

People on the Move The Book of Numbers Lesson 10 4Q 2009

The “Madness” of the Prophet

SABBATH

Read Memory Text – “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”
KJV

Do you believe this to be true? Is it literal or metaphorical? Is money the root to all evil? Did Lucifer in heaven sin because he was motivated by money?

Two potential ways to understand the text:

1. Money is the root of a variety of evil, lots of evil or different kinds of evil:

- “For the love of money is a root of **all kinds** of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” NIV, ESV, GNT, NCV, NRSV
- For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. NASB 95

Does it make a difference “all evil” versus “all kinds of evil”?

2. Money is symbolic of what money does – power and the love of power is the root of all evil? Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

- Did Satan want power? Did his desire or love for power corrupt him and lead to all evil?
- Does this mean power is bad or evil? Or possessing power is evil?

- Does God have power? Does God (Father, Son and Spirit) love power, seek power, pursue power? What does God do with power?
 - God disperses it, expends it, gives it away for the good of others
 - Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Thoughts? Why will Jesus be exalted? Is this exaltation something conferred or something earned? In what way is Jesus exalted over all others? Is it in some ability, capacity, talent, power He didn't previously possess? Or is it be in the awareness or minds of created beings that they have an exalted appreciation of the true nature and character of Jesus?

What kept them from having such an appreciation previously? Why will every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord? Will they be forced at flaming sword point?

“The King of the universe summoned the heavenly hosts before Him, that in their presence He might set forth the true position of His Son and show the relation He sustained to all created beings. The Son of God shared the Father's throne, and the glory of the eternal, self-existent One encircled both.... Leaving his place in the immediate presence of the Father, Lucifer went forth to diffuse the spirit of discontent among the angels....The

exaltation of the Son of God as equal with the Father was represented as an injustice to Lucifer, who, it was claimed, was also entitled to reverence and honor. **...There had been no change in the position or authority of Christ. Lucifer's envy and misrepresentation and his claims to equality with Christ had made necessary a statement of the true position of the Son of God; but this had been the same from the beginning.** Many of the angels were, however, blinded by Lucifer's deceptions." PP 37, 38

Why was this meeting needed? When God proclaimed the true position of Jesus did the proclamation settle the issue and were all heavenly intelligences convinced? Does this inform us of how and why Jesus is exalted in the end? Is it due to the Father's declaration or Jesus' accomplishment?

Were angels the only ones blinded by Lucifer's deceptions? Have human beings been blinded and confused about God and Christ?

Read first two paragraphs, "The story of..." thoughts? Any examples of this?

Alcohol and drugs – what happens when we use alcohol and drugs? The prefrontal cortex is impaired, judgment is undermined, initiative is diminished, the fear/mood centers become disinhibited, self control is undermined and over time brain damage occurs. We lose the ability to recognize what is happening.

What about bigotry, pride, arrogance? What happens to the ability to discern?

When we violate the law of love – commit adultery, steal, murder, gossip etc. The conscience will convict of guilt. Guilt is a destructive emotion. It causes activation of the negative of the stress cascade, increases destructive cytokines and activates the inflammatory cascade.

Because guilt is such a negative emotion we want to get rid of it. Assuming the guilt is appropriate guilt there are two ways to not experience it.

1. Experience God's grace – repentance and restoration
2. Denial and distortion – “it wasn't me it was that woman..”
But this always results in damage to the mind, warped reason, seared conscience and impaired judgment and thus over time we lose the ability to discern right from wrong or even the awareness that something is wrong

The Biblical metaphor of leprosy is quite accurate. We lose sensitivity.

SUNDAY

Read third paragraph, “It's kind of ironic...” thoughts?

What kind of characteristics do pagan gods possess? Ashtoreth, Baal, Belzabub, Molech? Are they generally considered to be gentle, kind, beneficent? Are they thought to be powerful? And are they open to be influenced by the worshipper?

Spiritualism constantly projects the idea that we humans can “control” the spirits or get them to do our bidding. Thus voodoo dolls, incantations, magic, spells all are designed to get the spirits or gods to do the bidding of the human agent. If this is how Balak thought gods worked is it surprising he sought out Balaam to get Balaam to influence the God of Israel to do Balak's bidding?

