

KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

"Teaching the things concerning the kingdom of God..."

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 44

THE CHURCH IN PERGAMOS

(continued)

"I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the *doctrine of Balaam*, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication" (Rev. 2:14).

Across the pages of scripture there march men and women chosen of God to reveal by their lives and actions the great truths and principles of spiritual reality. The Holy Spirit has graphically painted a cameo-sharp picture of each one of them. There is a clear sketch of their characters which provides object lessons for all who walk with God and seek to fulfill His purpose in the earth. There are some who reveal the positive, men full of faith and committed to obedience to God, who wrought exploits and laid the foundations of God's ways and will for all men. Let me mention some of them. In the Old Testament, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Jeremiah and Daniel. In the New Testament, Mary, John the Baptist, Peter, John, Paul, Barnabas, and Apollos.

Then there are those whose lives accentuate the negative, men who profess to walk with God and be His ministers, but whose character reveals the flaws and errors which disqualify men from inheriting the promises. Some of these are Cain, Esau, Balaam, Samson, Saul, Absalom, Judas, Demas, and Ananias and Sapphira.

The Old Testament prophet Balaam has long been an enigma. He appears out of the mists of antiquity somewhat like Melchizedek — unexplainable in his origins and role of his time. He lived near the Euphrates river in the land of Pethor, modern-day Iraq. His prophecies were totally accurate; his language the most eloquent of all the Old Testament prophets; his allegories the most poetic; and his deception, by the love of fame and money, the most cunning. His notoriety had spread so far abroad that it seems his name was known in all the courts of pagan kings, soothsayers, and magicians. Yet he had conversations with the true and living God almost like Moses did! You will find his name mentioned sixty times in fifty-seven verses in no less than eight of the sixty-six books of the Bible — more than any other prophet! Yet words fail to describe his final and ignoble end.

How could Balaam — who had been the greatest prophet of the Lord up to that time (second only to Moses) — end up a soothsayer, using enchantments and divinations in an attempt to destroy the people whom God had commanded him to bless. How could he, whom God no doubt would have honored and immortalized his name throughout all time — had he stayed true — end up being slain by the Israelites as a traitor of God, an adversary of righteousness, and an open advocate of uncleanness? How could one so greatly gifted end up in such disgrace — an outcast of both the people of God and the pagan peoples to whom he prostituted his prophetic calling?

The question follows — was Balaam a genuine prophet of God? Or was he a religious racketeer? It is my conviction that the scriptures clearly reveal that he was a prophet of God, and the Lord has

chosen him as an example of the reward of unrighteousness and unfaithfulness in the calling of God. Even before you finish the Old Testament, Micah tells us that we are to remember him. Notice what the prophet says, “O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord” (Mic. 6:5). In other words, Micah says you can’t forget him; you can’t ignore him because he is a tremendous lesson for God’s called and chosen people! The New Testament mentions him three times, always in connection with apostasy. The first is found in II Peter 2:15: “Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the *way of Balaam* the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.”

That’s the first statement, a warning concerning the “*way of Balaam*.” Then Jude, in his short epistle, says, “Woe unto them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the *error of Balaam* for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah” (Jude 11). Jude warns of the “*error of Balaam*.” The *error* of Balaam and the *way* of Balaam are not the same! Then finally, in the message of the Lord Jesus to the church in Pergamos, He says, “I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the *doctrine of Balaam*, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.” In this final passage we are told about the “*doctrine of Balaam*.” Now the *doctrine* of Balaam is different from the *way* of Balaam, nor is it the same as the *error* of Balaam. Therefore, in our consideration of what the Lord would teach us from the life of this man, we need to recognize that these three statements give us a character analysis of Balaam. Let us go back into his history, back into the book of Numbers, chapters twenty-two through twenty-five, to understand these warnings.

As Israel approached the promised land, after forty years of wandering in the wilderness, they entered a new territory. It was the territory of certain nations which greatly feared this multitude of people advancing into their area of the world. Israel had gained a victory as they came up against the Amorites and battled with them. Naturally, the word of that military victory spread and caused concern among all these nations. And when Israel came into the territory of Moab, Balak the king of Moab was afraid to engage them in battle. Not knowing how to handle this apparent threat to his kingdom, he called for the most famous prophet of that day and engaged him to put a curse on Israel. The one that he engaged is the one in whom we're interested, Balaam, the prophet.

Balaam was a Midianite, from the same country where Moses had lived for forty years before his call to deliver Israel from the hand of Egypt. That explains in part how he knew Yahweh, the true and living God. He was brought from Aram, out of the mountains of the east. And we should note this about this man: Balaam uttered several of the most wonderful prophecies you'll find in all the word of God! When the children of Israel arrived at the east bank of the Jordan river, preparing to cross over into the land God had promised them, naturally Balak the king of Moab, occupying an adjoining territory, did not know their intentions. He perceived them as a threat to his kingdom, should they attack him and wrest his kingdom from him. Therefore, afraid to make an attack upon them but wanting to defend his kingdom, he sent messengers to Balaam. The message they bore to the prophet was this: "Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse for me this people; for they are too mighty for me: perhaps I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land; for I know that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed."

