

Clough Deuteronomy Session 10
Deuteronomy 3:29-4:4 and Numbers 22-25, 31 - The Beth Peor Crisis
Fellowship Chapel; 12 Jan 10

Tonight we're going to start Deuteronomy 4 and before I get into it, people asked, from the notes for last time there were two blanks left on page 4, and on page 4 under conclusion it's the third dot there, it says a complete generational switchover from the 1st to 2nd except for Joshua and Caleb, those are the two that go into that. And then the 4th one, the Abrahamic family "land grants" showing these peripheral family members were able to conquer their inheritance and triumph over the giants. So that's what we did last time. Now tonight we're going to do something a little bit different. I'm going to do a review first and then we're going to take a detour to deal with the narrative that talks about a historical incident that Moses in Deuteronomy just passes over very quickly because the people he's talking to actually experienced this disaster so he doesn't have to amplify it to the people he's talking to but the problem is, we weren't there so we're not into it as far as the experience that they experienced. So I'm going to just review, if you follow in the handouts I'll show you the overall picture and then we're going to go to the Beth Peor crisis.

Just to review Deuteronomy and the Suzerainty Vassal treaties, to pull it together, what we're saying here and why it's so important, particularly for people in an academic environment of if you're looking at the history channel or the discovery channel or something and they have a program on the Bible, just arm yourself with the fact that the book of Deuteronomy can be shown, without question any more, anybody who questions this just doesn't know their scholarship, but Deuteronomy and the Ancient Near Eastern pattern of a treaty have very, very powerful parallels. And there are four applications, four ideas that cluster around this parallel. And these are ideas that, believe it or not, the students here who over the years have gone to neighboring colleges come back from campus with these strange ideas from some of the professors, and when I hear them I think gee, do these guys, you know, when was the last time they studied because their liberalism is even outdated liberalism.

So under the four things of Deuteronomy and Suzerainty Vassal treaties on the handout, the first thing is that it shows you that Deuteronomy is a unified document. Believe it or not there's some people that still think that JEDP and different sources somehow wrote chunks of text and they were organized by some editor centuries later into the book of Deuteronomy. And Deuteronomic form militates against that whole idea.

Secondly, and very important for our point of view as evangelicals who believe that the Bible is God's revelation is that that means that Deuteronomy is a contract doctrine, that is, it's a document that stipulates behavior on the part of the parties, that is Israel, and behavior on the part of God. So it's a contract and not only is it a contract but it's an example of God condescending, and by that term condescending we mean that God, who is infinite, condescends to come down; sometimes in the Biblical narrative it actually uses the word, God came down, He came down to Sodom and Gomorrah, He came down to see what they were doing at the tower of Babel. That coming down, that's where theologians get the word "condescend," God condescends to come down to the

creature level and some theologians have a problem because then when God comes down to the creature level He talks with us and negotiates as though He somehow lacks omniscience, and they call that open theology. But that's a failure to understand that these are condescending snapshots of God negotiating with us as though He's a person.

The third thing is it's a revelation of God's historical "interferences" into fallen civilization in order to bring about the final Kingdom of God. So you have these strange things like holy war that people rise up in fury to think that the Bible actually condones, not only condones but advocates, genocide, but it's a strictly limited genocide and as we said, the genocide that the Bible is talking about is a revelation of eschatological ethics, it's a revelation of the end of common grace, that when God decides to judge He's no longer showing grace, by definition, you have the two together, they are mutually antagonistic. So when God wants to reveal what a judgment looks like, it's termination of grace. But what happens is that the critics of the Scriptures go off and say, because they live in a world of (quote) "common grace," they want to extrapolate common grace into that situation and say there's a contradiction in the Bible, ethically. Of course, if it were true it would be really a lethal objection to our religion, if that were true.

Then finally, the fourth thing is that Deuteronomy is a teaching document because it's an example of how people were taught. Numbers, Leviticus, at least Leviticus particularly and sections of Exodus were addressed to the priesthood and there are lots of technical details associated with that narrative. But in Deuteronomy it's the lay person that's being addressed. So here's an example of what it must have looked like centuries ago when people were taught the Scriptures. And I think one of the things that we are coming out with, since we've gone through the first three chapters is undeniably the way the Scriptures were taught is that they were taught as historically valid documents. In other words, what the Scriptures are saying is that God has revealed Himself in historical events.

Christianity is not an abstract religion, it's not talking about principles in the abstract. It's talking about a story, a story of God's intervention in history, His engineering of the purpose and flow of history. That's why little notices, and I hope you noticed this, like when we were in Deuteronomy 3 it talked about King Og, that he was a giant, and what did the editor that put together the final text, what did he put in the little note? He said you can go see the bed of King Og to this day, to the day that he put the document together. So it's an invitation to investigate. The Bible is making these claims and it says if you don't believe my story about King Og, go look at his bed, measure it, see how big the guy was. So those notices are important to you because you can stand up to anybody and point out to them that we're talking about history, it's not my opinion, it's not your opinion, it's what actually happened. That's the objective, that's the thing.

