

Numbers 24:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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?

Analysis

Balaam's declaration 'what the LORD saith, that will I speak' sounds like prophetic faithfulness, but the narrative reveals this as selective obedience. He spoke only what God forced him to speak in the moment, but his heart remained mercenary. His later counsel to Midian showed he would harm Israel if he could find a method God hadn't explicitly forbidden. This teaches that true obedience encompasses both letter and spirit, both explicit commands and underlying principles. The Pharisees similarly obeyed the letter while violating the spirit (Matthew 23:23).

Historical Context

Balaam became a proverbial example of false prophecy motivated by profit. Peter calls his way 'the way of Balaam...who loved the wages of unrighteousness' (2 Peter 2:15). Jude warns of those who 'ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward' (Jude 11). Revelation condemns 'the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel' (Revelation 2:14). Balaam's legacy is cautionary—outward prophetic gift does not equal inward transformation.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How do we obey the letter of God's law while violating its spirit?
2. What does it mean to have prophetic gifts without genuine conversion?
3. How can we avoid selective obedience that technically complies while practically rebelling?

Interlinear Text

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org