**BALAAM’S STUMBLINGBLOCK FOR ISRAEL**

Sunday School Lesson 20

*Wandering in the Wilderness*

Numbers 25

5/25/2025

**Lesson Review:** In our nineteenth lesson, we looked at how a man named \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ tried to have \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ place a curse on the children of Israel. Ultimately, we saw that these men could not stop the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of God upon Israel. Our first observation was that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Israel quickly became the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ people that everyone feared. After the event with the serpents, Israel finally began to win \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. They were \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ out enemies and were brave enough to fight against them. As a result, the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ were genuinely and rightfully afraid of the children of Israel. Balak decided to launch a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ attack that was destined to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ from the start. He thought that he could get God to turn His \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ against His people, but even a greedy and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ man of God could not prevent the faithfulness and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of God. Balak’s attack on Israel reminds us how important it is to have God \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ our battles for us. We have a deceitful and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ adversary who is constantly plotting our destruction and demise. The attack against Israel wasn’t just secretive; it was a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ attack by those \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to them. Both Moab and Midian had a very close connection to Israel. The Moabites came from the lineage of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and Midian was one of the sons of Abraham himself. Additionally, Balaam, as a man of God, should have been their ally; yet he did not even \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ God’s blessing for them. Today, we will look at the second part of the story of Balaam and Israel. Sadly, Balaam found a way to cause trouble in Israel:

1. **BALAAM’S STUMBLINGBLOCK WAS AN INVITATION TO COMPROMISE FOR GOD’S PEOPLE.**
2. **Notice that Balaam’s counsel was designed to lure Israel into sin** *Numbers 31:16 Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD.* Balaam knew he could not curse Israel directly because God’s blessing was upon them, but he devised a plan to cause them to stumble. His counsel to Balak was to entice Israel into sin through the women of Moab. The sin was subtle. It started with relationships, but it led to idolatry and immorality. Balaam’s stumblingblock was not a physical attack, but a spiritual trap. He knew that if Israel compromised with sin, God’s judgment would come upon them. The devil’s tactics have not changed; he still works through temptation, compromise, and subtle invitations to disobey God’s Word. As believers, we must be on guard against compromise in our lives. Temptation often comes quietly through relationships, entertainment, or worldly pressures. If we are not careful, it can lead us into sin. We must remember that a small compromise can open the door to a greater fall.
3. **Notice that the doctrine of Balaam is to have the enemy subtly sneak in and contaminate God’s people.** *Revelation 2:14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. Matthew 13:27 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? 28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?* The doctrine of Balaam is a strategy of the enemy that looks harmless but leads to spiritual destruction. Balaam taught Balak how to sneak sin into Israel’s camp and plant the seed of compromise. Yet these compromises slowly contaminated the people and led them into idolatry and immorality. The same thing was done in the New Testament church. There were those who snuck in with the goal of contaminating the church. We must stand firm without compromise in our church, in our homes, and in our hearts. We can’t let our guard down.
4. **BALAAM’S STUMBLINGBLOCK CONSISTED OF IDOLATRY AND IMMORALITY.**
5. **Notice that Balaam knew that idolatry would turn the hearts of the people away from God, and it would provoke the anger of our jealous God.** *Numbers 25:2 And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.* Balaam understood that if he could tempt Israel into idolatry, they would abandon their loyalty to the Lord and invite His righteous anger. The Moabite women invited the Israelite men to join in their pagan feasts, and what began as a seemingly harmless invitation became a deliberate act of rebellion against God. Israel ate at the tables of false gods and bowed their knees to idols, forsaking the God who had delivered them. Balaam’s plan was to create a spiritual distraction that would erode Israel’s relationship with God, knowing that God’s jealousy would demand judgment. Idolatry is not always as obvious as bowing down to a statue; it often begins with our hearts being drawn away by lesser things.
6. **Notice that Balaam knew that fleshly sins would lead the people to pursue their own carnal desires, and it would promote the discontentment that had plagued them in the wilderness.** *Numbers 25:1 And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.* Balaam’s trap worked because it appealed to the flesh. Israel had struggled with discontentment, complaining, and self-will throughout their wilderness journey. Balaam knew that if they pursued their own carnal, sensual desires, they would once again forget the blessings of God and chase after their own satisfaction. The physical sin of fornication and whoremongering would lead them to choose immediate pleasure over obedience to God’s Word. Their lustful choices would assuredly lead them back to the very discontentment that had hindered them before. We must be careful not to let our flesh lead us away from God’s will. Sinful desires can quickly resurface, and destruction and discontentment always follow when we seek fulfillment outside of God’s plan and purpose for us.
7. **BALAAM’S STUMBLINGBLOCK CAUSED ISRAEL TO BECOME COMFORTABLE WITH SIN.**
8. **Notice that Balaam’s plan caused Israel to become so desensitized to sin that they openly embraced it in their camp.** *Numbers 25:6 And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.* Balaam’s strategy worked so thoroughly that the people of Israel became comfortable with their sin. A man walked right into the camp, in front of the leadership and in front of those who were grieving over sin, and boldly brought a Midianitish woman into his tent. The brazenness of this act shows how sin, once tolerated, soon becomes accepted and even celebrated. The man was no longer ashamed. He was desensitized to the wickedness of what he was doing. Sin tolerated is sin accepted. We must never let sin feel normal in our homes, our lives, or our churches.
9. **Notice that Israel’s comfort with sin revealed a deep spiritual apathy that had an effect on the entire congregation.** *Numbers 25:7 And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand.* The fact that Phinehas had to be the one to act shows that no one else was willing to confront the sin. The people were weeping at the tabernacle, but no one stood up to stop the man openly sinning in front of them. Israel had become passive, letting sin exist unchallenged. Balaam’s trap didn’t just tempt individuals; it dulled the collective conscience of the nation. When sin becomes normal in a community, it is a sign of spiritual apathy. We must have courage to lovingly confront sin and protect the purity of God’s people. If we do not, our hearts will grow cold, and our churches will lose their effectiveness for Christ. We must not let the world’s standards shape our tolerance of sin.
10. **BALAAM’S STUMBLINGBLOCK CURSED ISRAEL AND CALLED OUT GOD’S JUDGMENT.**
11. **Notice that Balak got what he wanted in the cursing of Israel. God’s judgment demanded a response.** *Numbers 25:9 And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.* Balak wanted Israel to be cursed, and although Balaam could not pronounce a curse through words, his stumblingblock led to a curse through consequences. Balaam’s trap led Israel into sin, and God’s holy character demanded judgment. The result was devastating: twenty-four thousand people perished because of their sin. This was not a defeat by an enemy army, but by the subtle seduction of compromise and immorality. The significance of this loss cannot be overstated. The very people God had blessed and preserved now fell under His judgment because they forsook His ways. They couldn’t blame the enemy because it was ultimately their own actions. Remember that Satan has NO power over us. He can only tempt us into bringing chastisement upon ourselves from the Lord.
12. **Notice that these enemy nations and Balaam were ultimately destroyed because of their own wickedness.** *Numbers 31:8 And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain; namely, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian: Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword.* The very nations that had plotted against Israel, and Balaam who had counseled their scheme, were ultimately destroyed. God’s judgment is thorough and just—those who lead others into sin will not escape accountability. The trap they set for Israel became their own downfall. Balaam, who once appeared to be a man of God, was cut down with the enemies of God because he chose to side against the Lord’s people. We know the same fate can be expected of Satan. The accuser and tempter of mankind will ultimately be destroyed!