Now you'll see in the handout where I've outlined, I don't have any detail in the outline tonight because we're going to do something a little different, we're going to go back into some background narrative, but if you'll look at that diagram in Deuteronomy 1:1-5, that was the introduction of God's spokesman, that corresponds to a preamble in a treaty form. Then we have Deuteronomy 1:6-4:40 which is the first exposition. So those four chapters, apparently narrate what Moses taught, and then Moses would stop and do something else, and then he'd have

another narrative. So that's a whole section. Well, if that really is the case, if that's an exposition, then we have to say what is Moses' point in that whole thing? Moses obviously didn't just sit up there and shoot his mouth off, he was doing something to train people. So we have to ask what was Moses' point in that whole section.

So we summarize it there, it's the motivation to obey from the past gracious acts of Yahweh. And that's important to see because so many people still, in our evangelical circles, think that the Old Testament saints operated under a system of law without grace, and it isn't, because the whole first three chapters are one thing after another that God did for you guys and you know, He's asking you now, okay, now you owe Me, you owe a response to Me because if I initiated it, you guys didn't want to get out of Egypt, you were sitting there a slave, you were building pyramids for nothing, Pharaoh never paid you a salary, and I came and I delivered you out of that. I initiated it, now you respond to Me because I started it, now the obligation is on you to respond. So that's the whole point. And now in chapter 4 he's going to start dealing with those implications of those historical acts in the first few chapters.

Now if you turn to Deuteronomy 3:29, the last verse in chapter 3, you'll see a little notice. We're going to look at that notice and then we're going to look at the first four verses of chapter 4. Then we're going to embark on a quick tour of sections of Numbers which is the book just prior to Deuteronomy. In 3:29 it says, "So we stayed in the valley opposite Beth Peor." Now if you didn't know anything about biblical history you'd say oh, that's an interesting note, "the valley opposite Beth Peor." And on the map, here's the north end of the Dead Sea, there's the Jordan River going up, this is a relief map so you can see the mountainous areas up here, all the way up here, this is Transjordan, meaning the east side of Jordan, Trans-across, so all this territory has been conquered now at the point this text is describing. And now he's saying we're in a valley, apparently that little valley there just north and northeast of this site called Beth Peor. And he just mentions that.

But then he's going to say something in three more verses about that incident. So let's follow what he's saying. Deuteronomy 4:1, "Now, O Israel," so this is a major section, "Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and judgments which I teach you to observe," we're going to develop the vocabulary next time, but for tonight we'll just go through this quickly, "which I teach you to observe, that you may live," notice the purpose clause, think about the motivation here, what is he saying? He says... the main verb is listen, listen with the implication of obey, "to the statutes and judgments which I teach you to observe, that," purpose, "that you may live." Now he's not talking about eternal life here, he's talking about physical life, and watch what he does then. "...that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you." Now who do you think he means by the noun "fathers?" Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. That word "fathers" ought to ring a bell of covenant continuity and faithfulness. God promised Abraham, God promised Isaac and God promised Jacob certain things. So when you read there in that thing, "which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you," that is covenant loyalty; he's referencing God's behavior measurable by a standard.

[2] "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor will you take away from it, that you may keep the commandments from the LORD your God which I command you." In other words, Moses did not want the Bible to be interpreted as a living document, to use lawyer language of our own time. This is not a living document made of rubber so you can just twist it any way you want, and that's what the thing is here, don't add to it, don't change it, just listen to it.

Now he adds verse 3, and this is why we have to do a little reconnoitering today. "Your eyes have seen what the LORD did at Baal Peor; for the LORD your God has destroyed from among you all the men who followed Baal of Peor. [4] But you who held fast to the LORD your God are alive today, every one of you." You see, he started off in verse 1 and I made the point about the purpose clause. Now "listen ... in order that you may live," and immediately after that verse, now he's talking about something happened at Baal Peor, and he says some of you guys are... you know, you're alive but remember a lot of people died there and they died because they didn't follow the statutes and commandments, so let that be a lesson. And the people he's talking about here, these are the people who went after Baal and we're going to see how that happened, and as we do this review, if you'll turn to Numbers 22, we're going to have to move pretty fast through the text here, it's a long story but I have to go through the whole story or you tend to lose the point. So we're going to cover Numbers 22 all the way through 25 and chapter 31.

So let me start the story this way. What you need to watch for in this text, in this narrative, is that we're dealing with principalities and powers that are in the unseen realm. We are going to deal with a pagan diviner, a man who interacted with the demonic forces that operated in history. Now some of you come out of a materialist type frame of reference and it's hard for you to think of the fact that there's an immaterial component to creation. And we have Halloween and we make fun of this and we trivialize it, but the Bible insists that the universe is different than it appears, and the Bible insists that the universe has an immaterial component to it; after all, where do the dead live? Where do the dead exist? Where do angels exist? Clearly there's a place in the universe where the dead and the angels exist, and it's that realm that sometimes comes into view, not a lot because God doesn't want to get us fixed on that, He wants us to get occupied with Him, but the point that we're saying here is that the story you're about to see is a narrative, very important narrative, of the dynamics between human history and the demonic dark forces behind human history and why you don't mess with them, and what happens when you do, and the tactics they like to use on us. So there's a lot of spiritual warfare in here and we're going to culminate, when we get through the story, and show that Paul, in 1 Corinthians takes this story and he teaches the Corinthian church just before communion. So it's an interesting narrative.