Additionally, what is Satan's power? Hebrews says that Satan has the power of death, what is that power? John 17:3 tells us life eternal is knowing God. If eternal life is knowing God then what would cause death? Not knowing God, then what is Satan's power? Lies about God he gets us to believe.

Satan's power over us is in getting us to believe lies! What we believe has power over us and Satan is the father of lies.

With this in mind, what are superstitions?

a belief or notion, not based on reason or knowledge, in or of the ominous significance of a particular thing, circumstance, occurrence, proceeding, or the like

Was Balak superstitious? Do people who believe false god concepts become superstitious? And what do superstitions do to the human being? Do they increase fear and irrational decision making?

Then, while incantations and curses have no direct power to injure, could they have power if the people were to hear and believe them? Is this why God intervened to influence Balaam away from cursing Israel – because they were so immature they may very well have been harmed by such a curse?

This is what was happening in Romans 14 when some members were afraid to eat certain foods. In the market the meat sold was the meat of sacrificial animals offered to pagan gods. Some of the immature Christians were afraid to eat the meat for fear it was cursed and could harm them. Paul said those with great faith understood the pagan god is stone or wood and cannot harm you and therefore could eat anything without difficulty. However, if faith was weak and one believed the pagan god had power then don't eat the food.

Was Paul dealing with the laws of nutrition? No, he was dealing with the mind – that all food is spiritually clean i.e. not under some magic curse and capable of undermining your faith in God. However, this doesn't mean all food is equally healthy.

MONDAY

Balaam – was Balaam an Israelite? No, he was an Aramaean prophet, what does this tell us? Did God speak and work only through the Israelites? Did God speak with Balaam and did Balaam know the true God? Was Balaam given the gift of prophecy?

- I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel. Numbers 24:17

This is a Messianic prophecy given by God through Balaam. What does this mean? If someone has the gift of prophecy and prophecies from the true God does that mean we should trust what that prophet says? Or are we still responsible for knowing God for ourselves, for checking out the evidence for ourselves, for thinking for ourselves and coming to our own conclusion? Why? Can prophets lie and be wrong?

Read second paragraph, “Balaam had urged...” thoughts? When Balaam didn’t curse Israel as Balak wanted him to, what advice did Balaam give Balak? To seduce the Israelites into idolatry through the various fertility cults and this would result in their curse - what happened?

Why and how does this result in a curse from God?

THURSDAY

Read bottom pink section – thoughts?

If you haven’t been to Brad Cole’s revamped website www.godscharacter.com I encourage you to check it out. He has a section of quotes people have said about God. Here is one from a woman named Sharon Baker:

Whereas retributive justice seeks to fit the punishment to the crime, attempting to control wrongdoing through

punishment, restorative justice forgives the crime and seeks to redeem wrongdoing through a repairing of the relationship...Justice, therefore, does not mean 'getting let off the hook,' or 'getting away with murder' (or worse). It means coming face to face with the shameful depravity of personal sin by coming face to face with the One who has the right and the power to punish but who instead loves and forgives. Love and forgiveness instead of anger and punishment bring repentance and redemption and in this manner, justice is served.

Thoughts? What is justice in God's government? What does God's justice look like?

Justice is doing the right or just act – what is the right or just act when the motive is perfect love for the other person?

FRIDAY

Read top paragraph, “He who will abuse...” thoughts? Will angels have to testify? Why or why not? Which is more impactful to persuade you of someone's guilt, hearing the personal testimony from a victim or witness, or watching the security video of it happening and hearing the perpetrator describe the crime with their own mouth?

Will we have accurate recording of all the lives of all people to watch in better than 3D? Will we have even more - real time evidence of how each person acts when they see the reality of God's presence?

Then why use such language? What kind of people need to hear such a message? Those who are being cruel to animals. And what kind of minds do such people have? How tender are their consciences, how open to truth? How sensitive to the movements of the Holy Spirit? How much of God's true nature to such individuals know and appreciate? Then what kind of

message will need to be given to reach them and convict them of wrong?

Does this give us some insight into why the Bible reads like it does in many places? What kind of people was God dealing with?

