

Sunday January 16th 2011
The Second of Peter
Part Eight

1). 2Pe 2:15 *They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; 16 but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet.*

Jude 1:11 *Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.*

a). Our two companion scriptures, as we saw last week, continue to address the subject of false teachers, those who are apostates, who have stood away from the faith. And in putting these two scriptures together, thereby combining three examples from the OT record, we find exemplified the complete scope of apostasy as it started in the early years of this dispensation, with the results of this action still existing, still continuing and overwhelmingly dominating the ‘church’ of today.

b). The key to understanding what took place and what continues to be out of place because of it is found in the first part of 2 Peter 2:15 - *They have forsaken the right way and gone astray.*

c). Forsaken = Greek – ‘kataleipo’, *kat-al-i'-po* = to abandon

d). The verb translated ‘forsaken’ here is in the present tense and so would show a continuous action – ‘they have abandoned and continue to abandon’

e). And that which they have abandoned and continue to abandon is ‘the right way [hodos]’.

f). They have in fact, possibly without making the connection, abandoned and continue to abandon the One who said - Joh 14:6 *Jesus said to him, "I am the way [hodos], the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

g). And we will realize of course that forsaking ‘the right way’ is not done in ignorance but by deliberately choosing to abandon the path that God has set and then following another direction; and in this the false teachers and their followers are just like the nation of Israel – Jer 6:16 *Thus says the LORD: "Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it.' 17 Also, I set watchmen over you, saying, 'Listen to the sound of the trumpet!' But they said, 'We will not listen.'*

h). Not only did God personally admonish Israel to walk ‘where the good way is’, but He also set over them ‘watchmen’, those who would speak the word of God as a warning [the sound of the trumpet] for those with ears to hear, but Israel would neither heed the admonishment of God nor the warnings of the watchmen and refused to walk in His way, or listen to His word.

i). Their actions are summed up in - Pr 16:25 ¶ *There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.*

j). Proverbs 16:25 would also apply to those who do likewise today and is a truth that is repeated in - Php 3:18 *For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame--who set their mind on earthly things.*

2). And as we saw last week the triad of apostate examples found in Jude begins with ‘the way of Cain’ and we had learned with regards to this that ‘the way of Cain’ is the way of the man of flesh, it is walking by sight and not by faith. It is embracing the self-serving, finite vision of man rather than being faithfully obedient to the plans and purposes of the infinite God.

a). In the Book of Ruth Boaz asks Ruth a question and then makes several statements based on her anticipated, positive response - Ru 2:8 *Then Boaz said to Ruth, "You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women. 9 "Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them.*

b). ‘You will listen, my daughter, will you not?’ is the question and the statements concern staying in Boaz’s field - *Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here,*

c). The faithful Christian, typified by Ruth, will keep their eyes on Christ’s field and work according to the instructions they are given, they will listen will they not; but those who follow ‘the way of Cain’ though would go and work in another field, where to the carnal eye the work would appear more pleasing, with a greater return as they would be producing fruit, but would in effect be of no value being works of wood, hay and straw.

d). Now to link together what we see in Ruth, what we read in Jeremiah and ‘the way of Cain’ with respect to ourselves we will realize that God has not been silent, but has through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who would guide us into all truth, been instructing us with regards to our work in Christ’s field, showing us the ‘good way’ that we should walk in it to find rest for our souls, having provided for us that which we are to glean. And we have also, in a figurative sense, heard the warning sound of the trumpet every week through the preaching and teaching of the word.

e). Ps 19:7 ¶ *The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; 8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. 11 Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward.*

f). For us to forsake the right way and go in ‘the way of Cain’, must of necessity mean that we will not have followed the Lord’s instructions concerning our work and nor will we have taken heed to the sounding of the trumpet, but instead we will have found a religious work in another’s field, which to the casual observer may appear to be ‘good’, don’t forget that the fruit in the Garden appeared to be good for food and pleasant to the eye, a work, which we would probably engage in with all sincerity, but as we have said, it will have no value for the Kingdom being outside the will of God. The wrong fruit has always resulted in death.

g). This whole scenario is exactly as the Lord prophesied in –
Mt 7:21 ¶ *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'*

3). Following on from ‘the way of Cain’ in Jude, the Holy Spirit then draws attention to those who *have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit,*; which is referred to in Peter as following *the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness*

a). In addition to this we also find Balaam mentioned in the Lord’s judgment of the church of Pergamos in - Re 2:14 *"But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.*

b). The ‘way of Balaam’ and ‘the error of Balaam’ would essentially be one and the same thing. The ‘doctrine of Balaam’ would be somewhat different, but would nonetheless be inextricably linked to his way and his error as his way and his error provide the motivation for his doctrine.

c). Nu 22:2 *Now Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. 3 And Moab was exceedingly afraid of the people because they were many, and Moab was sick with dread because of the children of Israel. 4 So Moab*

said to the elders of Midian, "Now this company will lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field." And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time. 5 Then he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor at Pethor, which is near the River in the land of the sons of his people, to call him, saying: "Look, a people has come from Egypt. See, they cover the face of the earth, and are settling next to me! 6 "Therefore please come at once, curse this people for me, for they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land, for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed." 7 So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the diviner's fee in their hand, and they came to Balaam and spoke to him the words of Balak.

d). In Peter we see that Balaam is equated with the wages of unrighteousness and in Jude with profit and the reason for this we find in v7 from Numbers - *7 So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the diviner's fee in their hand, and they came to Balaam and spoke to him the words of Balak.*

e). 'The way' and 'the error' of Balaam then has to do with being prepared to compromise on that which God has said, to speak something other than that which God has said for the purpose of financial gain; and may be our first example of supply and demand.