So let's start in Numbers 22, and we're going to look, if you look at the handout you'll see where I say Balak's 1st try, Balak's 2nd try on page 2, and so on. So Balak is going to try twice to destroy Israel. Now who is Balak? Let's look at Numbers 22:1, "Then the children of Israel moved, and camped in the plains of Moab on the side of the Jordan across from Jericho." So back to our map, here's Jericho, here's the Jordan River, and they're camping up here. Remember what happened in the campaign, they moved north, they've conquered Og, they've conquered Sihon here, and

conquered Og up there in the Sea of Galilee, so all that's been conquered. So now they've camped here, a massive number of people here. And the guy that we're looking at, he's the king of Moab, he's down here, so his kingdom, remember, they left it alone, they went around it, it's one of those three guys that they left alone because God said I gave the Moabites their land, you guys bug off and don't try to mess with them. And they didn't. Well, this guy is sitting down here and he realizes that what's happened here is millions of people have come up from the south, come around his country, and have obliterated all this powerful kingdom, Gentile kings north of them. And he's starting to think for himself, gee, you know, what about my security. So that's on his mind.

[22:1] "Then the children of Israel moved, and camped in the plains of Moab on the side of the Jordan across from Jericho. [2] Now Balak, the son of Zippor, saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites," those are the people to the north. [3] 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 they are full of fear.

Now this is one of about four narratives in the Bible that show you what happens when leaders in high positions cannot trust the Lord; it always is a disaster, and 9 times out of 10 they have no reason to be upset, because you can think of Abraham, I mean, he almost let his wife become part of Pharaoh's harem, because he was afraid; we have Isaac doing the same thing in his day, and we have King Saul, later on in the kingdom, he's concerned that Samuel hasn't come fast enough and goes and tries to sacrifice and it leads to the devastation of his entire dynasty. And then we have in the Northern Kingdom, King Jeroboam, he freaks out because he's afraid that his people are going to go down to Jerusalem three times a year and they're going to defect from his northern kingdom. And what did God tell Jeroboam? He said Jeroboam, I don't want you making a state religion in the north. The religion is going to be centered in Jerusalem, but you're the king, I've given you ten tribes, now just leave it alone and I'll take care of it. But the problem is, like we all, we have a hard time trusting the Lord. Well, when you're a leader and you don't trust the Lord, you drag all kinds of people into your unbelief and they experience the catastrophes and consequences because you failed as a leader so here we go. So Balak, now, he's king, his people are all upset; instead of giving leadership to his people he goes along with them.

[4] So Moab said to the elders of Midian," so now they're getting the Midianites involved, "'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. [5] 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! [6] Therefore please come at once and curse the 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."

Let me stop here and give background for this fellow, and that is that he is trying to contact a guy by the name of Baalam, and Baalam is known in secular history, at the bottom of page 1 of your handout you see where I

say "Paganism & demonic religion," and you'll see that the word "River" refers to the Euphrates, so we're talking about Iraq. Baalam, he's in Mesopotamia, he's nowhere close to the land of Israel here, he's a thousand miles away. Now you say why is this guy calling Balaam, a thousand miles away over in Iraq, to come over here in Palestine. Well, the answer is discovered in archeology; the Mari text in 1933 were discovered in Mesopotamia, this is on your handout, bottom of page 1, and in the Mari texts there was cultic practices involving divination and particular, and this is important for the story, soances with animals, that God would speak through animals. In most cases they would kill the animal and they'd look at his entrails and his liver and his intestines and they'd somehow use those to discern the will of the gods and goddesses through the way the animal innards looked.

So this is all part of this pagan belief system, and this fellow is thoroughly enmeshed in this, in the continuity of being, their nature, gods, men, it's all part of the same spectrum, compared to the Scriptures where God is absolutely different and you have the Creator/creature distinction. But in the pagan idea Balaam could contact the gods and goddesses of any religion, he was a genuine ecumenical pagan.

So if you turn the page, on page 2 you'll see that another exciting thing happened in archeology, in 1967 an 8th century BC inscription of the prophecies of Balaam was discovered, and of all places to discover it, it was discovered in Transjordan, in Moab. So this man was a very famous man, he was world renown as a pagan occult leader who had the reputation, he had a business. The other thing we want to kind of make sense of the story, this guy is a good businessman, and apparently a very wealthy businessman, and he made his money in religion. And basically he was a huckster and he would do these things, the blessings and the cursings and go through all the ceremonies and so forth, but the very fact that he was so successful ought to tell us that this man was very powerful and interacting with the demonic realm. So when he... he didn't call them demons, he called them gods and goddesses, but the point is that he had this interaction going on and he apparently was successful enough so that people all over the world knew about him. So that's the background.