What a reputation Balaam had! And the messengers of Balak came to this mighty prophet not only with a plea from the king of Moab,

but they brought with them a very handsome price. “And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the *rewards of divination* in their hand; and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak.” The rewards of divination was simply the money they were prepared to pay Balaam for his services in cursing the children of Israel. With this money they came to him and said, “Balak has sent us, and he wants to engage your services. He requests that you come and curse this people that has recently come up out of Egypt. They are a very dangerous people! So far, they have had victories everywhere they have met the enemy, and king Balak needs your help at this crucial hour.”

Ah, the very interesting thing is that this man Balaam sounds very genuine. “And he said unto them, Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the Lord shall speak unto me: and the princes of Moab abode with Balaam.” Have you ever heard anything more pious than that? He sounds very genuine, does he not? Balaam honestly seems to be trying to find the mind of the Lord here! And indeed Balaam did inquire of the Lord, and he received the answer from God! “And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people; for they are blessed.” That is God’s clear, unmistakable, and uncontrovertible word to Balaam. “You’re not to go, and you’re not to curse these people, *because I have blessed them!*” That’s God’s answer. Now what will Balaam do in response to this word from God? The fact is, he still appears one hundred percent sincere and genuine, for “Balaam rose up in the morning and said to the princes of Balak, Get you into your land; for the Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you.” He says, “I can’t go. I won’t go. Go home to your master and tell him that!”

“And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Balak, and said, Balaam refuseth to come with us.” Now if the story ended there, I would have to say that Balaam is one of the most remarkable men of

God of whom I have ever heard! Here's a man that has received a word from the Lord. God gives him a prophecy, and this man obeys explicitly the message. He said plainly, "I won't go. I will not curse these people!" But, unfortunately, the story doesn't end there.

As it turns out, Balak is a very determined and resourceful king. And, in my mind, I do not doubt for one moment that he knew something about the character of this man Balaam. "And Balak send yet again princes more, and more honourable than they." Ah, now Balak begins to flatter the prophet by sending some of the most important men of the kingdom to confer with him. He raises the issue to a higher level of his government. "And they came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus saith Balak the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me." They make him a more attractive offer. "For I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people." Now Balak offers Balaam a cabinet position in his government! Balaam will be one of his closest advisors, and he will obey all the counsel Balaam gives him!

And now listen to this pious prophet. "And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more." Now why does Balaam change the subject, and instead of referring to the high position Balak offered him, he suggests that should Balak give him his "house full of silver and gold" he still could not go beyond the word of the Lord? I will tell you why! Because *that's* what he wanted! With subtleness he was sowing the seed of suggestion into the mind of the king. Why mention it, if you're not thinking about it? "Why," he says, "I wouldn't go even if he gave me a house filled with gold and silver." And when he makes this statement I can hear a lot of brethren saying, "Amen! Hallelujah for Balaam! What a testimony he's giving!"

But he's not genuine here. The words that flow out of his mouth cannot be taken at face value. Balaam has a secret agenda in the words he speaks. He's actually going to take a little less than a house full of gold and silver, but it's still going to be a good price. And king Balak will feel like he got a real bargain! May I say to you, he said this because he was a covetous man. Now listen to what follows this pious declaration: "Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the Lord will say unto me more." Now, why did he say that? He already *had* the word of the Lord! He had already *given* his answer! So why does he say in effect, "Wait here tonight, and I'll go to God again to see if He has changed his mind!" Can you not see the subtlety and shrewdness? As soon as he planted the idea of gold and silver, he announced that he would go back and inquire of the Lord once more, if perchance He might have changed His mind!

Balaam was not unlike the preacher I once heard about who came to his wife and said, "I've just received a call to pastor the church in the next town. It's a larger town. It's a much better church. The people in it are more refined and cultured, they do not cause the trouble the people here do, and they've offered me a higher salary. I'm going upstairs and pray about this to see if it's the Lord's will for me to go." His wife says, "Fine, I'll go up and pray with you." And he says, "Oh, my, no. You stay down here and pack!" Balaam, you see, is going to pray about it some more, although he already has God's answer!

However, it does look like God changes His mind, does it not? Notice the development here for it's so important. "And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, *rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do.*" Now somebody says, "God *did* change His mind." No, God didn't! You see, my beloved, if you want to play games with God He will play games with you, and you will be caught in your own folly. God is no fool. He will give you enough rope to hang

yourself! He is wiser than all the cunning craftiness of man! You cannot out-smart God! You remember when the children of Israel complained and murmured in the wilderness to Moses, “We want something besides manna to eat. We’re tired of this stuff. We want meat!” And God says, “I’ll give them flesh. I’ll give them flesh till it comes out of their nostrils and they are sick of it.” Later on, the Psalmist wrote, “He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul” (Ps. 106:15).

