

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? (בְּלֹא שָׁלֹם שָׁלַחְתִּי, 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? (בְּאַמְנָמָם לֹא-אָכַל פָּבְדָּבָב) —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

שֶׁלְךָ תְּהִלָּתִי בְּלֹא בְּלֹעַ מִן אַתָּה
Did I not earnestly unto Balaam said And Balak H559 H1111 H413 H1109 H3808 H7971 H3808

לֹא לְמֹה לְךָ שֶׁלְךָ אֵלֶיךָ לְקַרְאָה
Did I not earnestly unto thee to call H7971 H413 H7121 H0 H4100 H3808

אַתָּה לֹא בְּאֶמְנָה מִן אַל
thou not unto me am I not able H3201 H3808 H552 H413 H1980

כְּבָדָךְ
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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