

Numbers 31:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain; namely, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian: Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword.

Analysis

Balaam's death among Midian's kings is tragically ironic - the prophet who couldn't curse Israel for money (Num 22-24) died with those he helped corrupt Israel through immoral counsel. Though God prevented his direct cursing, Balaam found indirect means to harm Israel by advising Midianite women to seduce Israelite men (Num 31:16, Rev 2:14). Peter calls him an example of loving 'wages of unrighteousness' (2 Pet 2:15), while Jude warns against 'error of Balaam' who went 'greedily after... reward' (Jude 11). His death demonstrates that apparent orthodoxy without genuine righteousness leads to destruction.

Historical Context

Balaam, from Pethor in Mesopotamia, had genuine prophetic gifts yet lacked regenerate heart. His oracles of blessing on Israel (Num 23-24) include Messianic prophecy (24:17), yet he sought profit from his gifts. His presence with Midian's kings reveals he stayed nearby after failing to curse Israel, waiting for opportunities to profit from Israel's enemies. His death fulfilled his own ironic request: 'Let me die the death of the righteous' (23:10) - he didn't, dying among God's enemies.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. Are there ways you're using God-given gifts for selfish gain rather than His glory?
2. How does Balaam's example warn you about the danger of orthodox words without transformed heart?

Interlinear Text

חַלְלִיָּהֶם עַל הָרֶגוּ מִדִּיָּן מְלָכָיו וְאֶת
H853 kings of Midian And they slew beside the rest of them that were slain
H4428 H4080 H2026 H5921 H2491

וְאֶת חוּר וְאֶת צֹר וְאֶת רֶקֶם וְאֶת אֵוִי וְאֶת
H853 namely Evi H853 and Rekem H853 and Zur H853 and Hur H853
H189 H7552 H6698 H2354

בֶּן־בִּלְעָם וְאֶת מִלְכָּיו חֲמִשָּׁתָּה מְלָכָיו מִדִּיָּן וְרֵבָע
and Reba five kings of Midian H853 Balaam also the son
H7254 H2568 H4428 H4080 H1109 H1121

בְּחֶרֶב: הָרֶגוּ וְרֵבָע
of Beor And they slew with the sword
H1160 H2026 H2719

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 25:15 (Parallel theme): And the name of the Midianitish woman that was slain was Cozbi, the daughter of Zur; he was head over a people, and of a chief house in Midian.

Revelation 2:14 (Parallel theme): But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

Jude 1:11 (Parallel theme): Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.

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