Now watch the negotiations; keep in mind this is a business deal, and in the New Testament when Balaam comes up for discussion he always, in all three instances in the New Testament, when Balaam is mentioned he's mentioned in context of a religious business. So watch. They go to the river, so they're over in Iraq, he sends a delegation, he describes the situation, he says... notice the reason he says, [6] "Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them," now he's talking about a military conquest, but he can't defeat them so how does he think he's ever going to defeat them? He's thinking as a pagan is that I can defeat them if I can curse their gods, so if I can deal with the spiritual powers, the dark side, and I can undercut his god, then I can win; so I can cripple his military power if I can somehow deal in the realm of the unseen. Now the fact was that this was the modus operandi in the Near East, you can go in the library and pull up lots of pagan texts and they actually explain the outcome of battles as the loss of the gods power. So the idea here is to destroy the spiritual power behind Israel.

[Numbers 22:7] "So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the diviner's fee," notice, in their hand, and they came to Balaam and they spoke to him the words of Balak. [8] And he said to them, 'Lodge here tonight, and I will bring back word to you, as the LORD speaks to me.'" So he knows Yahweh, he knows the name of their God. "So the princes of Moab stayed with Balaam. [9] Then God came to Balaam and said," notice, it's Elohim who comes to Balaam, and He "said, 'Who are these men with you?' [10] "And Balaam said to God," see, as though God doesn't know, of course God knows, but He's carrying on a conversation now, "And so Balaam said to God, 'Balak, the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent to me, saying, [11] 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.'" So clearly the whole thrust of this business negotiation is to get at the spiritual power of Israel and to destroy it. [12] "And God said to Balaam, 'You will not go with them; you will not curse the people, for they are blessed.'" [13] So Balaam rose in the morning and said to the princes of Balak, 'Go back to your land, for the LORD has refused to give me permission to go with you.'" [14] And the princes of Moab rose and went to Balak, and said 'Balaam refuses to come with us.'"

So that's the first Balak try; now he's going to try again, because part of this religion, part of this side of the chart about continuity of being and paganism always has, even though down at the bottom it says ultimately we're all seen as victims, because of the fact that there's no transcendent difference between man and god, as it is over here, here we have a Creator and a creature, the creature doesn't dare manipulate the Creator; this is why you can't be saved by works, you have to be saved by grace, because the Creator lays forth the terms of salvation, and we don't manipulate, we don't add, we don't subtract. But if you don't believe that, and you believe something like this, then the gods and goddesses are only quantitatively stronger than you are, and perhaps you might be able to talk them into a deal; perhaps you may be able to manipulate them by rituals; perhaps you can push them a little bit to come along side of you. That's the pagan mentality. I mean, you have to understand that's behind all this negotiation that's going on because you're going to see Balaam himself do some strange things here.

Okay, Balak's second try, verses 15-21, "Then Balak again sent princes, more numerous and more honorable than they. [16] And they said to him, 'Thus says Balak, [the son of Zippor]: 'Please let nothing hinder you from coming to me;' " notice the clause here, here's the negotiation, here's the religious business, [17] "'for I will certainly honor you greatly," now you know what that means, he's not talking about giving ribbons, he's talking about giving him money, "I will honor you greatly," and keep a memory of the word "honor" here, you're going to see it appear again. "I will honor you greatly, and I will do whatever you say to me. Therefore, please come, curse this people for me.'" [18] So Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, 'Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the LORD my God," now this is the pious thing, because you see, the guy's a business man, this is part of the negotiating deal that's going on here, I wouldn't do that.... [19] "Now therefore, please, you also stay here tonight, that I may know more of what the LORD will say to me." Now if he really believed that the Lord had said an absolute no he would salute and say yes, I can't

negotiate. But the very fact is, well, let me tell you what, let's go in the back room here and see if we can talk some more business here. So here we go, see, this is the manipulator.

[Numbers 22:20] "And God came to Balaam at night and said to him, 'If the men come to call you, rise up and go with them,'" now see, he told them first time don't go with them, but now see what God's going to do, He's going to deal with Balaam; oh, you want to manipulate Me, okay baby, two can play this game, so watch what God does. "... 'If the men come to you, rise up and go with the; but only the word which I speak to you-that you shall do.' [21] So Balaam rose in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went out with the princes of Moab."