When we demand *our way* over the wisdom of *His way*, God will let us have our way and we will reap the folly of it! There are certain things that you can keep nagging God about which He’ll permit you to do. But, my friend, you’ll dry up spiritually! The idea that we can ask anything our carnal heart desires and God is obligated to give it to us is a half-truth. Oh, yes, He *will* give you what you demand of Him, but that doesn’t mean it is good for you, or that it conforms to God’s best and highest for you. Do you want Him to give you every one of your prayer requests, or do you really want Him to have His way? Do you want blessed deliverance out of every problem and trial, or do you want to learn the lessons God is teaching you, that you may grow up into the stature of Christ? Do you want His will to be done, or do you want God to come over to your side and do what you want done? The interesting thing is there are times when He will do just that! There are a great many Christians that could testify to this experience. But those who demand God to bless *their* plans, *their* efforts, and *their* desires are *not sons*. If God is giving you everything you want, that is no sign of *sonship*! It may be a sign of THE BALAAM CONDITION!

Now this man Balaam is being permitted to go, but God is going to warn him every step of the way. And He uses something quite interesting. “And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab. And God’s anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the Lord stood in the way.” Without doubt, the reason Balaam could not see the angel of the Lord was

because he was thinking about a house full of silver and gold! He was a covetous man, and couldn't see spiritual things. And talk about a rebuke! God knows how to rebuke. The dumb animal on which he was riding could see the angel; it has more discernment than he does! My beloved, this is the *way* of Balaam. The *way* of Balaam is preaching, prophesying, or ministering in any capacity *for money*!

Hear the words of Peter again as he evaluates this man. "Who have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved *the wages* of unrighteousness: but was rebuked for his iniquity; the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbade the madness of the prophet" II Pet. 2:15-16). The "wages" of unrighteousness are the money people receive by departing from the perfect will and plan of God to accommodate people from whom they can profit by pleasing them. Some of the most covetous people I have met are in the Lord's work! A few of them I have met in this kingdom and sonship message! There is always a *price* on everything. There is always a *plea* for money for this project and that. *Their* need of *your* money is the object of every meeting they hold, every magazine they publish, and every letter they write. They will send you a book for your money, they will send you a tape for your money, they will send you some gold-colored trinket for your money, they will pray for you for your money, and with a thousand other crafty schemes they *make merchandise* of the gullible people who blindly follow them. They know the way of faith, but instead rely on carnal methods when it comes to raising finances. They coddle and flatter people at the expense of declaring the full counsel of God in order to profit thereby. There is always a *gimmick* to entice you to send your hard-earned money to fulfill their grandiose schemes to save the world or bring in the kingdom! Religion can be a racket. And I think every son of God is responsible for knowing what he is supporting!

Old Balaam had a message from God, but he was covetous. We're merely on the surface now; let's probe a little deeper. Look carefully at the personality of Balaam. Jude tells us this: "Woe unto them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, and run greedily after the *error* of Balaam for reward..." (Jude 11). Here we meet the *error* of Balaam. The error of Balaam was in deviating from the will of the Lord! Balaam represents a ministry or relationship with the Lord that brings a word from God. Balaam was a prophet, a true prophet of the true God bringing a true word from the Lord! Balaam was also a teacher and his student was Balak. Each of us is a *teaching* before we are a teacher. We teach what we are! Balaam *prophesied* out of the Spirit of the Lord. But Balaam *taught* out of who he was! What we *are* is much more powerful and expressive than what we *say*. Balaam taught Balak not only by his words, but out of his character and state of being. The word of the Lord was in his mouth, but carnality, deceptiveness, greed, and rebellion were in his heart. And that is the *error* of Balaam! Had you met him and said to him, "Now, brother Balaam, why are you going with these messengers? We understand that God has told you not to curse Israel. So, why are you going?" Then he would start rationalizing. He could explain his motives, and he could ascribe a worthy purpose for his conduct. That's the interesting thing!

Now let us dig a little deeper into the life of this prophet. This brings us to his *doctrine*. The doctrine of Balaam is satanic; it's demonic; it's hellish; it's subtle. It's the same thing that appeared in the garden of Eden to our first parents! In our Lord's message to the church at Pergamos He said, "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the *doctrine* of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to *eat things sacrificed unto idols*, and to *commit fornication*" (Rev. 2:14). Balak, you see, found that God would not permit him to curse the people of Israel. He knew he could not curse them! He understood his limit in disobeying the word of the Lord. But he still coveted the favor and the

money of king Balak! So he realized that he was going to have to adopt a different approach if he was to get the silver and the gold, and that's what he had come for, after all. If you think Balaam is going back empty-handed, you are not acquainted with religious racketeers! Because he wants the rich gifts of Balak, he's going to do something now that's very devious.

He would not out-right curse Israel, but he says something like this to Balak. "Now, I can't curse them, but I can tell you how to destroy them. You go down and join them. Get the good-looking women of Moab to go down to the camp and get acquainted. The Israelite men will find the Moabite women attractive, and will commit whoredoms with them. Some of them will love your women so much they will marry them! Your women will be so beautiful, so sensuous, so enticing, so caring and loving, that the Israelite men will do anything for them. They will yield to your customs, they will compromise with your gods, they will adopt your traditions, they will pollute their worship of Yahweh, they will commit trespass against the Lord, and God will no longer fight for them."

