wrong crowd here.

Verse 10, And Balaam said to God, Balak, the son of Zippor, king of Moab has sent to me saying, verse 11, behold, a people has come out of Egypt and it covers the face of the earth. Now come, curse them for me, perhaps I shall be able to fight against them and drive them out. Verse 12, God said to Balaam You shall not go with them, you shall not curse the people for they are blessed. Verse 13, So Balaam rose in the morning and said to the princes of Balak, go to your own land, go back home, tell King Balak, for the Lord has refused to let me go with you. I'm gonna give him a C on this. It's a passing grade, but it's not a great grade. It's a bad grade. And the reason I give him a passing grade is because at first he has at least being obedient to the Lord. God said no, so Balaam tells the men to tell Balak No.

However, God did say much more than no here, didn't he? Balaam makes it sound like that if it was up to him, he would take the offer. But the Lord won't let him go. That's kid stuff. You know, that's like when you're eight years old, and your friends come over and ask you to go ride bikes, and dad says, No, so you're like, I'm sorry, Dad said no. That's kind of what his response is to Balak's servants, His messengers. I'm sorry, I want to go. But the Lord said, No.

What about this? Maybe he should have just said this. Okay, I found out what you were wanting to know. Guess what? Those people you want to curse. Impossible. Yahweh really loves them, Yahweh blesses them, there's no way around this, they're impossible to curse. So you're gonna have to find another way to handle this situation. And don't be asking me to do anything that would grieve the heart of God. So back to Moab, you go hit the road, Jack, and don't come back no more, no more, no more, no more. That would have been closing the door to temptation, wouldn't it have? Like if that was his response? Then this story ends and Balaam in our estimation, gets an A. We would see Balaam as a good profit here, a faithful profit, but he leaves the door cracked open for temptation. Ephesians chapter four, verse 27, says, Give no opportunity to the devil. Paul would tell us make no provisions for the flesh. You don't set yourself up for failure in the future. You don't purposefully allow things into your life that very may well trip you up tomorrow or a week from now. You try to close all those doors that you can. You don't be quiet about your Christianity on the job

thinking maybe that's the best approach. That's gonna end up as a temptation. That's leaving that door cracked open. Maybe you have that opposite sex coworker that you're developing a relationship with, oh, it's just work. And you fail to say, Listen, I value your friendship, if it's honorable, but I gotta tell you, I love my spouse. And there's no way I'd break that trust. That's closing the door to temptation. That's making sure there's no provision in the future for the flesh to arise and cause us to fall. So we got to be careful about that. As Christians we got to be good at closing all those doors, shut every opportunity that you see that the enemy may have in the future so that he can't use it against you. Instead, in this story, that door is left open for Balak to sweeten up the offer. And of course, that's exactly what he's going to do. Give Balak an inch and they'll try to take a mile. Give Satan an inch and he'll try to take a mile.

Verse 14, So the princess of Moab rose, and went to Balak and said, Balaam refuses to come with us. Verse 15, once again, Balak sent princes more in number and more honorable than these, so he's sweetening up the deal. And he's attempting to appeal to Balaam's pride. Let nothing hinder you from coming to me, you're the most important thing, you're the only guy that can do this. We really need you and to prove it, I've sent you my top guys, I've sent you my VIPs, I've sent you my top reps to try to convince you of how much we need you and how special you are to us, we love you.

Verse 16, and they came to Balaam and said to him thus says Balak, the son of Zippor, let nothing hinder you from coming to me verse 17 For I will surely do you great honor. And whatever you say to me, I will do. Come curse this people for me. So Balak still thinks that the nation of Israel can be cursed. All he knows is that Balaam wouldn't come. Balak still thinks well this people could still be cursed if we can just get this guy to agree with it. Because again, this guy Balaam did not close the door to temptation. So Balak thinks, you know you sweeten the deal, hey, you just show up, we'll make a big fuss over you. You name your price, whatever your price is, we'll pay it because all that matters is that we get the end product that we want the nation of Israel cursed. And Balaam, if I was him, I wouldn't be concerned about the price that he could get, I would be concerned about the cost of going against the Lord.

