

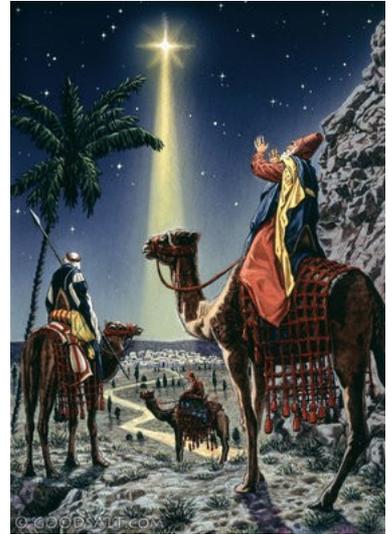
Balaam's Prophecy
(The "Star out of Jacob")
Numbers 24:15-25

Introduction:

This prophecy was delivered through one of the most unusual prophets in the Bible—an apostate prophet named Balaam.

Numbers 24:15-17

It is important to understand that Balaam was *not* a true believer in Jehovah. He was a hireling prophet who knew *about* the true God, but who was willing to market his prophecies to the highest bidder. Balaam was from somewhere in the land of Haran, in Syria, near the Euphrates River. Some of Abraham's family had settled down in that region hundreds of years earlier; and in Abraham's day, they still had knowledge of the true God. There were, apparently, still some remnants of the old Jehovah worship in that region—though it had descended into apostasy. Balaam was a "soothsayer" or diviner (one who seeks revelation from demonic forces).



Genesis 11:31-32

Genesis 24:1-52 (The family of Abraham in Haran worshipped the same God that Abraham did.)

Genesis 31:14-35 (By the time of Abraham's grandson Jacob, Jacob's uncle Laban in Haran had adopted some measure of idol-worship, while still claiming to worship Jehovah.)

Joshua 13:22

The background of this prophecy is that Balak, the king of Moab, along with the king of Midian, offered Balaam reward if he would curse the children of Israel. The Moabites and the Midianites also had some ruins of Jehovah-worship in their past, because the Midianites were descendants of Abraham, and the Moabites

were descendants of Abraham's saved (but very worldly) nephew, Lot. The fact that they took Jehovah's name seriously enough to try to curse Israel with Jehovah's stamp of approval (**Numbers 23:27**) shows that there was still some memory of Jehovah in their society. However, both nations had descended into apostasy.

Genesis 25:1-6

Genesis 19:36-38

God warned Balaam not to curse Israel, because the children of Israel were blessed. Balaam went with the king's convoy, and pretended to protest that he would not curse Israel; but he secretly intended in his heart to do so. God sent an angel to kill Balaam; and his donkey, seeing the angel, wouldn't move. Balaam beat his donkey for not moving, and God caused the donkey to talk to him. Balaam was so enraged, that he didn't even seem to be surprised by the fact that a donkey was talking to him!

Finally, God allowed Balaam to see the angel; and the angel severely rebuked him, and threatened his life if he failed to speak the words that God would give him when he met with Balak. Balaam obeyed, and blessed Israel before the king of Moab—but only because he feared that God would slay him otherwise.

Numbers 22:1 - 24:11

Balaam is mentioned in Scripture as a classic example of the apostate prophet. His apostasy showed itself, first of all, in that he attempted, in Jehovah's name, to curse something that God had blessed—and all for personal gain. (Likewise, apostate prophets also bless that which God has *cursed*. They call evil good, and good evil.)

2 Peter 2:15-16 (Balaam's father's actual name was Beor; yet, Peter calls Balaam "***the son of Bosor.***" Peter was not confused about Balaam's father's name: he was using a Hebrew play on words in order to make a point to his Jewish readers. *Bosor* is the Hebrew word for "flesh." Peter is saying that Balaam, because he was a lost man, lived for the flesh, and did not have the Spirit of God.)

Isaiah 5:20

Jeremiah 23:16-17

Balaam's apostasy can also be seen in his later attempt to seduce the children of Israel to commit fornication with the idolatrous Moabites.

Numbers 25:1-9 / 31:15-16

This corruption of the Israelites was for the purpose of causing them to lose their separation from immortality and idolatry, so that God would curse them. He was still trying to get his reward from the kings of Moab and Midian.

*Sadly, our modern world abounds with apostate "preachers" who appear to be "Christian," but who subtly deny the cross of Christ, and use God's name and His Word for fame and money (people such as the Pope, Billy Graham, Benny Hinn, Rick Warren, Robert Schuller, Kenneth Copeland, and countless other "Christian" leaders). These apostates are preparing the "Christian" world to embrace the pagan, one-world religion.

Despite Balaam's wicked character, this prophecy in Numbers is not a false, demonic prophecy: it is genuinely from God. In Old Testament times, God sometimes delivered prophecies through wicked men. Another example of this can be seen in the prophecy of the corrupt high priest, Caiaphas, who orchestrated Jesus' crucifixion.

John 11:47-53

Having looked at Balaam's personal background, let us now examine his prophecy.

I. The prophecy concerning the Messiah (vv. 17-19).

Balaam's prophecy concerning the Messiah followed immediately after his blessing upon Israel.

Numbers 24:10-17a

The words "*I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh (near)*" indicate that this powerful King was not yet on earth: He was to come in the future. Sadly, Balaam, and countless unbelievers, will one day

see Him when they stand before Him to be judged, and cast into the Lake of Fire.