"And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab" (Num. 25:1). As you read the terrible account that follows, you will see what happened as a result of Balaam's counsel. And so the Moabite women "caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord" (Num. 31:16). With fornication came idolatry into the camp of Israel! What the devil couldn't do by cursing and fighting from the outside, he did from the inside!

The *doctrine* of Balaam was the doctrine and method to corrupt a people who couldn't be cursed! They were corrupted by tempting them to be joined to the women of Moab, defile their separation unto the Lord, and abandon their holy character — union with the mind, ways, methods, and spirit of the world — which is *spiritual fornication*. The

doctrine of Balaam is union with the world, union with the fleshly ways of the carnal mind instead of a pure walk in the spirit and by the spirit. Do you know that God's elect people have never been hurt from without? The Lord's called and chosen people can only be corrupted from within! The richest years of the early church were during its persecution. While they were being imprisoned, beheaded, fed to lions, burned at the stake, boiled in oil, their property confiscated, and all the rest, there was great boldness, glory, and power upon the people of God! They increased by the thousands and the millions, shook kingdoms, and turned the world upside-down!

You see, my beloved, the devil was fighting them from the outside. He finally caught on! He couldn't hurt the church from the outside; so he *joined it!* Read the story of Constantine. Turn the pages of history and read how Constantine, emperor of Rome, out of considerations of state, in order to consolidate the empire under his control, made Christianity the official religion of his empire. Read the lines which tell how at the point of the spear he forced whole nations in a day into the communion of the church. Read Eusebius, the early church historian, to catch his enthusiastic conviction that the holy kingdom of heaven had come and that the kingdoms of this world had become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ — the carnal armies of the earth now supporting the church and bearing it onward to the full conquest of the world. Read it!

The church and the world were married together, the church and the world formed an adulterous relationship in which the church was kept and supported by human government. It still is! Even if it is only your government-chartered, tax-exempt, non-profit religious organization, preacher friend of mine, by which carnal government dictates that you choose a name other than the Lord's name, that you appoint a board and do business contrary to the government of the Holy Spirit, and by which the government of carnal men confers upon you the

“right” to marry the young and bury the dead as a servant of the civil government. “By the authority *invested in me* as a minister of the gospel, *and by the State of Texas*, I pronounce you man and wife!” Human government and fleshly armies are *not* the kingdom of God! With that first union of the church with human government all sorts of pagan rituals, pagan holidays, idols, cathedrals, doctrines, and practices were brought into the church. Can we not see by this that the formation of a religious organization *chartered by the state* is the *first step* into religious Babylon! The church couldn’t be *cursed*, so it was *corrupted*! That is the *doctrine* of Balaam!

And likewise, all they who follow in Balaam’s way, who have erred from the pure walk in the Spirit of God, and yet make a profession of serving and doing the work of Christ in their high-swelling words of vanity, and yet run greedily after the error of Balaam for rewards, and seek money for their preaching, prophesying, programs, books, and tapes; and that admire men’s persons, flattering the people for gain, and take titles to themselves of “Reverend,” “Doctor,” and others of *this world’s* recognition — are not these they of whom the Lord spoke when He said, “But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.”

Ray Prinzing once used the illustration of a young woman who goes to a nursing school, where she learns the things pertaining to the medical world, and after years of training and experience she becomes an RN. Long before this she has commenced to wear the nurses’ white uniform with white shoes, stockings, and cap so that she becomes an expression of that field. You see her walking down the street and before you can even recognize her as Sue, or Helen, or whoever, you have already identified her as being a nurse, for the medical world has so absorbed her into its system, that she becomes an expression of that

realm. She bears their MARK! God is raising up in this hour a people so GIVEN, YIELDED to the spirit of wisdom and holiness and power of the Christ as to be absorbed therein until it becomes, without our human effort, that we reveal HIM, for HE becomes the manifestation, HE becomes the atmosphere of our living, the sphere of our existence, so that we express only HIM at all times and in all circumstances. We are being perfected to bear the mark of GOD!

In our former days in the religious systems of man, in both thinking and actions we all bore the marks of the bestial system of this world. Did we not think like the world, plan like the world, organize like the world, promote like the world, and act like the world? Who would deny that the religious systems' whole vision, methodology, and attitude is in accordance with the world's system? Just as the church in the days of Constantine "paganized" Christianity by mingling with the worship of Christ pagan practices of idols, images, altars, incense, candles, vestments, saints (bearing the characteristics and virtues of the ancient pagan gods), Christmas, Easter, and a thousand other things, so in our day the church systems' planning and program is all in harmony with the "spirit of this age" as they continually "adapt" themselves to whatever the world is doing!

Let the devil hatch rock music out of the cesspool of the demented culture of drugs and sex, and the church will immediately "Christianize" it by giving the harmonic dissonance "Christian words." They call it "Christian Rock." It is not! You cannot have Christian rock any more than you can have Christian drug lords, Christian harlots, Christian thieves, or Christian liars! It is not even Christianized demonism — it is demonized Christianity! The church systems are always trying to keep in step with the world, appropriate to themselves the world's program, and somehow make it "Christian." It is the *doctrine* of Balaam! Let a worldly book come off the press about near-death experiences, and soon "Christian" books on near-death

experiences will line the bookshelves. Let diet books become the big *money maker*, and immediately “Christian” diet books and programs will flood the market. What great *imitators* the doctrine of Balaam makes God’s people!