Verse 18, But 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 go beyond the command of the Lord my God, there it is, could not go beyond the command of the Lord my God, to do less or more, verse 19, so you too please stay here tonight, that I may know what more the Lord will say to me. So I don't know about you, but I know professional haggling when I see it. This is exactly what professional haggling do. They want to start by setting the price high. So it's something like this: Well, I couldn't possibly part with that pocket watch, that's priceless to me. It's invaluable. That was my daddy's pocket watch. No way I would ever sell it to you for any amount of money. But I really want it. Okay, how's 50,000? That's the way these things work. The price is set high, the value is I mean, this still happens over in the Middle East to this day, this still happens, this haggling process in the marketplaces. Make it sound like Oh, no way I could never part with this. Then you start with a very high price that you can then haggle around. So 50,000, what will you take 200 for it? No, how about 40,000? So on and on the haggling goes until there's a compromised price that is reached. That's what this guy's doing. He's giving himself room to set that price very high. If he's able to pull this off, how do I know that's what he's doing? Come on, verse 18, he says I couldn't do it for all the money in the world. And then verse 19, he says, we'll stick around and we'll see though. Come on, he's haggling. He's letting them know, look, this is really an inconvenience for me, if I'm going to do this, wow. It's going to cost an arm and a leg.

I would say to you that when the Lord gives you an answer, just take that answer. If it's a no, let it be a no, and move on with your life. Now, if you aren't real sure about that being the Lord's answer. And if you need confirmation, Lord, I think maybe you said no. Or maybe because this happened, You're telling me no. If that's

what you think, then by all means, keep knocking. keep asking, keep seeking until you get that confirmation from the Lord. But church when you know that you know that the Lord said no, then the answer should be no. And you should be content with that. And there's a very important reason why. And that is because most people perhaps don't realize this, but the Lord can be talked out of His perfect will for your life. And he can allow his permissive will to happen in your life. But I will tell you, it is never going to be as good as God's perfect will for your life. In fact, sometimes his permissive will in your life is nearly devastating. And I'll tell you why, anytime the Lord gives you His perfect will, and you refuse and you try to constantly renegotiate, and God finally tells you okay, fine, permissive will, go for it, what the Lord is doing is he's preparing to teach you a lesson. And those lessons can be costly, they can be hard, the end of all those lessons is to prove to you that, hey, I probably should have just listened to the Lord the first time. I probably shouldn't have tried to talk the Lord out of doing this. And that's the error of Balaam here.

He knows what God has said, he wants that money, he wants that paycheck so bad he's trying to renegotiate with God. God says, Okay, fine, go. But you got to know that from that moment forward in God's heart, is the intention to correct and to teach a hard lesson too. So that's sort of how this whole thing is going.

