

Hymns: 20 Mansion Over the Hilltop 79 America the Beautiful
 33 When the Roll is Called Up Yonder 34 When We All Get to Heaven

Scripture: Psalm 106:1-6;28-31;47-48

Big idea: What was the sin of Peor?

Our scripture text for today is: **Joshua 22:17; Numbers 22:1-25:9**

We live in the strongest nation on earth. Our economy has the highest nominal GDP. Our military reigns supreme. We spend more on defense than the next ten countries combined. Yet we are facing a real threat of national collapse. Aliens pour over our borders illegally. Our debt continues to rise exponentially. Individual freedoms erode. Can these things bring us down? Or will it be something more fundamental that brings to ruin the greatest nation in history? Let's see what we can learn from our study today. What was the sin of Peor?

As a refresher, here's a recap of where we encountered Peor last time:

Joshua 22

*[17] Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us,
 from which we are not cleansed until this day,
 although there was a plague in the congregation of the LORD,*

What was the sin of Peor?

In order answer that question, we need to switch gears and back up to the time when Moses led the Israelites to the Promised Land. He had just taken a large swath of territory on the **east** side of the Jordan river – the kingdoms of Sihon in Heshbon (near the Dead Sea) and Og king of Bashan (up north). After witnessing that feat, the remaining dwellers in the land **greatly** feared the Israelites and **frantically** searched for a way to reverse the tide of Moses' victories. That's where we pick up our story today.

Numbers 22

[1] And the children of Israel ... pitched in the plains of Moab on this side [of] Jordan [referring to the east side of the Jordan River] by Jericho [across the river from Jericho].

Recall that Moab was inhabited by descendants of an incestuous incident between Lot and his **older** daughter after they fled from Sodom. Lot was the nephew of Abram.

[2] And Balak

... saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites.

referring to the defeat of the kingdoms of Sihon and Og.

[3] *And Moab*

that is, the people of Moab

was sore afraid of the people,

Why?

because they were many:

....

[4] *And Moab said unto the elders of Midian,*

Midian was Moab's neighbor to the south.

Now shall this company lick up all that are [a]round ... us,

as the ox lick[s] up the grass of the field.

And Balak ... was king of the Moabites at that time.

[5] *He sent messengers ... to Balaam ...*

to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people,

Pethor was located on the south shore of the Euphrates River..

to call him, saying,

Behold, there is a people [that came] out from Egypt:

*behold, **they cover the face of the earth,***

Remember the Israelites had 600,000 soldiers at the time and over 2 million people.

and they abide over against me:

Notice here we have two main characters in this story:

Balak – the king of Moab.

Balaam – a prophet.

One easy way to keep the names straight is to note the *k* in *Balak* can help us remember he was the **king**. The other guy was the prophet.

[6] *Come now therefore, I pray thee,*

curse [for] *me this people;*

*for they are **too mighty** for me:
 [that] I shall prevail,
 that we may smite them [down],
 and that I may **drive them out** of the land:
 for I [know] that he who[] [y]ou bless[] is blessed,
 and he who[] [y]ou curse[] is cursed.*

Here King Balak appeals to Prophet Balaam to curse the Israelites and thereby give him victory over their overwhelming force. Balak had prior knowledge that Balaam was able to confer both blessing and cursing.

In Joshua 13:22, we learn the prophet Balaam was either a soothsayer, the son of a soothsayer, or both. He was from Pethor of Mesopotamia (Deuteronomy 23:4) staying in Aram mountains of the east (Numbers 23:7). This makes it likely that Balaam was an Ammonite (Deuteronomy 23:3) – descended from the incestuous episode between Lot and his **younger** daughter. This was also the home of Rachel and Laban who were idolaters but aware of the God of Abraham.

[7] And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand;

That is, they brought payment to Balaam in exchange for Balaam cursing Israel.
and they came []to Balaam, and sp[o]ke the words of Balak to him .

*[8] And he [Balam] said []to them, Lodge here [to]night,
 and I will bring you word again,
 as the LORD shall speak []to me:*

and the princes of Moab [stayed] with Balaam.

*[9] And **God** came []to Balaam, and **said**, What men are these with [you]?*

*[10] And Balaam said []to God, Balak, ..., king of Moab,
 sent these messengers*

...

