



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Numbers 23: 27 – 24: 13

TRANSCRIPT

“The Prophecies of Balaam, part III: Israel Blessed and the Touchstone of the Gentiles.”

[Prayer] Father, we give Thee thanks for the Word of God and for the privilege that is ours this evening. We thank Thee for the Holy Spirit who teaches and instructs us in the things of the Lord. May our minds and hearts be open to the word. May we be responsive and by Thou grace. May we grow from our time together this evening. We thank Thee for the way in centuries past Thou didst speak.

We thank Thee for the great promises that have been given to which Thou art still faithful and have been faithful down through the centuries. We look forward to the consummation of them in the future. And now we ask that Thou be with us in our study in this hour.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Prayer] Returning to the third of the prophecies of Balaam, which the false prophet made in the plains of Moab on the way to the land of the promise. And the subject for tonight as we turn to chapter 23 in verse 27 of the Book of Numbers through chapter 24, verse 13 is Israel blessed and the touchstone of the gentiles. The relevance of the study of Israel in the Scriptures is really supernatural. In fact, when you think about

the fact that after all of these centuries, Israel is still in the center of things that are happening upon the earth. You can certainly see the supernatural way in which God has superintended the giving of his word and especially his supernatural providence on the preservation of these people.

We see this on the front pages of our paper now in 1985, 4000 years or so, not quite, since the promises were made to Abraham and it's almost as if they are just as relevant as if they were spoken a few years back. Today, we read in our papers of the bombing of the office of Northwest Orient Airlines and its office in Copenhagen and Denmark. And we notice the reason that the Islamic Jihad said that they bombed it was because of the Nation Israel, and because of the United States' friendship with the nation Israel. So, right on the right pages of the paper is still the Nation Israel.

Now, we don't have anything on the front pages of our papers constantly about the Parthians. We do not have anything on the front pages of our paper week after week about the Hittites or the Norseman or things like this but we have Israel on the important place in our news in 1985. It truly is a testimony to the sovereign providence of the Lord God and to his determination to fulfill the promises that he gave concerning them.

I know that someone may say well, it was only in 1948 that Israel became a nation and then she came to be the center of a great deal of discussion over the world but if you will go back and study history, you will find the Jews have been at the center of things down through the centuries. And it's really not something brand new. It is something that has been going on. It is just more prominent now than it was. So, when we read these ancient prophecies that Balaam, the prophet from Mesopotamia, gave and read them carefully, I am sure you will come to the conviction that he was speaking things that are relevant for us today.

A short review of the prophecies of Balaam at this point include these things; Balaam, remember, was a false prophet, it seems. There are some questions about this and one may want to debate to the point because there were certain advantages that he

had that are very close to descriptions of things that true believers may have. But nevertheless, it seems that the weight of evidence stands on the side of Balaam being a man who had a great knowledge of Yahweh, a great knowledge of the true religion but who nevertheless himself did not have any experience other than the saving way. The things are to be said about him in Jude and second Peter and Revelation chapter 2 seemed to confirm them.

But he was a false prophet with a great deal of the knowledge God. He loved the wedges of unrighteousness but he did not love righteousness. And there is a whole lot of difference between the two as you well know. He was permitted by God to prophesy for Balak even though God had made it plain to him that it was not his preceptive will that Balaam prophesy for Balak. But nevertheless, permissively, because in that ages past he had decreed that Balaam would prophesy. He was permitted to go with Balak or to go to Balak and there to prophesy. But he was told of course that he can only prophesy the things that the Lord put in his mind.

Now it seems the providence made every attempt to keep him from going even then or even though he was given permission. It's almost as if the Lord kept constantly reminding him. "You are not doing that which is best for yourself because the ass, the angel, and the crushed foot all testified to the fact that he was going against the preceptive will of the Lord God. Even the dumb ass tried to save the eloquent prophet but really the ass was the one riding, not the one being ridden. So, Balaam continued then he went. You know that people sometimes say in the days of Balaam, it was considered a miracle when an ass spoke. Things have changed.