You see, precious friend of mine, those who subscribe to the doctrine of Balaam are not *leaders*, setting the standards for mankind, but *followers*, mimicking and adapting the world’s standards under the pretense of serving Christ. If television talk shows are what the world is doing, then let us entertain the saints with “Christian” talk shows! Balaamites are never leaders and initiators, blazing the path for the world to follow; they are always followers and imitators as they partake of the spirit of the world and fornicate with her flesh and eat things sacrificed to idols!

David Wilkerson once wrote: “A few years ago, three pastors of large charismatic churches publicly stated they believed God would use rock-and-roll and rap music to bring in the next great revival. One of these ministers even declared that God used the Beatles to open people’s hearts to the Holy Spirit. No — never! Those young men glorified sex and drugs. How could that ever be the work of the Holy Spirit? One Christian magazine predicted that the next big movement in the church would be a ‘nightclub’ approach — including services that feature dancing, near-beer alcohol, and comedians. One pastor told me this is already happening in churches throughout England and Europe. The churches can’t hold the people’s interest — so they turn them into nightclubs! At one such church, a visiting gospel singer was advised not to sing anything that mentioned sin or the blood of Jesus, because it might offend the visitors. That church’s leaders were trying to create a ‘comfort zone’ for sinners!”

God is not well pleased with the world of believers who are all too willing to proclaim the praise of God with their lips and raise their hands in seeming consecration, even while they wear the gaudy garments of

Babylonish religion, running greedily after the error of Balaam for gain, and prostituting the holy truths of God with the unholy methods and program of the world. God is *well pleased* with those who seek only His will, His ways, and His glory. God is *well pleased* with those who reject the fleeting pleasures of sin and the worthless glitter of the prestige and position of this world. God is *well pleased* with those who forsake the excitement and noise of the crowd, who abandon listening to all manner of fantastic oratory, who in their hearts are no longer entertained by man-made programs, soulish concerts, so-called Christian television shows, and carnal schemes of a church system that has forsaken the leading of the Spirit of God.

The Father is *well pleased* with those who see His hand in all the happenings of their lives and give no place or glory or credit to the devil. The Father is *well pleased* with those whose only desire out of a pure heart is to please Him and apprehend that for which they also have been apprehended of Christ Jesus. The Father is *well pleased* with those who put first things first and walk daily after the spirit and not after the flesh. The Father is *well pleased* with those who stop seeking *gifts* and seek the *Giver*. God is *well pleased* with those who stop seeking *things* and start seeking the *Lord Himself*.

If the people of God today would stop following after preachers and personalities, turning a deaf ear to the slick advertising of unscrupulous men who love to promote themselves, if they would forget about revivals and crusades and supposed signs and wonders and begin to turn the knob of their prayer closet door, seeking not to run here and there, and do this and that, but seeking to enter into harmony with the mind of Him who worketh all things after the counsels of His own will, to do only those things they see the Father doing, to speak only those things they hear of the Father, then all the world would know that the Father is glorified in His *sons* even as He is glorified in His *Son*. Let us

seek God that He might fashion our lives according to His eternal wisdom, that in us He might be *well pleased!*

There are some wonderfully instructive connections between the various items set forth in the seven churches of the book of Revelation in which we are called to overcome. Immediately following the Spirit's warning about the doctrine of Balaam, He says, "So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate" (Rev. 2:15). Why should the Lord hate the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes so much? And why is it mentioned again here in connection with the doctrine of Balaam? I will tell you why!

Their names tell us a lot about them. Balaam, I am told, means "conqueror of the people." Nicolaitane also means "conqueror of the common people." Their names are almost identical and speak volumes to us in the spirit as to what God hates! The doctrine of the Nicolaitanes put one man above another, a hierarchical system that makes some people "laity" and others "lords," rather than a family of sons under the Headship of Christ. All church systems of man still hold to this doctrine and system today with their hierarchy of ministers and offices. They conquer the people through the force of their titles, prestige, power, charisma, and rules and regulations, rather than serving in humility out of the ministration of the Spirit.

Balaam went beyond the Nicolaitanes, however, for he taught Balak to cause Israel to stumble through the seductiveness of women, so that they might commit immorality and be turned to other gods. Balaam did this in order to gain a reward of money, prestige, and power for himself. But he did not rule by that power he possessed — his purpose was carried out through the *corruption* of the people of God! This is a more refined and deadly form of conquest than mere Nicolaitanism, for it turns the heart away from the purity of the truth and an uncontaminated walk in the Spirit and by the Spirit.