4). Balaam, we will remember from the scriptural account was hired by Balak to curse Israel, but he was not able to pronounce the curse against Israel, instead when he opened his mouth he spoke nothing but blessing - Nu 23:11 *Then Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, and look, you have blessed them bountifully!"*

a). However, although Balaam was not able to curse those whom God had blessed, this was not the end of the matter.

b). As we saw recorded in Peter, Balaam 'loved the wages of unrighteousness' and he was not prepared to give up on his financial reward.

c). 1Ti 6:10 *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

d). And this is what leads us to 'the doctrine of Balaam' – unable to curse Israel he needed to find another way to bring about their downfall by separating them from the blessings of God with his eye still on his financial reward.

e). The scripture that speaks of what happened is found in - Nu 25:1 ¶ *Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. 2 They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. 3 So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel.*

f). So what caused Israel to commit harlotry, to bow down to other gods and be joined to Baal of Peor? Well we find our answer in - Nu 31:16 *"Look, these women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD.*

g). As we have seen Balaam could not curse Israel, instead nothing but blessing came from his mouth; however he did succeed in leading Israel astray through his 'counsel', his 'doctrine', that which he taught them – as a result of his teaching, his 'doctrine' Israel was led by him to commit harlotry, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to bow down to other gods. And because of this, not unsurprisingly, God's judgment once again fell upon Israel.

h). What Balaam taught Israel had to do with the nation's covenant relationship with God and sin with regards to that covenant relationship. Simply put Balaam taught that as Israel had entered into a covenant relationship with God that could not be broken therefore Israel could live in whatever way they wanted and it would make no difference to their covenant relationship. They could in effect sin with impunity.

i). This of course was not true – It was true that the covenant established between God and Israel could not be broken, and it was also true that Israel's position as God's firstborn son could not be changed; but it was never true that Israel could sin with impunity - Ex 19:5 *'Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine.*

j). And the thousands who listened to Balaam experienced the wrath of God and were overthrown in the wilderness short of the goal of their calling.

k). Before we leave the historical account of Balaam and Israel let's just remember one thing – Israel knew exactly what God had required of them as His covenant people and had made a commitment to that end - Ex 24:7 *Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient."*

l). They also had the teaching of Moses and Aaron as they presented that which God had to say to the people.

m). What we must conclude then is that Balaam taught that which was readily acceptable to most of the people, because that is what they wanted to hear – they were looking for an excuse, a means to justify the sin they wanted to commit.

n). Dare we even say that because they had itching ears they heaped up for themselves a teacher?

o). Jas 1:13 ¶ *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 Then,*

when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

p). Balaam provided a service to Balak for which he received a substantial monetary reward and he also, possibly unwittingly, provided a service to Israel by legitimizing and justifying their ‘own desires’, giving credibility to their cravings through his office as ‘a prophet’.

5). Re 2:14 *"But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.*

a). Then, as we have seen, we find within the ‘Church’ that is before Christ in Judgment reference to those who within a Christian setting, ‘hold the doctrine of Balaam’.

b). And what we find with regards to the ‘Church’ parallels exactly that which we saw with regards to Israel. Christians know, as did those in Pergamos, that they have been saved by grace through faith and nothing can change their positional standing in Christ, nor can anything change their eternal salvation. And so, in this security it is argued, it is taught, that Christians may live their lives however they like and it will make no difference. They as Israel can sin with impunity.

c). And just as this was not true for Israel so it is not true for Christians.

d). Every Christian has been entered into a race - 1Co 9:24 ¶ *Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. 25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. 26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. 27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*

e). And every Christian is engaged in the spiritual warfare – Eph 6:10 ¶ *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take*

the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—

f). *2Ti 2:4 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. 5 And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.*

g). And the objective for every Christian is to win the race and be victorious in the warfare and to that end God has provided everything that is necessary for us so that we may, like Paul, be able to say - *2Ti 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

h). Our enemy however is doing all that he can to prevent Christians from achieving this end and has, through what we know as ‘the doctrine of Balaam’ introduced a lie into the ‘church’ that is widely received and widely taught based on the certainty of God’s ‘covenant’ with the eternally saved. This teaching says that all Christians will receive future rewards and future blessings, irrespective of how they live their lives now, something based entirely upon Christ’s finished work at Calvary. It is taught that through our positional standing in Christ we will automatically receive crowns and positions of power and authority with Christ in His Kingdom.