There are some very interesting blunders that were committed by Oxford undergraduates on the Scripture exam. Many years ago, in Oxford all of the graduates of that university had to pass a Scripture exam. Untold by some but this is not so true today but into modern times it was true. Now the kind of exam that they took was generally an exam about facts of the Bible, but the British do not have the same attitude toward the

relationship between the state and religion that we have in the United States and so all graduates of the university were required to pass a Scripture examination. Hence what you might have expected many of them down through the years have said some rather strange things in these exams.

Here are a couple of them: One was asked who was the first king of Israel, either by accident or real knowledge he readily answered "Saul," then wishing to give a little more additional scripture information. He said, "Saul afterwards called Paul". Another undergraduate was asked which were the two instances in the Bible where we have the record of lore animals having spoken and he once replied, "Balaam's ass". Yes, said the examiner that's one, now the other? The young man answer after a slight hesitation, "The whale, the whale said unto Jonah, 'Almost thou persuadest me to become a Christian.'" [Laughter]

Well, he was right about Balaam's ass. Balaam's ass was given by God the power to respond. Balaam's two prophecies, we have seen the two so far, have been prophecies that give us general information about the divine *baugeschichte*. Now *baugeschichte* is a very prominent and popular word today and people in Believers Chapel ought to know it. It's a German word that means the history of salvation. So it is a word that really refers to the progress of divine revelation. It's a word that refers to God's plan of the ages.

Now remember, we are in the early stages of the unfolding of the divine plan of salvation. That is the total plan or God's plan of the ages. So we are not surprised to read that these prophecies that Balaam has given are very general prophecies. There are certain specific things in them, but the really specific things await later revelation, which will fill in details of various things that are spoken. But the prophecies so far, are prophecies that have to do with the nation Israel and they outline both the present of the nation and the future.

They say certain things about it like this; chapter 23 in verse 8: "How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? How shall I defy whom God hath not defied?" So it's obvious that from this statement that Israel has been chosen of the Lord for a special purpose. In verse 19, "God is not a man that He should lie and neither the son of man that He should repent. Hath he not said, shall he not do it or has he spoken and shall He not make it good." In other words he is going to fulfill those promises to the nation. And then verse 21, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob; neither has he seen perverseness in Israel." So he is talking about the special position that Israel has before the Lord God. Then in verse 10 of chapter 23, we read: "Who can count the dust of Jacob or the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his!"

Now it's obvious from this that he is talking not simply about Israel today, but Israel in the future and by a prophetic insight he sees that Israel has such a glorious future. That speaking by prophetic inspiration, he says he would love to have his own last end like Israel's. In verse 23 also refers to the future: "Surely there is no enchantment against neither is there any divination against Israel." According to this time, it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel that is according to the proper time remember what hath God wrote: "Behold the people shall rise up as a great lion and lift himself up as a young lion. You shall not lie down until he eat of the prey and drink of the blood of the slain." So the glorious future of Israel as a future of conquest and ultimate blessing in general form and in very general terms is stated here.

Those are the words that C.F. Kyle, one of the old commentators, says concerning these prophecies of Balaam. He says that Balaam predicts Israel's blessing "in general terms". And what he means is that he is giving a general picture about the specific details and await further Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament. But Kyle's words were in great general terms.

Now let's look at verse 27 through chapter 24 and verse 2 and I'll read this verse then we will notice the prophetic situation in which the third of his great Messianic prophecies has given. And Balak said unto Balaam, "Come I pray Thee, I will bring Thee onto another place for adventure and it will please God that Thou mayest curse me them from thence." And Balak brought Balaam onto the top of the Peor that looketh toward Jeshimon.

Now that is the way the Authorized Version renders that but the word Jeshimon is a word that means wilderness or a desert and many of the modern translations have opted for that translation and that is perfectly proper so if you have it that's a reference to the plains of Moab where the children of Israel are before Jericho. And Balaam said unto Balak, "Build me here seven altars and prepare me here seven bullocks and seven rams." And Balak did as Balaam had said and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar. And when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he went not as in other times to seek for enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness and Balaam lifted up his eyes and he saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes and the Spirit of God came upon him.