The apostle Peter, and so does Jude, tell us that this guy was motivated by gain from wrongdoing, that's second Peter chapter two verse 15. And Jude said that Balaam's error was that he abandoned himself for gain. That's again, Jude chapter one, verse 11. So yes, Balaam knows what God has said, but he is not done trying to find a workaround so that he can get that paycheck. Verse 20, and God came to Balaam at night and said to him, if the men have come to call you, rise, go with them, but only do what I tell you. Verse 21, so Balaam rose in the morning and saddled his donkey, and went with the princess of Moab. Verse 22, but God's anger was kindled because he went and the angel of the Lord took his stand in the way as his adversary. Now he was riding on the donkey, and his two servants were with him. So no two ways about it. I'll double down on this, God did not want this for Balaam. God's perfect plan was that he not go, did he not get involved in this situation at all, certainly that he would not curse the nation of Israel. But God has allowed Balaam to go and have a conference with Balak, God was not happy about that. We see proof of it. Verse 22, God's anger was kindled. And that is because that when the Lord does agreed to give you some leeway in his permissive will, that is not necessarily a promise that he won't be upset about it. It won't be a promise that he's not going to teach you a hard lesson. Balaam's instructor for this hard lesson, the angel of the Lord. We remember who the angel of the Lord is in the Old Testament, that's Jesus. Jesus is this guy's instructor for a lesson in life's hard knocks, for a lesson in why you should listen to the Lord the first time, and not try to talk the Lord out of what he knows to be the best for your life. This is what we call a christophany, anytime we read of the angel of the Lord in the Old Testament, it's not just an angel of the Lord, it's a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. He's not taking on flesh and blood, of course, in this passage, but he is taking on a human form. And this was something that he did quite a few times in the Old Testament, and it is the New Testament that points that out to us, that the angel of the Lord from the Old Testament is none other than Jesus a christophany, a pre incarnate appearance of Christ. Verse 23, and the donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand, and the donkey turned aside out of the road and went into the field, and Balaam struck the donkey to turn her into the road. Now, I've been doing a lot of research on donkeys and mules because I am interested in them for our farm. Yeah, Maggie does know that by now. I won't say if she's happy about it or not, but she does know about it.

I have found out that donkeys are considered stubborn, mostly because they are highly intelligent and they are way more careful than horses. I've actually watched these exercises, and they'll take and they'll lead a horse into danger. And the horse, if it's pressed, it is far more likely to just run right into danger. I've seen them lead horses over something treacherous, and that horse will go over it without inspection. But if you try

to do those things with a donkey, you get a different result. If you try to lead a donkey into danger, it's going to try to stop and go around unless you force it to do otherwise. And I mean, you're gonna have to force it, because that's where they get their title, their character trait of stubborn. If you try to lead a donkey to step over something treacherous, is going to do something way different than a horse. It's going to stop, it's going to observe, it's going to look and then it's going to proceed with caution very carefully, very slowly, and it's going to step over whatever it is that's treacherous. A horse will run right over it and break something. So horses are more prone to injuries. Donkeys are intelligent, far more careful and way more likely to protect themselves and those that are riding them. So what we see here is typical donkey behavior the donkey sees something that Balaam doesn't. She sees Jesus with a sword, and she intends to go around.

And Balaam is mad because the donkey isn't going where Balaam is leading the donkey so he strikes the donkey. Now the better way to correct a donkey is something other than striking it, but he's mad, he's angry so he strikes it, whack. Verse 24, Then the angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path between the vineyards and a wall on either side. Verse 25, And when the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she pushed against the wall and pressed or pinched Balaam's foot against the wall. So he struck her again, whack. Verse 26, Then the angel of the Lord went ahead and stood in a narrow place. You see what's happening here, right? The Lord is trying to stop this, he starts out in the open, the donkey tries to go around and whack the donkey gets hit. Then he tries to pin this down even further, he goes to a narrow spot and stands and the donkey tries to press around him and ends up Pinching the foot of Balaam and whack the donkey gets hit again. Now the angel of the Lord is positioned in a place that is impassable, to the donkey. There was no way to turn either to the right or to the left. When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she lay down, under Balaam. Down she goes. And Balaam's, anger was kindled and he struck the donkey with his staff. He's actually beating the donkey for being intelligent and careful. The donkey has assessed the situation, sees the danger sees that it's impassable, so down the donkey goes as a way to protect her, and of course, Balaam indirectly, but Balaam doesn't know what the donkey knows. So the donkey gets a beat a third time. Verse 28, Then 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? What's wrong with you, dude?

Now as greedy as Balaam is for money, I'm very surprised that he didn't stop this trek, right here and go start his own circus. You know how much money you can make with a talking donkey? I mean, think like an entrepreneur here. That's a moneymaker. That's a printing press. That's a money tree. But though he's a prophet, I guess he's not much of an entrepreneur. He doesn't think about that.