Revelation 20:11-15

A. The Messiah's first coming (v. 17)

The words “**Star**” and “**Sceptre**” are metaphors for the Messiah. They refer to His glory (indicated by “**star**”), and to His right of kingship (indicated by “**sceptre**”). The word “**sceptre**” was used in another prophecy of the Messiah, which was given by Jacob.

Genesis 49:8-10

The wise men from the east probably knew the Hebrew Scriptures because of the influence of Daniel and other godly Jews who had lived in Babylonia / Persia in past centuries. Evidently, they were familiar with this prophecy; and they were so convinced that this prophecy had been fulfilled, that they made the long journey to Israel to greet the newborn King.

Matthew 2:1-12

The wise men correctly interpreted the star as a supernatural sign that the “**Star out of Jacob**” (the Messiah) had been born. The “**star**” was more than a metaphor for the Messiah: it was also literal. This unique star was also *supernatural*, for it arose in the west, not in the east. (“Jacob,” i.e., the land of Israel, was to the west of the wise men.) The star*/ also moved in a westward direction, disappeared and reappeared, and hovered low enough to show the exact spot where Jesus was.

Incidentally, Jesus is called the “morning star.” Yet, the NIV, and other modern versions, mistranslate Lucifer’s title “**son of the morning**” (*ben-shakar*) in **Isaiah 14:12** as “morning star”! (If “morning star” were the true reading, the Hebrew would be *kochav ha shakar*). Why would they give a title that belongs uniquely to Jesus...to Satan? This is why it is important to use the right Bible version!

Revelation 22:16

Isaiah 14:12

B. The Messiah's second coming (vv. 17b-19)

Numbers 24:17b-19

The prophecies concerning the smiting and subjugation of Moab and Edom have not yet been fulfilled. Moab and Edom *were* repeatedly defeated by Israel's kings in Old Testament times. However, in **Jeremiah 48-49**, this prophecy is said to be yet in the future—a “latter days” prophecy. Also, the entire book of **Obadiah**, which prophesies Edom's destruction, places Edom's destruction in “*the day of the LORD*” (during the Tribulation).

Obadiah 1-4, 15-18

Though these nations ceased to exist as distinct ethnic peoples after about A.D. 70, God apparently still views the people of west and southwest Jordan as “the children of Edom and Moab.” These nations will rise up against Israel during the Tribulation, and will be destroyed.

“*All the children of Sheth*” (v .17) may refer to all the people of the earth, since all mankind, ever since the Flood, has descended from only one line—the line of Seth (through Noah)! This is a powerful statement about the extent of the destruction that God will pour out on the earth during the Tribulation!

Genesis 5:1-32

II. The prophecy concerning the destruction of Israel's enemies (vv. 20-24)

In **verse 20**, Amalek is called “*the first of the nations.*” This probably refers to the fact that Amalek was the first nation to attack Israel after Israel had left Egypt.

Exodus 17:8-16

Because Amalek was the first nation to attempt to destroy Israel after they had left Egypt, Amalek was always under a perpetual curse from God.

Amalek (modern southern Israel, by the border of the Sinai) will be destroyed during the Tribulation.

In **verses 21-22**, the destruction of the Kenites is prophesied. The Kenites were the family of Jethro (also called Raguel), Moses' Midianite father-in-law. They left their own land and travelled with the children of Israel into Canaan, and remained "distantly friendly" with them. However, they never really assimilated into their culture; and on at least one occasion, they made an alliance with the Canaanites against Israel. Their destruction happened 700 years after Balaam's time, when "Asshur" (the Assyrian empire) completely destroyed them.

Numbers 10:29-33

Judges 1:16 / 4:16-24

The last part of the prophecy is so frightening, that Balaam gasps, "***Alas, who shall live when God doeth this!***" It is a prophecy concerning the future destruction of Asshur by forces from the West (coming from "Kittim"—modern-day Cyprus).

Since the old Assyrian empire covered the entire Middle East, it seems that the Middle Eastern region (except Israel) will be left in ruins after an invasion of Western forces during the Tribulation. We know, from other prophecies, that the ancient city of Damascus (the modern-day capital of Syria) will be completely annihilated in one night. This kind of instantaneous destruction, if not supernatural, could possibly be nuclear.

Isaiah 17:1, 11-14

This prophecy undoubtedly corresponds with the war of **Ezekiel 38-39**. In this war, Gog and Magog (Russia) will ally itself with Persia (Iran), Ethiopia, Libya, Gomer (a band of eastern European nations), Togarmah (Turkey), and "***many people with thee***" (probably Israel's other enemy neighbours, such as Jordan and Syria), and will invade Israel; but God will smite them with a destruction so thorough, that it will take Israel seven months to bury their enemies' bodies!

Ezekiel 39:11-15

It appears that these battles will be in the early part of the Tribulation. The casualties will be horrific; yet, it will be merely the **“beginning of sorrows”** (Matthew 24:6-8). No wonder Balaam said, **“Alas, who shall live when God doeth this!”** These prophecies will be fulfilled shortly before the **“Star out of Jacob”** (The Messiah) comes in the clouds to destroy His enemies.

Conclusion: This brief prophecy of Balaam spans both comings of Christ. In the first part of the prophecy, we find a beautiful foretelling of the star which would lead the wise men to see the young child Jesus. Yet, in the latter part of the prophecy, we find a dark, cryptic foretelling of the horrific wars that will take place during the Day of the LORD. The Day of the LORD will culminate in the Battle of Armageddon, when Christ will destroy His enemies.

The fact that all this was delivered through the mouth of an apostate soothsayer shows that God can raise up even wicked men in order to bring praise to Himself (Psalm 76:10)!