*[12] And **God said unto Balaam**,*

*Thou shalt **not go** with them;*

*thou shalt **not curse** the people:*

Why?

*for they are **blessed**.*

Notice God spoke to Balaam and will do so repeatedly in this story.

[13] And Balaam rose up in the morning,

and said []to the princes of Balak,

[Return] to your land:

Why?

for the LORD refuse[s] to [let me] go with you.

Balaam is obedient to God in this matter.

The elders of Balak returned to him the bad news.

...

[15] And Balak sent [another, larger, more honorable group of] princes.

[16] And they came to Balaam, and said to him,

[King] Balak [said]...,

[Please] let nothing ... hinder [you] from coming []to me:

*[17] For I will promote [you]to **very great honour**,*

*and I will do **whatsoever [y]ou [ask] me**:*

[please] come therefore, ... , [and] curse ... th[ese] people.

[18] And Balaam answered and said []to the servants of Balak,

*If Balak would give me **his house full of silver and gold**,*

*I cannot go beyond the **word of the LORD my God**, to do less or more.*

The prophet Balaam seems to have a respect for his office and for God. Note too he calls the LORD his God.

[19] Now therefore, ... , tarry ... here t[o]night, that I may know what [else] the LORD will say []to me....

*[20] And **God came []to Balaam** at night,*

and said []to him,

If the men come to call [you], rise up, and go with them;

but [only] the word which I shall say []to [you], ... [shall you] do.

[21] And Balaam

rose up in the morning,

and saddled his [donkey],

and went with the princes of Moab.

[22] *And God's anger was kindled*

Why?

because he went:

God told him to wait

and the angel of the LORD stood in the way [Balaam] was riding ... his [donkey], and his two servants were with him.

[23] *And the [donkey] saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way [with] his sword drawn ...: and the [donkey] turned aside ..., and went into the field: and Balaam [struck] the [donkey], to turn her []to the way.*

[24] *But the angel of the LORD stood in a path ... [with] a wall ... on [each] side....*

[25] *And when the [donkey] saw the angel of the LORD, she thrust herself [against] the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot ...: and he [struck] her again.*

[26] *And the angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place,*

[27] *And when the [donkey] saw the angel of the LORD, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he [struck] the [donkey] with a staff.*

[28] *And the LORD opened the mouth of the [donkey], and she said []to Balaam, What have I done []to [you], that [y]ou ha[ve] [struck] me these three times?*

That's curious indeed that a donkey spoke.

[29] *And Balaam said []to the [donkey],*

Because [y]ou ha[ve] mocked me:

I [wish] there were a sword in [my] hand, for now would I kill [you].

That's **even more curious** that Balaam spoke back to the donkey apparently without flinching.

[30] *And the [donkey] said []to Balaam, Am [] I [not your donkey] , upon which [y]ou ha[ve] ridden ever since I was [yours] []to this day?*

[Did] *I ever [refuse to carry you]?*

And he said, [No].

Now the donkey **reasons** with Balaam who **agrees** with the donkey.

[31] *Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the **angel of the LORD** standing in the way, [with] his sword drawn in his hand:*

and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face.

Based on Balaam's reaction and that of the angel, we can conclude this was the preincarnate Christ.

[32] *And the angel of the LORD said []to him, [Why have you struck your donkey] these three times? behold, I went out to withstand [you], because [your] way is perverse before me:*

[33] *And the [donkey] saw me, and turned from me these three times:*

unless she had turned from me,

surely now also I [would] ha[ve] slain [you],

and saved her

[34] *And Balaam said []to the angel of the LORD, I have sinned; for I [did not know] that [you stood] in the way against me:*

now therefore, if it displease[s you], I will [turn back].

Notice Balaam not only had conversations with God, but also with the preincarnate Christ.

[35] *And the angel of the LORD said []to Balaam,*

*Go with the men: but [speak] **only** the word that I shall speak []to [you].*

So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.

[36] *And when Balak heard that Balaam [arrived],*

he went out to meet him [at] a [border] city of Moab, [at] ... Arnon,...

[37] *And Balak said []to Balaam,*

Did I not earnestly send [for you]?

