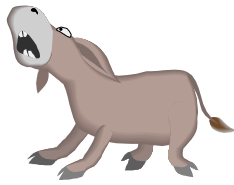


“A Talking What?”

Numbers 22:1-41



Memory verse: 2 Peter 2:15 NKJV

“They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.”

GOD had led the Israelites out of the bondage of Egypt into the wilderness. Because of their lack of faith and trust in the LORD they had to wander in the wilderness for 40 years. Now they are nearing the land which the LORD had promised Abraham He would give to his descendants.

When they journeyed to the east side of the Jordan they asked for permission to pass through the land. The kings, fearing them, were not willing to allow them passage. They prepared to do battle. The LORD gave His people victory over the Amorite kings Sihon and Og.

Now Balak, king of Moab had seen all that Israel had done to the Amorites and he was afraid. So Balak sent for Balaam, a soothsayer to curse the Israelites. (A soothsayer is a person who claims to predict the future). The elders of Moab and the elders of Midian took “the diviner’s fee” (money) to pay Balaam to curse Israel. Balaam told them to lodge there that night and he would bring back the words the LORD spoke to him.

That night the LORD told Balaam, “you shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people for they are blessed.” Balaam told the men who came from Balak to return to their land for the LORD refused to give him permission to go with them. Balaam could have made sure they understood that he had no desire to do anything against the will of the LORD. But we learn in other passages in the Bible that Balaam was a lover of money and he really wanted to do what the king asked.

Balak sends more men back to Balaam a second time. Balak promises Balaam, “please let nothing hinder you from coming to me. I will certainly honor you greatly and I will do whatever you say to me. Therefore please come and curse this people for me.”

Now Balaam could have just told them the LORD has spoken and you already know my answer. I will not go.

But instead he tells them, “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 to do more or less.” Then he tells them to stay the night while he goes to know what more the LORD will say to him. It sounds like he is wanting to obey GOD, doesn’t it? But from other verses in the scriptures we know his heart desired the money for he “loved the wages of unrighteousness.” That night the LORD told Balaam to go with the men, but “only the word which I speak to you – that you shall do.”

As Balaam travels on his way to go to Balak an Angel of the LORD stands in the way with his sword drawn. Balaam could not see the angel but his donkey saw him. The donkey turned to the side and went into the field to avoid the danger. Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back onto the street. Later the Angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between the vineyards with a wall on both sides. Again Balaam did not see the Angel but his donkey did. The donkey pushed herself against the wall and crushed Balaam’s foot. Balaam struck the animal once again.

Then the Angel of the LORD went further and stood in the way where there was no way to turn either to the right or to the left. When Balaam’s donkey saw the Angel she lay down under Balaam. Balaam’s anger arose against the donkey and he struck her with his staff. The LORD opened the mouth of the donkey and she said to Balaam, “What have I done to you that you have struck me these three times?”

Balaam answers the donkey, “Because you have abused me. I wish there were a sword in my hand, for now I would kill you.” The donkey then asks 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 Balaam answered, “No.”

At this point the LORD opens Balaam’s eyes and he sees the Angel of the LORD. The Angel tells Balaam, “Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I come out to stand against you, because your way is perverse before Me. The donkey saw Me and turned aside from Me these three times. If she had not turned aside from Me I would also have killed you by now and let her live.” Balaam says “I have sinned” if you want I will turn back. But the Angel of the LORD told him to go meet the men but “only the word that I speak to you, that shall you speak.”

Balaam goes to king Balak but three times his message is a blessing to Israel rather than the curse Balak wanted him to pronounce.