And then — in the church at Thyratira we meet another unsavory character — Jezebel! She represents an even more insidious realm — the *internal* realm of the *soul* — the very root of everything! In each case the Spirit is probing deeper! He starts with the outward form, men, often good men, who seek to control and dominate the Lord's people. Then He moves to the Balaamites, those who bring the Lord's people into union with the flesh and the world, corrupting the work of God in their lives through error. Oh, yes, God will deal with us to bring us out of the various forms of Babylon. But ultimately He will bring every overcoming son of God to the *root* of the matter — getting the Babylon *out of us*! This is accomplished only through the *salvation of the soul*, the *renewing of our mind*, bringing transformation. Israel is the type — God brought Israel out of Egypt in one miraculous night. But it took forty long years of dealing in the wilderness to **get Egypt out of them** so that they could rise up in faith and obedience, enter in, and possess their land! The same pattern appears in the book of Revelation in the seven steps of the overcomer! Only at the end — in the final step of overcoming — does the overcomer finally ascend to the throne of God! (Rev. 3:21).

Some time ago a dear sister in the Lord, Sheila Taylor, shared a remarkable dream with us which has vital significance for the elect of God in this new kingdom Day. She wrote, "In this dream I was among a lot of people. I had lain down and a 2,000 foot-long snake had passed from my body through my bowels. Nobody knew what it meant or what to do with it. They hung it up over a fence, then finally made a plastic case (cheap shade of blue plastic) and put the snake in it to preserve it. They were talking about it but without wisdom, only confusion. The Lord then spoke to me and said that I had been emptied of all sins and traditions and doctrinal teachings and errors from the past 2,000 years! He said I had been born at the cross but since then man had distorted the truth and many lies and errors had come in, that had to be taken away.

“Then I vomited. The Lord said it was the residue. I was now clean! I don’t know what ‘residue’ consisted of. But then He gave me a glass of the best tasting wine imaginable and said, Drink! It was the New Wine. I was still lying down and the Spirit poured the wine into my mouth. There are no words to describe how refreshing it was! It was sweet and wonderful and made me feel alive all over. Then I sat up and drank more and thanked Him over and over for filling me with *truth*. I worshipped Him. Then I woke up. Out of all the people there I was the only one who understood what was happening. The snake was dead but no one wanted to bury it; they wanted to preserve it!”

Although this experience was very real to Sheila personally, it is my deep conviction that it is also a message to the body of Christ! Truly God is purging His called and chosen elect from **all** the Balaamite errors and abominations of the past 2,000 years! Oh, the wonder of it! God is doing a deep and thorough work by His Spirit and by the cross in our lives, and He is delivering us completely from all that is not of Him. We are even vomiting up the *residue*, for the deliverance must be complete and irrevocable! The message to the church at Pergamos is just this: THE OVERCOMER MUST, IN THE THIRD STEP OF HIS OVERCOMING, REPENT OF AND FORSAKE **ALL** THE MIXTURE OF RELIGION to follow the Lord, and the Lord alone, in all things and at all times. “Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth” (Rev. 2:16). Everyone who is called to sonship is now repenting of all the *way* of Balaam, all the *error* of Balaam, and all the *doctrine* of Balaam!

EATING THINGS SACRIFICED TO IDOLS

The *doctrine* of Balaam seduces the Lord’s people to “eat things sacrificed to idols” (Rev. 2:14). Balaam taught Balak to seduce Israel into two things — eating and fornication. Food and sex — aren’t these the two most powerful human passions! In its spiritual meaning, eating

speaks of the word we feed upon; the ideas, teachings and doctrines we take into our spirits. Balaam taught Balak to seduce God's people to *eat!*

You see, my beloved, the Baptists preach one word, the Catholics preach another word, the Pentecostals preach a different word, the Mormons preach something else, and so on throughout Christendom. Two millenniums ago the same beloved apostle John who wrote so extensively of God's marvelous love also left us this solemn warning: "Little children, keep yourselves from IDOLS (that is, false gods, or false ideas and representations of the true God)" (I Jn. 5:21). "Little children, keep yourselves from false ideas about God!" Do we have false ideas about God? I fear we do. How the world and the church are filled with them! Many people view God as a schoolboy did: "...the sort of person who is always snooping around to see if anyone is enjoying himself and then trying to stop it." Others make God out to be a tyrant, or a vengeful, wrath-filled fiend. Some paint a God so weak that the will of man is stronger than the will of God! Then others speak of God as always *trying* to do this and that, but the devil is ever hindering and thwarting God's purposes, getting the upper hand, defeating God's best laid plans, tripping up and overcoming the saints, until it would seem that the devil is himself the *omniscient* and *omnipotent one!*

Some have a God so capricious that He will only save you if the correct formula is repeated over you in water baptism. Vast numbers blaspheme the Holy Ghost by attributing the works of the Holy Spirit to the devil, contending that if you speak in tongues, prophesy, heal the sick, or do miracles you are of the devil, and they dispense that *perverted word* into their offspring (spiritual children) who do truly trust Jesus as their Saviour. Some say that Christ can only be ministered to you through the sacraments, or a particular ritual, or the ministry of their group, or membership in their movement, or by believing only the doctrines of their church and listening to no one else. Others teach their people that they cannot go to heaven if they use tobacco, drink wine,

wear jewelry, put on make-up, cut their hair, go to movies, or wear or not wear certain kinds of clothing. We could pile error upon error, with “end-time” teachings about the so-called “rapture” of the saints, about a revived Roman empire, the antichrist sitting in a temple in Jerusalem, and wrath, judgment, and tribulation poured out upon the inhabitants of the world. To this we could add pagan holidays, customs, rituals, ceremonies, liturgies, works, and philosophies that have been introduced into the church realm and have become such an established part of her practice and teaching until the whole world believes that these things are surely taught somewhere in the scriptures or were established by the apostles or by Jesus Himself! Men have created out of their carnal minds a *false image* of God which is a *religious idol*!

