

Numbers 22:37

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Balak said unto Balaam, Did I not earnestly send unto thee to call thee? wherefore camest thou not unto me? am I not able indeed to promote thee to honour?

Analysis

Did I not earnestly send unto thee to call thee? (הלא שלחתי שְׁלַחַתִּי, halo shaloch shalachti)—The Hebrew uses emphatic repetition (infinitive absolute) meaning "Did I not urgently, repeatedly send?" Balak's wounded pride surfaces: he sent messengers three times, offered great rewards (22:17), and Balaam still delayed. His complaint **wherefore camest thou not unto me?** betrays ignorance of the divine restraint that prevented Balaam's earlier departure.

Am I not able indeed to promote thee to honour? (האֲנִי לֹא־אֹכֵל כַּבֶּדָּה, ha'umnam lo-uchal kabad'kha)—Balak's final appeal uses kabad, to make heavy/weighty with honor and wealth. The tragic irony: Balak offers to "honor" Balaam for cursing those whom God has blessed (23:20), not realizing that cursing God's people brings destruction, not honor. Balaam soon learns he can only speak what the LORD puts in his mouth (23:12).

Historical Context

This exchange reflects ancient Near Eastern diplomatic protocol where delayed responses to royal summons were insults to honor. Balak, king of Moab (circa 1406 BC), couldn't comprehend that a prophet might refuse royal favor. The offer of "honor" (riches, position) was standard payment for prophetic/divinatory services in that culture.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does Balak's focus on his own honor and ability blind him to God's sovereignty over blessing and cursing?
2. When have you been offended that someone didn't immediately respond to your "generous" offer, not seeing God's restraining hand?
3. What does Balaam's situation teach about the impossibility of profiting from opposing God's declared purposes?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר	בַּלָּק	אֶל	בִּלְעָם	הֲלֹא	שָׁלַח חֲתִי
said	And Balak	H413	unto Balaam	H3808	Did I not earnestly
H559	H1111		H1109		H7971
שָׁלַח חֲתִי	אֶל יְיָ	לְקַרֵּא	לָךְ	לָמָּה	לֹא
Did I not earnestly	H413	unto thee to call	H0	H4100	H3808
H7971		H7121			
הֲלֹא כָתָה	אֵלַי	הֲאֵמַנְתָּ	לֹא	אִיכָל	
thee wherefore camest	H413	indeed	H3808	thou not unto me am I not able	
H1980		H552		H3201	
כְּבִדְךָ:					
to promote thee to honour					
H3513					

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 24:11 (Parallel theme): Therefore now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee unto great honour; but, lo, the LORD hath kept thee back from honour.

John 5:44 (Parallel theme): How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?

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