So yeah, the elephant in the room is that we have a talking donkey in verse 28. And this is one that unbelievers really enjoy making fun of us over, oh my gosh, you Christians, your religious book has a talking snake and a talking donkey in it, and yet you're still dumb enough to not see it as a fictional made up book? Well, I gotta tell you, a talking donkey does not weaken my faith in the God who spoke all of creation into existence. If God could just think it and then speak it, and everything that we see came into creation, then yes, of course, God could cause a donkey to speak. So again, if we believe Genesis one, one, that in the beginning, God created the heavens in the earth, then, of course, we believe that God could make a donkey speak. On top of that, talking animals, that's not a new thing. I have seen talking dogs, I have seen talking cats, I have seen talking parrots, and I kid you not two of those parrots cursed me out. They were very foul mouthed. That is true. I've seen talking animals. So really, the issue here is not that an animal can talk. It's that an animal can form full sentences like this. You know, I've seen dogs and cats and parrots and various things like that, I've seen them talk. And you can tell they understand what they're saying because they talk in the right context at the right time. Maybe what they can't do is carry on a full sentence like this, like, Dude, what are you doing? You've beat me three times. I've never heard a parrot say anything like that, or a cat or a dog. So it's a little bit out of

the ordinary. But this is the God of all creation that is behind this. So I say, big deal. God made it happen. I have no trouble believing it. A talking donkey isn't really the alarming part of this verse, or this chapter. The alarming part is that Balaam talks back with this talking donkey as if nothing's happening, as if it's not unusual. He's carrying on a conversation with a talking donkey rather than checking himself into the psych ward. So that's what's alarming to me about the chapter but you be alarmed by whatever it is that you'd be alarmed by that you're right.

Verse 29, And Balaam said to the donkey, here's why I beat you three times, thank you for asking. Here's why. Because you have made a fool of me. I wish I had a sword in my hand for then I would kill you. Do you realize what this is? This is the first recorded incidence of road rage. It's true. This guy is on his road to his paycheck, he is mad because there's been traffic problems. And this is a road rage incident. He gets so angry that he doesn't seem the least bit deterred by the fact that his donkey is having an argument with him and said he argued back and the weird thing is that the donkey is not done arguing and the donkey is going to make sure to get the last word. Verse 30, And the donkey said to Balaam, Am I not your donkey? On what you have ridden all your life long to this day? Is it my habit to treat you this way? And he said, No.

I love this story.

This donkey is just letting him have it. This donkey is berating his master, you know, haven't I always been a good donkey? Yes. Have I ever done anything wrong to you? No, you're right, donkey.

So the only thing worse than arguing with the donkey, in my opinion, is losing that argument, which Balaam has just effectively done. You win donkey, you're right. Verse 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 down and fell on his face. Balaam finally gets to see what his quote unquote dumb donkey has seen the whole time. It's just a bad chapter for Balaam really. His donkey is more perceptible than him. His donkey beats him in debate. Just a question of who owns who here like, I don't know, I'm kind of thinking I bet maybe on the ride home, it was the donkey riding Balaam, not sure who owns who here. Verse 32, And the angel of the Lord said to him, why have you struck your donkey these three times? Because I have come out to oppose you. Because your way is perverse before me. Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Reminds us that the Lord loves animal life doesn't he? We read in the law not all that long ago, that it's the righteous man that cares for the life of his animal. Verse 33, the donkey saw me and turned aside before me these three times, this is the Lord talking, and if she had not turned aside for me surely just now I would have killed you and let her live.

What a story, huh? Wow. Good stuff, indeed.

So let's clear up what this whole donkey incident is about. And I'll try to do that quickly because I'm running out of time. Most people don't understand why this story is in here. Because there seem to be some complexities with it. Considering that the whole flow of this is, Balaam goes to God, I want to do this Lord, what do you think? The Lord says No. Balaam comes back, Lord, just checking back in if you change your mind. The Lord says, okay, okay, cool. Go. Go ahead and go. So the Lord has given him permission. And now it looks like the Lord is trying to stop him. And that's going to be the way that he takes this as well. So I guess that's really the question to answer, is the Lord trying to stop him from going where the Lord told him he could go? And the answer to that question is no. And that's what you need to know about this story. The Lord is not trying to stop him at all.