i). This of course is completely contrary to that which scripture teaches – *1Co 6:9 ¶ Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.*

j). As we think about this though we would have to remember the parallel that exists between the ‘Church’ and Israel. Just as Balaam taught that which appealed to what the Children of Israel wanted to hear, so do the false teachers who continue with this doctrine teach that which the majority of Christians want to hear - *2Ti 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;*

k). ‘The way’ and ‘the error’ of Balaam and ‘the doctrine of Balaam’ have taken such a firm hold on Christendom, just as they did in the camp of Israel, as they appeal to the base carnal nature that is still present even in the eternally saved. They provide a religious justification for continuing in that which is unacceptable to God and give credibility to the lie promulgated by respected theologians that God would never allow anything ‘bad’ to happen to Christians.

l). Hence there is a distortion in the teaching concerning God's grace and a distortion in the teaching concerning God's love that creates the illusion of safety and security where safety and security do not exist.

m). Jg 17:6 *In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*

n). There is still no king in Israel and so still everyone wants to do what is right in his own eyes - Pr 12:15 ¶ *The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But he who heeds counsel is wise.....22 ¶ Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, But those who deal truthfully are His delight.*

6). And finally, the third of our triad of examples of apostasy is 'the rebellion of Korah' - Nu 16:1 ¶ *Now Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men; 2 and they rose up before Moses with some of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, men of renown. 3 They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?"*

a). We had, we will remember, dealt with the rebellion of Korah in some detail a couple of weeks ago. Suffice it to say then, just as a reminder, that this was a rebellion against God's appointed authority, which was in effect a rebellion against God Himself.

b). Korah was a Levite and as such he would have been assigned a ministry before the Lord with respect to the operation of the Tabernacle. For Korah though, and those who rose up with him, his God assigned role was not enough. He wanted to raise himself up in the eyes of the people to be preeminent amongst them. The justification for this would come from finding fault with and then criticizing Moses and Aaron's leadership, justifying this action by believing that he could do a much better job and therefore it would benefit the people.

c). Absalom, the son of David provides another example of this –
2Sa 15:1 ¶ *After this it happened that Absalom provided himself with chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him. 2 Now Absalom would rise early and stand beside the way to the gate. So it was, whenever anyone who had a lawsuit came to the king for a decision, that Absalom would call to him and say, "What city are you from?" And he would say, "Your servant is from such and such a tribe of Israel." 3 Then Absalom would say to him, "Look, your case is good and right; but there is no deputy of the king to hear you." 4 Moreover Absalom would say, "Oh, that I were made judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice." 5 And so it was, whenever anyone came near*

to bow down to him, that he would put out his hand and take him and kiss him. 6 In this manner Absalom acted toward all Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

d). And we will remember that Absalom's actions result in open rebellion against his father, David – rebellion against God's appointed authority as his father and his king – And needless to say Absalom did not end well - 2Sa 18:9 ¶ *Then Absalom met the servants of David. Absalom rode on a mule. The mule went under the thick boughs of a great terebinth tree, and his head caught in the terebinth; so he was left hanging between heaven and earth. And the mule which was under him went on. 10 Now a certain man saw it and told Joab, and said, "I just saw Absalom hanging in a terebinth tree!" 11 So Joab said to the man who told him, "You just saw him! And why did you not strike him there to the ground? I would have given you ten shekels of silver and a belt." 12 But the man said to Joab, "Though I were to receive a thousand shekels of silver in my hand, I would not raise my hand against the king's son. For in our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, saying, 'Beware lest anyone touch the young man Absalom!' 13 "Otherwise I would have dealt falsely against my own life. For there is nothing hidden from the king, and you yourself would have set yourself against me." 14 Then Joab said, "I cannot linger with you." And he took three spears in his hand and thrust them through Absalom's heart, while he was still alive in the midst of the terebinth tree. 15 And ten young men who bore Joab's armor surrounded Absalom, and struck and killed him.*

e). We need to be content with whatever role God has assigned us and be determined to be faithfully obedient in that role. If God require of us no more than to be a husband or a wife then this is no small thing as in these roles is the picture of Christ and His Bride and to do this right is valuable beyond measure not only in the quality of our lives now, but most especially in the righteousness that will be accounted to us in respect of our reward at the Judgment Seat.

f). If we, within the church, have a need to promote ourselves and exalt ourselves, to be somebody in the eyes of others then it may not be long before we start to find fault and then become critical. It may not be long until we find ourselves rising up and following the apostasy of the rebellion of Korah.

g). 3Jo 1:9 ¶ *I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, [strengthened by Zeus] who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us.*

h). Jas 3:14 *But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. 16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.*

7). And so if we put all this together, ‘the way of Cain’, ‘the way/error of Balaam’ and ‘the rebellion of Korah’ we will find the complete panoramic picture of apostasy – all apostasy, all false teaching will find itself characterized in one or more of these three and will bring on itself the severity of the Judgment of God as certainly as God destroyed the ancient world, destroyed the cities of the plain and opened the ground to swallow Korah and the men with him. There is no doubt in this.

a). But also remember along with this that God knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation and protect them by His power for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Our God is faithful.