

How Cain, Balaam Can Help Us Prepare for the Next Move of God

Editor's Note: This is part 1 of a two-part series. Stay tuned for part 2!

This generation desperately needs Jesus! Many of us have been yearning to see revival in our time, and we are beginning to see hopeful glimpses that God is up to something. But are we, as a church, ready to steward a mighty move of God? Over the past few decades, we have all seen devastating scandals and theological compromises throughout the body of Christ that have clearly been detrimental to the gospel message in our day. Our lives and witness must change so people hunger for the one we represent, our Lord Jesus!

The Lord often speaks to me through the tragedies and triumphs of biblical characters. We all have our favorites, ones whose lives encourage us to fight the good fight and stand firm in our faith—like Joseph, David and Esther. They each fell short in some way, as we all do, but they humbled themselves before God, clinging to His promises, and God used them mightily in leadership in their generation.

But there are others who did not fare as well. Consider Cain, Balaam and Korah.

Cain

The fourth chapter of Genesis gives us a glimpse of what life was like outside of the Garden of Eden. The Lord still conversed with at least some of mankind, they still felt His favor or displeasure, and they were still able to enjoy His presence. Cain experienced all of these things in his relationship with the Lord. He knew the Lord enough to know

God was not pleased with him or his offering; and that Abel had God's favor. He heard the Lord's encouragement to do right and to rule over sin.

Cain knew God. And still he chose the way of wickedness. 1 John 3:12 (NIV) tells us, "Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's actions were righteous."

Cain's first transgression, on the surface, does not seem that terrible. He did not bring his best as an offering to the Lord. God warned him that sin was "crouching at your door," but instead of repenting, he killed his brother. When confronted by God about Abel's murder, Cain did not even express remorse. He was only concerned that his punishment was too much.

Cain had walked with God intimately, yet still he rejected the Lord's loving correction. Instead of repenting, he lashed out at the standard of righteousness in his life to assuage his own conscience. Even in his punishment, he was more concerned with his comfort than repentance.

We see this happening in our culture today at every turn. The Bible tells us that in the last days, people will love all sorts of sin and pleasure more than they love God, even those among the people of God. Unfortunately, we see false doctrine masquerading as truth more and more; and Christian excusing their sin under the guise of grace. Unbelievers will never come to know Christ when the believers act more like the world than they do like Jesus!

The writer of Hebrews tells us we must learn to distinguish between good and evil by the constant application of God's Word and His teaching on righteousness in our lives. Peter likewise encourages believers to "turn from evil and do good" (1 Pet. 3:11b), not fearing the threats against us but instead

“in your hearts revere Christ as Lord” (1 Pet. 3:15a). We must love God more than our own reputation or the sinfulness or pleasures of this world!

Balaam

Balaam was a well-known prophet in ancient Mesopotamia. His reputation spread far and wide. When Balak, King of Moab, saw how Israel had defeated his fierce neighbors, the Amorites, he was afraid. He called on Balaam to save his country through witchcraft.

Even though Balaam was not an Israelite, he still knew God. The Bible records several encounters that Balaam had with the Lord. At one-point Balaam even claims that the Lord is his God.

When Balak’s men brought the standard fee for divination and asked Balaam to curse the children of Israel, he was quick to obey God by sending them away. A second entourage, however, promised a handsome reward, and Balaam’s love of money caused his resolve to waver. He went back to the Lord to see if God had changed his mind. This time God allowed Balaam to go to Moab with strict instructions to only say what God directed. Knowing what was in Balaam’s heart, God sent an angel to confront him on his journey to make sure he understood. And technically, Balaam obeyed. Instead of pronouncing a curse on the Israelites, he blessed them—three times.

Balak was going to send him home with no reward. But Balaam’s heart was greedy, the apostle John wrote that he “taught Balak how to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality” (Rev. 2:14b). As soon as Balaam left, the Moabites sent women to seduce Israelite men, inviting them to sacrificial meals before their gods. And God’s judgment fell on the Israelites quickly.

Even though Balaam knew God had commanded blessing on the

Israelites, he twisted his knowledge of God's ways, devising a plan to benefit their enemies and profit himself. His greed led the Israelites into idolatry, immorality and ultimately God's judgement.

Balaam knew God's desire was to bless Israel. He could have walked in God's favor as a prophet of the Lord, someone like Job. Instead he helped lay a trap for the Israelites for money. In the end, his wealth was only for a season; he was killed by the Israelites in battle when they took the promised land. The lure of wealth is still alive and well today. Too often, we see the gospel merchandised or doctrine twisted for personal gain.

Paul warns Timothy, "Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." Of course, God may financially bless His servants for His purposes. Wealth in itself is not evil; it can be used for great good. But sacrificing integrity or straying from the way of the righteous to pursue money will eventually lead to destruction. We must love God more than the promise of wealth and prosperity.

Stay tuned for Part 2! {eoa}

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