What is the Lord trying to do?

The Lord is trying to teach him a lesson. All right, so what's that lesson? Listen very closely. What is the lesson that the Lord is trying to teach Balaam through this incident with his donkey, here's what it is. The donkey has been faithful to you all of your life. The donkey has been nothing but good to you. The donkey saw stuff that you could not see. The donkey saved your life three times. And you had no right to resist the donkey's choice of direction. Okay? Now if you take out the word donkey and you replace it with the name God, now you have the lesson that the Lord was trying to teach Balaam, let me read that back to you again. But this time instead of donkey, I'm gonna say God, here it is, ready? God has been faithful to you all your life. God has been nothing but good to you. God sees stuff you can't see. God has saved you multiple times already. So you have no right or reason to question God's direction. In other words, this whole story is to bring Balaam to the point where the Lord can teach him. Guess what, buddy? You need to learn to listen to the Lord the first time. That's the meaning of this whole incident that we read. It's like a picture lesson that I am pretty sure this guy will never ever forget. He's probably even going to have nightmares about this, you know, arguing with his donkey and his donkey just beating him back. I don't know. This is going to be a lesson he's never going to forget in all of his life.

Verse 34, then Balaam said to the angel of the Lord, ah, I have sinned. For I did not know that you stood in the road against me now. Therefore, if it is evil in your sight, I will turn back. So see he thinks, Okay, Lord, maybe you don't want me to go, I get it. I shouldn't have gone maybe you don't want me to go now? And the Lord's gonna say no, no, I do want you to still go. But I did want you to learn the lesson in the process. Verse 35, And the angel of the Lord said to Balaam go with the men, but speak only the word that I tell you get better at listening, Balaam. So, Balaam went on with the princes of Balak. Verse 36, when Balak heard that Balaam had come he went out to meet him at the city of Moab on the border formed by the Arnon, at the extremity of the border. Verse 37, And Balak said to Balaam did I not send to you to call you? Why did you not come to me? Am I not able to honor you? What's happening there is that Balaam has reached the city, and apparently he was dragging his feet wherever he was on the extremity of the border. He hasn't gone to see Balak immediately and that bothers Balak. You know, why didn't he come right away? Well, this guy's processing some weird stuff that just happened. And he's like, did that really happen back there? Or how long did I go without water in that sun? I mean, so he's processing all of this. Verse 38, Balaam said to Balak, Behold, I have come to you. Have I now any power of my own to speak anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that must I speak, the Lord has really pinned me down on this. And he's not gonna let me do anything he doesn't want me to do or say anything that he doesn't want me to say. Verse 39, Then Balaam went with Balak and they came to Kiriath-huzoth. Verse 40, And Balak sacrificed oxen and sheep, and sent for Balaam and for the princes who were with him, verse 41, and in the morning, Balak took Balaam and brought him up to Bamoth-baal and from there, he saw a fraction of the people. What's he doing? He's getting up where he can have visibility of the entire encampment, because this is an occultic thing to do. When you're putting a hex on people, or you know, quote, unquote, white magic, you're trying to bless people, they believe that the odds of it being successful increase if you are face to face with that person, or if it's a large group of people if you are within eyeshot of them. So that's what this is about. It's looking out over all of the people so that this curse that he's going to maybe level out can have the most impact and effect on all of the people the nation of Israel below. So next week, chapter 23, we're going to begin to read the prophecies that the Lord gives him this, story just keeps getting interesting. It doesn't get any more bizarre than the donkey. That's certainly the most bizarre part of the story. But the whole thing is very interesting. If you know the story, you know what's going to happen here, Balaam is going to try his hardest to get this paycheck. He is going to try his hardest to curse the nation of Israel, but every time he opens his mouth instead of cursing, what comes out? Blessing, blessing. All right, let's stand.