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Balaam and the Nicolaitans

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Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Balaam and the Nicolaitans.

The story of Balaam: when the children of Israel approached the borders of Balak the king of Moab he feared such a vast number of people (Num. 22:1-6), so he sent for the prophet Balaam that he might curse that people to guarantee their destruction (in ancient times it was believed by pagans that prophets had the power of afflicting anything by their curse).

- **Numbers 22:1–6:** Then the people of Israel set out and camped in the plains of Moab beyond the Jordan at Jericho. ² And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. ³ And Moab was in great dread of the people, because they were many. Moab was overcome with fear of the people of Israel. ⁴ And Moab said to the elders of Midian, “This horde will now lick up all that is around us, as the ox licks up the grass of the field.” So Balak the son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time, ⁵ sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor at Pethor, which is near the River in the land of the people of Amaw, to call him, saying, “Behold, a people has come out of Egypt. They cover the face of the earth, and they are dwelling opposite me. ⁶ Come now, curse this people for me, since they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them from the land, for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed.”

God prevented Balaam from doing what he wished to do (for his own gain), to speak a curse over Israel, by restraining him from cursing the people of Israel. However, sometime later Balaam (still craving the king's silver and gold) counselled Balak to make use of the charms of the females of Moab to commit fornication, so that through their influence the Hebrews might be drawn into licentiousness (extravagance and immorality), and lead away from God to join them in idolatrous worship. This was done and the abominations of idolatry spread through the camp of Israel; licentiousness prevailed everywhere. The following verse shows that Balaam deliberately planned this wickedness:

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- **Numbers 31:16:** Behold, these, on Balaam's advice, caused the people of Israel to act treacherously against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and so the plague came among the congregation of the LORD. (Num. 31:16).

Balaam's wicked counsel not only caused the people of Israel to go astray, but also caused them to bring God's curse upon themselves.

- **Numbers 25:1–9:** While Israel lived in Shittim, the people began to whore with the daughters of Moab. ² These invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. ³ So Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel. ⁴ And the LORD said to Moses, “Take all the chiefs of the people and hang them in the sun before the LORD, that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel.” ⁵ And Moses said to the judges of Israel, “Each of you kill those of his men who have yoked themselves to Baal of Peor.” ⁶ And behold, one of the people of Israel came and brought a Midianite woman to his family, in the sight of Moses and in the sight of the whole congregation of the people of Israel, while they were weeping in the entrance of the tent of meeting. ⁷ When Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose and left the congregation and took a spear in his hand ⁸ and went after the man of Israel into the chamber and pierced both of them, the man of Israel and the woman through her belly. Thus the plague on the people of Israel was stopped. ⁹ Nevertheless, those who died by the plague were twenty-four thousand.

BALAAM AND THE NICOLAITANS

- **Revelation 2:6:** Yet this you (the Ephesian church) have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

- **Revelation 2:14-16:** But I have a few things against you (Pergamum): you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. ¹⁵ So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. ¹⁶ Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.

Amongst commentators there are different ideas to who the Nicolaitans were, following are the two most common:

1. The name Nicolaitans is used symbolically to signify those who resembled the same self-serving faith as Balaam did. This idea is based upon the idea the Nicolaitans like Balaam brought about the corruption of God's people. Those who adopt this idea, suppose that the word Nicolaitans is used symbolically in the same manner that the word Jezebel is used, which is to denote corrupters and seducers of God's people.
2. Others suppose that the Nicolaitans, like Balaam were a religious sect who introduced into the church a false freedom, seducing Christians from living a godly life, by distorting Paul's doctrine of God's grace in such a manner that it allowed for immorality and sensual sins. Those who embrace this idea liken the Nicolaitans to those spoken of in the following verses:
 - **2 Peter 15-16:** Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing.
 - **Jude 1:4:** Certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.
 - **Jude 1:11:** Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion.

Balaam greatly desired the kings reward (silver and gold and being esteemed), and because of this worldly desire he was not only willing to do what he knew was wrong, but also do what God had forbidden him to do. This is what often occurs in the plans and purposes of those who claim to be Christians, but crave worldly riches, importance, and fame more than they desire to do what is right before the Lord.

In the Pergamos church there were men who desired worldly riches, and loved being exalted and esteemed by their followers more than they loved God, and therefore like Balaam lead the people astray (i.e., into immorality extravagance and idolatry) to achieve their own desires, ambitions, and goals, and in this way put a stumbling block before the Lord's people and by doing so substantially taught the same thing that Balaam did. The, majority of the Pergamos church (Rev. 2:14-16) in general was such that the Lord could approve it, but he could not approve of their tolerating those who held to the wicked doctrine of Balaam, especially since these doctrines had the potential to corrupt the very foundation of the church and its morals.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.