

The Pastor's Pen

“I see Him, but not now. I behold Him, but not near. A star shall come out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel.” ~

Numbers 24:17

Who said these words? A man named Balaam the prophet – the very same Balaam the prophet who had previously disobeyed the LORD and almost got himself killed for it. And Balaam would have been killed, if his donkey had not been smarter than he was. The LORD sent an angel to remove Balaam's head from his shoulders with the sword the angel was holding while he was standing in the road – and Balaam could not even see him. However, Balaam's donkey could, and the donkey wouldn't walk up toward the angel. Balaam started beating his donkey, but then the LORD enabled the donkey to speak in a human voice.

Now, one would think that when a donkey starts talking to you, it's either time to make sure somebody didn't slip something in your lunch...or it is time to stop and listen. Ironically, instead of stopping and considering the fact that one normally does not have a two-way conversation with a beast of burden, Balaam is so off track that he just stands there, argues with the donkey, and tells her that if he had a sword, he would kill her.

Only then did the LORD open Balaam's eyes so *he saw what his donkey had seen and he was told by the angel waiting to kill him that his donkey saved his life.* The fact that the LORD used a donkey to speak to Balaam is properly *humbling* for those of us who have been called by God to teach His people. The LORD does not need great orators... if need be, a simple donkey will suffice ...and quite often does.

But – *why* was the LORD *going to kill* Balaam? The answer is *simple but terrifying*, if we actually consider it. Balaam was unfaithful in how he handled God’s Word. Instead of saying nothing more and nothing less than what God said, *Balaam tried to make God’s Word say what he wanted God’s Word to say*. And, many a preacher does the exact same thing today, but we preachers would be wise to consider how seriously the LORD takes a man tampering with His Word, and how deadly the consequences can be.

Balaam learned his lesson and then God gave him the prophecy above. And what did the LORD *tell us* through the prophet? First, *a King would be born in Israel, but He would not be born for quite some time*. This is significant, because Balaam prophesied this roughly 1,500 years before the birth of Jesus. Second, *when this King was born in Israel – a star would rise to signal His birth* (think “We Three Kings of Orient Are”). Was this a lucky guess on Balaam’s part? Well, if you believe *that* – then you have a whole lot more faith than I do. This was no lucky guess. The God of Israel used a prophet with a donkey who was a lot smarter than he was – to give us *future history*, long before the future *was* history.

In fact, this is the very way that God tells us that we can know who truly speaks on His behalf and who does not. “*When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him*” (Deuteronomy 18:22).

Of all the religious holy books on earth, the Bible alone contains predictive prophecy – and over 25% of the Old Testament *is* predictive prophecy (*not counting* the New Testament). But I don't actually want you to take my word for it. I challenge you – *verify this for yourself*. But, since most folks won't take the time to do that, I will save you some time and give you a spoiler...it does not matter whether you look for true, specific, predictive, foretelling prophecy in Hinduism's *Vedas*, Buddhism's *Damahdapa*, Judaism's *Talmud*, Islam's *Qur'an*, Taoism's *Dao De Jing*, Confucianism's *Analects of Confucius*, Sikhism's *Guru Granth Sahib*, or *The Book of Mormon*. You will find not one minute scrap of verifiable, foretelling, predictive prophecy in any of them. It is not there.

The prophetic nature of the Bible sets it apart from every religious book on the face of the entire planet. This is one reason God takes it so deadly serious when someone claiming to speak for Him tampers with it. Why would God do this? So that we will *know* and *believe* that Jesus of Nazareth *is indeed* the Savior of the world.

This week, may your hearts overflow with the Laughter of the Redeemed.

Heath