- Korah, Dathan and Abiram we just read about – their rebellion and how the earth swallowed them up – what happened the next day? The entire camp was in rebellion again –
- The Levite and his concubine
- When Christ wanted to heal someone on Sabbath what did the leaders do? When He did heal the man they went out to plot his death
- After raising Lazarus – they went to plot His death

Does the condition of the people have anything to do with the way the Bible reads?

Read question number 1 and discuss – Did God make Balaam into a robot and force the words from Balaam's lips? Did God take away Balaam's freedom? Or did God present evidence to Balaam that convinced Balaam to say what God wanted Him to say?

If God was going to take over one of His creature's brains, at some point in history, and program them like a robot to speak what He wanted them to speak, why didn't He just do that with Lucifer and avoid the entire sin problem?

Can love exist in an atmosphere without freedom? Will God violate His own character of love?

TUESDAY

Read Numbers 22:21-33:

²¹ Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey and went with the princes of Moab. ²² But God was very angry when he went, and the angel of the LORD stood in the road to oppose him. Balaam was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. ²³ When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand, she turned off the road into a field. Balaam beat her to get her back on the road.

²⁴ Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between two vineyards, with walls on both sides. ²⁵ When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she pressed close to the wall, crushing Balaam's foot against it. So he beat her again.

²⁶ Then the angel of the LORD moved on ahead and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn, either to the right or to the left. ²⁷ When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam, and he was angry and beat her with his staff. ²⁸ Then the LORD opened the donkey's mouth, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?"

²⁹ Balaam answered the donkey, "You have made a fool of me! If I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now."

³⁰ The donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden, to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?"

"No," he said.

³¹ Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with his sword drawn. So he bowed low and fell facedown.

³² The angel of the LORD asked him, "Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me. ³³ The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If she had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now, but I would have spared her."

Thoughts? What do you think of Balaam's response to his donkey? Rather bizarre unless he was in Narnia – don't you think?

Do you think this event was designed to turn Balaam away from going to Balak? Or was it designed to prepare Balaam to do what the Lord wanted? Do you think after this experience Balaam was more willing to listen to what the Lord said and less likely to speak his own words?

WEDNESDAY

Read Numbers 23:7-10

Then Balaam uttered his oracle:

“Balak brought me from Aram,
the king of Moab from the eastern mountains.
'Come,' he said, 'curse Jacob for me;
come, denounce Israel.'

⁸ How can I curse
those whom God has not cursed?
How can I denounce
those whom the LORD has not denounced?

⁹ From the rocky peaks I see them,
from the heights I view them.
I see a people who live apart
and do not consider themselves one of the nations.

¹⁰ Who can count the dust of Jacob
or number the fourth part of Israel?
Let me die the death of the righteous,
and may my end be like theirs!”

Thoughts? What does it mean to die the death of the righteous? The lesson suggests we read Romans 3:20-24 let's read through verse 26

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. ²¹ But now a righteousness from God,

apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²² This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement,^a through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— ²⁶ he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

Thoughts? What does it mean to you? How do you hear it?

Here is my paraphrase:

Therefore, no one will be declared to be perfectly healthy and like Christ in character by adhering to a set of rules; rather, it is through the 10 Commandments that we become aware of our sickly state of mind.

^{3:21} But now God has revealed, a healthy state of being – a character that is right and perfect in everyway, that did not come from the written code, but is exactly what the Scriptures and the 10 Commandments were pointing your minds toward. ²² This perfect state of being comes from God and is created within us by God when we trust him. Our trust in him is established by the evidence given through Jesus Christ of his supreme trustworthiness. There is no difference amongst any ethnic groups, ²³ for all humanity is infected with the same disease of distrust, fear and selfishness, and are deformed in character and fall far short of God’s glorious ideal for mankind. ²⁴ Yet all, who are willing, are healed freely by God’s gracious remedy that has been provided by Jesus Christ. ²⁵ God presented Jesus as the way and

^a 25Or *as the one who would turn aside his wrath, taking away sin*

means of restoration. Now, through trust established by the evidence of God's character revealed when Christ died, we may partake of the remedy procured by Christ. God did this to demonstrate he is right and good, because in his forbearance he suspended, for a time, the ultimate consequence of sin and has been falsely accused of being unfair. ²⁶ So, he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so he would be seen as right when he heals those who trust in Jesus.

Thoughts?

FRIDAY

Questions 3 and 4 read and discuss