

Balaam

Numbers 22-24

Memory Verse

2 Peter 2:16

"but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

A shoe, Band-Aid, umbrella, hat, bottle of sunscreen, a vitamin, flashlight, toothbrush and a plastic sandwich bag.

Tape, chair, pictures (magazine cutouts of things that children would like to have), an apron, feather duster and a "cash box."

Cardboard, aluminum foil, glue and string.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Protection

Bring several things to display on a table in your room. Ask the kids to tell you what all the things have in common. You could bring a shoe, a Band-Aid, an umbrella, a hat, a bottle of sunscreen, a vitamin, a flashlight, a toothbrush, a plastic sandwich bag, etc.

Explain to the children that all of these items protect something. Discuss how each item might protect something. Explain that God always protects His children as Balaam finds out in today's lesson.

LESSON TIME!

The Bible says that we, as Christians, are in a battle--a spiritual battle, fought in the spiritual realm. The enemy seeks our demise. In Ephesians 6:12, the Bible says "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." Yet, the Lord is our protection. **God always protects His children.**

In our story today, we will meet a man by the name of Balaam who will attempt to put a curse on God's people, Israel.

NUMBERS 22:1-4

Then the children of Israel moved, and camped in the plains of Moab on the side of the Jordan across from Jericho.

Now Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites.

And Moab was exceedingly afraid of the people because they were many, and Moab was sick with dread because of the children of Israel.

So Moab said to the elders of Midian, "Now this company will lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field." And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time.

Balak, the King of the Moabites, was very afraid that the Israelites would come and conquer his people. He had watched them as they moved through the land, defeated peoples, and settled near him. He decided he needed outside help to defeat the Israelites.

NUMBERS 22:5-7

Then he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor at Pethor, which is near the River in the land of the sons of his people, to call him, saying: "Look, a people has come from Egypt. See, they cover the face of the earth, and are settling next to me!

"Therefore please come at once, curse this people for me, for they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land, for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed."

So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the diviner's fee in their hand, and they came to Balaam and spoke to him the words of Balak.

Balak sent for Balaam who was from Pethor in Mesopotamia, near a river. Balaam was a soothsayer, a diviner or fortune teller. His name means destroyer of the people (a name, we shall see later, that fits him well). The elders of Moab and Midian brought him some money to pronounce a curse upon God's people.

The spiritual realm is very real, and we must be careful. Things like astrology or fortune telling are modern versions of the soothsayers or diviners of Bible times. The Bible is very clear that, for our own protection, we should stay away from any involvement or practice of such things.

NUMBERS 22:8-12

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.

Then God came to Balaam and said, "Who are these men with you?"

So Balaam said to God, "Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent to me, saying,

'Look, a people has come out of Egypt, and they cover the face of the earth. Come now, curse them for me; perhaps I shall be able to overpower them and drive them out.'

And God said to Balaam, "You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed."

Though the important men from King Balak were offering to pay Balaam to curse Israel, God intercepted and warned Balaam not to curse His people "for they are blessed." We, as Christians, are chosen by God and *blessed* by Him. We experience His protection. **God always protects His children.**

So Balaam refused the money the first time, but the men returned to ask Balaam again. Although Balaam knew he was not to curse Israel, his greed for the money prompted him to ask God again.

NUMBERS 22:20-27

And God came to Balaam at night and said to him, "If the men come to call you, rise and go with them; but only the word which I speak to you; that you shall do."

So Balaam rose in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab. Then God's anger was aroused because he went, and the Angel of the LORD took His stand in the way as an adversary against him. And he was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. Now the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand, and the donkey turned aside out of the way and went into the field. So Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back onto the road.

Then the Angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on this side and a wall on that side.

And when the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD, she pushed herself against the wall and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall; so he struck her again.

Then the Angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left.

And when the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam; so Balaam's anger was aroused, and he struck the donkey with his staff.

God allowed Balaam to leave with the condition that He could only speak what God told him. Balaam's heart, filled with greed, aroused God to anger. So the Angel of the Lord stood in the way of the donkey.

The donkey saw the Angel and tried to stop, but Balaam beat her to make her continue. The Angel of the Lord would not let him by. Balaam, intent on his pursuit, became angry and beat the donkey.

Balaam's lust (strong desire) for money had blinded him and caused him to desire his will above God's will. The Bible says the love of money is the root of all evil. May we never desire possessions above godliness. If possessions are first in our heart, we like Balaam will find ourselves stubbornly opposed to God's will. In 1 Timothy 6:10 we read, "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

How Much Is It?

