

Recap of 3/12/17 (Numbers 22:1-19):

1. Numbers 22-24 is the account of a prophet, named Balaam, hired by the King of Moab to curse the people of Israel, to try to weaken them and make them subject to defeat. God intervened on behalf of His people.
2. "Some craftsmen in the ancient world made tents; others forged tools; some build homes; but Balaam practiced sorcery. For a fee, you could hire Balaam to cast spells that would help your cause and hurt your opponents. That's how he made his living, and he made it quite well." (365 Life Lessons from Bible People)
3. Balaam is cited in four Old Testament passages mentioning how God prevented him from cursing Israel. He could not get God to curse His people but he successfully counseled Balak to entice the Israelites into immorality and idolatry by having Moabite women entice Israelite men into the lascivious worship of their gods. (Numbers 31:7-16).
4. Balaam is mentioned in three New Testament passages (2 Peter 2:15-16; Jude 11; Revelation 2:14). He is profiled as deceitful and covetous, teaching idolatry and immorality. His motivation was that he loved the wages of wickedness. In the words of the Living Bible: "Balaam...fell in love with the money he could make by doing wrong."
5. Balaam loved money, he used divination and sorcery to ply his trade and promoted immorality and idolatry. Everything he did was consistent with pagan practices of that day. For these reasons I believe he was a false prophet. God spoke to and through Balaam, but He also spoke through a donkey. As scholar Eugene Merrill points out, God spoke to the pagan king Abimelech in Genesis 20, to Pharaoh (Genesis 41) and to Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4). Balaam made pious assertions about God but he continually tried to get his own way, talked much about money, relied on sorcery and divination and pagan rituals, and eventually subverted Israel through immorality and idolatry.
6. As the Scripture infers, Balaam was well-known in his day. A plaster inscription has been unearthed by archaeologists mentions the exploits of Balaam.