

Balaam's Donkey

Numbers 22:1-35

by Don Falkos

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The Israelites traveled to the plains of Moab across the Jordan River from Jericho. They had no intention of invading Moab, but the king of Moab didn't know that. He was terrified, so he sent an envoy to a pagan prophet named Balaam, saying, "Come and curse these people so I can drive them off."

Balaam consulted with God, who said, "Go, but say only what I tell you to say."

Along the way Balaam was thinking more about the money he was going to be paid than about what God might want him to say. Suddenly, Balaam's donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with a drawn sword. She ran off into a field. Balaam beat her with his staff to get her back on the road.

Later, Balaam's donkey again saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road. She veered to one side crushing Balaam's foot against a wall. Again Balaam beat her with his staff.

When Balaam's donkey saw the angel of the Lord for the third time, she stopped, sat down, and refused to move. For the third time Balaam beat her with his staff. Suddenly, Balaam's donkey spoke, "What have I done? Why have you beaten me three times?"

Balaam said, "You have made a fool of me. If I had a sword with me, I would kill you on the spot."

Then the Lord opened Balaam's eyes. He saw the angel standing in the road brandishing a sword. Balaam fell to his knees and the angel said, "Three times your donkey has turned away from me. If she had not, I would certainly have killed you by now, although I would have spared her life. Now continue on to Moab, but say only what the Lord tells you to say."