Now Balak, remember, has a great problem and his problem is essentially this. This great mass of people have come up. They have already overthrown the Amalekites who in turn had defeated the Moabites and so he is very fearful of them and thinking that the way to defeat them is to get a false prophet or to get a prophet to prophesy a curse against them. He has sent for Balaam. So his solution for his problem is prophesy.

We live in a different day. People today find the solution for the difficulties in violence. That's the way the Iranians solved their problems. That's the way others solve their problems. Over in Beirut and Lebanon they solve their problems by violence, but in those days, they tried to get a prophet who would prophesy against someone because often most prophecies seemed to come true.

Now Balak is a very persevering man. He didn't know anything about the perseverance of the saints, but he has certainly practiced the perseverance of sinners because he has been defeated twice, but now he is still going to try to get Balaam to prophesy against the children of Israel. He thinks that maybe the reason the prophecies haven't worked so far is that Balaam has not been standing in the proper place and so he is going to take him out to an even higher place and the place to which he takes them is the top of Peor. That's in the Pisgah range, and of course Mt. Nebo is probably the highest place but this is a higher place than where he has been, and now he evidently can see all of the children of Israel and Balak thinks perhaps if he can see them all, then his prophecies will come true.

David Wenham when speaking of this says "Third time lucky is Balak's motto." It was true that in ancient times there are some documentation of the fact that people did offer sacrifices for as many as three or four times and, in fact, some well known men like Suetonius, the Latin author, comments upon the fact that if you perform the sacrifice for four times, on the fourth what you are interested in would come true. We do not know that there is anything like that in Balak's mind, but that's precisely what happens and so when he comes to Balaam again, takes him to the top of Peor as he looks out over the desert and sees the whole of the children of Israel, Balaam goes through his same regimen again, but this time he knows that he is not going to have to perform any sorcery because he knows by now he is not going to be able to give any false prophecies.

He just going to say what God wants him to say, and he has already discovered that the Lord is not pleased to curse Israel. He rather is pleased to bless Israel. So he does not bother with enchantments and divinations and sorcery so we are told in verse 24, but he lifts up his eyes. He looks out and he sees Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes. And remember the children of Israel, 12 tribes all were around the tabernacle, three tribes on the north, three on the east, three on the south, three on the west. All in order. And that's what he means when he says he lifted up his eyes and saw

Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes. And as he was looking at Israel the Spirit of God came upon him. So, great preparation has been made now. Everything is fine so far as Balak is concerned for Balaam to come out with the proper the kind of prophecy.

Now, when Moses writes this, he says in the second verse that Balaam lifted up his eyes and he saw Israel. That is not the only thing he saw. Because we read in verse 4, "He had said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty." So, Balaam is a person who saw Israel objectively, externally, but he saw internally, and one might say, subjectively, though I think, internally is the better word. He saw the vision, as he says here, of the Almighty. So he fell into a trance. Obviously, it's something like prophetic ecstasy and, so my text says, "He had his eyes open."

By the way, there is a great deal of dispute over this particular word, "open", because it seems more likely that it means closed rather than open. And if it does mean closed, then the point of it is that he was closed with reference to the outward view now, and was receiving an inward vision. But we will leave it as it is, having his eyes open, in which sense it means that he is open to the ministry of the Lord God to him through the Holy Spirit.

So the Holy Spirit has come upon him and he sees Israel, but at the same time, he falls into a prophetic trance or ecstasy and now, he is given a vision of the Lord God Almighty. Now people can read this, and continue to read it and try to figure out exactly what kind of trance it is that Balaam falls into, but so far as I am concerned, no one today knows how Balaam felt.

The reason I say that is because, to my mind, there are no prophets today. There are no prophets that fall into trances and give us biblical revelation, because that's what is meant by a prophet. A prophet is a person who gives revelation, not instruction. Not teaching. Not exposition. Not preaching. Not proclamation. But a prophet is one who gives revelation. But the revelation is closed. We have no prophets today. Now, we

have lots of people who claim to be prophets, and I suggest if you have some spiritual maturity at all, that if you want to be convinced that they are not giving prophecies, just read their prophecies. That will do more than anything else.