Create an "old general store" by taping some items on the wall or dry erase board that will be the "for sale" items. Be sure to include a chair. Cut some pictures out of magazines of nice things that the kids in your class would be interested in (really interested in, like the latest toys, bikes or maybe a pony).

In class choose a volunteer to be the storekeeper, give him an apron, feather duster and a "cash box." The rest of the class may watch and listen. Tell the storekeeper that he may sell any of the items in his store except the chair. It is grandma's favorite chair when she comes to visit and she asked that family to never sell it. The teacher is the customer who asks how much the individual items are, and then the teacher asks how much the chair is.

The storekeeper will then say "not for sale!!" Then you should try to entice the storekeeper by saying "not even if I give you this nice new toy?" "or this?" (Show another picture). Then point out the compromise of Balaam who wanted to do right but loved riches more than he loved God.

NUMBERS 22:28-31

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?"

And Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have abused me. I wish there were a sword in my hand, for now I would kill you!"

So the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden, ever since I became yours, to this day? Was I ever disposed to do this to you?" And he said, "No."

Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the Angel of the LORD standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand; and he bowed his head and fell flat on his face.

So God made the donkey talk! Notice, God will use any means in order to get a person's attention and to protect his people, even a talking donkey. Balaam was so focused and intent on getting his money that he did not see the Angel of the Lord, nor did he take note that his donkey had talked.

Have you ever had a time when God told you not to do something, but you still do it any way? What are some ways that God had to get your attention (teachers, you can share a time in your life when this happened if you like)? God would rather us just listen and obey than force Him to resort to extreme means to get our attention.

The Angel of the Lord warned Balaam not to speak anything other than what God had told him. So Balaam continued on and met Balak. Balak then took Balaam to a place of pagan worship where he intended Balaam to curse Israel.

NUMBERS 23:1-11

Then Balaam said to Balak, "Build seven altars for me here, and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams."

And Balak did just as Balaam had spoken, and Balak and Balaam offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

Then Balaam said to Balak, "Stand by your burnt offering, and I will go; perhaps the LORD will come to meet me, and whatever He shows me I will tell you." So he went to a desolate height.

And God met Balaam, and he said to Him, "I have prepared the seven altars, and I have offered on each altar a bull and a ram."

Then the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, "Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak." So he returned to him, and there he was, standing by his burnt offering, he and all the princes of Moab.

And he took up his oracle and said: "Balak the king of Moab has brought me from Aram, From the mountains of the east. 'Come, curse Jacob for me, And come, denounce Israel!'

"How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? And how shall I denounce whom the LORD has not denounced?

For from the top of the rocks I see him, And from the hills I behold him; There! A people dwelling alone, Not reckoning itself among the nations.

"Who can count the dust of Jacob, Or number one-fourth of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, And let my end be like his!"

Then Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, and look, you have blessed them bountifully!"

Balaam offered sacrifices and sought the Lord. God told Balaam what to say. God declared, through Balaam, that you cannot curse someone that God has not cursed. Of course, Balak was upset that Israel had been blessed. His plan had backfired. **God always protects His children.**

NUMBERS 23:16-25

Then the LORD met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, "Go back to Balak, and thus you shall speak."

So he came to him, and there he was, standing by his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab were with him. And Balak said to him, "What has the LORD spoken?"

Then he took up his oracle and said: "Rise up, Balak, and hear! Listen to me, son of Zippor!"

"God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

"Behold, I have received a command to bless; He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it.

"He has not observed iniquity in Jacob, Nor has He seen wickedness in Israel. The LORD his God is with him, And the shout of a King is among them.

"God brings them out of Egypt; He has strength like a wild ox.

"For there is no sorcery against Jacob, Nor any divination against Israel. It now must be said of Jacob And of Israel, 'Oh, what God has done!'

"Look, a people rises like a lioness, And lifts itself up like a lion; It shall not lie down until it devours the prey, And drinks the blood of the slain."

Then Balak said to Balaam, "Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all!"

Balaam spoke for the Lord again. This time God declared that unlike man, God cannot lie, because He is perfect and righteous. God does not change, nor does His Word. God had blessed Israel; they were His special chosen people; He saw no iniquity in them. God would not allow any curse against them nor any kind of sorcery. **God always protects His children.**

Is it not comforting to know that our Heavenly Father is always watching out for us? We can trust Him to take great care of us. Because of our faith in Jesus Christ, God does not see iniquity in us.

Then Balaam said, "It now must be said of Jacob and of Israel; 'Oh, what God has done!'" God had done great things for Israel. He made them numerous and strong, brought them out from slavery in Egypt to a new fruitful land, and gave them the promise of the Messiah.

