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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1838 ~ A Donkey talks to Balaam.

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

The Israelites moved on again, eventually arriving at the wilderness east of Moab, which is the country north of Edom. They kept moving forward until they were east of the Dead Sea but didn't enter Moab country at that time. The Moabites were descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot. So they continued on until they came to the land of the Amorites, north of Moab and east of the Jordan River. They needed to pass this land to reach the Promised Land of Canaan. So Moses wrote a letter of request to the king of the Amorites asking for safe passage through his territory. Permission was refused. However, God wanted the surrounding nations to be afraid of the Israelites and the Lord fought on their side. After a battle and victory against the Amorites, the Israelites destroyed all the Amorite cities.

Moses then turned his attention to the region northeast of the Sea of Galilee, in what's now called Syria. The king there came out to fight the Israelites but God gave the king and all the soldiers over to the Israelites. With the defeat of these two kings, the whole region east of the Jordan River became Israel's possession. The land would soon become the inheritance of three of Israel's 12 tribes: Reuben, Gad and Manasseh.

The Israelites camped on the plains of Moab on the east side of the Jordan River just across from Jericho. Because the Israelites were so numerous and had obviously been blessed by God, Moab's king, Balak, was now afraid that he would also be overthrown. Today's *Bible Adventure* is all about the love of money.

DRAMA - [The Bible In Living Sound](#).

In Numbers, Chapter 22, Balak king of Moab, thought of a solution to his problem of having so many Israelites camped on Moab's plains. The king sent for Balaam, a famous sorcerer of that time living in a Hittite city near the Euphrates River. King Balak asked him to come and curse the Israelites, so that afterwards it might be easier to destroy them in battle. Balaam had a reputation for having the power to bring blessings or curses on people, and for which he expected to be paid well.

Although Balaam referred to the Lord as 'my God', he wasn't a believer in the God of Israel. He assumed that the Lord was just another deity that he could manipulate for his own financial gain. Balaam is condemned in the Scripture as an enemy of God and Israel. He practised sorcery and predicting the future, both of which were strictly forbidden by God's law and punishable by death.

When the elders of Moab and Midian arrived at Balaam's house with money to bribe his cooperation, Balaam initially refused to go with them without first consulting Jehovah.

As might have been expected, Jehovah forbid Balaam from going on a journey for such a purpose because the Israelites were God's chosen people whom He had blessed. So Balaam sent the king's delegation back home. King Balak thought that the elders he'd sent weren't important enough. So he sent another delegation to Balaam, this time bigger and with princes to negotiate with Balaam (and possibly offer him a higher payment), as well as offering promises of honour from King Balak himself.

Balaam was torn between God's command and the large offer of money. He didn't want to say 'No' to the delegation but waited to see what God's reaction would be that night. But surprisingly, God told Balaam to go to Moab with the delegation. However, once he got there, he was only to say what God told him to. Balaam may have realised that this Jehovah God was different from the other deities, and he was going to be in deep trouble if he tried to curse the people that God had blessed.

However, God was very angry with Balaam when he went with the delegation. God knew that in his heart, Balaam coveted the money on offer and he would curse the Israelites to get it. So God sent his angel to block Balaam's way. Balaam never noticed the angel but his donkey did and swerved out of the way to avoid the sword the angel was carrying. Balaam beat his donkey back onto the path and he tried continuing his journey. But this happened three times before God gave the donkey the power of human speech. Although talking animals isn't recorded in the Scriptures very often, we shouldn't be surprised that our Creator God is able to speak through animals if He chooses to.

Balaam didn't seem to fully realise that he was having a conversation with his donkey! But while doing so, God opened Balaam's eyes and he saw the angel, who told him that if the donkey hadn't avoided his sword, Balaam would have been killed. Balaam then admitted that he had sinned. But as later events would show, he didn't truly repent. On the condition that Balaam could only say the words that he was given by God, he could continue to Moab country with the delegation of Moab princes.

Here lies the main point of this event: Balaam couldn't curse the Israelites as he had planned to and much to his surprise, he ended up blessing Israel instead. God's covenant with Israel couldn't be broken, no matter how much money King Balak offered to Balaam. After mildly rebuking Balaam for his slow arrival, the king arranged for the sacrifices Balaam had ordered to be made, probably to the Moabite god or a Canaanite god Baal.

It's sometimes thought that God never uses an unbelieving person to carry out His will, but that's untrue. God uses any means that He wishes to. However, just because God uses an unbelieving person, it doesn't mean that the unbeliever escapes eventual punishment for their own sins. Christians are often used by God, but mustn't give into the temptation of thinking that they're more important, holy and gifted than other Christians. When tempted to raise our estimation of ourselves or our pride, we need to remember that God even used a donkey!

Balaam spoke in three different places after going through the ritual of sacrifices each time. But each time he did so, he blessed the Israelites. King Balak was very disappointed at first. On the fourth time, Balaam blessed Israel and prophesied that in the distant future, Moab would be conquered by Israel. King Balak was furious with Balaam and he told him to hurry home without any honours. But Balaam excused his blessings of Israel as being the words of the Lord. Following that exchange, Balaam gave three short prophecies about surrounding tribes and that they would also be ruined. Then the king and the prophet parted and they went their own ways.

Chapter 25 is a sad chapter in the history of the Israelites while on their way to the Promised Land. What King Balak couldn't achieve by delivering curses on them, the Moabite and Midianite women achieved by enticing the Israelites into worshipping the Canaanite god, Baal, using idolatry and sexual immorality. This was the first time the Israelites had sinned by worshipping an idol, something that they had been strictly forbidden to do. We cannot underestimate the danger of joining together with unbelievers. This dishonours God and leads to our own spiritual ruin.

Only in Chapter 31 of Numbers do we learn that it was Balaam himself who advised the Moabite and Midianite women to seduce the Israelites to turn away from the Lord. What Balaam failed to do through curses, he succeeded in doing through sexual temptation!

From the outside, the Israelites were safe but from the inside, they brought destruction on themselves by their own lust and disloyalty to God. God's judgment was swift: Moses used the judges of Israel to execute all those who were guilty of these sins.

If we think that these punishments were severe, we should remember that sin is like a cancer. It destroys not only individuals, but whole communities as well. We also have to remember that if we ourselves don't deal with our sin by confession and true repentance, then God will deal with it for us however He chooses. We must also take care not to let the love of money rule our lives. If we make the Lord Jesus central in our lives and put His Kingdom first, then all our needs will be met.

Balaam's name became a byword for someone who loved money so much that he made every effort to obtain it. When Israel later attacked and conquered Midian, Balaam lost his life by an Israeli sword. In 1 Timothy, Chapter 6, it says: "Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and are caught in the trap of many foolish and harmful desires, which pull them down to ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a source of all kinds of evil. Some have been so eager to have it that they have wandered away from the faith and have broken their hearts with many sorrows."

The final word on Balaam comes from 2 Peter, Chapter 2, Verses 15b-17: "The appetite of (false teachers) for sin is never satisfied ... Their hearts are trained to be greedy. They are under God's curse! They have left the straight path and have lost their way; they have followed the path taken by Balaam son of Beor, who loved the money he would get for doing wrong, and was rebuked for his sin."

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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