A lot of people often wonder about the fact that the Mormons claim inspiration for the Books of Mormon. Well, the greatest cure for that is to read the Books of Mormon. There are others who claim inspiration from the Koran. The greatest cure for that is to read the Koran, and so on. And I assure you that if you read those pieces of literature, you will discover that the word of God, as we know it, the 66 inspired books of the Old and New Testament, they stand on an entirely different plain above those books that were written only by men.

I know great claims are made. In fact, there are people today who claim to be apostles. Oral Roberts the other day said there are five apostles today. He is one of them. Richard is one, his son. He is, so far as I know, the first divorced apostle, but nevertheless, he is an apostle. And then there are two Kenneths, Kenneth Hagan, and Kenneth Copeland, and there is one other unknown apostle, unknown to me. I have forgotten what his name is, but I am not going to do any research to find out, but we don't have any prophets, and we don't have any apostles today in the sense of the Twelve or of the Apostle Paul.

Balaam fell into a prophetic ecstasy it seems, and he was given that unusual experience since, but exactly how he felt, I couldn't tell you how he felt. And I say, I don't think anybody else, alive today as a human being could tell you what this was. It was a prophetic trance and what came from him is a magnificent Messianic prophecy, and that's what we want to look at now for the remainder of our time.

I think it can be divided primarily into two parts. There is first the word of blessing. "Israel is exalted and to be exalted." And then a word of, what I would call, bane for the nations of the Earth, because Israel is the touchstone for the blessing of the Gentiles.

Now let's look at verse 5 through verse 7. Here is Balaam, in his prophetic trance. And so he says he sees the vision of the Almighty. He has fallen into this trance, actually he has fallen down, like Saul did when he prophesied, and yet he has his eyes open, open to the Lord and out come these words, which were so disappointing to Balak. "How goodly are thou tents for Jacob, and thy Tabernacles, O Israel. As the valleys are they spread forth. As has gardens by the riverside. As the trees of lined aloes, which the Lord hath planted and as cedar trees beside the waters. He shall pour the water out of his buckets and his seed shall be in many waters and his king shall be higher than Agag and His Kingdom shall be exalted."

Now you can see immediately that one of the major things that Balaam makes in this prophecy, one of the major points is that Israel is going to be prosperous. They are described in ways that suggest that, and also to be exalted in the Kingdom of God. The word that he speaks, speaks of them in the present, but it goes on to include the future as well. And so we have in broad, general terms, a picture of Israel's future, given in very figurative language, and lots of figures of speech notice, "As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the riverside. It has the trees of lined aloes, which the Lord hath planted and has cedar trees beside the waters." Incidentally, cedar trees were rarely beside the waters. And this was just the side of an extra blessing, because cedar trees were known for the permanency of their wood. Hard and prominent. But these cedar trees are by the waters, which in a sense is like a double blessing.

Now let's pick out a few things and let's remember, or perhaps it would be good for us, let's just take our Bibles, we have a few moments, turn back to Genesis chapter 12 and let us read again verse 1 through verse 3 of Genesis chapter 12. These verses contain the first giving of the Abrahamic Covenant, repeated so often in various ways through the remainder of the Bible. "Now the Lord had said unto Abraham, "Get Thee out of thy country and from thy kindred and from thy father's house unto a land thou will show thee." Notice the emphasis upon the land, right from the beginning? "And I will make of

Thee a great nation and I will bless thee, and make thy name great and thou shalt be a blessing."

Now incidentally, we don't have time tonight to go into all the details, and it is possible somebody has slipped in and wouldn't be here next week, or maybe forever for that matter. And when it is stated that he is a blessing, we should never think that these are promises that were given to Abraham only. These facets of these blessings are repeated to others later on. They were confirmed to Isaac, confirmed to Jacob. And so, there is an indication right from the beginning that they were promises given to the people. And finally, as you know in the New Testament, the seed of Abraham is said to be the Lord Jesus Christ himself. So now in verse 2, "I'll make of Thee a great nation, I will bless Thee and make thy name great and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that blessed Thee and curse him that curseth Thee and in thee, shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

I would like for you to notice a few of the things that you can see in Balaam's third great prophecy. First of all, the reference to the land, in verse 6, "As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the riverside. As the trees of lined aloes which the Lord hath planted and has cedar trees beside the waters." So the picture is of a people in a most prosperous condition. Trees of fragrant lined aloes were trees that were noted for their fragrance and then, of course, the cedar trees were noted for their long-lasting character. The abundance of water that is mentioned here would be particularly significant for Eastern people, because water was the difficult thing for them to find. The Texans can understand that too. So the picture is a picture of prosperity, so far as the people are concerned.

