

Numbers 24:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying,

Analysis

Balaam's response 'Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sentest unto me' appeals to his earlier warning (22:18) that he could only speak God's words. The phrase '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' sounds noble—claiming submission to divine authority regardless of reward. However, Balaam's later actions (31:16) reveal this was mere pretense. He found another way to harm Israel by counseling Midian to seduce them. Verbal orthodoxy without heart submission is hypocrisy.

Historical Context

Balaam's claim that no amount of wealth could make him transgress God's word (also stated in 22:18) seemed to demonstrate prophetic integrity. However, the later revelation that he counseled Midian to seduce Israel into idolatry (Numbers 31:16; Revelation 2:14) exposed his words as empty. He found a loophole—if he couldn't curse Israel directly, he would cause them to curse themselves through sin.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How can verbal orthodoxy mask internal rebellion?
2. What does Balaam's later compromise teach about finding loopholes in God's commands?
3. How do we avoid the Balaam syndrome of formal obedience with secret rebellion?

Interlinear Text

לֵאמֹר:	בַּלַּעַם	אֶל	בַּלַּק	הָלֵא	גַּם	אֶל
said	And Balaam	H413	unto Balak	H3808	H1571	H413
H559	H1109		H1111			
מֵלָאֲכֵי יְרֵכִי	אֲשֶׁר	שָׁלַחְתָּ	אֵלַי	דְּבַר רְתִי	לֵאמֹר:	
I not also to thy messengers	H834	which thou sentest	H413	Spake	said	
H4397		H7971		H1696	H559	

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 22:18 (Parallel theme): And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more.