Now comes one of the funniest passages in the Scriptures, Balaam's ass, and from verse 22-30, and sometimes preachers... oftentimes at seminary we have a joke, thank God that God spoke through an ass that He can speak through me, it's usually a classic joke in homiletics courses when you feel totally inept, that if God could speak through Balaam's ass, he certainly can speak through me. But that aside, there is humor in this because if you understood what I said, what the Mari texts in 1933, what particular kind of divination did they talk about? Animal divination, apparently these people not only cut animals up and tried to discern from their entrails the will of the gods and goddesses, but apparently, because he doesn't freak out when the ass talks to him, that the demonic powers would speak through animals. Now this is a feature that may seem strange to the modern mind, but you remember the gospels, there are cases in the gospels where animals, in Luke 8 we have Jesus, what did He do to the swine? He put demons into them. And Christian creationist biologists have pointed out, every time you see this with the psuche, maybe it's true that the mammals with a central nervous system can be vehicles of demonic powers and the reason we suspect that is because in the pagan art forms the animals are often in, the gods and goddesses are zoomorphic, that's what's different in the Bible. The Biblical God is never pictured zoomorphically but in pagan... think of the sphinx, it's a man's head on a lion's body. See, this is the kind of stuff that they were going through.

So anyway, [22] God's anger was aroused because he went," God's not pleased with this, even though He says he should go, and the reason... it's going to become apparent that God is angry at him. So, "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. [23] 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 he left the road, in other words, "So Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back onto the road. [24] 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." So He got him in another spot. [25] "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,]" you want to know what the will of the gods is baby through the animals, you're going to find out.

[26] So, "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 or to the left. [27] So when the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD, she lay down under

Balaam; so Balaam's anger was really aroused, and he smacked the donkey with his staff. [28] Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey and she said to Balaam, 'What have I done to you, that you have stuck me these three times?' And see, Balaam just sits there and he talks back to the donkey, so what do you make of this? Apparently these guys did have demonic interaction with animals. The problem is, in this case it's not a demon in the donkey; in this case it's the Lord, Jehovah, God of Israel, that's going to be talking through this animal, so you're going to really find out what the will of God is now baby. [29] "And so Balaam said to the donkey, 'Because you have abused me. I wish there was a sword in my hand," now the humor of the passage revolves on the noun, "sword." Watch it, see, who's saying he has a sword in his hand. "I wish I had a sword in my hand, because if I did then I could kill you.'"

[30] "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.' [31] And 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. [32] And the Angel of the Lord said to him, 'Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to stand against you, because your way is perverse before Me.'" Now watch this. [33] "The donkey saw Me and turned aside from Me these three times. If she had not turned aside from Me, surely I would also have killed you by now and let her live." So in this case his ass saved him, it wasn't the other way around. [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 displeases You, I will turn back.'" He says no, you go and deal with this guy, Balak so that's the end of chapter 22. [35, "Then the ANGEL of the LORD said to Balaam, 'Go with the men, but only the word that AI speak to you, that you shall speak.'" So Balaam went with the princes of Balak. [36] Now when Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the city of Moab, which is on the border at the Arnon, the boundary of the territory. [37] Then Balak said to Balaam, 'Did I not earnestly send to you, calling for you? Why did you not come to me? Am I not able to honor you?']

So now we come down to chapter 23 and we're going to have the confrontation with Balak. [22:38] "And Balaam said to Balak, 'Look, I have come to you! Now, have I any power at all to say anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that I must speak.'" [39] So Balaam went with Balak, and they came to Kirjath Huzoth," and that's a high point apparently. [40] "Then Balak offered oxen and sheep," that's a symbol, by the way, here that they're entering into a business covenant, this is a contractual ceremony, so they're making a business agreement here; see, we're still in the religious business. [40, "Then Balak offered oxen and he sent some to Balaam and to the princes who were with him. [41] So it was, the next day, that Balak took Balaam and brought him up to the high places of Baal, that from there he might observe the extent of the people."]

So now, [23:1] "Then Balaam said to Balak, 'Build seven altars for me here," now let's think of dollars and cents here, this is not a cheap deal that's going down; think of the effort that was involved, look what it says: "build seven altars for me, and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams," think how much that would cost, this is not nickel and dime

stuff. [2] And Balak did just as Balaam had spoken, and Balak and Balaam offered a bull and a ram on each altar. [3] Then Balaam said to Balak, 'Stand by your burnt offering, and I will go: maybe the LORD will come to meet me, and whatever He shows me I will tell you.' So he went to a desolate height. [4] 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,' and he's telling God this. [5] "Then the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, 'Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak.'" Now here you have an example of God's superintending and taking over what would normally be pagan divination, because these people would become demon possessed and they'd go speak evil. Well now the Lord is going to put a word in Balaam and here you have an interesting case of watching what the Holy Spirit did in the Old Testament through prophets; He would actually put a word in their mouth, in their heart. And so now comes this oracle.

Now if you look on your outline on page 3 I have a diagram up at the top about the structure of this passage. When you study the Bible you want to look for repetition; the Holy Spirit is very economical in the way He writes, and if you'll notice I've indicated seer oracles here. Each of these oracles have a formula behind them. For example, if you look at verse 7 it starts out, "And he took up his oracle and said," if you look at verse 18, it says in verse 18, "he took up his oracle and said," and that occurs for all the seven. So we know very distinctly in the original languages there are seven separate oracles here. Now what's intriguing is that only about two of these are actually done and then the rest of them are all clumped together and you'll see why in a moment. So we want to just observe some of the structures.

