

Balaam's latter day prophecy

...about the coming Messiah who would be the conquering King for Israel

Key verses

“I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; a Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter shall rise out of Israel, and batter the brow of Moab, and destroy all the sons of tumult. And Edom shall be a possession; Seir also, his enemies, shall be a possession, while Israel does valiantly. Out of Jacob One shall have dominion, and destroy the remains of the city*.” Num.24:17-18 NKJV

Read Num.ch22 to Num.ch24 for the full story of Balaam and Balak

● One of the oldest prophecies about Jesus' return

Although it is mentioned in Jude v14-15 that Enoch prophesied about the last days and Jesus return, this prophecy of Balaam is one of the oldest recorded OT prophecies about Jesus as the coming conquering King of the future age (see also the “Shiloh” prophecy in Gen.49:10). Being at the time of the Exodus we are looking at a date somewhere around 1446 BC, which is the traditional date, or some think a later date around 1290 BC.

● ‘Balaam’s ‘bad press’

Because of the ‘bad press’ associated with Balaam in the New Testament, most Bible readers seem to avoid discussion of Balaam’s prophecies altogether. Balaam was castigated by God’s angel because he **did not wait** (Num.22:20-22) for the princes of Moab to come to him. He was apparently much too eager to earn money for his services.

● The reluctant prophet

The above verses are part of the fourth prophecy of Balaam. Balaam was hired by Balak king of the Moabites to curse Israel because the Moabites were “**exceedingly afraid**” and “**sick with dread because of the children of Israel**” (Num.22:3). Instead of cursing Israel, Balaam was forced involuntarily under the influence of God’s holy spirit to utter blessings for Israel. Some of these blessings refer to Jesus as the future King in Israel.

● The ‘Star’ out of Jacob

This Hebrew word “kawkab” (Strong’s, 3556) translated “star” refers to a “blazing star”, round and shining. In the Hebrew it symbolises a **prince**. In Revelation 22:16 Jesus refers to Himself as, “**the Bright and Morning Star**”.

● The Sceptre (Branch) out of Israel

The Hebrew word 'Sceptre' is 'shebet' (Strong’s 7626). This word means, ‘to branch off’ and can refer to a stick in terms of **punishment and correction** or figuratively a **life giving branch** in terms of a family or clan. Jesus fulfills **both of these roles** as the **King** and **Saviour** of mankind. This prophecy is somewhat related to the ‘branch’ promises taken up later by the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Zechariah (Isa.4:2, 60:21; Jer.33:15; Zech.6:12).

In ancient times the kings sceptre was a sign of his **authority** if withheld, or extended **favour** if held out to others (see Esther 4:11, 5:2).

● Possession of His enemies

Moab and Edom (Mt. Seir) were the two early ‘family’ enemies of Israel. Edom in Old Testament prophecy can be a symbol for Gentile nations in general (see note below).

● Seed through Jacob, Israel

The '**One**' from Jacob. Jesus was born in the line of Jacob (Matt.1:2) and not Esau who was Jacobs firstborn twin brother. ('...the older shall serve the younger'. Gen.25:23)

* 'Remains of the city' NKJV, can be rendered 'survivors of the city' NIV, 'him that remaineth' AV. In this prophecy 'Edom' is the city in question which by New Testament times becomes a symbol for all of mankind. Compare Acts 15:7 which is a direct quotation of Amos 9:12. The latter day United Europe is also presented as 'that great city' in Revelation.

remains = Heb. 'Sariyd' = remnant or the rest