

Numbers 24:1 ¶ And when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness.

Numbers 24:2 And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding *in his tents* according to their tribes; and the spirit of God came upon him.

Again, the chapter break is unfortunate and the narrative continues from the previous chapter.

Balaam knew that it was God's desire to bless Israel, so he abandoned the pretense of going aside to seek enchantments. As he looked toward the camp of Israel in the wilderness, the Spirit of God came upon him.

Reminder—God uses anyone and anything necessary to accomplish His purposes.

Numbers 24:3 And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said:

Numbers 24:4 He hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling *into a trance*, but having his eyes open:

Balaam began to speak by declaring himself fully cognizant of what he was saying. He declares that he has heard the words of God and seen a vision of the Almighty. The Spirit, speaking through Balaam, notes that though he is in a trance, he is fully cognizant of what he is saying.

Numbers 24:5 How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, *and thy tabernacles*, O Israel!

Numbers 24:6 As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the LORD hath planted, *and as cedar trees beside the waters*.

Numbers 24:7 He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed *shall be* in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted.

Numbers 24:8 God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn: he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce *them* through with his arrows.

Numbers 24:9 He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed *is* he that blesseth thee, and cursed *is* he that curseth thee.

My paraphrase of Balaam's message: How pleasant are the tents in which Israel dwells. They appear to me as bountiful and prosperous, like a well-watered garden and strong cedar trees. Their progeny will be blessed with plenty. Their king is greater than Agag (the Amalekite king); in fact, His kingdom will be exalted above all others. God has delivered Israel from Egypt with invincible strength, and will empower them to destroy their enemies and possess their nations. Israel is like a strong lion, crouching and ready to pounce. Blessed are those that bless Israel, and cursed are those that curse her.

This last phrase actually calls to mind God's promise to Abraham.

*Genesis 12:1–3 “Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: **And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee:** and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”*

In effect, Balaam was telling Balak that if he persisted in cursing Israel, he would himself be cursed.

This promise has never and will never be revoked. If only the leaders of America and the other nations of the world grasped that truth. I believe that America has been blessed in great part because of the way she has provided support for Israel since its rebirth as a nation. Slowly but surely, we have taken actions that have made them more vulnerable to attack from other nations. Just as surely as we have been blessed for blessing Israel, so will we be cursed by cursing Israel. According to Webster cursing entails causing “...great harm, evil, or misfortune; that which brings evil or severe affliction; torment.” Our foreign policy continues to allow for just that regarding Israel.

Numbers 24:10 ¶ And Balak’s anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together: and Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed *them* these three times. Numbers 24:11 Therefore now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee unto great honour; but, lo, the LORD hath kept thee back from honour.

Balak was livid and smote his hands together in anger (an Oriental expression of rage). He ranted at Balaam for blessing his enemies three times instead of cursing them as he had asked. I guess he was still a bit in fear of Balaam, because he told him to go back home without harming him. He reiterated that he had hoped to bestow great honor upon Balaam, but the LORD had prevented that; in other words, Balaam got no pay for his attempted service to Balak.

Numbers 24:12 And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying, Numbers 24:13 If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the LORD, to do *either* good or bad of mine own mind; *but* what the LORD saith, that will I speak? Numbers 24:14 And now, behold, I go unto my people: come *therefore*, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days.

Balaam once again reminded Balak that he had explicitly told his messengers that even if he had been promised Balak’s house full of silver and gold, he could not go against the command of the LORD. He could not act in accordance with his own desires (implying that he would liked to have accommodated Balak); he could only speak as the LORD directed him.

Balaam declared that he had one more message for Balak and his people before going home. This message concerns “the latter days,” a phrase that references

end times.

Numbers 24:15 ¶ And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said:

Numbers 24:16 He hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the most High, *which* saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open:

Once again, Balaam clarifies that he had clearly heard the words of God and had seen a vision of the Almighty; though he was in a trance, he was clearly cognizant of what he was saying.

Numbers 24:17 I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.

Numbers 24:18 And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly.

Numbers 24:19 Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city.

My paraphrase: In the future—not soon—there will come a “Star” (or prince) out of Jacob and a “Sceptre” (or ruler) out of Israel. This ruler will destroy Moab. (Sheth appears to be renaming Moab.) The people and land of Edom will be conquered by her enemies as Israel grows stronger. Out of Jacob (another name for Israel) will come a ruler that will destroy all of Israel’s enemies.

This prophecy obviously references the Messiah, Jesus. John affirms this in the Revelation.

Revelation 22:16 “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.”

Numbers 24:20 And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and said, Amalek *was* the first of the nations; but his latter end *shall be* that he perish for ever.

I assume that Balaam had a vision of Amalek as he uttered this next part of the message. He declared that though Amalek was the most powerful of nations now, it would perish never to rise again.

Numbers 24:21 And he looked on the Kenites, and took up his parable, and said, Strong is thy dwellingplace, and thou puttest thy nest in a rock.

Numbers 24:22 Nevertheless the Kenite shall be wasted, until Asshur shall carry thee away captive.

Easton’s describes the Kenites as follows: “They were wandering smiths, ‘the gipsies and travelling tinkers of the old Oriental world.’”

Balaam next has a vision about the Kenites and declares that though they live in

a strong place in the rocks, they will be taken captive by Asshur (the Assyrians).

This prophecy would necessarily exclude the Kenites from the family of Moses' in-laws that had joined themselves to the nation of Israel.

Judges 1:16 "And the children of the Kenite, Moses' father in law, went up out of the city of palm trees with the children of Judah into the wilderness of Judah, which lieth in the south of Arad; and they went and dwelt among the people."

Numbers 24:23 And he took up his parable, and said, Alas, who shall live when God doeth this!

Numbers 24:24 And ships shall come from the coast of Chittim, and shall afflict Asshur, and shall afflict Eber, and he also shall perish for ever.

Balaam completes his message by basically declaring that no one can survive when God has purposed that he be destroyed. He declared that Assyria and "Eber" would be attacked by ships from Cyprus.

Eber, descendant of Shem, was the father of the Hebrew race. We know that God is not going to destroy the Hebrews according to His covenant with Abraham. Isaiah prophesied that Assyria would one day be blessed with Israel.

Isaiah 19:24 "In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land...."

So, I have to conclude that it is Cyprus that will be destroyed.

After completing the chapter and looking at some commentaries, a note in the NIV Commentary struck a chord. It noted that this same word referencing Cyprus is used in reference to Rome. (see commentary on Daniel 11) This actually makes better sense to me since we know that the Messiah will completely defeat the Antichrist, the leader that will arrive from the area of the revived Roman Empire.

Numbers 24:25 And Balaam rose up, and went and returned to his place: and Balak also went his way.

Then both Balaam and Balak returned to their homes—both in utter defeat. This same result is assured anyone that tries to thwart the will of God.