Now notice the second thing in verse 7. "He shall pour the water out of his buckets and his seeds shall be in many waters and his king shall be higher than Agag," in other words, a king. Now later on, in the history of Israel, remember Saul does slay a king by the name of Agag, who was king of the Amalekites. But that is not the reference

here. Some people have thought that perhaps, that was the reference here, and therefore, Balaam's prophecy was not really early, but later and written after that event in which Saul slew Agag. But Agag was a name for kings like pharaoh was a name for the rulers of Egypt. In other words, Agag was a name given to Amalekite kings. In Germany, the kaiser. In Russia, the czars. In Rome, the caesars. And so on. So Agag here is not a reference to a specific man that is pointed out in the context, but rather to the title. And notice that the title of the Amalekite king is given.

Why? Why Agag? Why not Pharaoh? Or why not Caesar or something like that. Well do you remember that the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt, the first of the heathen nations about them, the pagans, who sought to attack the children of Israel were the Amalekites. Exodus chapter 17, we looked at that some months back. So the first tribe to attack Israel, the title of their kings is used here in order to set out the greatness of the King of Israel.

Now let's take our Bibles again and turn back to Genesis chapter 17. Nothing was said about a king in Genesis chapter 12, but the prophecies that were given to Abram were not all given to Abram in Genesis chapter 12. In Genesis chapter 17, in verse 1 we read, "When Abram was 90 years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram and said unto him, "I am the Almighty God. Walk before me and be thou perfect. And I will make My covenant between Me and thee, and will multiply Thee exceedingly." And Abraham fell on his face and God talked with him saying, "As for me, behold, my covenant is with Thee and thou shall be a father of many nations. Neither shall thou name anymore be called Abram, exalted father, but thou name shall be Abraham, father of a multitude. For a father of many nations have I made thee, and I will make Thee exceedingly fruitful and I will make nations of Thee and...", notice, ".....kings shall come out of thee."

Now that's a reference to the fact that the seed of Abraham would ultimately be a king. Notice the 16th verse, "And I will bless her and give a son also of her: yea, I will bless her and she shall be a mother of nations, kings of people shall be of her." So

Abram was to be the father of kings. Now you might think, "Well that's just a reference to Abraham; that doesn't pertain to necessarily the nation later on." Turn over to Genesis chapter 35 and here now, God is not talking to Abram. He is passed off the scene. Now Jacob is the one who is the earthly recipient of the promises made to his grandfather. "And God said unto him, 'Thy name is Jacob. Thy name shall not be called anymore Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name and He called his name Israel.'" In verse 11, "And God said unto him, 'I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins.'"

And then over in chapter 49, verse 9 and 10, is Jacob himself in the blessing of the tribes, who speaks of the king by divine inspiration. Verse 9 of Genesis chapter 49, verse 9 and verse 10: "Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up. You stooped down and couched as a lion and as an old lion who shall rouse him up." Notice the reference to the lion, because we have already had Balaam using that figure of Israel and we will see him using it again in this third prophecy in a moment. "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come, or until he come to whom it belongs, Shiloh. And unto him, shall the gathering of the peoples be." So in the prophecy that Balaam gives, he says, "His king shall be higher than Agag."

Now there is also a reference to a third thing in this prophecy and that's the seed. Notice the 7th verse, "He shall pour the water out of his buckets and his seed shall be in many waters." I had some interesting expressions, and as you might expect, when these early prophecies are given and they are in very general terms. It's not easy to be absolutely certain of the meaning of some parts of them. And so the reference here to "And his seed shall be in many waters," may mean simply that he will have a prosperous posterity that will spread far and wide. Well, that is possible.