Can you not see the mystery? All who partake of such false and polluted teachings and doctrines which misrepresent God and distort His truth are *eating things offered to idols* — eating a *word* which is offered upon the altar of a false idea and image of God! All who follow the error of Balaam, and teach the doctrine of Balaam, do indeed *seduce* the Lord’s people to eat a word which is offered upon the altar of a false god — *a false religious system* which has usurped the very truth and spirit of our heavenly Father! Smoking, cussing, and drinking are not the big things an overcomer must overcome — *these negative spiritual conditions existing in the realm of the seven churches* are the things within ourselves we are commanded to repent of and overcome! Every son of God *has* repented and *is* repenting in the light that the Spirit brings!

SPIRITUAL FORNICATION

Finally, the *doctrine* of Balaam seduces the people of God to “commit fornication” (Rev. 2:14). The fornication here is a *symbol*, not the physical fornication of the flesh, but a joining to that which is not

Christ. Women in the Revelation are likewise symbolic, either positively of the bride of Christ, or negatively of the soul, or of religious organizations and activities which are *soulish* rather than *spiritual*. These are those ministries, and multiplied millions of believers, who daily sow their spiritual seed, deposit their spiritual life of Christ, into man-made religious systems, mingling the reality of Christ with the commandments of men, joining themselves to carnal programs, promotions, methods, and worldly religious activities, satisfying their own soulish appetites and lusts in the name of the Lord. It is *spiritual fornication*!

Consider with me two verses of scripture in Galatians 3:3 and Philippians 3:3-4. “Are ye so foolish? Having begun *in the spirit*, are ye now made perfect *by the flesh*?” “We are the circumcision, who worship God *in the spirit*, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence *in the flesh*.” “The flesh” is the name by which the word of God designates our human consciousness — soul and body. The soul at creation was placed between the spiritual or divine and the sensible or worldly, that both soul and body might, in due time, be raised up into that perfect union in the spirit which would result in man attaining his destiny, a spiritual body. When the soul yielded to the temptation of the sensible it came under the power of the body — this union of soul and body became “flesh”. And now the flesh is not only without the spirit, but even hostile to it: “the flesh wars against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh” (Gal. 5:17).

More than a hundred years ago William Law wrote that this antagonism of the flesh to the spirit has TWO DISTINCT STRATEGIES. On the one hand, the flesh wars against the spirit by its committing sin and transgressing God’s commands. This is the *evil* of the flesh. On the other hand, its hostility to the spirit is no less manifested in its seeking to serve God and do His work! This is the *good* of the flesh. The good and the evil of the flesh are represented in the garden of Eden as “the tree of the knowledge of *good* and *evil*.” When man sank into the flesh realm

he then walked no longer in the spirit, but after the knowledge of good and evil. In yielding to the sensual realm of the body, the soul sought itself instead of the God into whom the spirit could have raised it. Self-knowledge, self-effort, and self-development prevailed over the life of the spirit!

And now, so subtle and mighty is this spirit of self, that the flesh, not only in sinning against God, but even when the soul learns to serve God, still asserts its power, refusing to let the SPIRIT ALONE LEAD, and in its effort to be religious, wants to serve God independent of the spirit and is still the great enemy that ever hinders and quenches the spirit. It is because of this cunning deceitfulness of the flesh that there often takes place what Paul speaks of to the Galatians: "Having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" Unless the soul is brought into absolute submission to the spirit, the surrender to the spirit being entire as a bride to the bridegroom, thus bringing about the marriage of the bride-soul to the bridegroom-spirit, which is the marriage of the Lamb, what has begun in the spirit, very early and very speedily passes over into confidence in the flesh!

We are living in a very wonderful age. It is an age of drive and hurry and stress and storm. One would not go very far afield today in describing our age as an age of impatience and unrest. The tragic fact in the life of the American people at this present time is the absence of quietness and repose. We believe in "drives". We slavishly pursue our careers and social involvements; we meet our husband or wife in the hall and say, "Hi!" and we are gone. It takes great effort and commitment in order to find a few minutes to spend "quality time" with the children. If nothing else is going on we have the television going to keep our mind engaged lest we discover the silence. We are in too great a rush for repose. We have little or no time for the inner chamber. We prefer the flurry of activities and the crowds, the hustle and bustle. Nothing

appeals to us but the strenuous and the thrilling. Repose is too tame a thing entirely for this atomic space age!