So he goes through the ceremony and so forth, and then... the first oracle begins in verse 7, and from verse 7 on through the end of that oracle, down to verse 13, or actually verse 10 as far as the oracle itself, "He took up his oracle and said:" now this is God controlling the mouth and the mind of a pagan prophet; this is very interesting from the standpoint, later on Islam is going to come in the Middle East and claim that God really didn't work through Israel, He worked through Isaac, and how ironic that in this passage you've got a pagan prophet from Iraq, right near the center of, you know, we call it the Arabian center, here is a world famous guy from central Arabian area, and he is going to prophecy for Israel. And there's sort of an irony here historically. "Balak, the king of Moab, has brought me from Aram, [From the mountains of the east]" and he goes through, "Curse Jacob for me," this is what he's narrating, [And come, denounce Israel!]" [8] "How shall I curse," but now look at what happens in verse 8, 9 and 10; here's the pagan prophet trying hard to curse Israel because he's been paid, I mean, this is part of the deal, he's been paid to curse and yet when he opens his mouth he can't help but not curse. So we want to pay attention to this.

[8] "How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? And how shall I denounce whom the LORD has not denounced? [9] Far from the top of the rocks I see him, And from the hills I behold him," he's talking about Israel here, "There! A people dwelling alone, Not reckoning itself among the nations." So the theme of the first oracle is the uniqueness of Israel, as you see in the handout, that's why I indicated the theme there. [10] "Who can count the dust of Jacob? Or number one-fourth of Israel?" And then look

what he says at the end of verse 10, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and Let my end be like his!" So he can't help himself. So you can imagine after spending all this money Balak is not exactly pleased with the outcome of the first oracle.

So in verse 11, "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]!" [12] "So he answered and said, 'Must I not take heed to speak what the LORD has put in my mouth? [13] Then Balak said" well wait a minute, let's come with another place, so now we get into another little business deal, and they go through the ram thing and so forth. Then in verse 15 he says, well, let's just stand here and I'll go talk it over again with Yahweh. See, it's the manipulation thing because he's a pagan, the pagans think this way. [15, "And he said to Balak, 'Stand here by your burnt offering while I meet the LORD over there."]

[16] "Then the LORD met Balaam, and He put a word in his mouth, and said 'Go back to Balak, and thus you will speak." So now we have oracle number 2, verses 18-24. "Then he took up his oracle and said: Rise up, Balak, and hear! Listen to me, [son of Zippor!]" Now he's going to talk about, not the uniqueness of Israel but the guaranteed historical destiny of Israel. [19] "God is not a man, that He should lie," this is the election and calling of this nation, "God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should not repent." See, this is powerful for the pagan mind because the pagan mind thought that you manipulate, you make deals. After all, we make deals among men so why can't we... you know, convince. This is what the negotiation is about, let me convince you to change your mind and maybe if I can use that technique on the gods and the goddesses. But see now what he's saying, in the context here he says but God, that I'm dealing with here, he's "not a man, that He should lie, He's not a son of man, that He should repent," when He says something He says something and He doesn't go into a business agreement and be manipulated out of His election. "Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? [20] Behold, I have received a command to bless; He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it. [21] He has not observed iniquity in Jacob, nor has He seen wickedness in Israel. [The LORD his God is with him]." See, the idea of imputed righteousness, and he talks about "the shout of a King is among them." Verse 22, "God brings them out of Egypt, He has strength like a wild ox."

Look at verse 23 now, keep in mind, here is a pagan guy that's involved in sorcery. What does he say? "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!' [24] 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]." So obviously oracle number 2 is not very satisfactory either.

So now this really hacks off Balak, so look what he says in verse 25. "Then Balak said to Balaam, Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all!" If you're not going to curse them, for heaven's sake, don't bless them. [26] "So Balaam answered and said to Balak, 'Did I not tell you, saying, All that the LORD speaks, that I must do?'" Then Balak said to Balaam, Perhaps I will take you to another place. [27, "Then Balak said

to Balaam, Please come, I will take you to another place; perhaps it will please God that you may curse them for me from there."]

So we still have the manipulation going on and we're going to have oracle number 3 in chapters 24:3-9. Notice again, after the manipulation, after the business deal, [3] "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,]"

[4]"The utterance of him who hears the words of God, [Who sees the vision of the Almighty, Who falls down, with eyes wide open.]"

So this one is the third cycle is going to be that a person is blessed or cursed depending on their response to Israel. Look what he says in verse 5, can you imagine, I mean, imagine you're a cinematographer and you're writing a script for this movie, what face would you put on the actor that played Balak as he's listening to this, verse 5: "How lovely are your tents, O Jacob! Your dwellings, O Israel! [6] Like valleys that stretch out, like gardens by the riverside, [like aloes planted by the LORD, like cedars beside the waters.]" And then later on in verse 7, "His king shall be higher than Agag," who was one of the prominent Amalekite kings, "And his kingdom shall be exalted, [8] 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.]" Verse 9, "He bows down, he lies down as a lion... who shall rouse him?" Now look at the end of verse 9, what covenant does that remind you of? The Abrahamic Covenant, you see, see how powerful these covenants are in the Old Testament. Once you grab hold of this a lot of these stories make sense. Once you grab this you've got the string that puts the beads together on a necklace, and you want to watch how it works. "Blessed is he who blesses you, and cursed is he who curses you."

