

Numbers 24-26

December 4, 2011

24:1-9 In chapter 24 verses 1 to 9, Balaam blesses Israel. Your text should be in a non-paragraph style because the blessing is in poetry.

24:9 What do you find interesting at the end of verse 9?

- God promises to bless those who “bless” the Jews and to curse those who “curse” the Jews. See Genesis 12:1-3. [*1 The Lord had said to Abram, “Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you. 2 I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. 3 I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.”*] This is part of the reason that the United States has supported Israel.

Is this principle just true of the Jews, or can it be true of individuals?

- God blesses those who love and obey Him. See 1 Samuel 2:30 and John 12:26. God is also good to those who are good to His people. See 2 Samuel 2:4-6. [*4 Then the men of Judah came to David and crowned him king over the people of Judah. When David heard that the men of Jabesh-gilead had buried Saul, 5 he sent them this message: “May the Lord bless you for being so loyal to your master Saul and giving him a decent burial. 6 May the Lord be loyal to you in return and reward you with his unfailing love! And I, too, will reward you for what you have done.* NLT

24:10-14 Who can tell us what takes place in verses 10 to 14?

- Balak (*BAY-leck*) is angry with Balaam for not cursing Israel. Balaam reminds him that he was only willing to say what God told him to say.

Notice what Balak said: “The Lord has held you back from honor.” How might this be true in our lives today?

- Doing what God wants us to do will always get us reward in heaven (Matthew 10:42 & 2 Corinthians 5:10), but it may not always give us favor with men. In fact, doing the right thing can often “cost” us in this life. Worldly people will not want you in their relational circle if you are living a holy life. You could lose your job for refusing to do something illegal for a dishonest boss. But it is *always* the right thing to do the right thing, whether you get rewarded or punished for doing so. The Apostles all eventually lost their lives for following Christ and doing His will. See John 15:18-19. We should never compromise our integrity for money. See Proverbs 22:1. [*Choose a good reputation over great riches; being held in high esteem is better than silver or gold.*] NLT

24:15-25 In verses 15 to 25, Balaam again prophesies good about Israel.

24:23 What do we learn from the last part of verse 23?

- God is the giver of life. Man lives on the “borrowed time” that God gives to him. Man is a steward of the “life” that God gives him, not the possessor or owner of it. John 6:53 tell us that we have no life in ourselves. See James 4:13-14. We can shorten our lives, but we cannot live longer than God has planned for us to live. See Matthew 6:27. See Psalm 39:4 and 90:12.

25:1-5 What happens in chapter 25 in verses 1 to 5?

- Many of the Jews begin to disobey God by joining the Moabites in their immorality and pagan worship. Moses commands the leaders of the tribes to publically execute those who led the other Jews into this sin.

25:4 Why do you think that God wanted them executed “in broad daylight”?

- God wanted their deaths to be a warning to the people so that they would not fall into the same sin.

Do you think that the public execution of law-breakers would be a deterrent to sin and crime?

- See Deuteronomy 21:21. [*21*Then all the men of his town must stone him to death. In this way, you will purge this evil from among you, and all Israel will hear about it and be afraid.] Note: the Romans crucified law-breakers at major crossroads so that people would see and fear Rome. See Numbers 26:10.

25:6-9 What takes place in verses 6 to 9?

- Just after the leaders of the sin with the Moabites, a Jew defiantly brings a Midianite woman into the congregation. Phinehas (*FINN-ee-us*) realizes God’s anger as a plague breaks out among the people of Israel. He puts the two of them to death and God stops the plague. In addition to the leaders being publicly executed, 24,000 died from a plague because of Israel’s disobedience at Shittum. Verses 1 to 9 took place in a few days time. In 1 Corinthians 10:7-8, Paul says that 20,000 died in *one day* because of the idolatry and immorality.

25:10-18 What do we learn in verses 10 to 18?

- The Lord commends Phinehas and promises to bless his descendants because of his obedience. We learn here that the Midianite woman was the daughter of the leader of Midian. God tells Moses to be at war with the Midianites.

25:11 Is it ever “right” to be jealous or angry?

- Yes. God is a jealous God (Exodus 20:5 & 34:14). Jesus was angry over the Jewish leaders using the Temple sacrifices to extort money from the people. See Mark 11:15-17. Ephesians 4:26 tells us to “be angry” but not to sin. It is right to be angry about sin and injustice...it is anger for God’s sake. Most of people’s anger, though, is over not getting their way...it’s for their sake. Our anger is usually over a violation of our perceived “rights”. Jesus never got angry when people opposed Him, denied Him, or crucified Him. His anger was never about Himself or His “feelings” but rather always about an injustice toward God and others.

When should a Christian be angry?

- We should always be angry about sin because it displeases God and hurts people that are loved by God. Sinners not only fail to get angry about sin, they give approval to those who do it. See Romans 1:32. In Corinth, the people were proud of how open they were to sin; Paul tells them that they should have been angry about the sin and broken that they had not been angry (1 Corinthians 5:1-2,12-13). The Bible does not justify us getting angry because we don’t get our way.

25:12-13 What do we learn from verses 12 to 13?

- God may bless our descendants for our obedience. See Exodus 20:5-6. [*5*You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me. *6* But I lavish unfailing love for a thousand generations on those who love me and obey my commands.]

25:13 What do we learn about “atonement” in verse 13?

- The forgiveness of sin always requires the penalty to be paid. The wages of sin is death (**Romans 6:23**), so someone or something has to die. **See Hebrews 9:22**. The death of these two blatant sinners “atoned” the sin of the people. Either the sinner must pay for his own sin and die or a legitimate substitute must die in his place. In this case, the death of the leaders and these two became the substitute for the peoples’ sin.
- In our case, Jesus was the substitute for our sin. He died on the cross in our place for our sin (**1 Peter 3:18**). He took our penalty so that we could be forgiven. He was the fulfillment of all of the substitutionary sacrifices of the Old Testament. See the following passages: **1 Peter 2:22,24 & 3:18; Colossians 2:13-14; and Isaiah 53:1-12**.

26:1-65 In **chapter 26** the Jews are again numbered. All of the men who were **20 years and older** (except for **Joshua** and **Caleb**) had died (**26:64-65**) just as the Lord had spoken. **See Numbers 14:1-2,22-23,29-31**.

You may wonder why God sought to put Balaam to death after telling him that he could go to Balak (**22:20-22**). The text doesn’t always tell us *everything* that takes place. **Jude verse 11** refers to “the error of Balaam”. **See 2 Peter 2:15** and **Revelation 2:14**. From these two verses, what took place between Balaam and Balak?

- Balaam would not curse Israel for money, but he apparently did take money for telling Balak how he could corrupt the people at Peor.