Each of us, as we reflect on our lives, can say, "Oh, what God has done." God has forgiven our sins through faith in Jesus Christ, given us the hope of heaven, blessed us, protected us, and promised to provide for us. Everyday, with a thankful heart, we can proclaim, "Oh what God has done!"

NUMBERS 24:1-11

Now when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he did not go as at other times, to seek to use sorcery, but he set his face toward the wilderness.

And Balaam raised his eyes, and saw Israel encamped according to their tribes; and the Spirit of God came upon him.

Then he took up his oracle and said: "The utterance of Balaam the son of Beor,

"The utterance of the man whose eyes are opened,
The utterance of him who hears the words of God,
Who sees the vision of the Almighty, Who falls down,
with eyes wide open:

"How lovely are your tents, O Jacob! Your dwellings,
O Israel!

"Like valleys that stretch out, Like gardens by the
riverside, Like aloes planted by the LORD, Like
cedars beside the waters.

"He shall pour water from his buckets, And his seed shall be in many waters. "His king shall be higher than Agag, And his kingdom shall be exalted.

"God brings him out of Egypt; He has strength like a wild ox; He shall consume the nations, his enemies; He shall break their bones And pierce them with his arrows.

'He bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him?' "Blessed is he who blesses you, And cursed is he who curses you."

Then Balak's anger was aroused against Balaam, and he struck his hands together; and Balak said to Balaam, "I called you to curse my enemies, and look, you have bountifully blessed them these three times!

"Now therefore, flee to your place. I said I would greatly honor you, but in fact, the LORD has kept you back from honor."

Balaam went to another place and spoke a third time. Once again, God spoke a blessing through him. Balaam declared God's favor upon Israel. God spoke through Balaam saying that those that curse Israel will be cursed but those who bless will be blessed. This promise remains true today. We should pray for Israel and their peace; God loves them and has chosen them as His nation. **God always protects His children.**

Then Balak was angered and sent Balaam home.

NUMBERS 24:14-25

"And now, indeed, I am going to my people. Come, I will advise you what this people will do to your people in the latter days."

So he took up his oracle and said: "The utterance of Balaam the son of Beor, And the utterance of the man whose eyes are opened;

"The utterance of him who hears the words of God, And has the knowledge of the Most High, Who sees the vision of the Almighty, Who falls down, with eyes wide open:

"I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; A Star shall come out of Jacob; A Scepter shall rise out of Israel, And batter the brow of Moab, And destroy all the sons of tumult.

"And Edom shall be a possession; Seir also, his enemies, shall be a possession, While Israel does valiantly.

"Out of Jacob One shall have dominion, And destroy the remains of the city."

Then he looked on Amalek, and he took up his oracle and said: "Amalek was first among the nations, But shall be last until he perishes."

Then he looked on the Kenites, and he took up his oracle and said: "Firm is your dwelling place, And your nest is set in the rock; Nevertheless Kain shall be burned. How long until Asshur carries you away captive?"

Then he took up his oracle and said: "Alas! Who shall live when God does this?"

"But ships shall come from the coasts of Cyprus, And they shall afflict Asshur and afflict Eber, And so shall Amalek, until he perishes."

So Balaam rose and departed and returned to his place; Balak also went his way.

Balaam spoke the words God had put in his mouth, one final time--this time, about the future of Israel. Balaam prophesied of the coming of Jesus to rule; He also spoke of the future of the nations that Israel had encountered.

What Balak and Balaam intended for evil, God turned around for the good of His people. Balaam desired money above all things. He knew God's will, yet fought God's will. Yet our mighty God used Him to bless His people rather than curse them.

As Christians, we are God's children. God favors us and protects us, just like the children of Israel. *Nothing* will happen in our life that He does not allow. When God allows difficulty, we can be sure it will be used to work God's good purposes in our life (Romans 8:28). **God always protects His children.**

God will never curse His people. Yet, sadly, the scriptures (Revelation 2:14) tell us that Balaam, still consumed with greed, found a way that the Israelites would bring God's judgment upon themselves. Balaam would later counsel Balak to send the young Moabite women into the camps of Israel and cause them to sin against the Lord.

"His Truth Shall Be Your Shield and Buckler"

Based on Psalm 91:4, make a small shield by cutting a shield shape out of cardboard and letting the kids cover with aluminum foil. Gluing string to the cardboard before covering with foil could make further decoration.

Remind the children that the Lord will always protect us.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of thankfulness to the Lord for His protection in our lives and commitment to always trust in Him. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.