Now this third oracle, this about terminates the business agreement. [10] "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, get out of here, [11] "Now therefore, flee to your place. I said I would greatly honor you," remember I told you about the honor meaning money, "I would greatly honor you, but in fact, the LORD has kept you back from honor." So what Balaam says, I'm not giving you your fees, so you want a religious business, baby, go home, go back to Iraq, because I have had it, I am not paying you a cotton pickin' cent for this stuff. So the business agreement terminates.

And then finally in verse 14 Balaam is going to give him the rest of it anyway. ["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 all the cycles from here on, the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh, quickly come up now and we'll quickly go through these. This is the final frosting on the cake; the business has ended, the contract, business contract is ruptured because Balaam refuses to adhere to the terms of the business arrangement.

[15] "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,] [16] "The utterance of him who hears the words of God," see what Balaam is doing

here, he's saying look, now my eyes are opened and I'm going to talk about doom on who molest Israel. "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." [17] "I see Him," here you have an amazing prophecy, this is a Messianic prophecy, so it's not only talking about the destiny of Israel, now he's talking about something that's going to happen in history. I see Him, but not now, I behold Him, but He is 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." He's forecasting the Lord Jesus Christ through the Davidic line, the scepter there probably refers a close end to the monarchy under David.

Then he has these other quick assertions here of oracles, [18] And Edom shall be a possession;" which he was, [Seir also, his enemies, shall be a possession,] While Israel does valiantly. [19] Out of Jacob One shall have dominion, and destroy the remains of the city. [20] Then he looked on Amalek, and he took up his oracle and said," see the repetition of that sentence? "'Amalek was first among the nations, but shall be last until he perishes. [21] 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; [22] But Kain shall be burned. How long until Asshur carries you away captive?" forecasting the Assyrian invasion. And finally he says, and this may be a prophecy of Rome and Greece. [23] Alas! Who shall live when God does this? [24] But ships shall come from the coast of Cyprus, and they shall afflict Asshur," which is Assyria and Iraq, his own homeland, "and afflict Eber," which are all the Semites in the Eastern Mediterranean. "And so shall Amalek, until he perishes. [25] So Balaam rose and departed, and returned to his place."

Now if that were the end of the discussion that would be nice, it would be a nice Hollywood story where everything ended nicely. But now watch, because now Israel enters in a disaster, and what we're going to see in the argument that we've gone through in chapters 22, 23 and 24 is that when it comes to any spiritual assault on Israel, it will not come because God has given up being their shield. The attack will come because they are seduced and make wrong choices in their lives, and that is what is destroying them. It's not the fact that they are overpowered with demonic forces. God is the shield that keeps them at bay, God says I've elected this nation and you cannot curse it. It reminds you of Romans 8, doesn't it? Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, principalities and powers, the depths of the heights, because our God controls the darkness, He controls those things. But what He doesn't do, He doesn't make choices for us; we make the choices.

And so apparently Balak came back later on, maybe he was offered another business deal, apparently he came back, according to Revelation 2, Jude 1, 2 Peter 2 all speak of Balak. [Revelation 2:14, "But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a tumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality." Jude 11, "Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah." 2 Peter 2:15, "They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness."]

And he came up with a plan... well, you know, we can't curse Israel, but what we can do is seduce them. So here's what happens, [25:1, "Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. [2] They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. [3] So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel." That sentence, "anger the LORD" apparently also means that God began to plague them, and thousands of people were dying at this point. It's not just an abstract, "the anger of the LORD was aroused," these people are empirical, they want to see something publicly visible, so when they say "the LORD was angry," it was something that they saw that they inferred that God was angry. And it appears to be this massive plague that happened.

And [5] "Then Moses said to the judges of Israel, 'Everyone of you kill his men who were joined to Baal of Peor.'" And then we have an incident that happens toward the end of the plague in verse 6, this is amazing, in verse 6 in the Hebrew the connotation of how you translate verse 6 is: while Moses is saying verse 5 this happened. Well, what is it that happened? "[And indeed,] one of the children of Israel came and presented to his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping at the door of the tab of meeting. [7] Now when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest,, saw it, he rose 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 body." Now obviously, the commentators, most of them, they were having sex and they were doing it right in front of everybody, right in the major tent, and Phinehas said that's it, so he went in and spiked both of them with a javelin. "... and the woman through her body. So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel, [9] And those who died in the plague," notice, "were twenty-four thousand." That is over an army division, size wise. [10] And thus "the LORD spoke to Moses, saying," and the rest of the document talks about the victory and the plunder and so forth, and the fact that "the name of the Israelite," by the way, notice in verse 14 another one of these historical references, notice this, the man's name and the woman's name preserved for all of history. The man's name was Zimri, the woman's name was Cozbi, the daughter of Zur. [16] "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [17] Harass the Midianites, and attack them, [18] for they harassed you with their schemes by which they seduced you in the matter of Peor," go into almost a holy war, which he does, and in chapter 31, if you'll skip over to 31 you'll see what happened and you'll see an amazing thing that happened.

