

Numbers 23:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he answered and said, Must I not take heed to speak that which the LORD hath put in my mouth?

Analysis

Balaam responds 'Must I not take heed to speak that which the LORD hath put in my mouth?' This acknowledges prophetic obligation to speak God's words regardless of personal cost or preference. True prophets cannot tailor messages to audience expectations or financial incentives. Yet Balaam's later actions proved he sought loopholes when direct cursing was forbidden.

Historical Context

Balaam's constraint to speak only God's words establishes the standard for genuine prophecy throughout Scripture. False prophets speak what people want to hear (Jeremiah 23:16-17, Ezekiel 13:2-3), while true prophets speak God's words despite opposition.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How do you ensure your words reflect God's truth rather than audience expectations?

2. What cost are you willing to bear to speak unpopular truth God has revealed?

Interlinear Text

וַיַּעַן	וַיֹּאמֶר	הֵלֵא	אֶת	אֲשֶׁר	יָשָׁם
And he answered	and said	H3808	H853	H834	hath put
H6030	H559				H7760
הַהִוא	בִּפִּי	אֶת	אֲשֶׁר	לִדְבַר	
that which the LORD	in my mouth	H853	Must I not take heed	to speak	
H3068	H6310		H8104	H1696	

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 22:38 (Parallel theme): And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I am come unto thee: have I now any power at all to say any thing? the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak.

Numbers 23:26 (References Lord): But Balaam answered and said unto Balak, Told not I thee, saying, All that the LORD speaketh, that I must do?

Numbers 24:13 (References Lord): If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the LORD, to do either good or bad of mine own mind; but what the LORD saith, that will I speak?

Numbers 23:20 (Parallel theme): Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it.