One of the most recent interpreters in the Tyndale series has insisted that what this is probably a reference to is of multitudinous prosperity by virtue of sexual intercourse. That is, just simply a numerous posterity in that sense and David Wenham is the one

responsible for that, and he adduces Genesis chapter 17, verses 5 and 6 that we just read in support of it. But under any circumstances, Balaam prophesied that Israel shall have a seed and it will be in many waters. Prosperous, widespread, multitudinous. These ideas, some of them if not all of them, are certainly found there.

Now one further thing, in verse 7. “His king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted.” In other words, Israel is going to have a kingdom over the nations and that is very important and I think also it's very difficult for those who do not believe that Israel is to have such a kingdom because what we are saying is essentially if Balaam is pointing to a future kingdom, he is saying that this kingdom will be a kingdom that is exalted over the nations. In other words, Israel may look forward to a rule over nations.

Now that is affirmed in lots places in the Old Testament in the last days when our Lord comes. Israel shall have a pre-eminence among the nations and here Balaam is giving some inkling of them. This preeminence is something that relates to them because of the Lord Jesus Christ, of course. Remember it is said concerning our Lord that he died without any seed. That is rather startling isn't it? “And as for his generation, who shall declare it?” Isaiah said. He is the king. He inherits the kingdom but he doesn't have anybody as his natural seed. Who is going to rule and reign then? Well, he is the only one that has a right to rule and reign. He is the only one who holds the scriptural and legal right to the Davidic throne.

In other words, when the Lord Jesus died without generation, without any physical posterity, he carried the title King of David with him and he holds it now at the right hand of the Father and no one else can serve as King of David in the Kingdom. But when he comes in his second advent, he shall assume his throne. He has the legal right and the Scriptures are the genealogical records that support him in that.

Now then verses 8 and 9 give us the other side of the picture and this is the reason that Israel is the touchstone among the nations. Verses 8 and 9 are certainly

interesting in the light of Genesis again. “God brought him forth out of Egypt; He hath as it were the strength of a unicorn: He shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows.” Now figuratively he is described like a lion. “He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion; who shall stir him up?” He is a fearful enemy. You don’t over to the lion on the ground all huddle up and punch him with a stick. You do not know anything about him. So “Who shall arouse him? Blessed is he that blessed Thee and cursed is he that curseth thee.”

Now that sounds as if it were a quotation doesn’t? From Genesis chapter 12 and Genesis chapter 35. Verse 3 of Genesis 12, “I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: And in Thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” Israel is the touchstone of Gentile blessing. Israel is the yardstick of Gentile blessing. Israel is the measuring rod of blessing among the nations. Those that bless Israel are blessed and those that curse Israel come under curse.

Now I don’t know what the extent of which this should enter into our politics. Ultimately, of course, it should determine our politics, but we are not noted in our politicians for great knowledge of the word of God and the following of holy Scripture. But I’ll tell you, as an American I am very glad that we are not opposed to the Nation Israel.

Now there are many things about Israel that a person might legitimately criticize and I think we should we should legitimately criticize. But let us remember that the Scripture sent forth Israel as a chosen nation and therefore we should never stand opposed to the fact that Israel shall one day be the nation that has preeminence among the nations. We can be absolutely sure and I think, that the word of God stands behind that nation as the chosen nation. That is one reason, I think the great reason why there is so much antipathy to the nation Israel and anti-Semitism ultimately reaches right back to this and that the natural man does not like the idea of divine election as an individual election nor does he like divine election as the election of a nation because he

recognizes, of course, the election of the nation was the election so many individuals. So verse 9: “Blessed as he that blessed thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.”

Now this too is repeated in chapter 27 in verse 29 with reference to Jacob. So this is not something that was just for Abraham. This is for the land from Abraham, Abraham’s posterity and ultimately for the Lord Jesus Christ because ultimately the destiny of every individual hinges upon how they respond to the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Well, isn’t that a magnificent prophecy? In general terms, it would have been nice to be there by Balaam and say who is the king? When will the kingdom come to pass? Will it be over the whole of the earth? Will all of the nations actually be in submission to the nation Israel? And so on. Balaam wouldn’t have had the answer. This is the beginning of the great Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. They reach their climax in prophecies like the prophecies from Isaiah, but certainly a very magnificent group of statements concerning the future.