Numbers 31:1, "And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [2] Take vengeance on the Midianites, [for the children of Israel..." so they recruit an army, verse 5, they go out and they kill them. [9] "And the children of Israel took the women of Midian captive, their little ones, and took as spoil all their cattle, all their flocks, and all their goods." We'll see just how much of these they had. [10] "They also burned with fire all the cities where they dwelt, and all their forts. [12] And they brought the captives," notice these are not the Moabites per se, these are Midianites, the other group that was after them. "Then they brought the captives, the booty, and the spoil to Moses," it says verse 13, "Moses and Eleazar the

priest, and all the leaders of the congregation, went to meet them. [14] But Moses was angry with the officers of the army, with the captains over thousands and captains over hundreds who had come from the battle. [15] And Moses said to them, Why have you kept all the women alive? [16] Look, these are the women that caused the children of Israel to go through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation" of Israel. [17] "Now kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known a man intimately. [18] But keep alive for yourselves all the young girls who have not known a man intimately. [19] And as for you, remain outside the camp seven days," until you purify yourself.

And the division of plunder in verse 25, the massive amount of plunder, in fact, if you look over in Numbers 31:32, look at the size of the plunder, "The booty remaining from the plunder, which the men of war had taken," and by the way, the reason this booty is so high is because the Midianites were the merchants, remember who sold Joseph? The Midianites were the merchant men in the Ancient Near East. So these guys, these are very successful business people, so this is why you have this list that starts in verse 32 ["six hundred and seventy-five thousand sheep,"] that now becomes the capital assets of Israel. [33] "seventy-two thousand cattle, [34] sixty-one thousand donkeys, [35] and thirty-two thousand persons in all, of women who had not known a man intimately. [36] And half..." it goes on and describe it.

In the interest of time tonight I want to pull this together to show you how the New Testament makes use of this incident. Turn to 1 Corinthians 10, and this gives us insight into some of these warning passages in the New Testament. People get all upset when they see these warning passages and think people are losing their salvation. No, they are losing their lives. And 1 Corinthians 10, in this passage, it's the thing there, remember that's one of those great promises, verse 12, "Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall," see, it's this Baal Peor thing, "No tempting has taken you but such as is common to man, but God is faithful," the ultimate answer to all our testing, "God is faithful," three words answers every single test, doesn't it. "God is faithful, He will NOT allow you to be tested above which you are able, but will with the testing make a way of escape that you may be able to bear it." A powerful counseling verse, and everybody "well I can't do it, I can't do it;" Paul says yes you can.

Now verse 14, he's going to warn the Corinthian congregation about the way they were engaged in religious practices, "Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. [15] I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. [16] The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? [17] For we, through many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread. [18] Now observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar of the sacrifice? [19] What am I saying? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? [20] No, rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons." Now he's talking to believers here, not unbelievers. And he's worried and he's concerned

about believers having communication with demonic forces and the way they did it was they participated in these rituals.

Now the church fathers had a view of this which I think is true. They believed that the religious pictures, you know, the gods and goddesses, where do you think the craftsmen that did those stone things, or the wood, or made these idols, where do you think they got the picture? And the church fathers in several places in the early church writings say the craftsmen that built these statues of these gods and goddesses, they got that idea in demonic dreams; those gods and goddesses are actual three dimensional examples of what the demon looked like when he appeared to them, craftsmen. And that's why there's a close connection here. So Paul says now look, it's not that the idols are anything, but when you mess with them you mess with the demons that are involved with those idols. And so that's why he's arguing for this and it's all in the reference, 1 Corinthians 10 is all dealing with this. In fact if you look back in chapter 10, you'll see that in verse 7, "But do not become idolaters as some. As it is written, 'The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play.' [8] Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell, [9] nor let us tempt Christ as some of them tempted Him," and that's another incident that they did.

So these are incidents from the history of Israel that the New Testament builds on, but you miss the force of it if you don't read the Old Testament story and understand it. So tonight we've done a very quick mode here to try to get a little bit of background and we're going to go forward next time in Deuteronomy 4, the statutes and the judgments, and why you want to do it, but just keep in mind that this was a little motivational story, that Moses set in here. But just remember, an entire army division was destroyed, not because the demonic powers were given power by God, that God was somehow a weakling and He took His shield away; that wasn't the problem. The problem was these people became vulnerable when they made sinful choices. You opened yourself up for demonic forces, and that's why we have to be careful as Christians, particularly as our culture becomes more and more pagan, our young people are particularly going to be raised in a very hostile spiritual environment, drugs and everything else are just conduits for demonic power. And we don't want to participate with that, it's going to become increasingly an issue with us as Christians as a body of Christ, to maintain purity and maintain fellowship with our Lord.