[Why did you not come]?

am I not able ... to promote [you] to [a position of] honour?

[38] *And Balaam said []to Balak,*

*[Behold], I [**have**] come []to [you]:*

have I ... any power ... to say any thing?

the word that God put[s] in my mouth,

that shall I speak.

[39] *And Balaam went with Balak, and they came unto Kirjath-huzoth.*

[41] *And it came to pass on the morrow, that Balak took Balaam, and brought him up into the high places of Baal, that ... he might see the utmost part of the people.*

Numbers 23

So Balaam told Balak to build seven altars.

[4] And God met Balaam: and he said []to Him, I have prepared seven altars, and I have offered[] a bullock and a ram [upon every altar].

[5] And **the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth**, and said, Return []to Balak, and [speak these words to him].

[6] And he returned []to him, and, [behold], he stood by his burnt sacrifice, he, and all the princes of Moab.

[7] And he took up his [words], and said, Balak the king of Moab ha[s] **brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east**, saying, Come, curse [] Jacob [for me], and come, defy Israel.

[8] How shall I curse, whom God ha[s] not cursed?
or how shall I defy, whom the LORD ha[s] not defied?

Balaam proceeded to bless Israel.

[11] And Balak said []to Balaam, What ha[ve] [y]ou done []to me?

I took [you] to curse m[y] enemies, and, behold, [y]ou ha[ve] [just] blessed them [].

[12] And he answered and said, Must I not take heed to speak that which **the LORD ha[s] put in my mouth?**

Balak had Balaam repeat the altar and sacrifice routine at another high place called Pisgah.

[16] And the LORD met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, Go again []to Balak,
Of course, Balaam gave another blessing of Israel.

[25] And Balak said []to Balaam, Neither curse them ..., nor bless them

[26] But Balaam answered and said []to Balak, [Did I not tell you], saying, **All that the LORD speak[s], that I must do?**

[27] And Balak said []to Balaam, Come, [please], I will bring [you] []to **another place**;
[perhaps] it will please God that [y]ou may[] curse [] them [for me] from the[re].

[28] And Balak brought Balaam []to the top of Peor,

Balaam had Balak build seven more altars and sacrifice on each.

Numbers 24

The LORD responded the same way – blessing Israel through the lips of Balaam and ending with the familiar blessing first given to Abram and repeated to Jacob:

[9] ...Blessed is he that blesse[s] thee, and cursed is he that curse[s] thee.

[10] And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he [clapped] his hands together: and Balak said []to Balaam, I called [you] to curse m[y] enemies, and, behold, [y]ou ha[ve] [consistently] blessed them these **three times**.

[11] Therefore now flee [] to [your] place: I thought to promote [you] []to great honour; but,

[behold], *the LORD ha[s] kept [you] back from honour.*

So far Balaam seems committed to being faithful to the LORD's word. But let's look at "the rest of the story."

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,

Revelation 2

[14]...Balaam, ... taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed []to idols, and to commit fornication.

In addition, Balaam's heart was not right toward God as he was greedy for gain (2 Peter 2:15; Jude 11).

Numbers 25

[1] And Israel ... began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.

[3] And [the people of] Israel joined [themselves] []to Baal-peor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.

[5] And Moses said []to the judges of Israel, Slay [] every one [of the men] that were joined []to Baal-peor.

[6] And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought []to his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel ...

[7] And when Phinehas, ... , saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand;

[8] And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.

[9] And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.

So what was the sin of Peor? It was turning from God to worship a false god and defiling themselves.

Application

The enemies of this country know the best way to defeat us also is the way of Balaam – to turn us from

our faith in God, turn us to worship other gods, and foster immorality. Those things are happening today at an ever quickening pace. It cannot continue without the LORD bringing swift and sure judgment upon our country.

While that sounds bleak, our story doesn't end there. Speaking of heroes of faith though Abraham, the writer of Hebrews says in:

Hebrews 11

*[13] These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were **strangers and pilgrims on the earth.***

*[16] But now they desire a **better country**, that is, **a[] heavenly [one]**: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for **he hath prepared for them a city.***

Our hope rests not on a government or country. It rests solely on Jesus Christ who is preparing for us a glorious, eternal home.

Benediction

*Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,
And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 1:5-6)*