The sad part of it is that it is no different in the church world. The church is imitating the world! Christians regulate their devotion by the clock. The church schedule is packed with flesh-appeal programs and activities that run day and night. They feel that unless every night of the week is taken up with some sort of activity, the ministry is an ineffective thing. They have the strange idea that nothing is being done unless someone is talking! So they fairly swarm to conferences and seminars and committee meetings and platform discussions and concerts and workshops and programs and conventions. The inquiry that is nearly always made concerning a religious gathering is, "Was there much of a crowd there?" They take it for granted that if the speaker was a good talker and the building was crowded, the meeting was a big success. Do you remember in "Pilgrim's Progress" the conversation between Christian and Talkative? "I thought we should have a great deal of talk by this time," says Talkative. The moments when he was pursuing his journey in silence seemed wasted!

God's purposes are not accomplished by intellect and soulical activity. The church systems go forward today like a little Samson shorn of its locks of power. It parades up and down, boasting of its accomplishments, and, like Samson, it knows not that the Spirit of God has departed from it. But even as Saul and his armies tremble in fear before the mighty Goliath, the Lord God is raising up a little David with a slingshot of the spirit of sonship to meet the enemy with all of his stratagems and come off with a mighty victory! This David company is still in preparation, far out in the solitude of green pastures and beside the still waters, learning by faith and obedience to slay their bear and kill their lion. But we are gaining new victories everyday and learning within ourselves the power of God and the ways of His kingdom! Saul's armor will not do! The sons of God are being prepared to step forth in the

majesty of the name of the Lord God of Israel! This preparation does not take place with the seven brothers in the hustle and bustle of the streets of Bethlehem, but *alone with God* in the secret place of the Most High!

The church systems are reaching out their hands to society around them but their hands are so full that their hearts are empty. What do busy preachers or busy Christians know about the *secret place of the Most High*? What do they know about the *total silence* of the *most holy place*? The churches are filled to overflowing with members who are so busy running hither and thither, on errands of mercy and ministry it may be, but they are never *alone with God*. Undoubtedly they think that their heavenly Father is proud of them and their “Christian success,” their “religious career,” and their eternal, unceasing busi-ness for the kingdom of God, never giving thought to the fact that they are not unlike the successful child who is so absorbed in his pursuit of position, fame, and prosperity that he never finds a moment to stop by and chat with dear old Dad who made it all possible.

There is no real power in noise. There is never any real power in noise. The prophets of Baal discovered this long ago on mount Carmel! Many meetings today remind me of the scene on mount Carmel as the saints shout and cry and dance about, commanding God and rebuking spirits with the noise and fervor of a pagan war dance. Strength is not in bluster and noise. The very need to make noise is proof of the absence of power! The louder we pray to God and the more vociferously we shout at demons the less likely it is that we will receive an answer or that any demon will pay any attention to our word. *Strength is in quietness*. The life of sonship is deep rather than demonstrative. “It is the brook and not the river that goes brawling,” someone said. Jesus never sweat His garments wet while preaching, nor worked Himself into a lather when healing the sick, casting out devils, or raising the dead. If the *authority* is there the calmest command will

evoke obedience. There is no need for the president of the United States to yell and scream and work himself into a frenzy in order to give a military general orders to initiate hostilities against an enemy. The quietest directive, even a mere whisper, will do!

Oh, for the culture of the secret place! It is in solitude that we catch the mystic notes from the depths of God within. It is deep down in the depths that the righteousness and power and glory of the kingdom of God are known. By going apart one gets the vision of eternal realities. How vast the soul becomes in the presence of the Infinite! I have learned by arduous experience that our Father usually speaks in whispers, the still, small voice of the Holiest of all, but we often cannot hear these whispers for the clamor of the street. We are called to heavenly places, far above the clamor of the world and the babble of religion. For after all our home is in the heights! Our real power is in communion and union. There is a music that no one can hear until the ears are anointed. The voice of truth is a very low sweet voice.

Amid all the religious ruckus of the hour, and all the fuss and trumpet blowing of those who run after the error of Balaam, fornicating with the flesh and the carnal mind, there is a *little flock* that has climbed the mount with Jesus. They care not for the flamboyant humbug of the gaudy harlot's house, but, having beheld the glories of the kingdom afar off, they are pressing through surging waves of humanity to *come apart* to receive instruction from the King of the kingdom. At His feet they hear the call to the heavenly mark and find a door opened for them to enter in and lay hold upon the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. These are they who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth! They lean hard upon Christ! The spirit of His sonship dwells within them! They are partakers of His mind! They have been given the knowledge of His will! They comprehend His plan and purpose in the earth, in His sons, and in the universe! They have laid aside every weight and the sin which does so easily beset them! They are running the race

with patience! They esteem the hope that is set before them higher than all the pleasures of Egypt and the prestige of Babylon! They are patient in tribulation, knowing that through much tribulation we shall enter the kingdom. They continue instant in prayer to God, and He comforts them and upholds them with the right hand of His righteousness. To them the voice of the Father speaks in words of everlasting hope and assurance, “Fear not, *little flock*; it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Aren’t you glad!