Balak, typical of unbelievers is unconvinced. He is thrown into a violent rage of anti-Semitism. He smites his hands together. Have you ever seen a fellow in an NFL football game on the 30-yard line? He is going to try a 37-yard field goal and the game or perhaps the lead in the game rests upon it, and so he gets off you know and sets it up and they settle the ball and he comes over and kicks it and he misses it, and you see him walk off. That is exactly what we have here. Balak clapping his hands together.

Now you can do that at home. This expression in the Hebrew text is one that is used of horror, but it is also used of rage and that’s undoubtedly what it is and all through this coming NFL season -- just two weeks away folks -- all through these season those extra points kickers and place kickers miss that thing and you see them do it and you think about Balaam’s prophecy. So, the truth of the matter is you see, Balak, and

occasionally Septien<sup>1</sup> are losers. Balak a constant loser, Septien rarely; but nevertheless, that's what he means.

He has clapped his hands together in anger and now he says to Balaam very ironically, “I called Thee to curse mine enemies and behold hast altogether blessed them these three times. Therefore now, flee thou to thy place. I thought to promote Thee unto great honor; but, lo...” Now notice, he has entered into this situation. So now he is going to use the language of Balaam. He is going to talk about Yahweh. That's the way the world is. And so he says, “The Lord hath kept Thee back from honor.”

Well, that wasn't the Lord. It was Balaam in the first place and then, of course, it was Balak who contributed to it as well, but he is using the language of the religious man. Balaam said unto Balak, “Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sentest unto me,” saying, “If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord to do either good or bad of mine own of mind; but what the Lord saith, that will I speak.”

Now he would have loved to have been able to say something else because he wanted that money, but God did not let him to, and so the result is that both Balaam and Balak lose because they don't follow the teaching of God. Balak wants him to curse Israel and he loses. Balaam wants the money and he cannot help but bless him. And so the result is they are both losers. Well this is one of the great prophecies and this third and beautiful one pictures Israel's future by God's divine election of them.

One final thing. You know you can see here that man can be a very eloquent speaker painting beautiful pictures of salvation, but all of it be just shining brilliance of a whited sepulcher, all death within. Balaam had some marvelous words given to him by the Lord, but so far as we know he was not a man of God at all. He spent the whole night in prayer trying to find the Lord's will when the Lord had already told him what his

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<sup>1</sup> Raphael Septien was the place kicker for the Dallas Cowboys from 1978-1986.

will was. That's the kind of man he was. He was a man who held the truth in unrighteousness, made profession of the knowledge of Yahweh, but did not follow his word.

To my mind, and this is only an illustration and I wouldn't to stand there behind it very much and I certainly wouldn't want to risk my life on this interpretation. In fact, I wouldn't risk a finger on it. But it seems to me that Balaam is an illustration of what the author of the Epistle of the Hebrews writes about in the 6th chapter, when he talks about people who have great advantages, but who nevertheless have fallen away and thus come under divine judgment. Balaam was a person who had a great knowledge of Yahweh, but turned aside and apostatized from what he had instead of going on and possessing it. Like the writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews says when he speaks about those individuals in Hebrews 6. He was enlightened. He had tasted of the good word of God. He had partaken of the Holy Spirit in this ministry of prophetic unfolding, but nevertheless, did not have the reality in his heart.

Oh, how much we may know of God and still be lost. And so I'd like to leave that with you as I close. May God help us to be sure that we not simply have a knowledge of God on the apperceptive side, but also on the experiential side. Let's bow together in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for these magnificent prophecies. We know that Balaam is not the author of them. We know they come from Thee through the Holy Spirit. We praise Thee. We thank Thee for the way in which Thou hast in loving, kindness, and mercy, and long suffering sought to bring the nation and the nations to the knowledge of the seed of Abraham, the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh God, we are grateful and thankful Thou hast given some insight into the way of salvation through the blood of the cross. Now we pray Lord that Thou wilt make us effective witnesses and servants of him.

Deliver us from the desires of the flesh, the cons of sins of materialism that characterize our age. Help us to be truly the Lord’s.

For his names’ sake. Amen.